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Securing Nature: Militarism, Indigeneity and the Environment in the Northern Mariana Islands

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Anthropology

by

Theresa Hill Arriola

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Securing Nature: Militarism, Indigeneity and the Environment

in the Northern Mariana Islands

by

Theresa Hill Arriola

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Professor Jessica R. Cattelino, Chair

In the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), there are at least two groups of people with privileged claims to the islands' territory: The U.S. Military and the Native Chamorro and Refaluwasch peoples. As some of the longest colonized islands in the Pacific, nestled among waters with great biodiversity, the CNMI is an exemplary site of the intersections between militarism, indigeneity and the environment. The U.S. military retains certain legal rights over the islands-including the adjacent sea and air space-and conducts weapons testing and training such as live-fire exercises, and chemical and munitions testing. At the same time, the CNMI's Constitution grants exclusive legal rights over the ownership of land to people of Northern Marianas Descent (NMD) to protect its scarcity and sacredness. Increasingly, both Indigenous people and the Department of Defense (DOD) articulate territorial claims in terms of "the environment"-stewardship, conservation, and protection for future generations. Using ethnographic methods, this research examines the shared cultural spaces that emerge from the overlapping claims to the environment made by Chamorros, Refaluwasch and the U.S. Military. By understanding the environment as a contested site situated within a longer history of imperialism in the Pacific, this research asks: *how do U.S. Military and Indigenous Peoples' claims to the environment overlap and diverge? What*

are the multiple understandings of and relationships to "the environment," and what is at stake? The findings from this research reveal that the environment (land/sea/sky) remains a critical site from which to explore contemporary manifestations of United States imperialism in the Northern Mariana Islands, where militarism is naturalized through various federal environmental planning processes that work to reconfigure Indigenous lands into spaces of U.S. sovereign power. Ultimately, this work argues that the current framing of sovereignty in the CNMI forecloses possibilities for Indigenous self-determination by privileging statist ideologies that are bound to U.S. political status. Sovereignty must therefore be re-conceptualized to account for a more dynamic and holistic vision of contemporary Indigenous sociopolitical life and its connections to the land.

The dissertation of Theresa Hill Arriola is approved.

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I dedicate this work to my community, my family and in particular, my dad, who passed away during the early stages of writing this dissertation, and whose love and support continues to guide me. Thank you for always reminding me to stop and smell the roses. *Si Yu'us ma'ase yan hu guaiya hao Tata.*

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List of Acronyms

AFB	Air Force Base
AMP	American Memorial Park
Andersen AFB	Andersen Air Force Base, Guam
AR	Augmented Reality
AZC	Alternative Zero Coalition
ChSt	Chamorro Standard Time
CIMA	Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology
CJMT	The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Joint Military Training
CNMI	The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Congress	The United States Congress
CPA	Commonwealth Ports Authority
DEIS	Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Divert	Guam & CNMI Divert Activities and Exercises. *See also PACAF Divert.*
DOD	The United States Department of Defense
DOI	The United States Department of the Interior
DON	The United States Department of the Navy
EA	Environmental Assessment
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EPA	The United States Environmental Protection Agency
ESA	Endangered Species Act
FAA	The United States Federal Aviation Administration

FDM	Farallon De Medinilla (*No'os* in Chamorro)
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement
Federal Register	Official journal of the federal government of the United States of America
HIRC	Hawaiian Islands Range Complex
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
JGPO	Joint Guam Program Office
LFTRC	Live-fire training range complex
MBTA	Migratory Bird Treaty Act
MIRC	Mariana Islands Range Complex
MITT	Marianas Islands Training and Testing Study Area
MMPA	Marine Mammal Protection Act
MTA	Military Technical Agreement
MTMNM	Marianas Trench Marine National Monument
NAVFAC	Naval Facilities Engineering Command
NEPA	The National Environmental Policy Act
NMD	Northern Marianas Descent
NMI	Northern Mariana Islands
NOA	Notice of Availability
NOAA	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOI	Notice of Intent
NPS	The United States National Park Service
OEA	Overseas Environmental Assessment
OEIS	Overseas Environmental Impact Statement

PA	Programmatic Agreement
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACAF Divert	Pacific Air Forces Tinian Divert Infrastructure Improvements
Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System	PacIOOS
Pacific Pivot	Pacific Pivot US foreign policy or rebalance of troops.
PCBs	Polychlorinated Biphenyls
Rebalance	See *Pacific Pivot*
Roadmap	The United States–Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation Agreement
ROD	Record of Decision
SDEIS	Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statements
SEIS	Supplementary Environmental Impact Statements
SoTS	The United States Department of the Navy Stewards of the Sea
TTPI	Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands
TWA	Tinian Women Association
UN	The United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea
US	The United States of America
USAF	The United States Air Force
USINDOPACOM	United States Indo-Pacific Command
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VR	Virtual Reality
WWII	World War Two

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Association of Indigenous Anthropologists

American Anthropological Association

Introduction

Growing up on the island of Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, my brother and I would often skim our favorite beaches for seashells and other interesting finds. Along with our collection of polished shells, we would occasionally come across pieces of ordnance like bullet fragments left over from the war between between the Japanese and Americans during WWII. Sometimes, if the ordnance was particularly large or interesting, these objects would be brought home and become family mementos. In front of my childhood home sits a heavy, two-foot bomb casing that is rusted by the elements. My family has had it for so long that we even brought it with us when we moved from our old house in the village of Navy Hill to San Vicente. I also remember the large bullet casing that used to sit on my auntie's mantle in her home. When I inquired about the object, she told me it was similar to the bullet that grazed my grandmother's leg during the war-the one that left her with a permanent and disfiguring scar. Every so often my grandmother, fondly known as Nang, would still complain about the pain it caused because the scar tissue was pulled so tight against her bone. When my grandmother recounted the story, she explained that she almost bled to death when the bullet hit her leg as she left the temporary shelter of a cave during the war to seek water for her dying friend.

Today in the Mariana Islands, our environments are still littered with these remnants of war. So much so that these objects have become commonplace. Old tanks are now decorated with shiny new coats of paint mimicking military fatigue (Figure 1.1), along with cement bunkers, and other deteriorating buildings from the wartime that have been renovated, turned into offices or left alone to deteriorate under the sun. Unexploded ordnance teams still make their way to Saipan to collect

thousands of pounds of ammunition and other explosives in order to dispose of them properly.[1] When these clean-ups occur, so many pounds of unexploded ordnance are discovered that the community is both warned of the planned explosion and invited to view the spectacle of their detonation on the northernmost side of Saipan at Marpi Point.

Figure 1.1. This photo, taken in July 2018, depicts an aged WWII tank memorialized and repainted on the side of one of Saipan's main roads, Beach Road. *Source: Photo courtesy of author.*

Prior to leaving the island for college in the United States, I was involved in "Project UXO" at the local Northern Marianas College-a student-run research project where we collected ethnographic data on the location of unexploded ordnance for proper disposal by professionals. At the time, I thought of the project as a form of public service that aimed to protect people and never really gave

[1] According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (2020), "Unexploded bombs, artillery shells, grenades and bullets are still found routinely…Although the CNMI government did not create these hazards, local agencies are remediating them to make the island safe for the residents and for future development."

any critical thought to its overall significance. Far removed from the violent moments when they were first dropped or detonated, these remnants of war are transformed into modern-day safety hazards that needed to be mitigated with care.

It was only when I left Saipan to attend college in the United States that I learned about the extent of the American base building enterprise and about the process of militarization, in an anthropology class exploring the social dimensions of war. Up until then, I had largely learned about CNMI history as a part of broader national U.S. story of war-a perspective that framed our grandparents and great-grandparents as the unfortunate but grateful victims of a war between Japan and America. This conventional history has been a powerful narrative in shaping popular discourse surrounding America's role in the Marianas, and continues to remain a strong undercurrent in contemporary discussions of the U.S. Military's role in our community today. Critical Indigenous reflections on military history in the Marianas have been few and far between, with most wartime and post-WWII analyses framing the issue of militarism in terms of the war's devastating aftermath, Indigenous cultural loss and political intervention by larger nation states through the framework of post-war development. Alexander Spoehr, who conducted anthropological research at the Chicago Natural History Museum and later visited the Marianas in 1949-1950 to conduct archaeological and ethnological research (Spoehr 2000,xv), exemplified these viewpoints. In his popular book entitled *Saipan: The Ethnology of a War-Devastated Island,* Spoehr (2000,xix) references the post-war years on Saipan as a "…strange and incongruous mixture of natural beauty and the ugly, abandoned remains of war." Other post-WWII analyses in the Northern Mariana Islands, such as the popularly referenced history book entitled *The Problems of Resettlement on Saipan, Tinian and Rota* by geographer Neal Bowers, addresses the many social and political issues facing the people of the CNMI in the wake of WWII. Bower connected many of the most pressing issues to the war but also saw them as an outcome of the islands geographic location and history (Bowers 2001,xiii). These historical

perspectives offer a window into the difficulties experienced in post-war life but are also important for the way they frame both Marianas people and environments as casualties of war, and victims of their geographic location. Such discourses continue to permeate contemporary military planning in the Pacific that recapitulate colonial tropes about Indigenous relations to the environment.

Structure of the Dissertation

In the early stages of my research into the U.S. Military's presence in the Marianas archipelago, I kept a file cabinet of all the data that I had collected about the U.S. Military's environmental impacts on the islands and labeled it "environment," alongside "social," "economic" and "political." This was due in large part to the Department of Defense's (DOD) framing of the environment as a domain that would be *impacted* by their plans. This was further promulgated by an understanding of the environment as it is rendered in the technocratic language of the U.S. Military's many *environmental impact statements* in the Marianas. As the project progressed, I realized that this was not just a story about the U.S. Military's many impacts on the environment which are highly visible, but about its capacity-as an institution with tremendous social, political and economic influence-to transform the very meaning of these very environments that we occupy. These documents came to exemplify one of the many ways that power manifests in the context of the environment as it is rendered in the language of military planning. In *Shadows of War,* Carolyn Nordstrom (2004,73) argues that power "is a cultural product-embedded in cultural convictions, sociopolitical relationships, and interpersonal actions propelling societies whether at war or peace…Power relations become part and parcel of the taken-for-granted world." Indeed, militarization is a process that surrounds us so thoroughly that we often forget it exists. This research has taught me that conceptualizations of the environment are so inextricably wrapped up with Indigenous histories of displacement and colonialism, that I could no longer separate the two from one another. In today's world one has to ponder what stewardship, protection and conservation of the land even mean

without understanding how Indigenous relations to the land have been transformed by militarism and militarism has been transformed by indigeneity. In this era of anthropogenic climate change, the quest to protect sacred lands in the midst of militarism has become increasingly dire.

This dissertation engages with both Indigenous and anthropological methodologies to examine the importance of contemporary experiences with U.S. militarism and their ties to American imperialism within "its" territorial and commonwealth counterparts. It provides an in-depth look at the normalization of militarization-or everyday militarism-in the Northern Mariana Islands in the western Pacific where increasing United States-China tensions are renewing the islands strategic military importance on the globe. It engages with broader discussions of imperialism[2], Indigenous sovereignty and the politics of nature where the environment is often understood as a given domain in which militarism makes its effects. Yet, little attention is paid to the discourses, political ideologies and practices that make possible its construction in quotidian life.

In Chapter One, I explore anthropology's early 20th century inroads in the Pacific and its confluence with the broader goals of United States social scientific research and military governance. I situate knowledge about the Pacific within the field of anthropology in order to both reflect on the history of anthropological knowledge production about the Pacific-as-place and to engage in an Indigenous re-reading of this history amidst contemporary militarism in the region. Anthropology cannot be understood outside the broader militarized goals of the United States during these early years and this history is key to understanding how contemporary militarization of the Pacific cannot be divorced from these early explorations of Pacific peoples and environments. My academic engagement with the topic of militarization began as an undergraduate under the guidance of my then mentor, Dr. Catherine Lutz at Brown University, who introduced me to the topic of

[2] By imperialism, I am referring to Alyosha Goldstein's (2014,10) formulation in which "Imperialism in the broadest sense is the deliberate extension of a nation's power and influence over other peoples or places by military, political or economic means. Imperialism is the practice of establishing, maintain and expanding an empire."

militarization in her Anthropology course entitled "War and Society." As a Chamorro woman from the Northern Mariana Islands who studies United States imperialism, this disciplinary framing has been a critical space from which to examine contemporary forms of militarization.

In Chapter Two, I examine how militarism is naturalized in the CNMI by focusing on the everyday and mundane application of environmental planning processes. This research has found that colonial tropes of insularity, smallness and emptiness, many of which were concepts that developed out of early anthropological research, continue to provide the language for justification of violent military technologies in the Marianas. This chapter provides ethnographic accounts of Indigenous social and political life as Chamorros and Refaluwasch (Carolinian) peoples navigate the production of the U.S. Military's many environmental planning processes-including the creation of environmental impact statements (EISs), which outline the military's many impacts on the environment. In Chapter Three, I examine the implications of U.S. territorial governance over the ocean, demonstrating how the ocean is simultaneously a site of governance and of Indigenous epistemological recuperation against the military's expansion of its "blue-water capabilities." In Chapter Four, *Securing Nature* examines how the Northern Marianas's "commonwealth" political status forecloses possibilities for imagining de-colonial futures and argues for a more dynamic construction of sovereignty suited to today's world. Lastly, I close with a brief discussion of militarism's acceleration through the construction of political urgency via disaster.

Literature Review

This dissertation draws on ethnographic and archival research from 2017-2019 but also draws heavily from earlier ethnographic and archival research beginning in 2009 when I began studying militarization as an undergraduate student at Brown University. In addition, my personal experiences growing up on Saipan as a Chamorro woman have provided me with first-hand knowledge about the island's politics, people and environment. I have had many opportunities to

learn about the islands' history and its relation to the U.S. Military and government simply by speaking to fellow community members about their experiences or attending public hearings when U.S. Military personnel visited the islands. I have grappled with the question of why Pacific Islander recruitment into the U.S. Military is higher than many other ethnic groups per capita and have engaged my own family members and friends about their experiences in the U.S. Military. These early interests eventually catapulted me into my life's work where I employ a transdisciplinary approach to examining militarization in the Marianas. As a result, this dissertation brings together three main bodies of literature regarding militarism and empire, the cultural politics of nature and the anthropology of Oceania and draws from a number of fields including but not limited to: Indigenous Studies, Pacific Island Studies, Anthropology, Political Ecology, and Geography. Through their convergence, my research centers indigeneity as both political concept and ontology on a highly militarized archipelago by focusing on one key aspect of Indigenous struggles: the environment. More precisely, the environment as it is situated within the realm of cultural politics.

Militarism and U.S. Empire

The broad reach of American empire and militarization have been documented at length (Kaplan & Pease,1994;Teaiwa,1994;Sherry,1997;Lutz1999,2002,2009;Gusterson,2004;Kaplan,2005; Mann,2005;Johnson,2005;Ben-Ari,2006,2008;Giroux,2004;Pieterse,2004;Bacevich,2005;Carroll,2006; Enloe,2014;Vine,2015;McGranahan & Collins,2018). Rather than employing militarization as a static geopolitical concept characterized by war alone, these scholars highlighted militarism's intimate linkages with United States empire building (Kaplan,2005) and its ongoing ability to transform social life and structure aspects of daily life (Lutz,2002), including the way militarism itself is studied (Gusterson,2007). They also teased out important comparisons between the military as an institution, militarism as an ideology and militarization as material practice. Within this body of work, a distinct form of "American militarism" has emerged as an object of study in the 21st century

(Frese & Harrell, 2003) in which "militarization is organized to engulf the entire social order" (Giroux 2004,211). Scholars focusing on the Pacific have deepened the examination of militarism within places like the Marianas, as a process that both constitutes and is constituted by Pacific Islander cultures (Souder-Jaffery, 1987; Hattori,2004; Aguon,2006; DeLisle,2008; Bevacqua,2010; Camacho,2011; K.L. Camacho,2013; L. Camacho,2013; Perez,2015; Bascara et al.,2015). A large body of in-depth scholarship also examines the role of militarization on various facets of social, political and economic life and its links to Indigenous self-determination in the Marianas (Souder-Jaffery &Underwood,1987; Aguon,2006,2010,2014; DeLisle,2008; Natividad & Leon Guerrero,2010; Shigematsu & Camacho,2010; Camacho,2013; Viernes,2013; Na'puti, 2013; Na'puti,2014; Na'puti &Bevacqua,2015; Alexander,2015; Perez,2015; Frain & Na'puti,2017; Bevacqua,2017; Frain,2018). Yet, while the Mariana Islands remain integral to the formation of American military and governmental policies, they continue to be rendered "strategically invisible to the popular and scholarly American imaginary" (Perez 2015,623). Thus, an adequate examination of contemporary forms of imperialism attention to these seemingly invisible regions outside the continental U.S. that exemplify the uneven and "perpetually incomplete…project" (Goldstein,2014,432) of U.S. colonialism that actively constitutes social, political and economic relationships in our world today. Native and Indigenous Studies scholars have further deepened our understanding of how these forms of U.S. imperialism "abroad" are ongoing projects intimately connected to the shifting politics of settler colonialism within the continental U.S. (Kauanui,2008;Goldstein,2014;Arvin,2019).

The Cultural Politics of Nature

This work's theoretical approach to nature employs the assumption that human-environmental relations are situated within "historically informed political-economic and social contexts" (Buscher,2013) and that nature itself is a complex cultural production in which humans are inextricably linked (Haraway,1990;Tsing,1994,2013;Cronon,1996;Raffles,2002;Darlington et

al.,2003;Moore et al.,2003;Cattelino,2015). Critical approaches to the construction of nature are an integral part of examining how the environment intersects with globalized processes of militarism, imperialism (Grove,1996;Davis,2005;Kosek,2006;DeLoughrey,2012;Kim,2014;Masco 2006,2015;Powell,2018), security (Peluso & Watts,2001;Masco,2014), and development (Walley,2004;Marzec,2016;West,2006). As a way to mirror Hugh Raffles' (2008,324) analysis, I aim to understand how "places are discursively and imaginatively realized through the practices of variously-positioned people and political econom[ies]." Placing nature and the environment in the realm of "cultural politics" offers a more critical exploration of how power is enacted through these conceptualizations in everyday life[3]. As cultural anthropologist Jessica Cattelino (2015,238) explains, it means "attending to cultural practices like making meaning of nature, classifying it, and representing it" while underscoring what is at stake by "tracing how these cultural practices distribute resources among human groups and individuals."

Despite the large body of work that has uncovered militarism's convergence with imperialism and self-determination throughout the Marianas, the social construction of the environment and its ensuing consequences remain understudied as a central analytic and object of ethnographic inquiry in the everyday militarization of Indigenous social and political life in the Marianas. This theoretical approach is especially timely in light of the U.S. Military's contemporary increase in militarization and its assertions about the environment that are seemingly contradictory, such as when it claims to safeguard the environment against degradation while engaging in destructive practices such as live-fire exercises, and chemical and munitions testing. While the U.S. Military's attention to the environment is in no way a novel observation (Marzec,2016), situating the

[3] While the literature on the cultural politics of nature and the field of Political Ecology overlap in their approaches to power, Baviskar argues that a "cultural politics" approach pays closer attention to the ways that people make and ascribe social meaning to environmental concepts such as natural resources outside of their "material use value" (Baviskar 2003,5052).

simultaneous claims to the environment by Chamorros, Refaluwasch and the U.S. Military within the history of imperialism highlights the environment as an important site from which to examine the formation and dispersal of political power in everyday life.

Anthropology of Oceania

Alongside administrators and U.S. Military personnel, anthropologists were among a privileged few who were given security clearance to enter many of the islands throughout the Pacific in the post-WWII era. This was a historical reality that worked to solidify the Pacific as a regional cornerstone within the field. Since then, scholars have long been concerned with the (mis)representations of Indigenous peoples and places throughout Oceania (Teaiwa,1994;White & Lindstrom,1989;Dirlik et al.,1995;Hanlon,1998;Hanlon et al.,2000;Borofsky,2000;Howe 2000;Rainbird,2003;Davis,2005;Hau'ofa,2008). For example, the common misconception of the Pacific as a "non-place" (Steinberg,2001) or "the greatest blank on the map" (Spate 2004,ix) has a long history rooted in European colonial discourse and has had profound consequences on the environment and people whose livelihoods depend on it to survive. The same critique has been leveled by scholars who point to the idea of islands as laboratories and experimental paradises (DeLoughrey,2012). The devastating impact of U.S. nuclear testing in the 1940s on the Marshall Islands and the current military testing in the Mariana Islands are testament to the way in which the Pacific Ocean has been envisioned as "isolated" space, far enough away from the continental U.S. from which to conduct this testing. Mindful of these perspectives, I advance a more nuanced perspective of the Pacific beyond these divisions by situating my analysis of claims-making over the environment within the realm of contemporary U.S. political power in the region.

Anthropological knowledge has always been tied to the knowing of the "other" as colonial subject and this history informs the foundation of this research. As Talal Asad (1991,315 in Bonilla 2017,335) writes, "It is not merely that anthropological fieldwork was facilitated by European

colonial power . . . it is that the fact of European power, as discourse and practice, was always part of the reality anthropologists sought to understand, and of the way they sought to understand it." Bearing this history in mind throughout this dissertation, I have been painfully aware of the ways that these forms of knowledge production are still very much a part of contemporary life in the Pacific. Drawing from Vine Deloria's critique of anthropological knowledge, anthropologist Rick Smith (2019) reminds us of anthropology's complicated and problematic relationship with Indigenous peoples, a field which defined so much of what indigeneity meant, with little regard for how such perspectives actually worked to further meaningful causes of Indigenous peoples themselves. Increasingly, Smith (2019,4) argues, an "anthropology aligned to Indigenous sovereignty is not anthropology as usual."

This dissertation sits comfortably within this realm of revisionism and departs from a conventional understanding of military history of the Marianas or even military histories of the environment or "green militarization" which signals a body of work that "…highlights the negative impacts of military activity on the environment" (Masse et al.,2017). Instead, it engages in the "practice of "reading against the grain" colonial documents and practices that frame everyday life" (Diaz 1994,32). An Indigenous re-reading of conventional history in the Marianas seeks to re-work the anthropological legacy of salvaging culture and ossifying conceptions of indigeneity in the Pacific. This is both a question of theory and method, in which the recapitulation of "Marianas Political History" for example is both an attempt to summarize and locate the conventional bodies of knowledge that inform the topic at hand, as well as use them to discuss what implications these bodies of knowledge have in our contemporary world. Thus, this work seeks to touch upon aspects of living cultures that are always, and have always been, in flux rather than a definitive account of *the* Chamorro or Refaluwasch people. The dynamism of culture reminds us that there is never any one singular account of culture and history and that "…there is no omnipotent vantage point from

which to pronounce the definitive or whole truth of any human practice or event" (Diaz 1994,31). This is precisely what is beautiful about studying culture. As Samoan poet and writer Albert Wendt (1976,644) once poetically remarked, "Like a tree a culture is forever growing new branches, foliage and roots."

Research Methodology

Using anthropological methods and analyses rooted within the context of decolonizing methodologies (Smith,2012), I examine the central role that the environment has come to play in the contemporary militarization of the Marianas archipelago. The focus on everyday militarization in this dissertation provides a critical lens for understanding contemporary military planning not so much as an outcome of a political agreement between two larger nation states such as U.S. and Japan, or a question of geopolitical strategies, but to underscore how militarism is embedded in much longer, more quotidian, story about living with/in the "environment" of the military. The three main bodies of work mentioned above encouraged me to highlight Indigenous theories about and experiences with militarization-perspectives which have too long been ignored in favor of a depoliticized and teleological approach to understanding Marianas military history. Although grounded in anthropological methodologies, I employed an interdisciplinary approach to uncovering the complexity of contemporary militarism. To do this, I engaged in long-term ethnographic research in the CNMI and employed four main research methods: 1) Formal and informal interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants; 2) Participant and non-participant observation during U.S. Military environmental planning and other community events, 3) documentary analysis of environmental planning documents such as environmental impact statements and, 4) media analysis of military planning dating back to the early 2000's when discussions regarding increased militarization throughout the Marianas were just starting to gain traction within the local community. These methodologies resulted in the logging of hundreds of hours of informal interviews and

conversations with community members throughout the Marianas and beyond regarding military planning as well as thousands of pages of analyses. While my primary academic training is situated within the field of sociocultural anthropology, I have always drawn deep inspiration from anthropology's intersections with Native/Indigenous Studies, Pacific Island Studies and History. I do not see each field as mutually exclusive but instead deeply entangled and informed by one another.

Indigeneity as Theory and Practice

With indigeneity as its core, this research has always been from its inception, about decolonization and about the process of what Hau'ofa describes as "…endeavoring to shed a kind of mentality bred under conditions of colonialism" (Hau'ofa 2008,3). It has often been remarked in personal conversations on Saipan that to describe America's relationship with the CNMI as "colonial" does not make sense because we possess a political union with the U.S that was the result of *our choice*. In one sense, yes, politically this is true. On the other hand, this perspective speaks to our need to "unsettle" (Bonilla,2017) our understanding of decolonization within Micronesia, especially as the militarization of the Pacific by various powers including China and the United States ramps up in the coming years. This project therefore views decolonization as a process that requires knowing, doing and being in a world that systematically works to downplay Indigenous perspectives in everyday life. It requires not just resistance to colonial formations but a systematic re-working of how these formations transform and are transformed by Indigenous peoples. Importantly, it is not about "going back" to an imaginary time in which we envision ourselves as a pristine homogenous cultural whole. It is not about being chained to an unchanging past. This is a colonial fantasy that seeks to disappear the Native (O'Brien,2010). Frantz Fanon eloquently describes this process of unlearning when he writes,

> I am not a prisoner of History. I must not look for the meaning of my destiny in that direction. I must constantly remind myself that the real *leap* consists of introducing invention into life. In the world I am heading for, I am endlessly creating myself. I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further (Fanon 2008,204).

This leap is critical for altering contemporary discourses surrounding Chamorro and Refaluwasch life that perpetuate ideas of disappearing, death and "Indigenous demise" (Diaz,1994). For so many years in my youth up into my adulthood, I have read in history books and have been told that Chamorro culture is almost dead and that a "pure" Chamorro no longer exists since our bloodlines have been tainted with hundreds of years of intermixing with each successive colonial regime. I have come to learn that the myth of purity has less to do with who we want to be than about what others want us to be in today's world. Despite all odds, Indigenous Peoples have continued to express a broad and expansive global vision for their futures that need not engage with the false pretenses of modernity but instead draw on unique cultural differences to advance "culturally specific" needs (Sissons 2005,13). To draw on indigeneity then is to engage with it as both theory and practice.

Decolonization is deeply political *and* personal, requiring a great deal of courage to let go of so much of what we have been taught about ourselves by others. Putting theories of decolonization into practice take hard work, persistence and a lot of patience in the everyday conversations that engender imperialist ways of knowing the world that we ourselves recapitulate daily. I have found that the erasure of Indigenous experiences often occurs in small increments. In questions like "why do you feel so dispossessed by the U.S. Military, they are always the first ones to help us when a disaster happens?" and "Who is going to save you when you are in trouble?" As long as I have been involved in this research, I have been confronted with these types of questions that have produced a real sense of anxiety and even guilt at times, that framing United States as an imperial power was something to be ashamed about. This, of course, is an experience that I now realize is part of what it means to decolonize and is precisely what is "unsettling" about decolonization itself (Tuck &

Yang,2012;Snelgrove et al.,2014). Decolonization requires us to consistently rethink the politics of one's Indigenous positionality in the world in ways that are often uncomfortable and confrontational because they chip at the very "epistemological foundations" (Tuck and Yang,2012) of dominant settler worldviews. This discomfort makes it so that even to "think and act Native under colonial conditions is a highly politicized reality, one filled with intimate oppositions and powerful psychological tensions" (Trask 1999,43-44). It also requires a constant re-examination of the taken for granted assumptions that we have about the world we live in, including the very environments that we come to inhabit. Pacific scholar and poet Teresia Teaiwa (2017,14) has pointed out this erasure by explaining that,

> ...Indigenous experiences of militarization are often ignored-and sometimes deliberately marginalized-by non-Indigenous scholars on the grounds that they are statistically irrelevant; that because they constitute a minority presence, there is nothing for a dominant group or groups to learn from paying attention to them. Often, what such dismissals, really signify is that the dominant group is unwilling to surrender its paradigms, for one of the most profound effects of a genuine reckoning with Indigenous knowledge is having one's epistemological foundations challenged.

It is a "reckoning" as Teaiwa has pointed out, with an understanding of the world that cannot sustain the level of militarism that currently exists in today's world. Taking into account the fact that in-depth histories of Indigenous Peoples experiences with militarization are few and far between, this work seeks to make steps towards ameliorating that erasure by understanding how Indigenous worlds are shaped by processes of militarism and vice versa. Rather than Indigenous experiences "adding to" or "complementing" the colonial and militarized histories of the Pacific, I wish instead to privilege Indigenous perspectives as forms of knowledge production that actively shape our social and political realities.

What then is so threatening about Indigenous epistemologies to various formulations of imperialism, such as militarism today? For one, it is the confrontation of perspectives that are often incommensurate with imperial understandings of the world-of the environment, sociality, politics

and culture. Taking into account what Tuck and Yang (2012,4) describe as "an ethic of incommensurability," it is the realization that these projects require our lands back, and advance unsettling conversations about the very definition of indigeneity under U.S. hegemony where we must navigate the politics of recognition in relation to the broader nation state. It is a realization that indigeneity cannot be relegated to the past, nor can discourses of liberal multiculturalism (Byrd,2011) including social justice frameworks (Tuck and Yang,2012) accommodate the struggles for decolonization. In the CNMI, examining militarism is unsettling because it is terrifying-for what it means to one's family, self, community and very identity. It requires a re-thinking of history altogether, where there is no easy way to describe the destruction of colonialism's pasts and presents, and where no hero narrative exists. In an Indigenous community that relishes in the patriotism that surrounds the popular story of American intervention in the Pacific, this revisionism has at times been slow and painful and is fraught with issues surrounding what it means to be both intimately tied to American sociopolitical life and simultaneously invisible. The history of militarization in the Marianas has never *just* been about unequally positioned actors, because this would not be telling the story in its entirety. American intervention, and other colonial ventures within the Pacific, have produced a number of longstanding social, political and economic ties in the community, and to say that Chamorro or Refaluwasch peoples simply did not want the U.S. Military to remain on the islands tells only half this story. On the other hand, an examination of U.S. presence in the region that disregards the proper social and historic context obfuscates how processes of imperialism and militarization have worked to shape contemporary life in the archipelago.

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Chapter 1: Anthropology, Militarism and the Pacific-as-Place

I remember looking out the car window reading the street signs: 1st Street, 82nd Street, Grand Street and Broadway (Figure 1.2). It was a scorching hot day so I tried my best to avoid stepping outside of the car. When we made it to the atomic bomb memorial pits, I finally got out to snap some photographs, leaning close to the glass that covered the cement pits to get a better view of the historical photographs of military personnel carefully handling parts of the bombs (Figure 1.3). These memorials are not, as the street signs might suggest, in Manhattan. They are located on the island of Tinian, 7,818 miles from Manhattan and a mere ten minutes by plane from the island of Saipan in the Marianas archipelago-earning its place as one of the shortest flights in the world.

Figure 1.2. This photo, taken in August 2017 by the author, depicts the corner of Broadway and Grand Street on Tinian Island in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). *Source: Photo courtesy of author.*

Figure 1.3. This photo, taken in August 2017 by the author, depicts memorial pit No. 1 that once housed the uranium atomic bomb that was detonated over Hiroshima. The pit now contains a glass protective covering and historical photos of the bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy," on North Field, Tinian Island in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). *Source: Photo courtesy of author.*

The story goes that the island's roadways were named by Captain Paul J. Halloran, Chief of the Seabees during the Saipan and Tinian campaigns of WWII. After viewing a map of Tinian, Halloran noticed that the island's size and shape mirrored that of his home island of Manhattan, and so he proceeded to direct the construction of the island's infrastructure around this cartographic rendering. The Japanese Imperial Naval Air Station was located on Tinian prior to the U.S.'s arrival, and was subsequently "bulldozed by U.S. Seabees who turned it into North Field, US Army Air Forces, [and] a strategic B-29 operating base" (Farrell 2018,41). At the time of this construction,

Tinian became the largest air base in the world. When a detachment of 54 Los Alamos scientists traveled to the island to handle the bombs, they had no idea where the location was except that they were headed there, hence the island's codename: Destination (Steeves,2020). The island was chosen as the operations base and storage location of the two atomic bombs-nicknamed "Little Boy" and "Fat Man"-that the U.S. later dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

A little more than thirty-five hundred people reside on Tinian today. Travel between Saipan and Tinian is frequent given the familial connections between each island, and tourists are often offered trips to Tinian during their stay on Saipan. Much like the entirely of the Marianas, the island's economy relies mainly on tourism. In the early 2000's, the island's economy hinged on the creation of a $200-million-dollar casino named the *Tinian Dynasty,* backed by privately-funded Hong Kong shareholders. It was touted as an economic opportunity for locals and off-island workers, mostly from the Philippines and China, to gain steady jobs with the promise that the Asian tourism market would continue to expand. The casino's glamourous and sprawling interior hinted at the vague promise of wealth on an island with little economy to support such a massive project. Yet, the ostentatious décor inside the casino, and its massive presence loomed in stark contrast to the surrounding environment. The long-term benefits of the casino never materialized, and the dependency on the casino industry eventually left Tinian residents with what is now the ruins of an empty building. A number of lawsuits filed against the owners of the Tinian Dynasty relating to labor disputes and unpaid renovations continue to make their way into the CNMI's local newspapers, including a $75 million fine by the U.S. Department of the Treasury Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (Bautista,2018). Since then, the CNMI Government has continued to look for other avenues to boost revenues for the island's struggling economy.

Hopes are now being raised at the prospect of the U.S. Military providing economic opportunities through increased training and improved infrastructure as a result of military planning

slated for Tinian, including the *United States Air Force's Divert Activities and Exercises*[4] that establishes a new airport facility that will assist in upcoming military training activities.[5] The Tinian community's optimism regarding these plans are tied to the signing of the 1975 Covenant agreement between the United States and the CNMI where three-fourths of Tinian were leased to the military by the CNMI government for the purposes of national defense. The lease agreement was set to last for a fifty-year period, with the option to renew at its cessation. On May 3, 2019, the Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) signed and finalized a 40-year agreement valued at $21.9 million to complete the U.S. Air Force's divert airfield on Tinian island[6]. This deal was viewed as a momentous occasion that was "expected to benefit the economy of Tinian and the entire Commonwealth" (Erediano,2019). Shortly after the deal had been finalized, reports emerged about a memorandum by the U.S. Secretary of the Navy, Richard V. Spencer, (dated April 30,2019) requesting that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) remove airspace limitations over Tinian to allow live-fire training. The memorandum also noted that the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) was conducting an environmental analysis to use a combination of Tinian Island and Pagan Island for "unit level live-fire training" and "full scale live-fire combined arms training" (Spencer,2019) respectively. The request was made without consulting the CNMI government and appropriate agency heads and prompted major backlash from local legislators and Tinian residents who viewed Spencer's request as an affront to local leadership. In response to Secretary Spencer, Commonwealth Ports Authority Chairwoman and Tinian native, Kimberly King Hinds, explained that she was "surprised and beyond disturbed" by this action and noted that "In effect you are asking the FAA to

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[4] For more information, see PACAF Divert Marianas EIS website at www.pacafdivertmarianaseis.com.
[5] In a rather circuitous turn of events, the Tinian Dynasty is now being discussed as a place to host the increase in personnel and workers needed for the infrastructural improvements on Tinian (De La Torre,2019a).
[6] On May 3, 2019, the 40-year agreement to complete the U.S. Air Force's divert airfield on Tinian Island) was finalized (U.S. Air Force,2019), but the final EIS for the Divert was completed earlier in 2016 and was signed on November 13, 2018 (Villahermosa,2018).

remove airspace protections over one of our airports, effectively turning over control of this airspace to the Navy." This move, she continued, "reflects the historic callous policy of United States' westward expansion, seizing property as it justified for security or any other reason and in complete disregard of the interests of those already there."[7]

Despite the Tinian community's desire to welcome military planning on islands, this latest spat highlights two common concerns that residents have raised about military planning in the islands, both of which are connected to the much longer historical legacy of U.S. policies in the Marianas. The first relates to the U.S. Military's record of skirting Indigenous decision-making in favor of completing urgent military planning needs. Secondly, it highlights the confusion over the U.S. Military's overlapping projects that make simultaneous use of land, sea and airspace, all of which are commonly presented as separate projects. Indigenous activists on Saipan often remarked, "Give them an inch, and they will take a mile." This phrase was used to refer to the practice of the military making decisions regarding one project, with other projects overlapping or following shortly after, without having received the same amount of consultation or analysis by the local community (a discussion outlined in further detail in Chapter 2). It mirrors a similar sentiment captured in James H. Webb's (1974) earlier examination of Tinian residents' reaction to military planning in the region prior to the signing of the 1975 Covenant agreement. He writes,

> With regards to the lack of comprehensive picture of what our Western Pacific future holds in store for the Marianas, we need only look at the violent reaction that occurred when the United States asked for all of Tinian. "Where will the golf course be?" was the sarcastic query of Guamanians who had "been down that road before. The head of the Marianas delegation, Senator Edward D.D.G. Pangelinan, claimed, "The military is like a spoiled child, asking for more than it really needs.

Webb (1974) continues,

[7] This event was covered by local media and community members on Guam and Saipan (De La Tore,2019a;De La Tore,2019b;Erediano,2019;Perez,2019;Press Release,2019). See also *U.S. Navy Wants to Restrict Tinian's Airspace*, 2019,03:15-05:21).

> Vicente N. Santos, vice-chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission, was the most eloquent, remarking: "That's the military way of doing things-to ask for three parts, when they only need one…They call is "contingency planning, But when will they need this land? In five years? Ten? I personally would like to give the military some land on Tinian. But they don't need all of Tinian (Webb 1974,92).

These complaints highlight both an acknowledgement of military needs as well as a sense of skepticism regarding the timing and location of military planning and raise the question of how the islands are framed via the notion of *contingency*-a sense that the island territories are integral to a sort of military back-up plan*,* but are never quite drawn out accordingly (at least explicitly and in a public manner). This exact concern over the way that Tinian was being framed as disconnected from the overall military "blueprint for future American Western Pacific presence" (Webb 1974,92) continues to remain more relevant today than ever. This mentality has been similarly applied to places where bases are not permanently stationed, but nevertheless provide important real estate for military planning, a term that militarism scholar David Vine has described as the "lily pad strategy" where United States base building continues to expand without much oversight in order for the U.S. Military to engage in "endless small-scale interventions in which a large, geographically dispersed collection of bases will always be primed for instant operational access" (Vine,2012). Importantly, this segmentation was deceiving because while on paper they appeared to be separated projects, in practice, the military viewed these spaces as intimately connected and integral to the acquisition of territory throughout the region. An examination of the military's strategy to segment its multiple plans highlights how the centrality of these projects to military defense goals rely on their relative obscurity within the local and global community in order for the DOD to remain unaccountable for how its plans overlap and diverge. The CNMI remains an important site from which to disrupt the narrative that bases are the most visible signs of militarism and exemplifies a location in which everyday militarization pervades.

A Brief History of Militarization in the Marianas

United States Military history in the Marianas does not follow a linear trajectory nor does it "begin" with the United States, but instead can be viewed as but one facet of a much longer history of imperialism in the Pacific. Located in the western Pacific about 1,500 miles from Tokyo and 5,800 miles from Los Angeles, the Northern Mariana Islands along with Guåhan (Guam) comprise the fifteen islands that make up the Marianas archipelago. The archipelago itself is a 425-mile-long chain (Rottman 2002,372) connected to the larger Izu-Bonin-Mariana arc system that is bordered by the deepest trench on planet earth, the Marianas Trench. Given its location, the Marianas has sometimes been integral to U.S. government and military policies in Micronesia while at other times completely ignored. Kiste (1999,38) has characterized "Early American involvement in Micronesia" for example "as a period of 'benign neglect'"[8] while Heine (1974,xvi) argues that Washington's policies in the region have never been consistent. At the end of the Spanish American War of 1898, the Northern Mariana Islands were sold to Germany and remained under German colonial rule from 1899-1914 until Japan was granted the League of Nations mandate over the islands (also known as the Japanese Mandate). During this time, the Japanese naval administration governed Saipan, but eventually gave way to a civil administration in 1922 known as the the South Seas Government (Spoehr 2000,51). The Japanese government developed an extensive railway system for sugarcane production on Saipan. Remnants of Japan's occupation still exist on Saipan, some more visible than others. A drive around the island reveals Japanese bunkers, a replica of the old Japanese train used for transporting sugarcane, and Sugar King park, where a statue of Japanese businessman Harui Matsue is built. Matsue was known as the "Sugar King" after reviving the sugarcane industry

[8] Kiste and Falgout (1999,38) note that despite this perception of "benign neglect" in the 1950's, this position is complicated by the fact that while certain parts of Micronesia were ignored, other parts occupied important roles for training and testing. For example, they explain that, "…it was during this time that the American nuclear weapons test program was conducted in the northern Marshall Islands…and the Northern Marianas were cordoned off by the Central Intelligence Agency for the training of the Nationalist Chinese military" (Kiste and Falgout 1999,38).

on Saipan and starting the Nanyo Kohatsu Kaisha (South Seas Development Company). By the mid-1920's, Matsue turned Saipan Island into a sugar cane plantation by dividing the island into "rectangular plots of cane" (Peattie 1992,161-163) and expanded the sugarcane industry to the islands of Tinian and Rota, where thousands of Japanese laborers settled. Traces of the Japanese era are also still present in the Chamorro lexicon on Saipan.

The Japanese occupation of the Marianas effectively ends when the U.S. seizes the Northern Mariana Islands from the Japanese Empire in 1944 and begins to govern the islands. By 1947, having gained control over most of Micronesia, the region was designated as the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI), under the guidance of the United Nations (Kiste 1994,227). Heine (1974:5) notes,

> On July 19, 1947, the new Trust Territory was turned over to U.S. Navy administration on an interim basis. Military government was organized on an emergency status. Title to lands had not been decided, nor had the actual role of the United States Navy in the governing of the territory. Much of the time, the military was functioning under the rules of international war. This was a new experience for the United States.

American militarism had already begun to inform an important foundation for governance throughout the region while U.S. policies throughout the Micronesia sought to keep people out (known as "negative" strategy), rather than buildup the region militarily (Webb 1974,83). The fate of the Mariana Islands was different however, as the United States looked to the islands to increase militarization and maintain a military presence in the western Pacific. Around this time, the Mariana Islands became known as "America's forward fortress in Asia Pacific" (Rivera,2002) and were codenamed "GATEWAY" (Rottman 2002,372). The early formation of the U.S.-Micronesia relationship in the context of a militarized 'state of emergency' sets the tone for a number of policy decisions that are mirrored by contemporary military planners under the pretense of national security. For example, military "readiness" (or pre-emptive security against perceived threats to the United States) that seeks to combat

threats from China and North Korea remain key to promoting further militarization throughout the archipelago. This strategy, in which increased militarization is justified via emergency, is not novel but instead is a governing pattern that has been noted in other parts of the Pacific during the wartime era. Juliet Nebolon's research, for example, critically examines how "the extended period of martial law transformed the wartime "state of emergency" into a technique of governance" in Hawai'i (Nebolon 2017,24). In an era of pre-emptive military planning and planetary crises looming, a critical approach to these states of emergency are critical to unpacking their normalization.

Despite being part of the Marianas archipelago, Guam has a different colonial history which sets it apart from the Northern Mariana Islands. Guam is the largest and southernmost island in the chain, but was ceded to the United States shortly after the Spanish-American War in 1899. The island became a valuable piece of territory for the U.S. Navy to occupy since it allowed for large ships to dock in the waters of Apra Harbor and could serve as a coaling station for ships traveling from Hawai'i to the Philippines (Farrell,2013). Whether or not the U.S. would annex rest of the Mariana and Caroline islands was a source of major dispute. This early U.S. involvement in the Marianas highlights the militarized roots from which contemporary United States hegemony springs and showcases how U.S. militarism is deeply embedded in imperialist desires for territory and empire building. As Kiste and Falgout (1999,18) point out, "The Department of War (later Defense) and many members of Congress favored outright annexation, while the Departments of State and the Interior argued that it would be embarrassing for America to acquire new territory as a result of the war." The War and Navy Secretaries saw annexation as necessary for deterrence against USSR and Britain as well as to maintain the image of the United States as "anti-imperialist" (Smith 1991,16-17). The anxiety over whether or not to annex the islands offers a glimpse into early

American intervention in a region that was viewed as strategically important, but not officially territorialized by the United States.

Given this history, the U.S. has remained a colonial presence in Guam for a much longer time than in the CNMI and although the islands are culturally and ethnically similar, they remain politically distinct. Chamorro scholar Keith Camacho (2011,37) has recounted this history at length and highlights how these historical divisions are sometimes linked to competing loyalties to the Americans on Guam on one hand, and to the Japanese in the Northern Marianas. Despite these differences, the Marianas archipelago's association with the United States has led to an association of westernization and cultural loss regarding Chamorro peoples. Kiste (1993,73) expresses this sentiment when he writes, "The Chamorros of the Northern Marianas and Guam had the longest colonial history of all Micronesian peoples, and, as a consequence, they were the most Westernized and felt a sense of superiority over the others." This difference was further reified by the fact that the United States political status negotiations with the CNMI during the 1970s occurred separately from the rest of Micronesia (Smith 1991,34). Thus, despite the fact that Micronesia is often understood as "The most peripheral of peripheries" (Hanlon 1998,1) in comparison to the rest of the Pacific, the Marianas stands apart from other islands in terms of U.S. politics and as a result of increased militarism. This history helps frame Guam and the CNMI's relationship with the broader Micronesian region as one of overlapping sociocultural and political connections *and* disconnections. Furthermore, these distinctions remain critical for understanding how processes of militarization influence political decision-making in the Marianas today, as both CNMI and Guam governments deal separately with military planning, yet the entire archipelago and its surrounding sea and airspace are characterized by the DOD as the Mariana Islands Training and Testing "Study Area."[9]

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[9] Given the difference in socio-political histories between Guam and the CNMI, there are times when invoking an analysis of the entire Marianas archipelago is helpful (such as in describing the entire Marianas as a "Study Area") and other times when the teasing out of differences between Guam and the CNMI is important for understanding

Military Ranges in the Marianas

Despite the differences in our political structures and colonial histories, the Indigenous populations on Guam and the CNMI have retained enduring cultural, political and economic ties to the U.S. Military. However, because of the presence of U.S. Military bases on Guam (Andersen Air Force Base and Naval Base Guam), the island receives more recognition in popular media and politics despite its relative obscurity to most Americans. Saipan (the capitol island of the CNMI), on the other hand, which is only a 45-minute plane ride from Guam is viewed as even more obscure and unknown within the realm of American politics. This has been the case in historical accounts of the island when for example, Spoehr (2000,42) wrote, "If Guam was a remote corner of the Pacific world, Saipan was even more so." Taken together, the islands have sometimes been described as the "longest colonized islands in the Pacific" (Aguon 2006,8) since the 16th century beginning with the Spanish Crown. Within this long history of colonization, the U.S. occupation in the Marianas is relatively new, yet Chamorro's enlist in the military at higher rates per capita than many other US states. Every year, in the annual Fourth of July parade celebrated on Saipan, families gather to celebrate an event that has come to stand in for the melding of two different historical events. While the fourth of July marks the American Independence Day, it is also the day that commemorates two somewhat contradictory events: the 1944 "liberation" from Japanese occupation and the "liberation" of locals from various post-war camps where they were placed by the U.S. Military after the war.[10]

These celebrations thus exemplify the somewhat paradoxical nature of asserting both Indigenous identity and American culture in the annual event and highlight a mix of both loyalty to

militarism's uneven and differential effects on the Indigenous peoples (such as in the case of environmental law). These differences are a question of scale and my analysis of militarism in this region takes into account the productive tensions that emerge from these comparisons.

[10] This contradiction is visible in the various descriptions of the Liberation Day event throughout the island such as in the Marianas Variety newspaper which characterizes the event as a liberation from wartime camps, and on the Marianas Visitor's Authority website which characterizes Liberation Day festivities as a "week long celebration of the island's 1944 liberation from Japanese occupation" (Press Release 2018;Culture in the Marianas,n.d.).

the United States and a celebration of freedom to express Indigenous culture. Chamorro scholars have done much work to unpack the contradictory nature of "liberation" in U.S. territories, and in particular on Guam, where the islands lack any semblance of political status.[11] In his article "Deliberating Liberation Day", Chamorro scholar Vince Diaz unpacks the tenuous history of this commemorative event in the Marianas. His work highlights the way in which the arrival of the Americans after the the brief but brutal Japanese occupation of Guam in 1941, made them a praiseworthy and welcome guest, complicating how resistance to militarism takes shape today.

On Saipan, displays of American patriotism are prominently displayed alongside CNMI flags at government buildings, at the airport and during "national" commemorative events such as September 11th. The confluence of militarism and tourism (or 'militourism' as Pacific scholar Teresia Teaiwa aptly describes it) which conflates tourism with "military surveillance," (O'Dwyer 2004,36), has produced a mostly Asian tourism market that capitalizes on the islands as definitively American. As the Northern Mariana Islands transformed into a U.S. commonwealth, this political reality opened the doors to a booming Asian tourism market beginning in the 1980's and 1990's. A drive to one of the island's largest stores in the tourist distract named "I Love Saipan" reveals a plethora of kitschy items that promote the U.S. presidency; such as Obama and Trump bobble-heads, American flag shot glasses and ashtrays, as well as U.S. presidential cut-outs. These objects serve to authenticate the experience of traveling to America, or at least "American soil." Together, militarism and tourism-both of which are crucial economic drivers in the Marianas-are joint processes that have worked to construct the Marianas as both paradise and a slice of Americana since the post-WWII period.

[11] See for example Perez,1996;Diaz,2001;Camacho 2011,83-109;Kisha Borja-Quichocho-Calvo,2016.

America's militarized entanglements in the Pacific are a major tourism business on island, and tourists are encouraged to visit war memorials, commemorative sites and war ruins as part of the island's history. Cheong and Miller argue that while the label of tourist is often used pejoratively in western contexts, examining tourism from a Foucauldian perspective allows for a more nuanced understanding of the way in which "…power relationships are located in the seemingly nonpolitical business and banter of tourists and guides, in the operation of codes of ethics, in the design and use of guidebooks, and so on" (Cheong and Miller 2000,378). On Saipan, U.S. socio-political hegemony is depoliticized by a tourism market that touts the islands as "the closest American destination to China." In today's political climate, as U.S.-China relations are strained, tourism and militarism straddle a fine line between upholding and threatening one another as industries. For example, Chinese investors in the casino business have noted the negative business climate associated with an increase in U.S. militarism in the CNMI, while the U.S. Congress warns of China's continued social and political influence in the Pacific region (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2019). Yet, war remains a seductive way to sell the Marianas and displays of WWII history continue to focus on the tactical aspects of the war, top down military decision-making, and the military's role in island territorial governance particularly in the immediate post-war period. These stories also appeal to "military junkies" and "war buffs" who view the collection of this history as an important and often overlooked arena of America's war history. These perspectives tend to valorize U.S. Military intervention and depoliticize militarism's connection to imperialism, while the death of Indigenous peoples are portrayed as unfortunate moments in American history, in which our grandparents and great-grandparents were caught in the "crossfires"[12] of the war. The Indigenous

[12] Among other militarized euphemisms, both "crossfire" and "crossroads" that are frequently often associated with Micronesia. See for example Carl Heine's book entitled *Micronesia at the Crossroads: A Reappraisal of the Micronesian Political Dilemma,* Nancy Bo Flood's book entitled *Warriors in the Crossfire*, Oliver North and Joe Musser's *War Stories II: Heroism in the Pacific*, and others. Further, popular media on Saipan such as the Marianas Variety often describe Chamorro and

experiences of wartime in the CNMI soon became subsumed under the broader American war story.

U.S. Militarism and Anthropology

In the post-war period, this war story drew researchers to the region that "relied heavily on privileged, if not disaffected, access to colonial territories" (McGranahan & Collins 2018,5) that paved the way for investigations of a seemingly "ungoverned" Indigenous Pacific populace. Anthropology's confluence with U.S. imperialism in the Pacific therefore directly aided in the promulgation of militarized governance over Indigenous peoples. Paul Nadasdy argues that, "it is also telling that it was the Department of War, that administrative unit charged with defending the country from external threats, which initially assumed responsibility for Indian affairs. It was not until 1849 that that responsibility was transferred to the Department of the Interior" (Nadasdy 2017,52). Similarly, The Office of Insular Affairs as we know it today, was born out of the War Department, when the United States was wrestling with what to do with its newly acquired island possessions after the Spanish American War of 1898. Thus, the U.S. anthropological presence in the Oceanic region is entangled with U.S. imperialism (Kiste & Marshall,1999) in ways that implicate the field as a critical site of knowledge production about the Pacific and indigeneity.

Anthropological fieldwork has never been and will never be divorced from the knowing of Indigenous peoples. As Audra Simpson (2007,67) writes,

> To speak of Indigeneity is to speak of colonialism and anthropology, as these are the means through which Indigenous people have been known and are sometimes still known. Knowing and representing the "voices" within those places required more than military might, it required the methods and modalities of knowing, in particular: categorization, ethnological comparison, linguistic translation and ethnography.

Refaluwasch people as being caught in the crossfires of war, as recently as 2017 during North Korean missile threats towards Guam (See for example Deeth et al.,2017).

United States colonial ventures in the early 20th century are precisely what allowed anthropological studies to flourish in the region, since entry into what was then the US Trust Territory of Pacific Islands in the 1940's-50's was restricted by the U.S. for strategic security purposes (Kiste and Marshall 1999,230). In the Pacific, early anthropological research took Pacific Islanders to be part of enclosed cultural systems that were isolated from the rest of the world (Fitzpatrick & Anderson,2008). As a result, a number of key anthropological studies have solidified the Pacific as an integral "place" within the field and arguably into a broader American consciousness. The earliest of these scholars were Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead and Raymond Firth (in the mid to late 1920s) and Marcel Mauss, Gregory Bateson, and Marshall Sahlins (in the years following WWII)-all of whom became integral to the early formation of anthropology as a field. Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (originally published in 1922) laid the foundation for the many anthropologists who followed after him, especially those looking to emulate his ethnographic style of documenting the seemingly mundane aspects of people's daily lives. Focusing their research on island communities, their theories formed important assumptions about humanity. Many early ethnographic encounters were seen as cultural "experiments in cultural adaptation and evolutionary development" (Sahlins 1963,285). From these findings, anthropologists could make cross-cultural comparisons about where societies fell on the social evolutionary scale. The idea, according to Sahlins, was that, "Where culture so experiments, anthropology finds its laboratories-makes its comparisons" (Sahlins 1963,285). The comparative work that came out of these early studies popularized the belief that Pacific Islanders fell on a scale of political achievement in which certain regions were viewed as possessing more or less political complexity. As a result, the Pacific began to be sliced into different cultural areas where they could be measured against one another. For example, Sahlins writes, "Measurable among several dimensions, the contrast between developed Polynesian and underdeveloped Melanesian polities is immediately striking…" (Sahlins 1963,286). Despite the level

of cultural detail outlined by anthropologists in the Pacific, these typifications contributed to the cultural homogenization of entire regions in the Pacific. Such simplistic views of the Pacific then mapped onto to racial categorizations that continue to permeate our contemporary perceptions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia (Arvin,2019). Kanaka Maoli scholar (Native Hawaiian) scholar Maile Arvin, for example, highlights how the contemporary manifestations of these superficial divides continue to surface in Hawai'i where Polynesians, who were viewed as the whitest of the Pacific Islanders, were also deemed the most civilized. In this instance, she argues, "…settler colonialism in the Pacific noticeably overlaps with white supremacy…" (Arvin 2014,n.p.).

Pacific as Anthropological Place

The confluence of imperialism and anthropological knowledge production within the region continues to highlight the importance of the "Pacific-as-place" (Hau'ofa,1975;Wilson & Dirlik,1995;Teaiwa,1994;Hanlon,1998,2009;Howe,2000;Gegeo,2001;Rainbird,2003;Davis,2005;Geiger,2007) which informs much of the way we understand the contemporary Pacific. An exploration of the field's legacy within Micronesia-or "American Micronesia" (Kiste & Marshall 1999,433) is an important part of navigating how to interpret the large body of work that came out of these studies, and because our current political relationship with the United States and expanding militarization continue to structure how this research can be drawn upon to understand indigeneity. On Saipan for example, medical doctors Alice Joseph and Veronica F. Murray conducted a series of personality studies under the U.S. Navy sponsored Coordinated Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology (CIMA) program between July 12, 1947 and January 20, 1948. They subsequently published a book entitled *Chamorros and Carolinians of Saipan* in 1951. While their project was sponsored by the Institute of Ethnic Affairs in Washington, D.C., the U.S. Navy provided their transportation and housing and the authors viewed their research as a way to enable the U.S. Navy to effectively govern local people within the U.S.'s newly acquired territories (Joseph and Murray 1951,vii). The Coordinated

Investigation of Micronesian Anthropology (CIMA) in particular provided in-depth research of the Micronesian region and is considered the "largest research project in the history of the discipline" (Kiste & Marshall,2000).

Anthropology therefore systematically aided in the *knowing* (Howe,2000) of Micronesia for post-war military governance of Micronesian peoples when security clearances were difficult to access. Alkire notes (1999,81) for example, that "the first anthropologists to enter Micronesia in 1944 and 1945 were affiliated with the US naval government, the US Commercial Company (USCC), or both." Spoehr's post-war ethnological research in Saipan highlights the forms of American paternalism that were common at the time; that characterized anthropological research as a means to govern Micronesian peoples. Micronesia therefore served as an important influence over anthropological thought and the formation of the discipline itself (Kiste & Marshall 1999,423). The implications of these studies are great since they were able to document in ethnographic detail, the sociocultural, political and economic practices of Indigenous Pacific Peoples. They laid much of the groundwork for the way in which the Pacific was popularly perceived-infantile on an evolutionary scale-from which ideas about western civilization could be built. This perception had an "implicit connection between bounded space and culture, a conflation that has been vital to evolutionary anthropological models" (DeLoughrey, 2007). In the CNMI today, the influence of Spoehr's research cannot be understated where his book, *Saipan: The Ethnology of a War-Devastated Island,* is still used in the modern court system to interpret traditional Chamorro and Refaluwasch customary land laws (Ristroph,2008).

Conclusion

The confluence of American anthropological theories with extensive U.S. governmental research programs resulted in anthropological inquires centered around "culture-environment linkages" where "The theoretical emphasis of this period might be characterized as evolving from

culture areas to cultural ecology" (Alkire 1999,81). Importantly for this research, is the way in which social stratification was correlated with early environmental perceptions of differing islands. Thus, these early studies were notable not only for the contributions that they made to the field of anthropology, but for the way in which the Pacific and Pacific Islanders have been envisioned in the past and continue to be represented in the present. This early preoccupation with these so-called faraway places has no doubt received its fair share of critique, but the field remains indebted to the Pacific, who relied so much on the exploration of Pacific Islander ways of life in its infancy.

In his wrestling with the legacy of anthropology in the Pacific Epeli Hau'ofa (2008,9) wrote, "We must devise ways-or, better still, widen the horizon of our discipline-in order to…humanize our study of the conditions of the peoples and cultures of the Pacific." Native and Pacific Island Scholarship has been instrumental in providing a more critical understanding of Pacific worldviews that underscore the Pacific's humanity rather than obscurity. Still, one would be remiss to frame anthropology's colonial encounters as a relic of its time, or beyond further critique. Contemporary ethnographic investigations of the Pacific, especially by Indigenous scholars, continue to re-conceptualize Pacific worlds by unpacking the history of imperial interest in the region for various purposes including academic, militaristic and colonial. Thus, the history of anthropological research in the Pacific remains critical to an analyses of indigeneity today which provides a foundation from which to examine aspects of contemporary Chamorro and Refaluwasch culture and the broader Oceanic region.

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Chapter 2: Naturalizing Militarism through Environmental Planning

On March 18, 2019, I arrived at Kanoa Resort on Saipan for the U.S. Department of the Navy's (DON) public meeting on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (S-EIS) for the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Study Area. Upon entering the chilly air-conditioned room, I was greeted by U.S. Military personnel and asked to sign in by leaving personal information such as my name, email and affiliation. At one table near the entrance sat two tablets where individuals could watch videos of the Department of the Navy's oceanic research within the MITT Study Area. Emblazoned on both tablets were large logos that read "U.S. Navy Stewards of the Sea" alongside the phrases "Defending Freedom," and "Protecting the Environment" (Figure 2.1).

On another table sat a display that included an explanation of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) timeline, of which the night's meeting was specifically addressing "Step 4" or the public review and comment period (Figure 2.2). Individuals were encouraged to walk throughout the room and stop at each table to learn more about the DONs proposed project and speak to various military personnel throughout the night. While it was not explicitly clear to me in the moment, I later found a picture that mapped out the physical set up of the room, which ended with a public commenting table (Figure 2.3). A lone stenographer sat in the corner of the room to transcribe public comments about the Draft Supplemental EIS and aid with translation since most if not all of the information presented was in English, an issue that community members have historically lamented as being problematic to the older generation of Chamorro and Refaluwasch speakers.[17]

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[17] This contemporary indifference towards Indigenous languages mirrors the long-standing colonial role of the military in its orientation towards Chamorro people underscored by the long history of Naval Government policies that were antagonistic to Chamorro language and culture in Guam. One such policy was implemented in 1917 entitled Naval Government Executive Order No. 243 which "designated English as the only official language of Guam and ordered that Chamorro must not be spoken except for official interpreting" (Clement,n.d.).

Figure 2.1. A tablet featuring videos about the Department of the Navy's interactions with the environment during the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS at Kanoa Resort on March 18, 2019. Saipan, CNMI. *Source: Photo courtesy of author.*

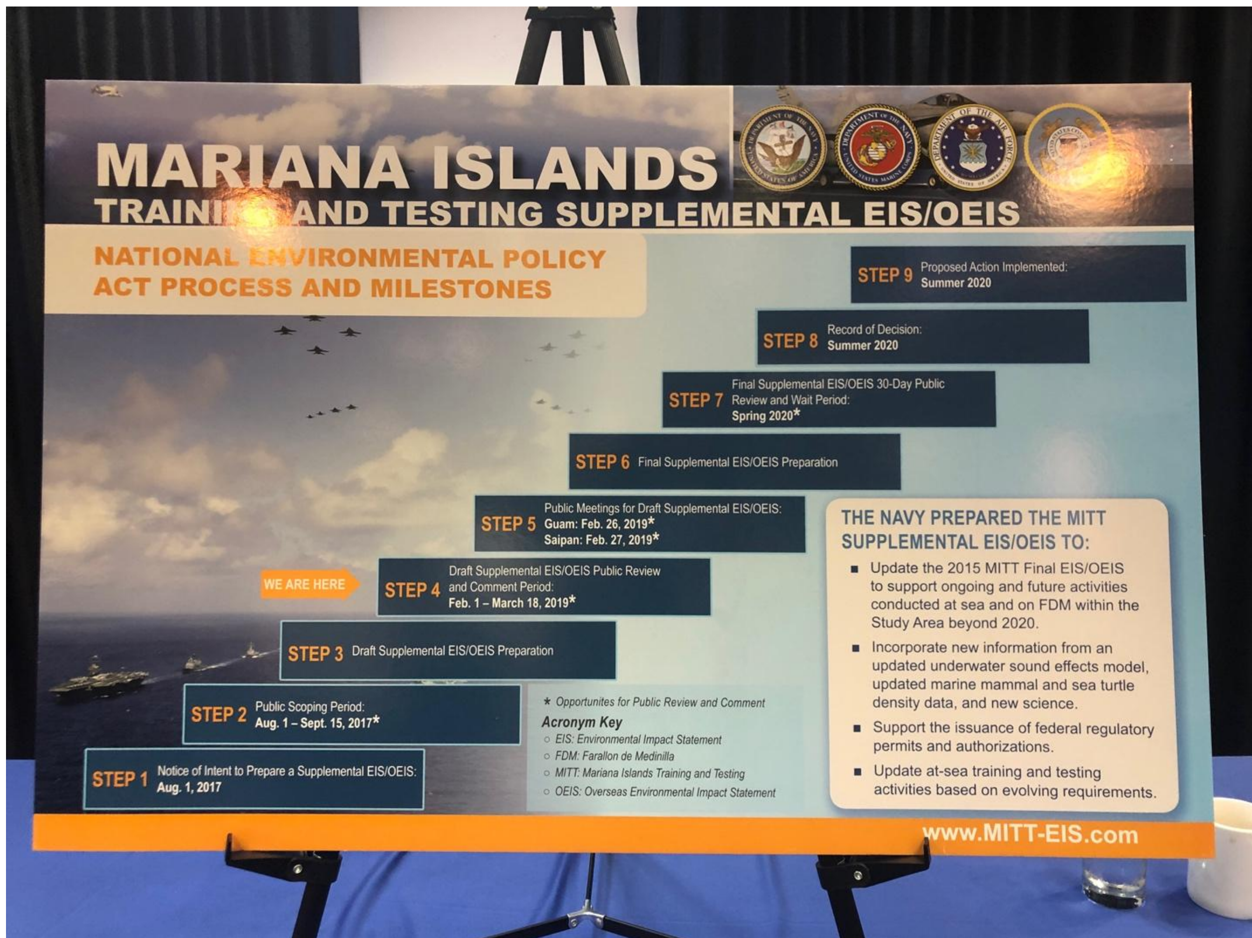

Figure 2.2. An informational poster set up by Department of the Navy personnel describing the NEPA process timeline regarding the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS on March 18, 2019. Saipan, CNMI. The orange arrow reads "We Are Here" to indicate that the project is on Step 4 "Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS Public Review and Comment Period." *Source: Photo courtesy of author.*

WELCOME TO THE U.S. NAVY'S OPEN HOUSE PUBLIC MEETING

All public comments must be postmarked or received online by **April 2, 2019**, Chamorro Standard Time, for consideration in the Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS.

Tinian:
Date: **Thursday, March 14, 2019, 1:00 to 3:30 p.m.**
Location: **Tinian Public Library**
San Jose Village
Tinian, MP

Rota:
Date: **Friday, March 15, 2019, 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.**
Location: **Mayor's Conference Hall**
Songsong Village
Rota, MP

Saipan:
Date: **Monday, March 18, 2019, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.**
Location: **Kanoa Resort Saipan, Seaside Hall**
Beach Road in Susupe
Saipan, MP

Guam:
Date: **Tuesday, March 19, 2019, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.**
Location: **University of Guam, Jesus & Eugenia Leon Guerrero**
School of Business and Public Administration Building
Anthony Leon Guerrero Multi-Purpose Room 129
and Henry Sy Atrium
Mangilao, Guam

Hafa Adai
Importance of U.S. Military Training and Testing in the Mariana Islands
Proposed Action and Alternatives
Public Access and Safety in Ocean Areas
NEPA Process and Milestones
Summary of Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS Analysis
Marine Species Research and Monitoring in the Mariana Islands
Environmental Protection and Stewardship
Comment Table

WE WANT YOUR INPUT!

2

www.MITT-EIS.com

Figure 2.3. A page from inside an informational booklet handed out during the March 18, 2019 public meeting on Saipan, CNMI. The bubbles indicate a physical mapping of the room set up by the Department of the Navy during the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS public meeting, ending with the collection of public input via a comment table. *Source: Department of the Navy MITT EIS Website (www.mitt-eis.com).*

As part of the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, the production of an EIS is required by United States Federal law whenever a lead agency proposes to make large scale changes to the environment that are seen as significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. An EIS offers a certain number of facts related to environmental impacts that include but are not limited to: the scope of the project, various project alternatives, and opportunities for public comment. From an anthropological perspective, these documents are useful not so much for researching the validity of their content or the holes in the document's logic and argumentation, but in their ability to highlight how *militarism becomes naturalized through environmental planning processes*, revealing the limits of Indigenous decision-making in today's security landscape. In this chapter, I argue that paying closer attention to the ways that the U.S. Military mobilizes conceptualizations of nature and the environment has the potential to reveal new forms of long-standing sociopolitical inequities that structure the relationship between the United States as a settler nation and its territorial and commonwealth counterparts. Answers as to why militarism is resisted, negotiated and even promulgated by Indigenous people whose lives have long been influenced by colonial processes can be found-at least in part-through the examination of the environment as a site through which power moves. Thus, I ask: What is at stake for the Indigenous people of the Marianas in light of the military's conceptualizations of the environment? In turn, how do Indigenous peoples negotiate the military's reconceptualization of the environment? I answer these questions by exploring how discourses about the environment get taken up by various actors-including military personnel, Indigenous community members, and government officials-during federal environmental planning processes in the Northern Mariana Islands. In particular, I analyze Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) as objects of ethnographic inquiry and draw on long-term ethnographic data, personal experience growing up as an Indigenous Chamorro woman in the Northern Mariana Islands, as well as two separate public commenting forums in June 25, 2012 and March 18, 2019

regarding the creation of a Draft Supplemental EIS for the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Study Area and the Draft EIS for Divert Activities and Exercises for Guam and CNMI (hereafter referred to as Divert).

One might wonder why a document as long, technical and relatively inaccessible as an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) would be so important for understanding social life and shifting ideas of the "environment" and "nature" in the U.S. Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands? As socially meaningful documents understood within the historical context of militarism throughout the Pacific, EISs reveal a story not simply about the U.S. Military's many *impacts* on the environment that are most visible but about the DOD's capacity-as an institution with tremendous amounts of social, political and economic influence-to transform the very meaning of the environment in the spaces that we occupy throughout the Marianas archipelago. As Geographer Jeffrey Sasha Davis has pointed out, "…military activities do not just destroy nature, they also *actively produce it"* (Davis 2007,231). Given this reality, EISs have come to occupy a central role in the way that community members throughout the Marianas have come to interact with the DOD's conceptualizations of the environment, as bounded spaces that are constructed as vital to national defense even when such spaces are used for destructive purposes.

Contemporary Militarization in the Marianas

In general, U.S. Military planning in the Marianas has required that the Department of Defense (DOD) produce an extensive catalog of legal documentation in order to accommodate for an upsurge in planning and development (See Figure 2.4) spurred by a U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) recommendation on October 29, 2005 to re-align U.S. forces in Japan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan,2006). As part of this agreement entitled "U.S.-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation," the Department of Defense (DOD) planned to pursue a massive military "Build-up" in the Pacific. This move was characterized by the DOD as an attempt

to reduce the troop burden in Okinawa and restructure forces throughout the Pacific, but was also spurred by decades-long protests by Okinawan residents who had opposed military land

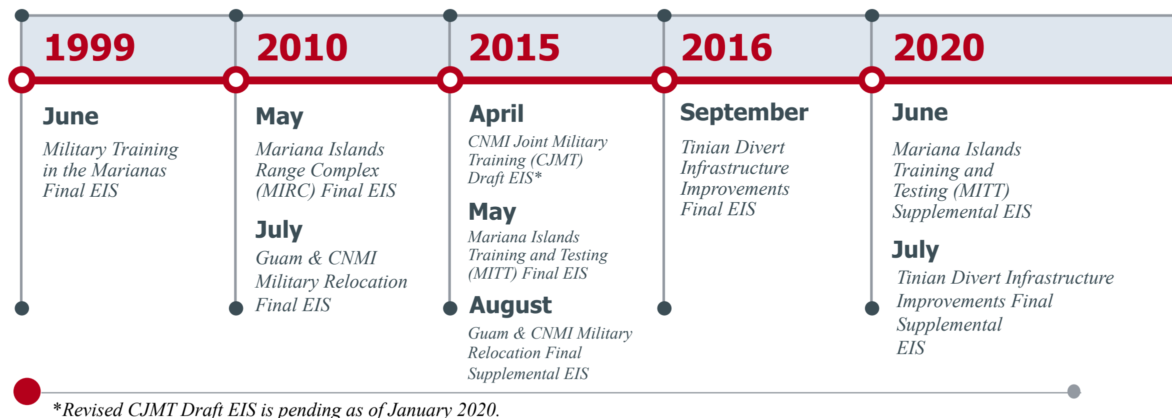

Figure 2.4. A timeline of the U.S. Military's Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Final Supplemental EIS release dates in the Mariana Islands. *Source: Graph courtesy of author.*

use, pollution and the ensuing violence of military personnel in their local community. The original plan for this move would involve the relocation of 8,000 marines and their 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to the island of Guam by the year 2014 (Lapore,2008). On Saipan, the *Marianas Variety* reported that this build-up was estimated at $15 billion with Japan paying for more than $6 billion of that cost. The move encompassed not only the relocation of military personnel and their families, but also thousands of construction workers and other civilian Defense Department employees to aid in the process. Given the enormity of the move, talks about needing an additional 22,000 workers to support the infrastructural needs of the Build-up began to surface (Pincus,2009).[18]

[18] Since these announcements first made headlines throughout the Marianas, a number of scholars and community members throughout the Marianas and abroad have outlined the details of the build-up and critically analyzed its role in

The sheer magnitude of this project culminated in the release of a November 2009 Guam and CNMI Relocation Draft EIS which was met with major resistance (Natividad & Kirk,2010) on Guåhan and produced a number of public protests that highlighted the centuries long social and political inequity that has characterized the relationship between Indigenous Chamorro peoples of the Marianas and the United States. The D-EIS also incited major community organizing on Guåhan as individuals throughout and community came together to comment on the 11,000-page document which spurred the formation of the activist group We are Guåhan. In part through the group's critical efforts and its creation of a "comment drive," 10,000 comments were submitted to the D-EIS and We Are Guåhan remains "the most well known activist group on Guam in opposition to the proposed military buildup" (Mays and Camacho,2019). The militarization of Guåhan in particular was a direct affront to the ability for Chamorro[19] peoples to exercise self-determination. When the Build-up was announced, Julian Aguon, a human rights lawyer and Chamorro Native from Guåhan explained,

> … Guam remains one of only sixteen non-self-governing territories, i.e. UN-recognized colonies, of the world. We don't even vote for the US president. We have no effective, meaningful representation in the US Congress. And the entire buildup was announced, and it was basically — any Chamoru consideration was really *de facto*. We're never really at the table. We were just informed by the US that they were going to bring in outside population of these many tens of thousands of people (Democracy Now, 2009)

the longer trajectory of colonization and U.S. hegemony throughout the Marianas and beyond (Aguon,2006;Natividad & Leon Guerrero,2010;Natividad & Kirk,2010;Na'puti and Bevacqua,2015;Camacho,2013;Camacho and Broudy,2013;Camacho,2012). The explosion of scholarship and media coverage alongside increases in environmental planning documents that have resulted from the Build-up since it was first announced publicly comprises an immense archive. This archive speaks (literal) volumes about the immensity of the U.S. Military's symbolic and physical undertakings throughout the Marianas archipelago and about the Guam and CNMI community's potential to envision alternative political visions outside for the Indigenous people of the Marianas.

[19] The difference in spelling between "Chamorro" and "CHamoru" reflects a sociocultural and historical difference in usage between the Northern Mariana Islands and Guåhan. While I use both Chamorro and CHamoru interchangeably, my perspectives are rooted in experiences and research in the CNMI, where "Chamorro" is the acceptable form of spelling.

These sociopolitical concerns were then merged with major environmental concerns, many of which were mirrored by the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rejection of the Draft EIS for the Guam and CNMI Relocation when it was given a rating of EU or "environmentally unsatisfactory" (Lutz,2019). In the CNMI, military forums regarding the relocation were initially met with little attendance, while most seemed to view military planning as a welcome relief to the economic depression facing the island. First Hawaiian Bank's 2009 Economic Forecast noted a bleak future for the CNMI, whose economy had taken a turn for the worst in the wake of a declining Japanese tourism market due to natural disasters and the closure of the islands' main source of economic income, the garment industry (Laney,2009). It also noted that,

> …significant economic uncertainty pervades the CNMI, with no source of optimism for the longer term. One positive note is that the Marines, when they come to Guam, are expected to conduct at least part of their training on Tinian. But environmental decisions have yet to be made even in this area. (Laney 2009,7)

Government agencies throughout the CNMI were tasked to provide comments on the Draft EIS within 90 days of its release, an impossible task to say the least given the document's complexity and length. The inaccessibility of the document itself and the CNMI public's relative unfamiliarity with the DOD's involvement in NEPA process more generally, led to very low in-person public participation. When another Draft EIS was released regarding Divert Activities and Exercises[20] for Guam and CNMI in 2012, in person public participation continued to remain low. While a total of 211 comments were submitted to the Draft Divert EIS mostly by government agency stakeholders that were delivered via air mail or submitted via website, only four comments were made in-person on Saipan and four on Tinian, totaling eight in-person public comments.

[20] The timeline for the Divert Activities and Exercises for Guam and CNMI EISs (Divert) are as follows: Draft Divert EIS (2012), Revised Draft Divert EIS (2015), Final Divert EIS (2016) that identified "Alternative 2" or "Modified Tinian Alternative" as the preferred alternative (U.S. Air Force,2016).

The public meeting for the Draft Divert EIS was held on Saipan at the Multi-Purpose Center in June 25, 2012 and was lead by the U.S. Air Force. It outlined a proposal to improve existing airports in the Mariana Islands to "support mission requirements and to achieve divert capabilities in the western Pacific" (U.S. Air Force,2016). At the time, the two airports being eyed for these "improvements" were the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport (and the Port of Saipan) and the Tinian International Airport (and the Port of Tinian).[21] I remember walking into the Multi-Purpose Center where I was asked by military personnel to sign-in and leave personal contact information for their reference. I walked into the auditorium and found chairs sitting in lines facing the stage area where U.S. Air Force personnel sat behind microphones. There were hardly any people from the CNMI community in attendance. At some point in the evening's forum, community members were asked to walk up to a microphone at the front of the room to ask questions or share comments regarding the Draft EIS. I listened intently to the concerns of the three other individuals in attendance that night: one in support of the plans for economic reasons, one who questioned the accessibility of the plans to those in the community and lastly, a farmer who was concerned about the levels of noise that would ensue with increased military planning on Saipan. My palms were sweating from nerves as I walked up to make my comments about my confusion over how this particular EIS was related to the overall military Build-up. At the end of my comment, there was silence and no response; no further questions asked and no answers given. I walked away from the night's meeting more confused than when I had entered. As with other EISs, all of the

[21] At the time of this public forum, it was unclear to me how this particular EIS was connected to the broader Build-up. As this research went on, I realized that this initial public forum was setting the groundwork for what would eventually come to be known as the Final Divert EIS that identified "Alternative 2" or the "Modified Tinian Alternative as the Preferred Alternative (U.S. Air Force 2016,4). The events surrounding the finalization and signing of the the Divert airfield on Tinian continued are discussed further in this chapter. While the U.S. Military continues to contend that the Divert exercises are not connected to the overall Build-up, this research has shown that while military planning may appear to be segmented, it is in fact deeply enmeshed with one another even if the separation of EISs produces a level of disconnection.

public comments collected that night[22] and in every other public forum lead by the U.S. Military are codified in the "public comments" section of the EIS documents. Local Saipan blogger Ruth Tighe of *On My Mind,* who attended the Draft Divert EIS public meeting captured the night's forum in a blog post. She wrote,

> Attendance was sparse at the hearing held earlier this week on U.S. Air Force plans to use either Saipan or Tinian airport as a "divert"/back-up destination should circumstances make it impossible to use any of Guam's airports, military or civilian. The Air Force brought in a dozen officials, more than a dozen posters, multiple copies of the executive summary, flyers, brochures and of the nearly inch-thick full text of the Environmental Impact Statement prepared in connection with the plan, as well as boxes of sandwiches, donuts, lumpia, fresh cut oranges and watermelon.
>
> The event was given a fair amount of publicity-with announcements of the hearing appearing in the paper, the event featured as a story, and listed under community events. But still, few came to learn, listen, comment. It does seem a fairly benign project-extending either the Saipan or the Tinian runways and adding some support structures-without any significant impact on the environment or its inhabitants. With predicted use of the facilities only a few times a year once construction is completed, other than some temporary increase in noise level in the Kagman and Dandan areas, it would nevertheless appear to promise increased activity in the economic sector-most welcome to the islands' floundering economy (Tighe 6/29/2012).

This blog piece was significant for its description of the everyday nature of militarized environmental planning in the CNMI and remains a rare form of public documentation regarding the military's presence in the earlier days of "Build-up" planning where the DODs presence was viewed as rather uneventful in the CNMI. Tighe's description regarding the amount of documentation that the U.S. Air Force personnel brought along with them (i.e. more than a dozen posters, multiple copies of the executive summary, flyers, brochures and of the nearly inch-thick full text of the Environmental Impact Statement prepared in connection with the plan…) underscores

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[22] Public comments for EISs have been collected in multiple formats by the DOD including in-person, online and via air mail. Public comments received during public forums are then transcribed and included in the U.S. Military's many Final EISs and the lead agency must respond individually to each comment as per NEPA requirement. The comments from the June 25, 2012 public forum regarding the Divert can be found at:
http://www.chamorro.com/docs/Vol%20II%20Divert%20PublicRDEIS_AppG_100615.pdf

the magnitude of information outlining proposed military projects that had *already* been in the works prior to their arrival on island. Her statement also reveals a relative sense of disinterest on the part of the broader community, whereby the infrequent and divert usage of the CNMI was perceived by the community as a "fairly benign" project increase in the overall military Build-up in the Pacific, where most people seemed to welcome the economic benefits of such projects with open arms.

Despite the optimism surrounding the economic prospects associated with the Build-up, much has changed since the release of the original plans, including the view that the CNMI plays a relatively insignificant role in the overall relocation plans as contingent or "divert" locations and complications plagued the move from its inception. For example, Pagan,[23] an island north of Saipan that was evacuated in the early 1970's due to a volcanic eruption in the Northern Marianas, was later described as the key "lynchpin" for the Build-up by US lobbyist Juan Carlos Benitez in 2013 (Camacho,2013). Today, current projections estimate that 5,000 Marines will relocate to Guåhan in waves beginning in 2024 with the full relocation complete by 2028 (South,2019) while the Japanese government foots $3 billion worth of projects and the U.S. Government covers the remaining $5.7 billion of the costs (Robson,2020).

Many of the DODs plans have either been stalled or slowed for a variety of reasons including resistance by Indigenous advocacy groups throughout the Marianas, including a July 27, 2016 lawsuit filed by EarthJustice on behalf of Tinian Women Association in the CNMI, DOD budgetary constraints, lack of foreign visas for construction workers, and other considerations based on world events. For example, on September 29, 2019, the *Air Force Times* reported that United States President Donald Trump was diverting funds away from the Marianas military Build-up and towards the construction of the southern United States border wall (McAvoy,2019). This was a shift

[23] For coverage regarding Pagan and resistance to militarization see Hofschneider & Lin, 2016 and Geraldi & Perez,2019.

reflected in the Pentagon's budget (Hartung,2020) and highlights the interconnections between the militarized policing of the southern border within the continental United States and its intersections with militarized foreign policies abroad.

From Marianas Archipelago into a Military "Study Area"

On March 18, 2019, another EIS was released. This time it was a 1,452-page Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (S-EIS)[24] for the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Study Area. The public meetings and comment period were extended past the original February deadline due to typhoon Wutip. In regulatory terms, the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS would support ongoing and future activities at-sea and on Farallon de Medinilla (FDM) within the MITT Study Area beyond 2020 such as sonar testing, as well as the issuance of federal regulatory permits and authorizations under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA). Having received a number of comments from attendees at the public comment meeting regarding the confusion over what the Draft Supplemental EIS was addressing exactly, one of the military's representatives described it as a simple "legal requirement" that was being updated because of permitting deadlines due to the MMPA. In declaring that this Supplemental EIS was being completed for purposes of complying with environmental regulations, this statement foreclosed the possibility of meaningful community discussion regarding its connection to the broader military Build-up throughout the Marianas or the Pacific Pivot more broadly. In fact, military personnel at the public comment meeting made it a point to describe this particular S-EIS as disconnected from the broader military Build-up, which created the appearance of separate projects.

[24] A S-EIS is required when "substantial changes to the proposed action are relevant to environmental concerns" or when "there are significant new circumstances or information relevant to the environmental effects that have bearing on the proposed action or its impacts" (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2017).

Despite the fact that living within the confines of the MITT Study Area makes no discrimination between the implementation of EISs, the separation of the MITT supplemental EIS from the original MITT EIS through bureaucratic and legal instruments is critical to the appearance of disconnectedness between various military projects. As a supplement-a term which implies an enhancement or "add on" to an original project-this EIS might appear to be a rather benign project in the overall picture of military planning throughout the archipelago since it addresses smaller portions of the MITT Study Area (what the DON calls the "at-sea" and Farallon de Medinilla portions of the study area). Arguably, it can be viewed as quite the opposite given the legal stakes of its approval, which grants the Department of the Navy additional regulatory permits and authorizations under the MMPA and the ESA. It comes at the heels of the DODs creation of the MITT Study Area in 2015, from which the Draft Supplemental EIS informs one part. The creation of the MITT Study Area was noteworthy for effectively doubling the land and oceanic space that the U.S. military already used for live-fire training and testing on and around the islands[25], including the use of active sonar, live-fire training and explosives. Kanaka Maoli scholar Goodyear-Kaʻōpua has recently noted the significance of the MITT in combination with the U.S. Military's other training areas in Hawai'i and writes that, "Together with the existing Hawaiian Islands Range Complex and the transit corridor between them, the new MITT opens America's largest training and weapons testing area in the world" (Goodyear- Kaʻōpua 2018,92). By bringing the Marianas and Hawai'i together, Goodyear- Kaʻōpua highlights not only the vast expanse of territory occupied by the United States, but the transoceanic militarized currents (Shigematsu and Camacho,2010) that conjoin Indigenous territories through a common settler militarism (Nebolon,2017).

[25] The MITT Study Area expanded upon the Mariana Islands Range Complex (MIRC) that created a half-million sq. nautical mile training range around Guåhan, Rota, Tinian, Saipan and all but the furthest islands to the north in the Marianas archipelago in 2010.

What is Nature and the Environment?

Scholars in Anthropology and Geography have long examined the production of terms such as "nature" and "the environment" and their intersections with power. Geographer David Harvey's research has been instructive of this critical move to unpack what he describes as foundational concepts such as space, time and nature-all of which are so expansive in their definitions that they have become nearly impossible to define. Harvey argues that, "We need critical ways to think about how differences in ecological, cultural, economic, political and social conditions get produced…and we need ways to evaluate the justice/injustice of the differences so produced" (Harvey 1996,7). In the context of imperialism, the stakes of defining and re-working these terms are important for the way that they produce material consequences over the lives of Indigenous peoples throughout the Pacific. Cultural Anthropologist Jessica Cattelino argues that by highlighting the *cultural politics* of nature, one is "…attending to cultural practices like making meaning of nature, classifying it, and representing it, while also tracing how these cultural practices distribute resources among human groups and individuals" (Cattelino 2008,238). Thus, to critically examine the formation of these foundational concepts is to challenge their orthodoxy in defining people's realities and to uncover the novel ways that they gain new traction in our contemporary world. Anthropological investigations of the intersections between power and nature offer ways to illuminate how nature has been evoked as a "regime of truth" (Foucault,1995) that seeks to normalize certain social relations. Nature and the environment can therefore be understood as complex socio-cultural productions (Haraway,1991;Braun,2002;Raffles,2002;Greenough & Tsing, 2003;Cattelino,2008) that are deeply entangled with political economies and control over resources (Peluso and Watts,2001;Paul Robbins,2008;Cattelino,2015;Carroll,2015). As Cherokee scholar Clint Carroll has pointed out in the context of Indigenous communities who continue to struggle over the control of their lands, it is more apt to describe the environment not so much through the use of the phrase

"The *environment* is inherently *political*," but rather through the phrase, "The *political* is inherently *environmental*" (Caroll,2015). These perspectives are key to unsettling the way in which seemingly innocuous environmental processes that aim to protect one's surroundings, can actually re-produce colonial logics of dispossession by erasing and reframing Indigenous connections to land (Wolfe, 2006;Voyles, 2015;West, 2016;Powell,2018;Bevacqua & Bowman,2018) as secondary to militarized policies.

The convergence of militarism and the environment has produced a number of important scholarly interventions that have worked to unpack the complexity of the military's engagement with the environment and the various ways in which militarized environmental discourses work to obscure colonial policies and political inequity (Davis, 2007;Harris,2015; Marzen,2015;Voyles,2015; Goodyear-Ka'ōpua,2018). In her book, *Wastelanding*, Traci Brynne Voyles examines the process of "wastelanding" on Navajo land whereby uranium mining renders certain spaces, particularly desert space, as "valueless" and thus destroyable for settler purposes. Voyles analysis of "wasteland discourse" is valuable for understanding how the discourses employed by the DOD to describe the islands as trainable and testable spaces, enact material consequences over the environments in ways that promote destructive military practices. In places where militarism has slowly transformed landscapes into places of violence, such as in the Mariana Islands, the environment is positioned as a major site of contestation for the survival of Indigenous livelihoods.

Environmental Impact Statement as Ethnographic Object

One of the primary vehicles by which information regarding military planning is made available within the CNMI is during the U.S. Military's many environmental planning processes, including the creation of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS). Generally, these processes aim to follow regulatory guidelines set out under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970 and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. While NHPA comprises a critical

component of the U.S. Military's environmental planning processes throughout the islands[26], this chapter takes the production of Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) and a subsequent public meeting regarding the Supplemental Draft EIS for the MITT Study Area as its primary focus. Although NEPA's extraterritorial application has been debated throughout the years, its legal application has been applied broadly to "the nation" which has been "interpreted to include the trust territories" (Fogleman 1990,13). Thus, as a U.S. Commonwealth, NEPA's application extends to the Northern Mariana Islands.

As per NEPA regulations, an EIS is a document that is prepared to describe the specific effects that the proposed activities will have on the environment and the types of mitigation that would lessen or remove negative impacts. The creation of an EIS is an important part of taking precautionary measures to lessen the impact of any projected plans and is designed, in practice, to be a participatory process (Palerm 2000,581). Before it can be finalized, the EIS goes through a number of steps, including: a published notice in the *Federal Register*, a Draft EIS (D-EIS) which includes a 45-day public review and commenting period, a Final EIS, and lastly, a *Record of Decision* (ROD) which describes the agency's final decision, alternatives considered and plans for mitigation and monitoring. In theory, the commenting period and NEPA more broadly, was created to democratic

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[26] On March 13, 2019, while conducting fieldwork on Saipan, I attended a public meeting regarding "Section 106" of the National Historic Preservation Act. This public meeting, which took place as part of a "Stakeholder engagement process" is know as "consultation". Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to account for their effects on historic properties and take proper mitigating measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse effects as well as document these mitigation efforts. At this meeting which was located at Kanoa Hotel (Seaside Hall), various military personnel discussed the Department of the Navy's potential effects on cultural properties throughout the MITT Study Area. At this particular meeting, DON personnel provided "Historic Property Identification Forms" in which they solicited comments from the public about significant districts, sites, buildings or objects throughout the MITT Study Area that might be included in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). As per NHPA, environmental planning processes make distinct differences between culturally significant "properties" versus "resources." Anticipating that the public audience might be confused about the difference, one archaeologist representing the DON explained, "sometimes folks will get confused with cultural resources but this is about cultural properties." Section 106 consultations are therefore an important part of the environmental panning processes in the Marianas and are often overlooked as simply procedural. I argue that they remain critical sites for exploring how the Indigenous communities interact with DOD regulatory processes and environmental planning processes and where discourses about the environment are negotiated, constructed and transformed.

participation on behalf of an American public. This was a point that DON officials stressed on their visits to the CNMI during the public commenting period for the MITT Supplemental Draft EIS. For example, the DON MITT EIS website notes that, "Submitting substantive and concise public comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS is one of the most important aspects of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process." In practice, learning about military planning through EISs place a great deal of the liability to participate in the NEPA process on the general public and as Lutz (2019,121) argues, "…is a process by which the burden of ignorance and the identity of the ignorant party shifts from the colonized to the colonizer."

What participation actually meant[27] to people living in the community during this process is something that was frequently remarked upon throughout Saipan. Aside from the fact that many were simply uninformed about the NEPA process and how to get involved in the public commenting periods, it was common for community members to make comments like: "who cares if I make comments, the military is going to do what they want anyway" or "even if I say no, what is *that* going to do?" In one conversation with a Saipan resident, she remarked, "what good are my comments when the military owns half the islands anyway?" In an area as highly militarized as the Marianas, these comments reveal the unique challenges that Indigenous communities who question military planning are facing, since they often feel powerless to make any changes over decisions being made on the lands that are already leased by the DOD from the CNMI Government. Rather than dismissing these experiences as cynicism towards the military, they instead highlight the futility of "participation" in this context.

For those in the community that actively protested military planning, there were even less opportunities for such opinions to be expressed during the NEPA process. As a federally mandated

[27] During a broadcasted hearing online convened by Senator Therese Terlaje's in the Guåhan Legislature, Sen. Terlaje noted that in regards to environmental impact statements, "our entire role was to comment…that was it…not to participate." (Terlaje,2019).

document, EISs inform the public of the military's impacts on the environment, which includes project alternatives, but does not seek consent or permission. As Candace later remarked during a personal conversation, "Remember…It's not like the military is asking if their plans can happen when they write an EIS…they're saying that it's *going to* happen and we have to deal with the impacts" (personal communication,2018). For this reason, the DON actively discouraged comments that were read as a yes or no answers regarding military decisions. On the back of one blank public meeting comment form, The DON (See Figure 2.5) wrote,

> Comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS are not counted as votes or as part of a referendum on Navy decisions. They are used to improve the document and analyses, and to ensure impacts are adequately determined before the Navy makes a final decision on the proposed project. Therefore, avoid comments that state "I am in favor of this project," or "I am opposed to this project." Remember that the more clear, concise, and relevant to the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS your comments are, the more effective they will be and more likely they will be used to improve the final documents and affect the agency decisions.

Such statements highlight the way that public participation is viewed by the DON, as a process which does not necessarily change the trajectory of the plans outlined in an EIS even if portion's of a project are eventually altered. Furthermore, outright rejection of military planning was simply not legible within the NEPA process. A sampling of public comments regarding the MITT S-EIS exemplified this position, as well as the DON's response to such opinions. For example, Figure 2.6 lists four subsequent public comments which oppose military training and testing. Each comment is met with the same scripted response by the DON, "The military is committed to protecting public health and safety and the terrestrial and marine environment while training and testing." These community comments and their subsequent responses serve as a stark reminder of the political limitations that residents living in U.S. territories and commonwealths face, where federally mandated regulations can take precedence over local decision-making to further defense goals with little to no consequence.

Tips for Providing Substantive Comments on the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS

Submitting substantive and concise public comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS is one of the most important aspects of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.

The most effective comments are those that provide useful information to the Navy. For instance, submit comments if you find:

- An error in analysis that may affect the outcome
- New information that would change the analysis and conclusions
- Any peer-reviewed scientific literature that should be considered in the analysis
- Something that should be clarified
- A substantially different alternative that meets the purpose and need statement and has not been considered

General recommendations to keep in mind when making comments on any NEPA document:

- Support statements with details. If, for example, you are concerned about biological resources, it is helpful to focus on a particular problem or issue, such as a species that you feel was not sufficiently analyzed, instead of making a broad statement such as "the Navy did not adequately analyze the impacts on biological resources."
- Back up your statements with explanations, facts, and references, as appropriate.
- Be as specific as possible with your comments and refer to page numbers and paragraphs in the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS.
- Focus comments on the specifics of the proposed project under consideration.
- Submit your comments within the timeframes announced to ensure that your concerns are considered and addressed in the Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS.
- Request to be included on the EIS/OEIS mailing list to receive notification of public meetings and project updates.
- Recognize that the potential impacts on resources are likely to be described in more than one section because there are interrelationships between the resources and programs.
- Become familiar with the contents of the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS, including the purpose and need statement and the responsibilities of the lead agency (Navy).
- Review the project website to become familiar with the proposal, learn about the NEPA process, understand the responsibilities and authorities of the federal agency, keep up to date on public meetings and comment periods, get answers to frequently asked questions, and view agency notifications. The website for the MITT Supplemental EIS/OEIS is **www.MITT-EIS.com**.
- Comments on the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS are not counted as votes or as part of a referendum on Navy decisions. They are used to improve the document and analyses, and to ensure impacts are adequately determined before the Navy makes a final decision on the proposed project. Therefore, avoid comments that state "I am in favor of this project," or "I am opposed to this project." Remember that the more clear, concise, and relevant to the Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS your comments are, the more effective they will be and more likely they will be used to improve the final documents and affect the agency decisions.

Visit **www.MITT-EIS.com** for project information.

Figure 2.5. This photo depicts the back page of a public meeting comment form handed out by Department of the Navy personnel on March 18, 2019 during the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS public meeting at Kanoa Resort on Saipan, CNMI. The front page provides space for individuals to submit public comments while the back of the form includes "Tips for Providing Substantive Comments on the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS/OEIS". *Source: Department of the Navy MITT EIS Website (www.mitt-eis.com).*

Importantly, community members throughout the Marianas have continued to use the commenting period as platform for expressing their concerns, including both support and dissent, creating a critical public record of community opinions.

While the participatory nature of NEPA may not be flawed per se, the cursory nature of public participation in environmental impact statements points to the fact that these environmental documents do precisely what they are *supposed* to do for the D)D in the context of militarization under U.S. hegemony. That is, they delimit and guide the conversations about the environment in ways that primarily support defense goals and they set the parameters for how Indigenous involvement in the NEPA process can occur but only during specific timeframes (i.e. public comment periods) and in ways that are recognizable to the environmental planning process (i.e. substantive comments that reflect deep knowledgeable about military planning and EISs). In her examination of the environmental politics of coal power plants within the Najavo Nation in New Mexico, anthropologist Dana Powell's research reveals similar discrepancies regarding the limits of environmental planning over Indigenous territory. She argues that these participatory moments are less about "the failure of democracy" and more about "an exposure of democracy's limits in practice" (Powell 2018,150). In a settler context, militarized environmental planning can obscure Indigenous rights by justifying control over the land as critical to military "readiness" without having to engage with the outcome of this control over Indigenous land and livelihoods. This is particularly consequential in places portrayed as remote and insular such as in U.S. territories and commonwealths where Indigenous communities lack adequate political bargaining power to engage in meaningful dialogue with the United States regarding military planning.

These "out of the way" (West,2016) places produce a paradox of environmental regulations in the context of U.S. federal legislation outside of the continental United States where Indigenous Peoples can be both constrained by federal environmental regulations yet benefit from their

application to protect the environment at the same time. In other words, while federal environmental regulations can be wielded as knowledge systems that deny Indigenous participation, they can also be used as a form of protection against the encroachment of further militarization.

Mariana Islands Training and Testing
Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS

June 2020

	Comment	Navy Response
Valerie Weiss (VW)		
VW-01	I oppose the Mariana Islands Training and Testing ...tal EIS/OEIS for environmental reasons as well as for the safety of marine mammals. Please do not destroy parts of our environmental world with military occupation and war practice. There has to be a better way to train than sending loud, far traveling, sonar into the depths.	The military is committed to protecting public health and safety and the terrestrial and marine environment while training and testing.
Gary Chock (GC)		
	...S has so much money to spend on bombing other ...ands and lands, why don't you just build your own islands to bomb closer to your own country like off the east coast .would probably be cheaper than paying for a lease and clean up after you guys bomb the shit out of it .Why do you have to destroy other nations lands to protect your own asses	The military is committed to protecting public health and safety and the terrestrial and marine environment while training and testing.
Patricia Blair (PB)		
PB-01	I oppose any Navy training exercises by the Navy in Guam, ...rianas, Okinawa, Hawaii. These exercises displace people, harm the environment on land and sea, and in no way improve the USA's security. The USA Navy should focus on cleaning the ocean, looking at ways to live in peace with other countries by respecting their boundaries.	The military is committed to protecting public health and safety and the terrestrial and marine environment while training and testing.
Marcy Koltun-Crilley (MKC)		
	...g and training measures, especially the ...testing. Living in Hawaii I have seen how even after spending close to a quarter of a billion dollars, the island of Kahoolawe is still not cleaned up or safe. Research shows that this type of sonar is extremely harmful to marine mammals. No more destruction of our islands, oceans and wildlife!	The military is committed to protecting public health and safety and the terrestrial and marine environment while training and testing.

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Appendix K Public Comment Responses

Figure 2.6. Sample of public comments including the Department of the Navy's (DoN) responses found in Appendix K of the Marianas Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Final Supplemental EIS/OEIS. Although this is a public document, names are redacted for privacy. *Source: Department of the Navy MITT EIS Website (www.mitt-eis.com).*

Indigenous peoples must therefore continually negotiate the constraints and opportunities provided by EISs in ways that compliment their values and visions for the future. This is exemplified in the Marianas as Indigenous activists have increased their opposition to military planning by employing NEPA as a guiding framework for environmental protection, holding the DOD accountable to the

regulations required under the law. As Chamorro scholars Na'puti and Bevacqua point out, "Even as the territorial designation for Guåhan establishes a precarious relation to the United States, by engaging in the environmental discourse of the nation-state, the efforts to preserve and protect Pågat proved to be an effective strategy for the movement" (Na'puti and Bevacqua 2015,850). Here the authors are referring to the mobilization of activists protesting the creation of a live-fire training range over Chamorro ancestral lands on Guåhan on the grounds that the military did not satisfactorily meet the proper environmental standards under NEPA.

The mobilization of environmental laws to protect the CNMI against further militarization has also been employed by activists and environmentalists in the current legislation discussed below, as well as in 2002 when the Center for Biological Diversity, represented by Earth Justice, sued the DON for violating the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) on the island of Farallon de Medinilla where military training and testing is conducted. According to the U.S. Navy, approximately one hundred and fifteen species of seabirds and shorebirds protected listed under the MBTA occupy the MITT Study Area (U.S. Department of the Navy,2019). These protections ensure that any taking, killing or possessing of migratory birds is illegal unless permitted by regulation. On March 13, 2002, Judge Emmet G. Sullivan issued an injunction that put a stop to all military activity on FDM for violating the MBTA. While Judge Sullivan's ruling sent a strong message to the DON that its plans were in direct violation of the law, the DOD was able to skirt this ruling by submitting legislation to Congress that would exempt its projects from the MBTA (Earth Justice,2002). Under the National Defense Authorization Act of 2003, the President agreed to "exempt the Armed Forces from the incidental taking of migratory birds during military readiness activities[28] authorized by the Secretary of Defense" (U.S. Department of the Navy,n.d.). Such a move not only highlighted the power

[28] According to the DON Marianas Islands Range Complex (MIRC) Draft EIS (pg. 3.10-1), Congress defines "readiness activities" as "all training and operations of the Armed Forces that relate to combat and the adequate and realistic testing of military equipment, vehicles, weapons, and sensors for the proper operation and suitability for combat use."

behind invoking environmental law to slow or deter military planning as a way to safeguard environments and people, but simultaneously displayed the DOD's power to skirt these same regulations by defining their plans as necessary for military "readiness."

Stewardship and Care for the Environment

Despite the history of litigation against the DON in the Marianas, the military frequently employs the language of environmental stewardship to temper the consequences of its impacts on land and sea and obscure its toxic legacy throughout the Pacific. The DON's branding of its commitment to environmental stewardship is extensive. For example, the DON cites its environmental stewardship programs such as its marine species monitoring program (www.navymarinespeciesmonitoring.us) and its coral reef surveys as indicators of their commitment to both their mission as well as the environmental health of the Marianas and its people. The DON's Stewards of the Sea (SoTS) program also touts a YouTube cartoon featuring a turtle mascot named Stewie that explains how the DON employs protective measures to protect marine life. This re-framing of stewardship over the environment through militarized means continues to play a critical role in the way that military plans are negotiated amidst their associated risks, particularly within the MITT Study Area. In the CNMI, this occurs through the military's conservation geared projects with organizations such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), beach clean-ups, disposal of unexploded ordnance, and the branding of the Department of the Navy as Stewards of the Sea. It requires a great deal of work by the DOD, the U.S. government and various other stakeholders including community members themselves, to create a suitable environment for militarized violence that overlaps with Indigenous homelands. Without a critical examination of what the environment means in this context, we risk losing sight of the transformative power that such discourses have over our material surroundings.

The Paradox of Environmental Regulations in a U.S. Commonwealth

The DOD occupies a paradoxical position in terms of its engagement with the environment. Given the irreparable damage to the environment that so much military planning has on the land, it might be tempting to ask if the DOD cares about the environmental at all? As one of the largest managers of federal lands throughout the United States and its territories (totaling 26.9 million acres of land owned, leased or otherwise possessed worldwide), it also remains one of the biggest polluters on planet earth. According to a Brown University study conducted by the Costs of War project, the DOD is "the world's largest institutional user of petroleum and correspondingly, the single largest producer of greenhouse gases in the world" (Crawford, 2019). Thus, while the DOD is responsible for the management and preservation of large swaths of the planet, it must also contend with its legacy of environmental disturbance by finding ways to remain "environmentally compatible" (Woodward 2001,202).

Thus, while the military is responsible for the management and preservation of large swaths of the planet, it must also contend with its legacy of environmental disturbance. The Department of Defense (DOD) therefore draws largely on environmental discourses and ecosystems management to support decisions related to national defense which has resulted in the hiring of a large body of professional resource managers who are tasked with "harmonizing environmental protection duties with military missions" (Coates et al. 2011,467). Importantly, their *principal purpose* is to assure that these lands, water, airspace, and coastal resources provide the necessary space and conditions to support mission-related activities. As with many other Indigenous communities who must contend with militarization on their homelands, Indigenous Chamorro and Refaluwasch people in the Northern Marianas Islands also remain committed to the preservation of environment and stewardship over the land, but for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of a homeland and way of live for future generations. In this light, the question is less about *if* the DOD cares for the

environment, and more about *why* it cares so much. The stakes of this research lie in the unsettling of how this care is naturalized by the military in the form of environmental stewardship and preservation of land for future training and testing even as it continues to buttress against Indigenous forms of place-making that are antithetical to military planning.

In this dissertation, the naturalization of militarism over the environment further entrenches the idea that colonialism is part of a bygone era and further promotes these covert forms of colonialism in the name of environmental stewardship and security. The CNMI continues to remain an unexpected site for underscoring contemporary colonialism because of its framing as an *exception*. Here, I am referring to the ways in which the CNMI has historically been framed as a political exception and as a group of islands that that negotiated commonwealth status with the U.S. unlike any other islands in Micronesia. Further compounding this unexpectedness, is underscoring how imperial policies have informed the seemingly banal and somewhat monotonous application of federally enforceable environmental planning processes in the context of everyday militarization. It is within these spaces of possibility that this work questions what political worlds-what forms of self-determination-can be actualized in the midst of the hypermilitarization of our environments.

During the MITT Draft S-EIS meeting at Kanoa Resort, I was handed a glossy 15-page booklet prepared by the DON that was filled with colorful photographs of marine and terrestrial animals, maps and graphs regarding the MITT Study Area. While the booklet highlighted the technical aspects of the Draft S-EIS, it also served as a way to showcase the DON's commitment to marine resource protection, alongside its concern with protecting public access and safety out at sea. For example, under the heading of Environmental Stewardship read a blurb, "The military's environmental stewardship programs contribute to both the success of the military mission and the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the Mariana Islands." On the next page it

continued, "The military shares these areas with the community and recognizes the importance of public access to ocean and coastal areas." By couching destructive military practices within the context of a "shared" space in which the DON also engages in environmental stewardship, both destruction and stewardship are framed as processes that co-exist alongside without contestation rather than completely incongruous practices. Geographer Rachel Woodward has argued that this move characterizes "military training and environmental protection as conceptually equal…" and "implies that weighing up military activity and conservation is possible on the same set of scales, that the two originate from a unified set of objectives" (Woodward 2001,209).

While environmental stewardship programs aim to encourage a sense of care over the environment, they do little to highlight the reason why care is so fundamental to military planning and how these militarized discourses obscure the overall trajectory of United States policies in the region. While the DON refers to the importance of its long-standing relationship with the sea and environmental stewardship programs as necessary components of their commitment to sustainability, these plans are noticeable for what they leave out of the discussion, such as the DOD's historical legacy of contamination and destruction. In the Marianas, this legacy continues to present itself in material ways such as in the presence of agent orange contamination and Superfund sites on Guåhan, the DOD's use and abandonment of polychlorinated biphenyl's (PCBs) in Tanapag village on Saipan and the thousands of pounds of ordnance still being cleaned up that were left behind during the WWII era.

Mitigating Impacts

The promise of "mitigating" these toxic sites remains a contentious issue amidst the history of U.S. Military contamination throughout the Pacific. To mitigate is to lessen or remove the negative impacts associated with a proposed project under NEPA. For example, the Draft

Supplemental EIS for the MITT notes that, "The Navy has developed and implemented comprehensive monitoring plans since 2009 for protected marine mammals occurring on Navy ranges with the goal of assessing the impacts of training and testing activities on marine species and the effectiveness of the Navy's mitigation measures" (U.S. Department of the Navy 2019,3.4-91). By this logic, any negative effects to marine mammals throughout the DON's Study Area were viewed as rectified through the lens of mitigation. Yet, the power to define when and how mitigation will occur rests solely on the DON, leaving little room for preventing or lessening the long-term effects of military planning on multispecies environments.

In this case, mitigation can be similarly compared to the process of what Tanya Murray Li (2009,33) describes as "…presenting failure as the outcome of rectifiable deficiencies; smoothing out contradictions so that they seem superficial rather than fundamental; devising compromises." This process has the potential to absolve the DOD of any responsibility to the local community outside of making their plans known. Further, it depoliticizes the military's plans by merely *noting the existence* of mitigation efforts without ever having to acknowledge the long-term disruptions that such changes incur on the environment or engage with any real mechanism for accountability. In the context of the Marianas, mitigation can be further understood as a "mechanism of denial" (Kuletz 2001,242) similarly used by those in the nuclear industry in which the environmental consequences of militarism are downplayed, ignored or denied in ways the obscure Indigenous connections to land particularly in places where people lack political power to enforce any meaningful change.

Segmenting the Land

Compounding the relative inaccessibility of EISs is the fact that military plans are often conveyed as seemingly unrelated projects. Indeed, one of the most consequential outcomes of the military's EIS process is the appearance of this segmentation among military projects into smaller more manageable training and testing areas. Local activists continue to voice their concern over this

segmentation, which they view as an intentional breaking up of military planning in direct violation of NEPA regulations, which has misled the public into thinking that the military's environmental impacts are less than described. The resultant outcome has been the release of multiple EIS's that fail to address the connectedness of all military activities, and thus, military plans slated for various islands were often understood by community members as unrelated.

This outcome has been so powerfully articulated by various branches of the U.S. Military that its opposition comprises part of a lawsuit filed on behalf of Indigenous activists in the CNMI as part of the Alternative Zero Coalition (AZC) on Saipan. AZC is an umbrella coalition that includes: Tinian Women Association, Guardians of Gåni', and PåganWatch and has been instrumental in the resistance movement against militarization in the Northern Mariana Islands. In particular, their activism surrounding the release of the CNMI Joint Military Training (CJMT) Draft EIS in 2015 that included destructive training and testing on Tinian and Pagan Island, sparked an organized wave of community mobilization against U.S. militarism and caught national U.S. media attention (Geraldi & Perez,2018). In part through AZC's efforts and activism on Guam, the public outcry resulted in the submission of over 30,000 comments to the CJMT Draft EIS that forced the U.S. Navy to re-think its position over its environmental impacts (Geraldi & Perez,2018).[29] The release of the 2015 CJMT was no doubt a turning point for the CNMI on many accounts and there has been a noticeable increase in media and journalism regarding militarization in both local and national U.S. news outlets.

EISs remain so deeply entangled with the resistance to militarization that the coalition's name itself was born out of the community's desire to have a "no alternative" option when the

[29] At the time of writing this dissertation, the release of a revised CJMT had not been released and the CJMT website (www. https://www.cnmijointmilitarytrainingeis.com) still noted that there was no information regarding the status of the EIS.

DOD projects are presented to the community in the form of an EIS.[30] In a May 1,2015 special to the Saipan Tribune, Cinta Kaipat explained,

> What is Alternative Zero? The U.S. military has Alternative 1, Alternative 2, etc. Alternative Zero is the citizens' choice for what we want for Pagan and Tinian. Alternative Zero stands for NO to destruction of Pagan or Tinian at the hands of the U.S. military. NO means NO! (Kaipat,2015).

As a result of this community mobilization, AZC filed a lawsuit with the Center for Biological Diversity against the Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, Navy Secretary Richard V. Spencer and Defense Secretary James Mattis for allegedly violating NEPA regulations[31]. The advocacy group's lawsuit argued that the Department of the Navy failed to consider all the impacts associated with the Marines Relocation from Okinawa to Guåhan and its connection to the military's plans to conduct live-fire training and testing on the islands of Tinian and Pågan, within the CNMI. In one informal interview with Chamorro activist Peter Perez, co-founder of AZC, he explained in frustration, "The military likes to break their projects up into smaller projects, so that nobody knows the whole picture. They become so broken up that nobody seems to know what they are even doing anymore." Prior to our meeting, Mr. Perez had co-edited an op-ed alongside fellow co-founder of AZC, Ms. Cinta Kaipat, and explained,

> The U.S. military has intentionally broken its large-scale development of the Mariana Islands and surrounding waters into the world's largest live-fire training range into multiple proposals with the resulting effect of misleading the public and minimizing apparent impacts.

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[30] The meaning of the name "Alternative Zero Coalition" was shared in a personal conversation with AZC co-founder Peter Perez in the Summer of 2017.

[31] For more information about the case see *Tinian Women Association et al v. United States Department of the Navy et al* at https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/mariana-islands/nmidce/1:2016cv00022/5391/94/0.pdf?ts =1535017168.

During fieldwork on August 9, 2018, I attended one of the latest hearing for AZC's lawsuit at the Horiguichi Building on Saipan[32]. There were about twenty-one people in attendance, including the plaintiffs represented by Kimberly King-Hinds, a Tinian Native, and attorney David Henkin, from Earth Justice along with other Saipan community members and Indigenous activists in the Alternative Zero Coalition. Inside the courthouse, I briefly said my hello's to AZC's co-founders Peter Perez and Cinta Kaipat and I took a seat next to a woman named Candace[33] who I had met for the first time. As it turns out, she was tasked by the CNMI government to comment on the MITT Draft Supplemental EIS as a government agency employee. Weeks later, Candace agreed to meet with me for an informal interview to discuss her perspectives on the U.S. Military's process of drafting EIS's in the CNMI. Given the confusion that individuals had expressed regarding their creation, I wanted to get a sense of how government agencies were being tasked to respond to these documents and how these experiences might differ from everyday citizens.

> I: What were some of your concerns regarding the comments that you submitted for the Draft Supplemental MITT EIS?
>
> C: There are both procedural and substantive issues here. Personally, I am concerned about the apparent segmentation of apparently interrelated actions but this is a matter that is currently before the courts. Substantively, there appears to be a lack of sufficiently clear information to make reasonable assessment of potential impacts of the proposed activities.
>
> I: Which concerns were the *most* pressing for you?
>
> C: On a personal level, as a community member and a sailor, I am concerned about the socio-economic impacts of a 10 nautical mile danger zone around FDM as well as the ecological impacts of continued live fire bombing of that island and other testing activities.
>
> I: What has been your overall experience writing these comments in the CNMI?

[32] See (Limtiaco,2018) for coverage of the hearing on Saipan.
[33] Pseudonym

> C: I have reviewed numerous EIS/EIAs, and find the DOD's publications for this region to be very complex, somewhat nebulous, and generally challenging to respond to.

Similar concerns regarding the MITT Study Area were later picked up by Guåhan Senator Kelly Marsh Taitano in May 2019 who expressed concerns over the fact that the Department of Defense was proposing a bifurcation of the Programmatic Agreement for the MITT, which she viewed as an "inappropriate and fractured view" (Atalig, 2019) of the impacts that military training and testing would have on the islands' combined cultural, historical and environmental resources. The contemporary concerns regarding the segmentation of military planning mirror longstanding anxieties regarding the sociopolitical and economic separation of the Marianas archipelago's people perpetuated by U.S. governmental and military policies. Historically, as Smith (1991,34) points out, "…it is often argued that the United States was pursuing a deliberate (and successful) strategy of 'divide and rule' in Micronesia" in the early days of the political status negotiations." Thus, while the CNMI Government has argued to retain separate agreements to maintain the integrity of inter-island government decision-making, Senator Marsh Taitano's comments echo the tenuous history of division and attempts at reunification between the CNMI and Guåhan and speak to the need for increased unity when negotiating the outcomes of military planning throughout the Marianas as the DOD continues to separate and disperse its plans.

Conclusion

One night over dinner, I struck up a conversation with an individual employed by the DON whose work had brought him to the Mariana Islands on a number of occasions for training purposes. Halfway through our conversation his wife, who had been listening intently to the conversation innocently inquired, "But why would you use the Marianas for testing of all places?" He turned to look at her, chuckling, and replied, "…well, I mean, we couldn't do it in the middle of Los Angeles!" These everyday moments reveal the limits of our political power in the Marianas,

where our political status and “strategic” location define our use-value in the broader Military Industrial Complex (MIC), in ways that are deeply personal and discomforting to confront and accept. The production of the Marianas as a security necessity is only possible through its simultaneous production as dispensable, largely through the framing of our environments as necessary components for conducting military missions. The environmental planning process is one of many sites where the impingement of imperial structures on Indigenous worldviews are crystallized, in the everyday and often mundane way that such processes are implemented in the Marianas, and in the types of knowledge that are omitted during the process. This has contributed to what anthropologist Catherine Lutz has termed the “weaponization of bureaucracy” and the “production of ignorance” whereby the seemingly benign and less spectacular events surrounding militarism go unnoticed as the military draws on performances of expertise while leaving the public ignorant of its plans (Lutz 2019,108).

While conducting fieldwork on Saipan, there was a real sense of frustration building among community members regarding environmental planning process by the DOD. Individuals often expressed that their opinions were not being adequately incorporated into what was supposed to be a participatory process. These feelings were often complicated by the fact that many possessed a strong sense of loyalty towards America and its military so that even questioning the military’s plans were often viewed as suspect. While many environmental planning documents aim to protect or preserve the environment, these processes take on entirely different meanings in the context of contemporary imperialism-such as in U.S. territories and commonwealths where local laws continue to be superseded by federal legislation and where military renderings overlay Indigenous connections to place.

The types of knowledge production that render the environment visible for violent practices are rooted in a much longer history of United States imperial policies abroad and in the blanket extension of U.S. domestic environmental policies within the territories.
The militarization of the environment thrives on the recycling of imperial tropes that naturalize outcomes of war preparation. The process by which EIS's are created speak to the way in which, "...settler perspectives and worldviews get to count as knowledge and research and how these perspectives-repackaged as data and findings-are activated in order to rationalize and maintain unfair social structures" (Tuck and Yang, 2012, pg. 2). How Indigenous epistemologies will shape the production of environmental knowledge through the currents of imperialism is yet to be fully realized. What this research has revealed, however, is how our Indigenous worldviews continue to shape our political futures, not simply through resistance to nation-state narratives about the environment, but in ways that exceed the militarized renderings of the environments that surround us and inform who we are as a people. In the context of settler colonialism among the territories and commonwealths, federally mandated environmental protections can sometimes do something contradictory—they can preserve dispossession through environmental protection. I am not suggesting that environmental protections are not useful, but instead advocating for a deeper interrogation of how these regulations are applied in various militarized and settler colonial contexts, especially when presented as inherently good for everyone involved by way of their association with environmental stewardship.

These findings are a testament to the multiplicity of "imperial formations" (Stoler et al., 2007) that continue to manifest in unexpected places in our contemporary world, such as in the context of militarized environmental planning. In order to unpack how the militarism of the environment is naturalized through environmental policies, we must remain vigilant about how such

processes are enacted over time and space. Drawing on the conceptualization of "slow violence," (Nixon, 2013), this is what postcolonial scholar Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues is the *longue duree* (DeLoughrey 2015,353) on which militarism flourishes. On the other hand, this research has found that Chamorros and Refaluwasch also employ forms of slow resistance to complex environmental processes that have forced the DOD to delay, re-work and shift their projects over the land. Despite the DOD's issuance of its "final" decisions regarding its many plans, Indigenous peoples throughout the Marianas and abroad continue to defy the finality of these decisions through their continued negotiation, dialogue and resistance to environmental planning processes.

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Chapter 3: Blue Territory: U.S. Territorial Expansion and Ocean Governance

A drive along Saipan's beach road is accompanied by beautiful views of the shallow turquoise waters that meet the deep sea at the reef's edge, with military supply ships dotting the horizon. At the very end of the road, you reach American Memorial Park (AMP) in Garapan, the most urbanized village where most of the island's restaurants, hotels and shopping centers are located. Because Saipan is a part of a U.S. Commonwealth, U.S. National Parks Service (NPS) currently operates AMP on Indigenous lands leased to the U.S. Government during the creation of the Covenant agreement in the 1970's. The agreement allowed for the construction of the park as a way to commemorate American servicemen and women, along with people from the Marianas, who died during WWII. With steady access to U.S. federal funding, the park is meticulously manicured and hosts large green lawns that spread out to meet the white sands of Micro Beach. It is also one of the most popular tourist attractions on island, where visitors mostly from Korea, China and Japan, come to learn about America and Japan's role in WWII and throughout the Pacific. On a typical day at the visitor's center, you are greeted by friendly park rangers to assist you with your visit. A small theatre sits to your right, where you are invited to listen to an introductory video about the war before entering the center's museum, and eventually make your way into the small gift shop selling mostly war-related history books and memorabilia.

When visitors entering the theatre take their seats, the lights are dimmed for visitors to watch a short film entitled *An Island Called Saipan*. A Japanese gong sounds as a narrator begins to tell a brief history of the Japanese Empire in the Mariana Islands. As the movie picks up in intensity, the narrator's voice slows as be begins to tell the story of American troops storming Saipan and forcing the Japanese military towards the north side of the island, where ragged limestone cliffs loom. Saipan is an island comprised mostly of limestone rock and if you have ever stepped on limestone with bare feet, the unmistakable feeling of its razor sharps edges makes the thought of

these cliffs even more menacing. Known today as "Suicide" and "Banzai" cliffs, Japanese soldiers and civilians committed mass suicide by jumping to their deaths into the deep dark blue of the Pacific Ocean in order to avoid capture by the Americans. A black-and-white video clip then appears on the screen, and the image of a woman slowly making her way down the sharp decline of Banzai Cliff appears, right before she leaps into the churning water below. Then the camera pans to a moving image of a small baby floating face down in the water below the cliffs. The image of the baby and the woman jumping to her death haunts me and not just because it is horrifying to watch, but because these images catalyze us to remember war in certain ways; especially in ways that characterize the American military presence as a welcome relief and end to wartime horror. This history of commemoration is not new, and many Indigenous people now challenge the narrative of indebtedness that many islanders express when discussing the war in the Marianas, but how these narratives continue to inform contemporary militarization are still yet unfolding.

As a concentrated site of war memorials, charming natural landscapes and a number of unique island ecosystems, American Memorial Park blurs the distinction between spaces of Indigenous and federal ownership and the same can be said of the ocean that borders the park. Given the central importance of the land and sea for Indigenous people and its strategic importance for military planning, this chapter examines the ways in which militarized renderings of the ocean and sky overlap with Indigenous conceptualizations of place. First, I unpack the U.S. Military's framing of the Marianas as *open, realistic* and *strategic*-conceptualizations that work to frame the region as empty, destroyable and geographically determined for violent military practices. I then explore how these perspectives overlap with Indigenous epistemologies of the land and sea, which are integral to the formation of identity and cultural recuperation in the Northern Mariana Islands. Lastly, I contextualize these contemporary renderings of the Marianas by exploring the significance of islands and the sea within a U.S. colonial imaginary and how Indigenous epistemologies have

historically resisted such interpretations. An examination of these overlapping claims to the sea highlight the movement of political power and the ensuing distribution of resources and ownership over the water today.

Pivot to the Pacific

The 2011 Pacific "pivot"[34]-or the "rebalance" of U.S. forces away from Iraq and Afghanistan and into the Pacific-is playing a critical role in the way that the Mariana Islands environments are currently being framed by the military, particularly in regards to the sea. At a Guam Rotary Club meeting in 2013, D.C. lobbyist Juan Carlos Benitez admitted that, "…most national security experts agree that the bases in other areas of Asia like Okinawa and Korea provide greater reach than Guam does" (Ridgell,2013). However, the two main reasons why Guam continues to remain the key location for the relocation of military personnel are, "First it is sovereign US soil, which means that the US would not need to seek permission from any foreign government if an attack was launched from Guam. The second is that all fuel that is imported into Asia passes through Guam's military sphere of influence" (Ridgell,2013). Despite the fact that the U.S. Military faces major hurdles over moving more troops into the Pacific, competition over territorial control continue to make the Mariana Islands more "important than ever," according to the Department of the Navy's MITT website (U.S. Department of the Navy,n.d.). The military's creation of the The Marianas Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Study Area (Figure 3.1) is but one of the many examples of the military's transformation of oceanic space into spaces of violent training and testing. Within this space, multi-national military exercises are conducted annually, including *Cope North, Valient Shield*

[34] This "pivot" or "rebalance" as it is known, has received coverage in U.S. and local media outlets, as well as by various Pacific scholars including Teaiwa (2017) in her article entitled "The articulated limb: Theorizing Indigenous Pacific participation in the military industrial complex," in which she highlights the central role that the "build up on Guam" serves "as an illustration of the Pacific's geopolitical articulation with the Military Industrial Complex." Shibuya (2018, 57) argues that the term "rebalance" was a descriptor later applied to the "pivot" as a way to avoid perceptions that the United States was participating in a premature move away from the Middle East and was also employed to both quell the perception of a confrontation with China, while simultaneously assuring U.S. allies that this move indeed was a way to keep Chinese power in the region in check.

and *Tri-Crab* as well as a number of testing activities that include the use of weapons systems, active sonar, and sensors.

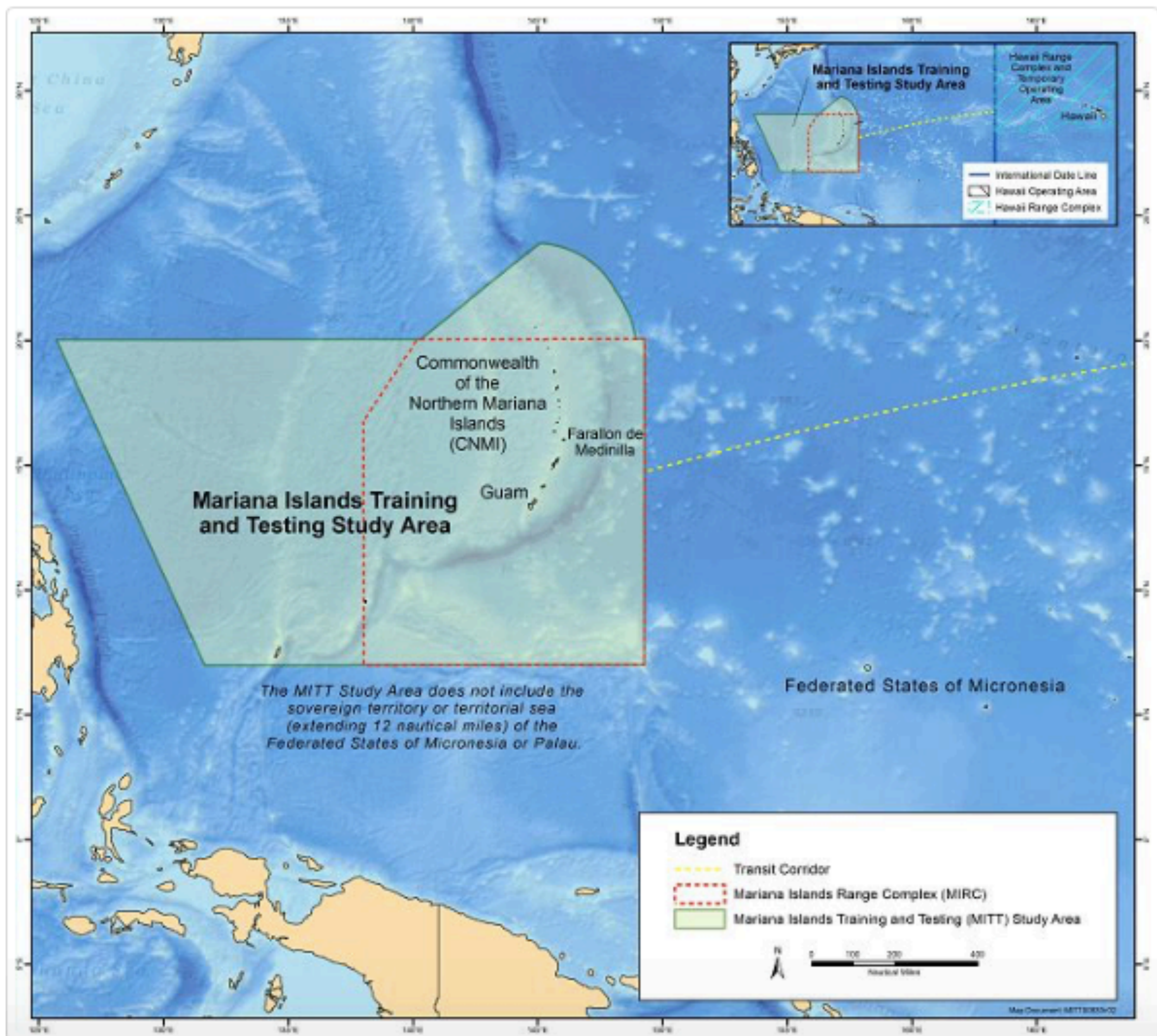

Figure 3.1. A Map of the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) comprising the Mariana Islands and surrounding sea. *Source: Department of the Navy MITT EIS Website (www.mitt-eis.com).*

"Realistic," "Open" and "Geostrategic" Environments

Within the lines that demarcate the MITT Study Area, the DON often refers to the use of *realistic* training and testing as critical to military readiness, personnel safety and national defense. The Department of the Navy describes the importance of the MITT Study Area by explaining that it possesses "unique attributes, including location, proximity to concentrations of U.S. forces,

environment, and size, which make it an ideal venue for training military personnel and testing equipment and systems." The islands' use value is further justified by providing a, "...strategic and valuable environment for conducting military readiness activities. The islands are an ideal setting because of their location in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region, allowing the military to maintain a global and strategic presence" (U.S. Department of the Navy,2015). This realism is often juxtaposed with simulation, which the DON argues does not adequately allow for it to complete its requirements. On the DON's MITT Study Area website, for example, frequently asked question number six reads: "*Can't you use simulators for training and testing?*" The DON's response is as follows:

> When possible, military personnel use simulators and other advanced technologies when training and testing, and recent advancements and improvements in simulator technology has led to an increase in usage. Simulation, however, can only work at the basic operator level and cannot completely replace training and testing in a live environment.
>
> Despite advancements and improvements to simulator technology, there are still limits to the realism technology can provide.
>
> Simulation cannot provide the real-world accuracy and level of training needed to prepare naval forces for deployment
>
> Simulation cannot replicate a high-stress environment nor the complexity in coordinating with other military personnel
>
> Simulation cannot replicate dynamic environments involving numerous military forces and cannot accurately model sound in complex training environments (U.S. Department of the Navy,n.d.).

Despite major advances in Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR)-otherwise known as "synthetic training capabilities" (NRI Digital,2018)-the Marianas region provides a level of training accuracy by providing what the DON's terms a "live environment." The danger in describing these island environments as realistic is in the disconnect this produces between what this means for

military planning, and what it means to those living within these spaces of training and testing. By divorcing people from the environment, these spaces are rendered openly accessible to the DOD and therefore vulnerable to irreparable damage through their construction as realistic and thus irreplaceable.

The rendering of islands as key geostrategic locations for forward deployment, continue to give islands a sort of strategic charisma, even when these locations do little for the military's logistical planning. For example, According to a 2014 RAND report (Lostumbo et al.,2013) commentary post entitled "Should the U.S. Move the Marines to Guam?" by Michael J. Lostumbo, the Guam Marines Relocation ranked poorly in regards to costs and location. Marines from Camp Pendleton in California can get to parts of Asia more quickly since there is no dedicated sealift on Guam, despite being closer to the Asian continent in its proximity (Lostumbo et al.,2013). The optics of the move towards the Asia-Pacific region was also concern for the DOD, who worried that the restructuring of forces would give the appearance that they were leaving the Middle East. Thus, Lostumbo explains that,

> To counter this perception of withdrawal, previous U.S. defense officials established an arbitrary metric focused on the number of Marines posted west of the International Date Line, which seems to be the dominant justification for selecting Guam and has prevented consideration of broader options (Lostumbo et al.,2014).

Therefore, despite the fact that various sources[35] have found this re-structuring problematic, the

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[35] In 2011, U.S. Senators Car Levin D-Michigan, John McCain, R-Arizona, and Jim Web D-Virginia stated that the military realignment was "unrealistic, unworkable and unaffordable" (Erediano,2013) and called on the Department of Defense to re-assess the restructuring of forces throughout Asia, including the Guam Relocation or build-up. At the time, the Senators felt it would be impossible to complete the build-up by the projected 2014 deadline, adding the that this would place too much financial burden on Japan which was dealing with the aftermath of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Furthermore, a 2013 Government Accountability Office (GAO) (U.S. Government Accountability Office,2013) found the Department of Defense's "preliminary cost estimate for its current realignment plan…not reliable, because it is missing costs and is based on limited data." As recently as 2019, The Marine Corps Times noted that Gen. Robert B. Neller stated that the Marine Corps. plan to relocate from Okinawa to Guam needed a review (South,2019).

military remains committed to increasing its presence in the Marianas as a way to both combat the optics of leaving Okinawa due to local opposition (a reality that does not align with the "Pacific Pivot") and because Guam continues to remain a colonized American territory.

The framing of islands as strategic spaces is also evident from China's military perspective, particularly in its "island chains" strategy whose roots can be traced to German military planning. In particular, Karl Haushofer's notion of "offshore island arcs" in the early 20th century (Erikson & Wuthnow,2016b in Rhodes, 2019) formed the precursor to the island chains perspectives. In general, the *first island chain* refers to the line of islands beginning with southern Japan, the Ryukus, Taiwan, and ends in the Philippines while the *second island chain* refers to the line of islands from Japan, to the Marianas and through to the western Caroline Islands (Rhodes, 2019). Militarized discourses surrounding Chinese weapons development have taken into consideration strategies that seek to "penetrate" or "break through" the barriers that these island chains pose to mainland China (Cavas,2017). Island chains strategies "play out in numerous fashions, from weapons China develops to the kinds of exercises and operations the military carries out" (Cavas 2017,n.p.)[36] This mirrors a similar approach to U.S. military planning during WWII, whereby the Marianas was viewed as a "strategic air bombardment springboard within the B-29 range of Tokyo…" as well as "stepping stones" (Smith,1991). Importantly, discussions regarding these "island chains" are receiving renewed attention[37] by U.S. Military strategists who view them as integral to confronting China's growing power in the Pacific. One of the biggest developments that spurred the Pacific "pivot" centered on "China's growing military capabilities and its increasing assertiveness of claims to disputed maritime

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[36] Andrew Erickson from the China Maritime Studies Institute at the Naval War College, has written about the "island chains" strategy from a U.S. military perspective and its historical role both within and outside of the United States military and government. See for example, "Barriers, Springboards and Benchmarks: China Conceptualizes the Pacific 'Island Chains'" in the *China Quarterly* by Erickson and Wuthnow (2016a) and "Why Islands Still Matter in Asia" in *The National Interest* by Erickson and Wuthnow (2016b).

[37] Anthropologist David Vine outlines a similar concept developed by naval intelligence officer Stuart Barber called the "Strategic Island Concept" (Vine 2018, 249) in the late 1950's that justified the militarization of Diego Garcia.

territory" which had "…implications for freedom of navigation and the United States' ability to protect power in the region" (Manyin,2012). These concerns are coupled to the idea of "sea power" which Buszynski (2019,6-10) argues are rooted in a much longer history of geographical determinism, promulgated by Anglo-American "theorists of strategy" such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Halford Maekinder and Nicholas Spykman, all of whom can trace their perspectives to the german *geopolitik* or "geopolitics" in its most classical rendering.

The Marianas' geographic location has served as the unquestioned justification for much of the violence that ensued on the environment and its people during WWII, and these assumptions continue to hold steady in our contemporary times. As Smith (1991,81) has argued,

> The US strategic outlook is taken as a self-evident given and, depending on the values of the observer, the US approach to Micronesia is welcomed as an overriding defense necessity, rejected as an overriding evil, or for the more ambivalent, treated as a necessary evil…

Pöllath (2018,237) has argued that historically, "…the acquisition of remote islands in the Pacific on a primarily strategic premise gave rise to the accusation of colonialism," so the United States proceeded to quell this perception by employing the *Insular Cases* to allow the nation to acquire "territory without the extension of all the benefits of the US Constitution." This historical reality has produced an ambiguous political zone in which the Marianas occupies, and has similarly been described by Chamorro scholar Tiara Na'puti as the "both/neither" concept in which Chamorros on Guåhan must navigate the dual identity of both Indigenous and American through processes of decolonization and resistance (Na'puti 2013,55). The significance of this half-in, half-out political status is that it continues to produce legal grey areas as they pertain to U.S. federal regulations, "rendering the U.S. territories essentially invisible" (VIillazor,2018). Through this "politics of invisibility" (Nordstrom 2004,34) the CNMI provides the United States with political and economic

benefits necessary for further expansion of military policies that can proceed with relatively little oversight to the American public, and has also encouraged capital to flow under the radar.[38]

The renewed significance of geopolitics in the Marianas, must therefore be examined with great caution given the historical assumptions about the nature of the islands' location which are characterized militarily as geographically determined locations necessary for further training and testing. The confluence of this geopolitical perspective meshed with security discourses regarding the environment (Dalby 2002,184) renders the Marianas a prime target for training and testing. Today, strategic references aim to encourage political and economic policies that combat Russia and China's growing military power, and the countries' socio-economic influence, as well as nuclear threats from North Korea. In 2011, Tom Donilon (National Security Advisor for the Obama Administration) wrote in the *Financial Times*, "America is back in the Pacific and will uphold the Rules" (Donilon,2011). In this article, he outlines then U.S. President Obama's plan for U.S. defense posturing in the Pacific, which posits the region as a top strategic priority. In December 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump recapitulated these concerns in the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* citing the need to secure the Pacific and frame trepidations over Russia, China, North Korea and Iran as a "great power competition" that involved "…fundamentally political contests between those who favor repressive systems and those who favor free societies." (United States,2017).

[38] Despite the fact that Saipan must abide by most US federal laws, local immigration and labor laws were fully controlled by the CNMI government until 2008 when it was federalized by U.S. Congress. Before this time, both local and foreign investors hired individuals from China and Southeast Asia with relative ease and employed them for low wages on Saipan. In the early 1990's, large American companies such as Tommy Hilfiger and Liz Claiborne took advantage of the CNMI's visa programs and low minimum wage and began stitching "Made in America" labels on their clothing, since their products were technically being made on American soil. As a result of these abuses, U.S. Congress eventually passed a law to federalize the CNMI's immigration system which placed restrictions on local government control. While U.S. media coverage of garment factory abuses on Saipan centered on human and labor rights violations in the 1990s, with many placing blame on the CNMI government for allowing such abuses to occur, hardly any examination problematized why capital is able to move so seamlessly within and through the CNMI as an American "territory" in the first place.

These contemporary security concerns have promoted a renewed need for the U.S. to focus its attention on the Pacific, and in particular, the Pacific Ocean. In the eyes of the DOD, the ocean remains one of the three conventional military domains of war along with land and air. In fact, this has been the "…basic organizing principle for the armed forces in three departments of Army, Navy, and Air Force…" (Heftye 2017,n.p.). With the advent of new domains such as space and information (or cyberspace), each branch of the military has had to contend with these multi-domain battlefields in novel ways. In the Pacific, military commanders are tasked to participate in cross-domain warfare and prepare troops for new types of battles, all of which work to portray parts of the Pacific Ocean as a realistic training ground where war games can be conducted alongside U.S. allies. These domains are instructive of the way in which military planners view land in relation to the sea. For example, military strategist Erik Heftye (2017,n.p.) writes,

> The farther one travels away from land into the wide expanses sea-air-space, the notion of control or ownership becomes more tenuous, as well as legally problematic…The legitimacy of territorial waters and airspace exist only in proximity to land owned by a nation state. International waters and airspace, in addition to space and cyberspace, are considered global commons owned by no one, because there is no direct relation to land. National interests in these places involve ensuring access and freedom to operate rather than absolute ownership.

The Department of the Navy (DON) describes their engagement with the sea as forms of "blue water capabilities" or "blue water" operations[39]. They historicize their relation to the water, particularly within the the Marianas, by pointing to the the fact that they have been conducting training, testing and research within the world's oceans for many years. For example, on an informational booklet disseminated at a public forum on Saipan in the early months of 2019, the Department of the Navy (DON) explains, "Since 1775, the U.S. Navy has been operating on, over

[39] Terms such as these are what postcolonial scholar Elizabeth DeLoughrey has described as "strategic military grammar" (DeLoughrey, 2019) that works to downplay Indigenous connections to sea.

and within the world's oceans to protect and defend the United States, it's allies, and the global commons." In the Marianas, the DON describes its ongoing activities at-sea as, "similar to activities conducted in the Mariana Islands for decades" (U.S. Department of the Navy,2019).

Missing from any reference to the sea, however, is any references to the politics of Indigenous ownership or connection to the same "national" waters, where Indigenous Chamorro and Refaluwasch people continue to remain the legal owners of land in the Northern Mariana Islands through a land alienation clause in the CNMI Covenant entitled Article XII. The U.S. Navy's historicizing of the sea simultaneously lays claim to ocean and airspace and is characterized as defensible on the grounds of being both American territory and a global commons. This characterization is problematic for the way in which it occludes any reference to the politics of Indigenous ownership or connection to these same waters amidst the history of U.S. colonialism. Yet, by invoking long-standing ties to the ocean, this position served as justification for continued militarization of the water.

Insular Environments

Integral to the discussion of realism, is the perception of islands in popular military discourse as comprised of large "open" spaces. Such descriptions are rooted in the contradictory position that islands have historically played in the colonial imaginary, in which islands are viewed as insular ecosystems surrounded by an empty oceanic expanse. While the construction of the Pacific as we know it today, as well as its portrayal as open and empty space can be traced back to the 16th century Spanish colonial era Magellan (Spate 2004), these imaginings continue to frame military activities as occurring in empty spaces. This desire was further perpetuated during the Cold War-era where "emptiness…[became] increasingly appealing in the new atomic age" (Banivanua-Mar,125) and where the oceans began to be viewed as a space from which to expand U.S. "sovereign borders" and a dumpsite for "unsavory nuclear waste" (Denton, 2018). Postcolonial scholar Elizabeth

DeLoughrey connects this isolationist perspective to systems ecology, in which the perception of islands as "closed systems" or "isolates," justified the use of Pacific Islands as "nuclear laboratories" (DeLoughrey 2012,6). Thus, DeLoughrey argues, the entire "…American empire of tropical islands, circling the globe from the Pacific to the Caribbean, became a strategic space for military experimentation and the production of new scientific epistemologies like ecosystems theory" (DeLoughrey 2012,6).

Yet, while islands are often viewed as insular and remote, holding little to no political sway in world politics, they remain critically important locations for the expansion of militarization. In U.S. territories and commonwealths, where Pacific Islander lives are influenced greatly by federal policies enacted by the U.S. government and military, these representations produce discourses that influence military planning in material ways. According to the DON, the Marianas beat out other locations for the relocation of Marines such as Hawai'i, Alaska or California because it is considered U.S. soil and possesses the largest amount of *open air* and *open sea* to conduct military maneuvers and testing. As an unincorporated territory, this would mean that "the U.S. would not need to seek permission from any foreign government if an attack was launched from Guam" (Ridgell,2013). The urgency of these militarised policy decisions is further compounded by the fact that "all fuel that is imported to Asia passes through Guam's military sphere of influence" (Ridgell,2013). As militarism scholar Ronni Alexander has pointed out, it is the primary concern of the U.S. Military to protect its sea lanes in the Pacific. Indeed, one of the biggest developments that spurred the Pacific Pivot focused on China's growing military and maritime power which threatened the U.S. Military's freedom of navigation.

Nationalizing the Water: "Blue-ing" U.S. Empire

Today, the U.S. Military's ease of movement within Marianas waters is made possible through the U.S.'s expansive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that envelopes the entire

archipelago. With over 13,000 miles of coastline and 3.4 million square nautical miles of ocean, this EEZ has been characterized as the "single greatest enclosure in human history" (Campling and Colas 2018, 780). The territories and commonwealths that comprise the Insular Areas are integral to military operations since they provide the freedom to operate within a 200-mile radius around each island. Given the relatively small land mass that comprises the Marshall, Caroline and Marianas archipelagos compared to the surrounding water, this provides tremendous political and economic advantages to the United States. The CNMI alone has an EEZ of 777,000 sq. km, with a land area of 471 sq. km. (Pacific Islands Forum, n.d.). The 2019 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission reiterates the importance of EEZ's within Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia as crucial to the protection of important fisheries, making the myriad islands "more consequential than their land mass might suggest" (U.S.-China Economic and Security Review 2019, 418). This was an important point examined by Peter Nolan (2013) in which he argued that the significance of islands for U.S. territorial acquisition and control over natural resources was only made possible under the legal framework of EEZ's. Importantly, Nolan's work contextualized Chinese military expansion and its "string of pearls" strategy by juxtaposing it against the much greater expanse of territory acquired by the United States under the United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) (Nolan, 2013,93).

"The United States is an Ocean Nation" writes the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration (NOAA) while proudly displaying its EEZ's throughout the globe (See Figure 3.2). Central to this claim is the fact that such zones include "diverse ecosystems and vast natural resources," all of which overlap with some of the most militarized territories on earth. According to the Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System (PacIOOS), the CNMI EEZ, "encompasses a variety of geologic, morphologic, and tectonic environments." Under the jurisdiction of the United States' EEZ, the Marianas Trench (known for being the deepest point on planet earth) was turned into a

National Monument in 2009; a process that became a formidable zone of contention between the CNMI and U.S. governments regarding ownership over natural resources. Under the Bush Administration, the Antiquities Act of 1906 was used to designate 250,487 sq. kilometers of submerged lands and waters surrounding the Mariana Islands as a national monument named the Marianas Trench Marine National Monument (MTMNM). Gruby (2017,429) argues that while CNMI officials were able to increase their political bargaining power by successfully claiming territorial rights to the surrounding submerged lands and waters, they were later undercut by the U.S. federal government restrictions that ultimately limited CNMI sovereignty. While this particular designation did not appear to be directly related to an increase in militarization, such moves have been critiqued as forms of "blue-washing" that "further colonize, militarize and privatize the Pacific," particularly in the case of monuments which are unilateral presidential decisions that require no public input (Perez 2014,n.p.).

In the context of militarism, the protection of marine spaces is particularly fraught. This is because militarism frames connections to the ocean as a choice between defending national interests or exposing it to "enemy" territory and thus, federal environmental protections can be used to transform spaces of conservation into "defense assets" (Hooper,2017). By enclosing ocean space via environmental protections, this transformation opens up space for further militarization. It is no mistake that the confluence of early American scientific research interests in bathymetry of the seafloor intersected with Washington's increased concern over the ownership of oceanic space (Denton,2018). The DON's contemporary marine research in the Marianas, made possible through its territorial rights to water thus become a critical avenue for United States military expansion through a form of incorporation into a broader American aqua-politics. Importantly, by including the ocean in an examination of America's military strategies outside the continental U.S., this fact turns the logic of island insularity and isolation on its head, by highlighting the importance of the sea

(and the air above it) for the acquisition of resources amidst the hundreds of islands that comprise the Pacific.

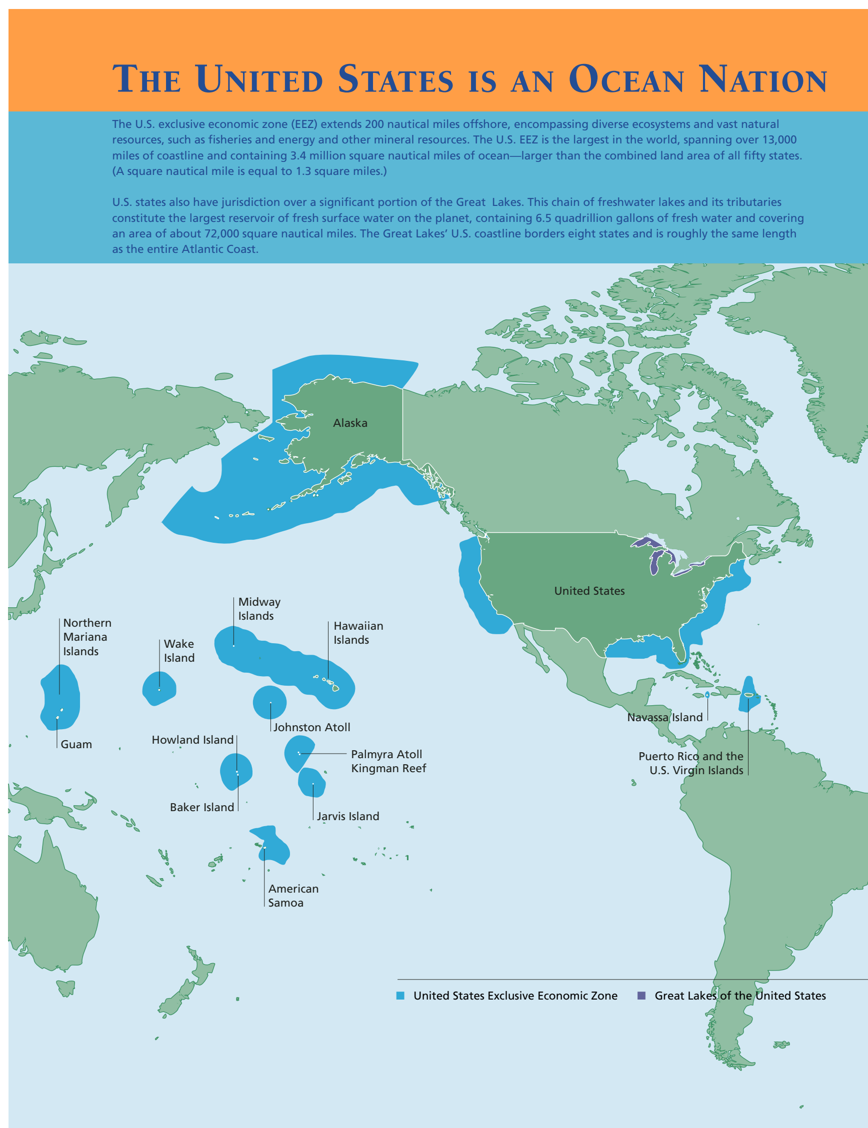

Figure 3.2. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's (NOAA) map of the United States' Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) around the world. *Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) Fisheries Service.*

Today, through the use of EEZ's, the U.S. has laid claim to the waters surrounding the Marianas, effectively transforming it into a jurisdiction of "American water" (and air) adjacent to "American soil." Stratford (2016,11) argues that an adequate examination of an EEZ "should be understood by reference to its historical context and the material conditions under which it was and

is being produced." This critical lens elucidates how the contemporary (re)structuring of American forces throughout the Pacific is deeply entangled with U.S. ownership over the cast expanse of waters surrounding the Marianas and beyond. According to the Department of the Navy, their, "Systems are tested in varying marine environments, such as differing water depths, seafloor types, salinity levels, and other ocean conditions, as well as replicated warfighting environments, to ensure accuracy and safety" (U.S. Department of the Navy, n.d.) EEZ's are thus critical to the military's justification for increased training and testing needs because the ocean not only provides the physical space from which these activities can be conducted, but because these activities can occur within a supposedly neutral American territory. In this way, EEZ's also provide a striking example of the strategic assumptions that undergird ownership and territory in the context of imperialism throughout the Pacific.

Land/Sea/Sky

It was a typical sunny day on Saipan when my *nino* (godfather in Chamorro) agreed to visit me at my parent's home with his granddaughter. As a respected Chamorro elder in the community with a deep knowledge of the language and customs of our people, I asked him if he would be willing to share his knowledge of how the land informs Indigenous epistemologies in the Northern Marianas. Here I am referring to Indigenous epistemology as "a cultural group's ways of thinking and creating and reformulating knowledge using traditional discourses and media of communication (eg, face to face interaction) and anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture" (Gegeo 1998:290). As his granddaughter played alongside us, we sat together as the humid breeze flowed through the window screen. I asked him if he would share his knowledge of the importance of nature in our culture. Without hesitation, he replied, "There are three things that have survived in our Chamorro culture related to respect (*respetu* in Chamorro). "The first is respect to the ancestors, the second is respect for the land and nature, and the third is respect for each other-to those that are living,

especially to the elders." He paused and said, "we know the ancestors' spirits are there…that they don't cease to exist when they pass on…even embodying themselves in aspects of nature and we are connected to them when we remember them."

When I pressed him on the importance of the land in our culture, he explained, "Similar to Refaluwasch culture, in Chamorro…*tano* doesn't just mean land, it means your place." "*I tano*," means "what is on the earth, including things on the land like plants. It is akin to the English word world," he said. "So to say *tao tao tano* which translates literally into person of the land, means to say that you are acknowledging that that person is "of that place." As Chamorros, we often refer to ourselves as *tao tao tano* or *tao tao tasi*, meaning "people of the land" or "people of the sea," respectively. The popularity of this phrase is exemplified in a number of different ways throughout the Marianas including its use on local apparel brands appealing to a sense of rootedness to the land, especially to younger generations of Chamorro and Refaluwasch youth. When I asked how we could best translate the word "environment" into Chamorro, my Godfather replied, "There is no word for environment exactly, or airspace...because everything is connected...we don't separate the land from the sky or the ocean."

As social beings, we imbue spaces with meaning, thereby creating places that inform the way we see ourselves and identify with one another in this world. Indigenous perspectives offer a critical lens from which to understand how land "carries a currency beyond a mere reflection of physical landscape or specific location, commonly referred to as the "geographers" concept of space. Rather, Indigenous scholars often invoke land as place" (Goeman 2008,23). Tuck and Yang (2012,8) have described land as a shorthand for "land/water/air/subterranean earth" which highlights the implicit assumptions that underlie Indigenous thought processes about one's environmental surroundings. Importantly, as Indigenous homelands are threatened within the context of settler colonialism they write,

> Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence (Tuck and Yang 2012,8).

Processes of militarization in the Marianas require both a spatial and ontological erasure of Indigenous livelihoods through the restructuring of place into militarized environmental spaces. While these discursive formulations have materialized into restrictions over Indigenous political decision-making that prioritize the application of U.S. federal policies, Indigenous conceptualizations of place continue to challenge such formulations by prioritizing the sea as a site of connection rather than separation. This position is exemplified in the contemporary political imaginary of Pacific Island as a "Blue Continent," a phrase employed by the Pacific Islands Forum[40] and in the everyday use of the ocean as a place of sustenance and recreation throughout the archipelago.

Resisting Insularity through Oceanic Expansiveness

In its broadest sense, Oceania encompasses the entire "insular" area between Asia and the Americas, but its more popular usage refers to four main regions that include: Australasia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia in the Pacific Ocean. Howe (2000) outlines the influence of early European figures who promulgated these divisions, one of which was J.R. Forster, brought along by Captain Cook on his early explorations of the Pacific. Because of these problematic assumptions about the region, scholars in Pacific Island Studies, History and Anthropology have long challenged the relevance of these boundaries, citing them as remnants of colonialism that superficially divide the Pacific without careful attention to language, culture and ancestry. Yet, these geographical borderlands continue to position the thousands of relatively small islands in the

[40] See for example the Pacific Island Forum's "2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent" at https://www.forumsec.org/pacific-regionalism/

western Pacific neatly within the confines of *Micro*-nesia. In the Northern Mariana Islands, this historical demarcation of the Pacific into various spaces of colonial and militaristic conquest has framed the islands largely through the lens of war and American territorial expansion. As Pacific historian David Hanlon (2009,92) has argued, "A near century of travel, ethnographic, and historical writings have made its avoidance impossible" and worse, "…attests to the reifying power of colonial discourses" in securing these boundaries. One of the most well-known forms of resistance against these colonial perceptions of Pacific insularity comes out of the late Tongan and Fijian writer and anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa's now wide-reaching works. Hau'ofa's theorizations condemned the devastating effect that these perspectives have had on Pacific Islander psyches and highlighted the primacy of Indigenous epistemologies over colonial interpretations. He did so by focusing on the very poignant difference between understanding the Pacific as "islands in a far sea" versus a "sea of islands." While the former addresses islands as "dry surfaces in a vast ocean far from centres of power," the latter attempts to underscore a more "holistic perspective in which things are seen in the totality of their relationships" (Hau'ofa 2008,151).

Given the history of framing of islands as insular and remote, a renewed attention to challenging land-centric perspectives has been a critical aspect of decolonization in the Pacific. Pacific scholar Vicente Diaz argues that by employing Austronesian seafaring knowledge, decolonization in the Pacific can take shape by connecting Indigenous Peoples through their struggles "against other histories of migration and settlement in other regions of the world", while allowing us to "rethink the underlying terms and assumptions about Indigenous subjectivity" (Diaz 2011,21). Such perspectives have the potential to reclaim the ocean as a site of power and mobility rather than a passive and empty entity. Drawing on Diaz's perspectives, Chamorro scholar and poet

Craig Santos Perez engages with the term "terripelago" as a way to explore the movement of territory outside its preconceived land-based borders. He writes,

> …territoriality is more than land. Territoriality signifies a behavioral, social, cultural, historical, political, and economic phenomenon. Territoriality demarcates migration and settlement, inclusion and exclusion, power and poverty, access and trespass, incarceration and liberation, memory and forgetting, self and other, mine and yours. Humans, animals, plants, and environments all struggle over territoriality (Perez 2015,620).

This focus on the sea has prompted a number of important intellectual currents in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Emergent oceanic or archipelagic "turns" (Stephens & Roberts,2017) towards a "critical ocean studies" approach (DeLoughrey,2014) or "blue cultural studies" (Mentz,2009) in fields like English, and American and Cultural Studies[41], as well as related ontological turns in Anthropology, continue to follow in this current. These perspectives do much to unpack foundational questions about what constitutes a nation-state and encourage a broader and more fluid approach to theorizing territory in the context of imperialism (Deloughrey 2014,260). Oceanic spaces do not necessarily accommodate a straight forward approach to understanding imperial processes in part because they cannot always be approached in the same way that we identify and relate to land. Independent scholar and writer, Karen Amimoto Ingersoll, offers a similar contribution by engaging with a Hawaiian "seascape" epistemology that works against the "predisposition of cultural and Indigenous studies to connect indigeneity with a territory, a "territory" that has been predominantly, although not entirely, land-based" (Ingersoll 2016,15). In the Marianas, where the ocean remains critical to Indigenous ancestral identity and sustenance, land-centric perspectives prioritize a colonial way of experiencing the world in ways that "privilege

[41] For a more in-depth discussion of these disciplinary currents please see Elizabeth DeLoughrey's analysis in her article "Toward a Critical Ocean Studies for the Anthropocene" (DeLoughrey, 2019).

landmasses over expansive seas, islands, and archipelagoes" (Na'puti 2019,6). Thus, Indigenous Pacific perspectives offer a way out of land-centric assumptions and allow us to envision how imperial processes scan the globe in a diverse range of communities both within and outside the continental United States. These Indigenous Pacific formulations also include forms of solidarity that rely on ancient Indigenous knowledge systems to make sense of these connections.

Conclusion

The Pacific as we know it today *is* insular-and not because it is comprised of islands with well-defined borders-but because militarism necessitates insular natures through its training over the land, sea and sky. This is a fact that the DON understands very well and makes explicitly clear in the context of environmental planning. In the DON's assessment of their impacts on the human environment throughout the Marianas, they note the critical social and historical importance of the ocean for fishing to the local people of the archipelago. The DON writes, "The military recognizes the cultural and economic value of these activities and their dependence on having access to areas of the marine environment essential to preserving local culture and sustaining the local economy" (Department of the Navy,2015) and acknowledge that fishing remains a "way of life" for the people of the Marianas. Similarly, the airspace above the islands informs a critical component of military training and requires an entirely separate environmental assessment in the NEPA process (i.e. Mariana Islands Range Complex Airspace Environmental Assessment).[42] Yet, such militarized renderings of environmental space are deeply interwoven with Indigenous epistemologies of the land that exceed the conventional notions of territory as it is conceived by the United States as a nation- state.

[42] A copy of the Mariana Islands Range Complex Airspace Environmental Assessment can be found at: http://chamorro.com/docs/MIRC_FINAL_EA_JUNE_2013.pdf.

From a military and policy perspective, the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) Study Area appears to present itself as a territorially undisputed space for training and testing with no mention of how Indigenous peoples are configured into contemporary discussions of the environment. Through the construction of these varied and overlapping spaces via militarism and U.S. ocean governance, Indigenous renderings of place are reconfigured into spaces of national territory and military "study areas." The DOD's characterization of the MITT as *open* (empty), *realistic* (destroyable) and *strategic* (geographically determined) in tandem with U.S. sovereign power over the sea, is a form of territorialisation that relies on the erasure of Indigenous relations to the land (King 2013, 8). While the smattering of U.S. territories, commonwealths and political associations that comprise the Pacific are often portrayed as peripheral to the overall structuring of American political life, their inclusion into a broader American ocean politics suggest the opposite. The CNMI exemplifies a location in which militarization reinforces political inequity in ways that are legally justifiable. These are, as Goldstein notes,

> …the legal justifications for occupation, the unofficially sanctioned or tolerated illegalities that further underwrote expansion and occupation, and differential modes of governance-including liberal democracy and citizenship-remain the very conditions of possibility for its more indirect forms of rule... (Goldstein 2014:9).

The historical conditions in which the Northern Mariana Islands were transformed into a U.S. Commonwealth, opened the doors for further territorialisation of the waters and air surrounding the Mariana Islands via militarisation. Through this transformation, islands were politically and ecologically "re-organized" according to a checkering of military Study Areas, Exclusive Economic Zones, and areas of environmental conservation under the jurisdiction of the United States.

The legal collapsing of these spaces allows the United States the freedom to operate within the surrounding seas and airspace, without having to confront the complexities of its political legacy in a

region where differences in local self-government has taken a back seat to the United States base building enterprise and its defense goals.

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Chapter 4: Sovereignty and Decolonization in the CNMI

Every few weeks in the CNMI, the U.S. Military publishes an inconspicuous notice in the local newspapers that include the dates and times they will be using the northern island of Farallon de Medinilla or FDM (No'os in Chamorro)[43] for target practice. FDM is located approximately 45 nautical miles north of Saipan in the Marianas archipelago and has been used as a live and inert range by the Department of Defense since 1971. During the drafting of the CNMI Covenant, FDM was to be used for defense responsibilities and cost the military a total of $20,600[44]. The DOD currently maintains an active lease with the CNMI Government that began in 1983 and has an option to renew for another 50 years. Due to the military's testing, fishing vessels, tour operators and the public are advised not to enter the general location of the maneuvers which includes up to twelve nautical miles around the island. These notices are published fairly often but quickly fade into the background to make way for other more pressing news stories. I draw attention to this particular notice as a way to highlight how militarization promotes a routinization of violence that is easily glossed over as a necessary component of the political agreement between the CNMI and the United States. In doing so, I seek to disrupt the popular narrative that sovereignty was "given up" for United States citizenship at the time of the CNMI Covenant's creation.

This chapter's main intervention within this line of argument then is to disrupt the common narrative in the CNMI that we were never colonized by the United States by nature of our political

[43] Farallon de Mendenilla or FDM as it is commonly known was a name given to the island under Spanish colonial rule, but the Indigenous Chamorro name for the island is No'os.

[44]Specifically, Section 802 of the CNMI Covenant reads: (a) The following property will be made available to the Government of the United States by lease to enable it to carry out its defense responsibilities: (1) on Tinian Island, approximately 17,799 acres (7,203 hectares) and the waters immediately adjacent thereto; (2) on Saipan Island, approximately 177 acres (72 hectares) at Tanapag Harbor; and (3) on Farallon de Medinilla Island, approximately 206 acres (83 hectares) encompassing the entire island, and the waters immediately adjacent thereto (b) The United States affirms that it has no present need for or present intention to acquire any greater interest in property listed above than that which is granted to it under Subsection 803(a), or to acquire any property in addition to that listed in Subsection (a), above, in order to carry out its defense responsibilities (CNMI Covenant,n.d.).

status, framed as a sovereign choice; and that military planning is a "necessary evil"[45] that we bargained for when we signed the 1975 Covenant agreement. Rather than accepting the Covenant as a stranglehold on future discussions of our political status and increased militarization, I instead hold the concept of sovereignty into question beginning at the time of the creation of the Covenant agreement[46] in an attempt to create space for re-conceptualizing its sociopolitical potential for our people. In doing so, I advocate for indigenizing sovereignty (Nadasdy,2017)-a perspective that is grounded in an Indigenous epistemology of land, and argue that processes of decolonization must examine the role of militarism in shaping the trajectory of Indigenous sovereignties in the Marianas. As is argued throughout this dissertation, militarization poses an immediate obstacle to Indigenous self-determination and the exercise of sovereignty. This analysis thus draws on a dynamic and emerging politics of sovereignty whose success can be measured in the relative ability for Indigenous peoples in the Marianas to maintain ownership and control over the land and thus, their lives. To make this argument, I draw on historical documentation regarding the CNMI Covenant throughout the CNMI community, contemporary discussions regarding political status in news media, informal interviews, and participant observation on Saipan from 2016-2020. I draw heavily from theories of sovereignty within Indigenous and Native Studies to critique the conventional understanding of Euro-American sovereignty and explore its possibilities for our political presents and futures in the Northern Mariana Islands.

[45] This terminology was employed by a number of interlocutors on Saipan in personal conversations when describing the military's presence in the Marianas after WWII.

[46] The Marianas Political Status Commission in 1975, defined the "Covenant" as a "binding agreement like a contract or compact and the title used for this agreement is not intended to have independent legal significance. This title seems appropriate because the relationship between the United States and the Northern Marianas will be a permanent one, which in its fundamental respects will not be able to be changed by one party without the consent of the other" (*To Approve*,1975).

Indigenous Sovereignty

Sovereignty is a fraught topic that is both political and personal, particularly as it pertains to Indigenous communities who continue to negotiate its meaning within the context of settler societies where juridical notions of sovereignty often contradict notions of Native sovereignty. In order to work through this contradiction, Teves et al. (2015,3) asks, "Is Native sovereignty the same sovereignty articulated within Western political discourse?" and, "If not, can Native peoples rearticulate sovereignty given its ideological baggage?" These questions raise important insights into the meaning of sovereignty within the context of Indigenous political systems both within and outside (such as in territories and commonwealths) of the continental United States. In these contexts, seventeenth and eighteenth century European conceptualizations of sovereignty continue to dominate the sociopolitical landscape while simultaneously undercutting Indigenous political systems that do not fit neatly within the bounds of its definition (Deloria,1979).

In its most conventional and popularized form, sovereignty is defined as "Supremacy or pre-eminence in respect of excellence or efficacy." Its second definition reads, "Supremacy in respect of power, domination, or rank; supreme dominion, authority, or rule" ("Sovereignty,"2020). By definition then the state is characterized as having enough power to exist independently and "regulate one's own internal functions in the field of domestic relations" (Deloria 1979,22). In such cases, the state is presumed to be the apex of power and even "…the precondition for politics" itself (Nadasdy 2017,3). Sovereignty then is as a conceptualization deeply enmeshed with the nation state, in which the nation is viewed as a supreme authority that rules over a bounded territory, the roots of which can be traced back to the Enlightenment and the Age of Discovery (Bonilla 2017, 332) and is "…directly tied to the need to codify and regulate the practices of conquest and the settlement of lands with peoples deemed uncivilized-and hence unsovereign" (Bonilla 2017, 332).

The history of colonization within Indigenous communities flips the definition of sovereignty on its head by highlighting how the term is both historically contingent and dynamic where Indigenous expressions of sovereignty often exceed European conceptualizations (Nadasdy 2017,79). As Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) scholar J. Ke'haulani Kauanui (2017,326) has pointed out, "Any discussion of sovereignty is sure to entail competing epistemological frames, and thus different ontological orientations and diverse political forms in theorizing our political present." Sovereignty is therefore negotiable, fluid and ever-changing yet deeply meaningful and real. At any particular moment in history, the term means different things to different peoples, but has tremendous capacity to inform Indigenous political life through its possibilities. Defining sovereignty is therefore an exercise in power itself and is a form of negotiation rooted in one's experience within society. Indigenous persepctives have much to offer to the concept of sovereignty because of the ways that they transform, engage with and exceed traditional statist ideologies that envision statehood as a political end goal.

Sovereign Limits

Indigenous theorizations have long recognized the inherent limits of employing European conceptualizations of sovereignty to understand the politics of Indigenous nations, territories and commonwealths where sovereignties are deeply interdependent (Cattelino,2008), emergent (Uperesa and Garriga-Lopez,2017), nested (Simpson,2014), entangled (Nadasdy,2017), paradoxical (Kauanui,2018) and interact with statist ideologies in complex ways. Many of these political arrangements exist outside the normative notions of a sovereign nation-state and defy the "universal norm" of sovereignty (Bonilla,2013). This is because for many Indigenous Peoples, sovereignty is not simply a political concept but "is at its core about relationships—relationships with each other and with plant and animal nations, with our lands and waters and with the spiritual" (Leanne Simpson 2015,18 in Hiller and Carlson 2018,49). Such perspectives reveal the political possibilities

and limitations of sovereignty and have been a critical component of theorizing Indigenous political resurgence, resistance and negotiation against colonial conceptualizations of sovereignty that seek to codify Indigenous political systems and forms of governance (Trask,1999).

Because of these historical complexities and competing epistemological positions, I do not attempt to *define* sovereignty within Chamorro and Refaluwasch communities, but to examine the stakes of contemporary renderings of sovereignty in the Northern Mariana Islands particularly amidst ongoing militarization; a process that is often in direct conflict with movements towards the protection of Indigenous land. This examination requires an unsettling of what current assumptions undergird definitions of sovereignty and decolonization in the context of the CNMI Covenant, as well as in the context of Indigenous theory-making more broadly. For the territories and commonwealths that are characterized as living *under* United States sovereignty such as Guam and the CNMI, these realities are often complicated by the fact that the United States does not view itself as an empire (Johnson 2005,1) and "…is often presented as an exception to the colonial model of state power" (Uperesa 2017, 39). The mere existence of places like Guam and the CNMI as we know them today, like many of the other "discontiguous states of America" (Lai,2011) around the world, do much to trouble this perception of exceptionalism and debunk this myth about American history (Kiste 1993,66).

On February 15, 1975, when the CNMI Covenant was signed, a headline in the *New York Times* read, "The United States signed a covenant today that will eventually make the Northern Marianas Islands in the Pacific a commonwealth, under American sovereignty, much like Puerto Rico" (Times,1975). As an unincorporated territory, *under* American sovereignty, these designations secured a political distancing between the CNMI and the United States that continues to characterize our contemporary social and political relationship. Sovereignty in the CNMI is therefore complicated by the fact that federal legislation can supersede local self-governance, despite the fact

that self-governance implies a level of political autonomy (at least in theory) to the people of the Northern Marianas. This legal paradox has led to much debate within United States legal circles, leading one legal analyst to question, "…in the event of an irreconcilable conflict arising between the Northern Marianas people and the United States government regarding an internal matter of the CNMI, who must prevail?" (Horey 2003,182). In reference to this ambiguity within the CNMI Covenant, Horey (2003,241) writes that there was no "...suggestion or agreement as to precisely how, as a practical matter, local self-government *would* be secured from federal interference. The only agreement was that, somehow, it would." This legal quandary is particularly important in the contemporary context of troop restructuring in the Pacific, since the superseding of federal legislation over local laws has historically occurred as a result of increased militarization in the name of national defense. This quandary also brings into question the very notion of state sovereignty over respective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ's) and other "federalized" spaces such as Marine Monuments within the United States insular areas. For a nation-state, sovereignty thus becomes a question of ownership over territory, or at least about demarcating what belongs and what does not belong within the nation-state's boundaries. As Bonilla explains, to define the boundaries of its territory, nation-states rely on certain "territorializing assumptions" and "constitutive exclusions" (Bonilla, 2018) that define who can and cannot become part of the nation.

(Un)incorporated into the Nation

The United States designation of islands as *insular territories* to be administered by the War Department's Bureau of Insular Affairs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is one such form of demarcation. By including the category of *unincorporated territory* into the political vocabulary, territories remained in spaces of "liminality" and "deferral" (Goldstein 2014,15). This has manifested in what Fallon (1991,31) argues is an "…ambivalent, if not antagonistic, attitude

toward granting independence to these territories."[47] Such designations, which produced a sense of being half-in and half-out of political decision-making, is evident in the juridical recognition of territories as "foreign…in a domestic sense" (Kaplan,2005;Burnett and Marshall,2001) when discussions surrounding the much debated Insular Cases were under way. In reference to Puerto Ricans, Amy Kaplan describes this legal paradox as a "limbo in space and time" which allows the United States to interpret the political futures of the territories and commonwealths in ways that both deny them of the ability to become a state but also the ability to become an autonomous nation (Kaplan 2005,3). Kaplan's analysis in *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* highlights how such paradoxes are not anomalies at all, but rather part and parcel of United States empire building and that far from being contradictory, the foreign and the domestic are co-constitutive (Kaplan 2005,4). By touching on the Insular Cases in this discussion, my point is not simply to re-hash the imperial and racist roots from which these legal opinions and juridical categories have sprung, but to highlight how these discourses continue to pervade current discussions of self-determination among the Indigenous Chamorro and Refaluwasch people in the CNMI by framing sovereignty as always, already subsumed by and through United States political frameworks.[48] The legacy of the Insular Cases continues to provide the foundation for the flourishing of other imperial formations (Stoler et al., 2007) that do not easily fit within the context of colonialism as it is typically

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[47] It should be noted that, according to Smith (1991,36), "The Marianas plebiscite on future status held in 1975, notwithstanding the size of the vote for a Commonwealth (78.8% with a turnout of over 90%) failed to include independence or free association options. The options required by UN decolonization principles were not offered and the status of this act of "self-determination" was criticized by a number of legal scholars. The failure to present other options reflects an agreement by both the United states and political leaders in the Northern Marianas to push the matter through as quickly as possible, and implied some lack of confidence in the islander's support for Commonwealth status." Historically, it is understood that the members of the Congress of Micronesia (a bicameral legislature created in 1965 during the TTPI) were not in agreement with the members of the Marianas delegation in the 1960's about the Northern Marianas desiring a closer political union with the United States. (McPhetres 1997).

[48] The importance of the *Insular Cases* also highlights the court's reliance on *Rice vs. Cayetano* as a tool for understanding indigeneity in the Marianas. While the formation of a Northern Marianas Descent identity was not intended to map onto race, it has sometimes been conflated with race and is viewed as a direct violation of the U.S. fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. However, the use of *Rice vs. Cayetano* to understand race relations in the CNMI is problematic and has been problematized by a number of legal scholars (Aguon,2009;Torres,2012;Villazor,2018).

imagined. One such manifestation in our contemporary world is the assimilationist discourse used to circumscribe Indigenous identity and authenticity. Such discourses have long been detrimental to Native peoples whose struggles are framed within the context of exclusion/inclusion into the broader nation state (Byrd 2012,xxv) and work to foreclose Indigenous political imaginaries.

Assimilation into a broader American political family was an influential narrative employed in early Covenant negotiations between the United States and CNMI in the early 1970's. The Marianas Political Status Commission of 1974 described this commonwealth union as, "the name given to a self-governing political entity which is closely attached to another, larger political unit such as a nation." Between 1972-1974, there were five rounds of CNMI Covenant negotiations before the Commonwealth Bill was signed into US P.L. Law 94-241 by U.S. President Gerald Ford on March 24, 1976 (McPhetres,1997 in Babauta & Babauta,2008,pg.5). During this time, assimilationist discourses that aimed to incorporate the CNMI into a United States political structure provided powerful narratives that influenced Covenant negotiators on Saipan, which was considered the capitol island of Micronesia at the time. For example, the Honorable Edward DLG Pangelinan, Chairman of the Marianas Political Status Commission (MPSC) at the time, understood Indigenous relations with the United States as something that both expanded economic opportunities and also provided a sense of incorporation into a broader American social, political and economic family. He explained,

> As an American, there are enormous opportunities for education, employment, business, investment, career, recreation and relaxation, military and public service. As citizens, we enjoy the benefits of being part of the richest and strongest nation in the world. The geographic boundary of the CNMI is no longer limited to the boundaries of the island's lagoon, it extends from the CNMI to American Samoa to Hawaii, the continental United States and to the American Caribbean of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Our lands are the most beautiful and scenic spots on this planet. And what about the communities we have built-our cities, towns, counties, villages and the length and breath of our country. And finally, the diversity of our people, the Indigenous Chamorro/Carolinians, all are now members

> of a much larger community of over 300 million Americans. We all benefit from the various cultural and ethnic diversity of our American population (Babauta & Babauta,2008,pg.5).

Mr. Pangelinan's statement links a diverse array of other United States territorial "possessions" with the continental United States through their incorporation into an American political system that he frames as "ours." In the CNMI, where Chamorros and Refaluwasch are often simultaneously understood and self-identify as both Indigenous *and* American, assimilationist discourses are often recapitulated through U.S.-transplanted civil rights frameworks that effectively erase indigeneity through the racialization of Chamorro/Refaluwasch people as an ethnic group within America. Such discourses continue to be produced through the expansion of federal policies via militarization today and have profound consequences on contemporary Indigenous politics where the power to retain control over Indigenous lands as the ancestral people of the Northern Marianas is complicated by the legal designation as American citizen.

Linking Sovereignty to Decolonization

Sovereignty is fundamentally linked to decolonization since it involves a critical re-thinking of how we envision who we are as a people, particularly in relation to a broader American nation. It entails an unsettling of who we are as Indigenous peoples in today's world where decolonization is commonly associated with state-sanctioned processes that often link political independence with complete disconnection from larger nation states. Sovereignty is thus linked to our ability to negotiate our political futures, much like our community did in the early days of the Covenant negotiations when questions surrounding the exercise of our political power were surfacing. Yarimar Bonilla's preference for the term unsettling as opposed to decolonizing is instructive here since it "...avoids the telos of decolonization. What is unsettled is not necessarily removed, toppled or returned to a previous order but its fundamentally brought into question" (Bonilla 2017,335).

The term "unsettling" is particularly useful to employ in the Pacific where many islands remain technically de-colonized, but remain under U.S. hegemony (Pöllath,2018) and where some remain on the UNs list of Non Self Governing Territories (NSGT) such as Guam. In this light, it is helpful to understand decolonization less as a strict political process with a defined end goal than it is to view it as a varied, dynamic and transformative process situated at the complex intersection of sociopolitical and historical circumstances. In the context of United States-CNMI relations, sovereignty remains an inroad for exploring these complex dynamics and the ways that United States sovereign power is asserted over local political decision-making via militarization. An adequate examination of our political futures must engage with the influential power of militarization on our islands, where United States hegemony manifests itself in ways that are not always so obviously tied to traditional conceptualizations of colonialism. As Na'puti (2013,56) points out,

> …today colonial control and imperial rule no longer manifest in overt and hostile taking of land as was common in the era of European colonialism. Instead, colonialism operates in more covert ways, through the control of labor markets and neoliberal reforms and by exerting military and political pressures throughout the globe.

Amidst increasing militarization, processes of decolonization can be understood less as *breaks* from a larger nation state, and more of a site of political contestation and ongoing negotiation with the United States. In the CNMI, there are fears that independence from the United States-who provides major social, economic and political advantages-will immediately cease if we were to re-think our political status. These fears are often accompanied by an "all or nothing" attitude about American involvement in the Pacific which characterizes decolonization less as a process integral to Indigenous self-determination and more about "losing out" on the benefits of being American. The outcome of this perspective is that discussions on Saipan surrounding decolonization are viewed as irrelevant, unnecessary, and even disrespectful to the United States who is viewed as providing for

our Indigenous communities. Yet, decolonization continues to remain deeply entwined with militarization, where the prospects of re-negotiating the CNMI's political status with the United States often led people to ask me, "if not the United States military, then who?". In other words, how could we possibly survive, who would we even be, without the United States? This phrase was usually followed up by an assertion that if it were not for the United States presence here on our islands, we would be overtaken or threatened by another nation like North Korea, China or Russia-a narrative largely promulgated by the United States' Pacific Pivot that warns against threats from the Asian continent. While this work does not seek to downplay the real dangers that have been asserted against the islands by countries such as China and North Korea, it does seek to contextualize our islands' involvement in the broader geopolitical and military strategy between nation states whose priorities center around the promotion of defense goals rather than Indigenous sovereignty.

Creating a (Trust) Territory, Defining the Common(wealth)

What does decolonization mean when Indigenous homelands have been reconfigured as American territory and where decolonization is foreclosed by commonwealth status? Furthermore, how do we define "the commons" in a territorial possession? In his essay entitled "Against death maps of Empire: Contesting colonial borders through Indigenous sovereignty," Eric Ritskes, writing about Jodi Byrd's conceptualization of the commons writes, "Byrd (2011) recognizes indigeneity as a necessary obstacle to 'the commons' as a means of decolonization because the commons is conceptualized on and through lands stolen from Indigenous peoples; the idea of the commons was not only always exclusionary, as Kim Christen (2012) argues, but always already embedded in colonial dispossession." In the case of the CNMI, Indigenous experiences living in an unincorporated territory pushes the limits of the terms like "decolonization" in productive ways by challenging the very meaning of what it means to be part of a broader commons defined by a larger

nation state. What decolonization actually means in a United States territory[49]-where the full spectrum of constitutional rights is not present-has long been up for debate. Fallon (1991; 29) expands on the paradoxical nature of this political agreement when he writes,

> The necessary basis of equality is missing because the islands do not have equal representation in the U.S. Congress, the inhabitants of the Northern Marianas cannot vote for president, the islands may be subject to federal laws not applicable to the states, and the legislature of the "Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas" does not conform in its structure and nature to the state legislatures.

The various United States territorial statuses of the islands that comprise the Pacific therefore exist within a "murky" political zone "lying between formal statehood and official independence" (Fallon, 1991,23). As a commonwealth-a term which in itself is rather nebulous[50]- the people of the CNMI opted for a closer political union with the United States that recognized local self-government, but in many ways privileged United States citizenship.

Discussions surrounding decolonization in the Marianas are complicated by the meaning of *colonization* itself, especially in the CNMI where United States political hegemony is often framed as a necessary component of securitization in the region rather than a form of occupation. Banivanua-Mar 2019, 117) argues that this perspective was exemplified by the U.S. Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson's characterization of the Pacific islands as critical defense "outposts" to detract from the

[49] While I am not suggesting that the CNMI is legally defined as a territory, it has often been presented as undistinguishable from other territories in terms of federal policies. Horey (2003:182) has argued that politically, this has been an outcome of the, "…overall federal tendency…to ignore the unique circumstances of the CNMI, and lump it together with the traditional U.S. territories." In theory, this distinction is important, since commonwealth status affords the Northern Mariana Islands with a level of autonomy that other territories do not have, such as the right to self-government and the CNMI Covenant and Constitution.

[50] Fallon (1991,26) argues that the term ""commonwealth" has no precise definition for the U.S. Government" and points to the historically arbitrary use of the term by other U.S. states such as Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Virginia; as well as the Philippines' short-term use of the term between 1935-1946. For an excellent discussion of the "graded, political limbo" that "the federal government has consigned" to it's eight insular territories including: American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Marianas, Palau, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands see Joseph E. Fallon's (1991) "Federal Policy and U.S. Territories: The Political Restructuring of the United States of America". A similar assessment of national belonging is addressed by Barreto and Lazaro who write that there are "varying degrees of national belonging."

problematic use of the label "colonies." Thus, Northern Marianas history is conventionally understood as moving in teleological fashion from conquest to colonization to self-government. Importantly, colonization in the case of the Northern Marianas usually refers to Spanish, German and Japanese occupation, rather than the United States, who is commonly viewed as a nation state that negotiated with the CNMI rather than a colonizer. It has been argued, for example, that the Northern Marianas Islands were "no longer true colonies" (Horey 2003,21) under the jurisdiction of the League of Nations, since the Indigenous peoples were seen as desiring to integrate "American ideals of democracy, equality and popular sovereignty…and that there be a break from the colonial past, not a continuation of it under another name" (Horey 2003, 242). From this perspective, the creation of the Covenant symbolized for many in the Northern Marianas, a move towards incorporation into a broader nation that signified the end of colonization, rather than another beginning.

Having been framed in the language of self-determination, the ideological and political transformation of the Marianas Islands, from its status within the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) to a United States commonwealth, also symbolized for many an exercise in sovereign power that had not been afforded under any other previous colonial regime. As Chamorro legal scholar Nicole Torres (2012,173) points out, "…the CNMI acted as a sovereign in negotiating the Covenant with the United States, which specifically acknowledges the CNMI's inherent sovereignty…". This process is viewed as a distinguishing political feature between the CNMI and the largest and southernmost island of Guåhan, which is undergoing a political status education campaign regarding a formal path to decolonization through the United Nations due to its non-self-governing territorial status[51]. While the 1950 Organic Act granted U.S. citizenship to those living in

[51] At the time of writing this dissertation, Guam was listed under Chapter XI of the Charter of the United Nation's list of Non Self-Governing Territories (NSGT) which are defined as "territories whose people have not yet attained a full measure of self-government" (The United Nations and Decolonization,2020).

Guåhan, it allowed for only a limited form of "self-government" and one non-voting delegate in Congress. Thus, the CNMI's political status was "temporalized in a moment" (Simpson,2010) and the Covenant remains a stranglehold on discussions surrounding our political futures in the CNMI.

The Sovereignty/Citizenship Trade-off and the Dependency Dilemma

In an attempt to learn more about the CNMI's perspective regarding sovereignty, I conducted an interview with a Chamorro lawyer and sovereignty scholar Mr. Robert Torres from Saipan. I began by asking Mr. Torres about his views regarding the history of sovereignty and its implications for contemporary society in the CNMI. He responded,

> …you ask yourself…when has a people ever had an opportunity for true independence and forsake independence and bargain away their own sovereignty in favor of a favorable political relationship with its former trustee…never…this commonwealth was a kind of anomaly in this history, and so Guam never had an opportunity to negotiate for this…

In his explanation, Mr. Torres frames this unique history with the United States as a former trustee as one in which we entered into a bargaining relationship with by *giving up* our sovereignty. CNMI Historian Samuel McPhetres also notes this agreement in his popularly referenced history book entitled *Self-Government and Citizenship in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.* He explains that this decision,

> …was an act of self-determination by a sovereign Indigenous population who voluntarily opted for union with the United States knowing that they had independence as an alternative. It was the first time that this had ever happened in the history of the United States.

Despite the fact that the Marianas was not considered self-governing at the time, the decision to enter into a political union with the United States was viewed as an act of "inherent sovereignty" (McPhetres 1997,48). Guam on the other hand was viewed as never having the opportunity to

participate in such a historical moment. Given this fact, I continued to inquire about why independence was such a controversial idea at the time.

I: It's interesting that independence was immediately associated with having no connection with the United States, like you are turning your back on the country. I'm curious as to why independence was so controversial.

Mr. Torres: The majority of people did not see independence as the path of opportunity, progress or development…The fact of the matter is, when we bargained for the Covenant we signed onto a deal that wholesale adopted the American system of governance, laws and jurisprudence and economic benefits and everything. We did. And now it can't be terminated unless there is a mutual consent provision which its obviously not going to happen that the United States would have a mutual agreement to terminate the Covenant….so we have to now work within a system of laws and rules and finances that is affected by US policies, on immigration, on labor, on an environment, and as the ebb and flow goes in the United States so too goes the CNMI…So we bargained for this, and we signed on for it and that's the deal we made…

In his discussion, Mr. Torres highlights the deep legal entanglements that have emerged from the Covenant negotiations. While the mutual consent provision offers us a level of protection against Congressional power, our lives are now so inextricably linked to the United States that the implementation of the provision is now viewed as an impossibility. Covenant expert and co-author of *An Honorable Accord: The Covenant Between the Northern Mariana Islands and the United States,* Howard P. Willens explains, that the CNMI's political arrangement is both "constitutional and successful" and that the mutual consent provision "…protects the Northern Marianas people from having the fundamental terms of their relationship with the United States being unilaterally altered by the US Congress-as Congress is presently free to do with respect to Guam and the other US territories" (Willens 2003,376). I highlight Willens analysis here to point out that while contemporary debates surrounding the CNMI's political status center around issues of U.S. constitutionality, this analysis misses out on the broader issue of dependency that militarism produces. Put in another way, legal provisions-even the ones meant to protect the CNMI-cannot be divorced from the broader history of imperialism throughout the Marianas where U.S. Military goals remain preeminent. Without

contextualizing the history of the Covenant in this way, arguments over whether or not the CNMI's status remains constitutional will do little to expand the horizons of decolonization in the Pacific. Chamorro scholar Michael Bevacqua (2017,107) has characterized the similar situation on Guam as a "decolonial deadlock," in which people liken to suicide, and can be described as "a discursive formation that circles around the idea that the best possible political and social configuration in Guam has already been reached through its colonial relationship to the United States and that hence, nothing more need be done." In the CNMI, this research has revealed that the Covenant remains a stranglehold on discussions of Indigenous political futures that foreclose discussions regarding decolonization. This is because the formation of commonwealth and territorial relations in the CNMI and Guam are viewed as meaningful political arrangements that make it difficult to speak about our contemporary relations with the United States as imperial in nature. This stifling of the political imagination also frames decolonization as a simplified "choice between national independence in isolation and emancipation in association or integration with the colonizing power…" (Heim 2017,915). In the CNMI, our militarized legal entanglements with the United States remind us that decolonization has never been a simple question of what is legal or not.

The Limits of a Commonwealth Status

In 2008, United States' Congress federalized the CNMI's immigration system despite the CNMI's popular disapproval of this legislation. One year earlier, at a Hearing Before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, David B. Cohen, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs, testified that while the CNMI had made improvements to working conditions since the 1990's serious concerns over homeland security, human trafficking and mistreatment of refugees throughout the islands still remained. For these reasons, Cohen concluded that with the help of U.S. Congress, the CNMI's immigration system must be federalized as soon as possible through the passing of bill S.1634, the *Northern Mariana Islands Covenant Implementation Act*. This was an important

moment for the people of the CNMI who lacked representation in Congress, yet were being subject to federal oversight over immigration policies that were seen as failing. While Cohen was clear about the need to federalize, his statement also highlighted the inequitable political relationship between the U.S. and CNMI. He explained,

> …we're concerned about the message that would be sent if Congress were to pass this legislation while the CNMI remains the only U.S. territory or commonwealth without a delegate in Congress. At a time when young men and women from the CNMI are sacrificing their lives in Iraq in proportions that far exceed the national average, we hope that Congress will consider granting them a seat at the table at which their fate will be decided (*United States/CNMI Political Union*,2007).

At the conclusion of the federalization process, CNMI residents continued to remain uneasy about what this controversial change meant in terms of federal encroachment over local laws, despite blaming local government for many of the failings associated with this outcome.

In a *Marianas Variety* (2011) article entitled "CNMI Lawmaker Advises Review of U.S. Ties," CNMI Representative Stanley T. Torres framed the issue in terms of the CNMI's political status, creating House Bill 17-7, calling for the creation of a Second Marianas Political Status Commission that would re-evaluate the CNMI-U.S. political relationship. In a telling interview, Torres stated,

> …[the] timing is very right to bring this proposal up because it appears that the federal government has been screwing us for a long time…The feds give us money but instead of letting us make the best use of it ourselves, they put a lot of restrictions (Erediano, 2011).

Torres' comments reflect the CNMI's inability to adequately exercise the right to self-government, and similar sentiments continued to remain a theme into the mid 2000's as U.S. military planning burgeoned alongside these concerns. In 2015, House Bill 19-2 was submitted[52] to the Nineteenth Northern Mariana Commonwealth Legislature. In short, the bill was titled the *Second Marianas*

[52] This bill was submitted around the same time that major increases in military planning were being discussed. For example, it was submitted shortly before the Final Record of Decision (ROD) for the Marine Relocation and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Mariana Islands Training and Testing (MITT) was released.

Political Status Commission Act of 2015[53] whose purpose was reinvigorate the call to create a Second Marianas Political Status Commission that would,

> ...examine whether the people desire continuing in a "Political union with the United States of America" pursuant to the Covenant; to determine if that continuation is in their best interest, or whether some other political status would better enable them to fulfill their aspirations of full and meaningful self-government and for other purposes.

Recognizing that the current political time in which we find ourselves no longer accommodates the CNMI's desires for self-determination, the goal of the Second Marianas Political Status Commission was to meaningfully engage in discussions regarding contemporary political engagements with the United States. Authored by Rep. Felicidad Ogumoro (R-Saipan), the CNMI Senate passed the House bill by a vote of 6-1 on December 19, 2014. The Commission consists of nine voting members and two non-voting ex-officio members, including two persons from Rota, two from Tinian and five from Saipan. The bill came at the heels of a number of important changes in the CNMI, among which "Submerged land control, rampant militarization, and the federal immigration takeover" ranked as the most pressing (Chan,2016)[54]. Arguably, while all three political concerns are presented as separate issues, they can be viewed as falling under the same umbrella of militarism.[55]

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[53] The first political status commission refers to the original Covenant agreement made in 1975 between the CNMI and the United States of America.

[54] The three issues being referred to are: 1) The CNMI's legal struggle to retain control over the submerged lands surrounding the Marianas 2) the increasing militarization of the islands and surrounding sea and airspace, and 3) the U.S.'s decision to federalize the CNMI immigration system which up until 2008, had been run by the CNMI Government.

[55] Chamorro scholar, Keith Camacho's (2012) analysis of Chamorro and Filipino social movements in the Marianas argues that the ensuing federalization of the CNMI immigration system due to labor violations can be understood as a move to further militarize the region through the logic of border policing. This argument is instructive of the way in which all three issues fall under the umbrella of militarism. It is also worthwhile to note that the precarious economic situation in the CNMI that was left in the wake of federal immigration, has produced a further reliance on militarization as a means for economic revenue. For example, in the CNMI's Comprehensive Economic Development Plan 2009-2014, the document notes that, "Although faced with many economic challenges the Commonwealth looks to an opportunity which is already bringing in new investment to the region. The planned military buildup, which is the planned move of Marines from Okinawa to Guam, will undoubtedly bring both positive and negative challenges" (Commonwealth Economic Development Strategic Planning Commission,2009).

When I asked Rep. Ogumoro about her experiences regarding the authoring of House Bill 19-2, she stated,

> The U.S. continues to make policies without proper consultation and if there *is* consultation and we say no, just like in the case of the military…when we are trying to make a point…they keep going, as if we are talking to the birds.

Having heard her express similar concerns about the Covenant previously, I asked her about her experience with the Covenant negotiations as well. According to Rep. Ogumoro (Personal communication, July 6, 2020),

> …look back into the reports even in our books, it only took…oh my gosh…less than a year…such a short time for public education for the people to understand what the Covenant really means. You see what is happening now for the other [Pacific] entities such as the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau and the Federated States of Micronesia...they are on equal footing with US…with us, the U.S. is speaking on our behalf and that is so obvious when we go to the United Nations…we sit *behind* the U.S. and they speak on our behalf…

Rep. Ogumoro's sentiments echo the much longer resistance to accepting commonwealth status as the best option for the people of the CNMI that existed on Saipan. In particular, it has been noted that the Saipan Women's Association (SWA) and the United Carolinian Association (UCA) were vocal opponents of the Covenant while major support came from the Marianas Political Status Commission (McPhetres 1997,54). This history is helpful for understanding how resistance to political negotiations with the U.S. has historically manifested itself among different groups in ways that do not always fit neatly into a pro-U.S. narrative.

Not a Territory

In a *Saipan Tribune* article entitled "Meaning of Covenant Questioned," John Tagabuel, executive director of Carolinian Affairs Office, stated that the "U.S. is treating us like a U.S. territory" (Chan,2016) like Guam or Samoa, who are non-governing entities. In comparing our

status to Guam, Mr. Tagabuel's comments reveal a number of complex social and political realities that continue to shape discussions of Indigenous self-governance in the Marianas. First, as previously mentioned, the CNMI possesses more political autonomy than the neighboring island of Guam which remains on the UNs list of Non-Self Governing Territories (NSGT) and an "unincorporated territory." Similarly, as American nationals (as opposed to US citizens) Tagabuel's comments reveal the relative political disadvantage that American Samoans have in comparison to those living in the Northern Marianas. This perspective was also commonly shared with me by Saipan residents when referring to Guam's political status by stating, "At *least* we are a commonwealth." In fact, when applied to the CNMI, the label of territory can be viewed as offensive. At a public presentation about the legal status of the U.S. territories that I attended on Saipan in 2018,[56] John Gonzales (president of the Northern Marianas Descent Corporation) stated that to call the CNMI a "territory is an insult…who went through a process unlike any other" islands in the region. In this regard, commonwealth status is often a mark of distinction that is upheld as a source of pride for the people of the CNMI.

In legal terms, the designation of commonwealth status along with the creation of the CNMI Covenant, Constitution and ensuing political union with the United States, presents the CNMI with a level of political autonomy that simply is not present in the case of other territories. In fact, in the 1975 plebiscite vote to become a U.S. commonwealth, the Indigenous populations of the Northern Mariana Islands were understood as the only population ever known to have "voluntarily opted for union with the United States knowing that they had independence as an alternative" (McPhetres 1997,57). This autonomous decision was understood was an "act of self-determination by a sovereign Indigenous population" (McPhetres 1997,57) and is tied to the fact that the political union

[56] This public presentation entitled "U.S. Constitutional Rights in the Territories and the CNMI," was held at American Memorial Park on July 8, 2018 and hosted by Honorable Gustavo A. Gelpi and from Puerto Rico and Honorable Jose S. Dela Cruz from Saipan.

between the CNMI and the United States could be altered unless on agreement by both parties, a mutual consent agreement (or mutual consent clause) written into the Covenant as a way to thwart an abuse of power should it ever occur. As a result, Guam is sometimes upheld as an exemplar of what the CNMI does *not* want in regards to self-determination, as its official status remains an unincorporated, organized territory in which the Organic Act of 1950 was imposed upon the island. As Mr. Rudy Sablan in the *Saipan Tribune,* explains,

> There exists a misconception about our CNMI. Many people believe that because we are a commonwealth, we belong to the United States, as if we are property or territory of the U.S.-Wrong. We don't belong to the U.S.A. Neither the U.S. Congress, nor the U.S. President, has yet to agree that we are a U.S.-owned territory. The CNMI is not just U.S. soil (Chan,2016).

Legal scholar Horey (2003:182) has argued that politically, this has been an outcome of the, "…overall federal tendency…to ignore the unique circumstances of the CNMI, and lump it together with the traditional U.S. territories." Both Mr. Tagabuel and Mr. Sablan's point out the inherent contradiction between the CNMI's self-government and U.S. sovereign power over the CNMI's political system, a paradox that continues to frame contemporary discussions of sovereignty in the CNMI, with the general consensus being that the CNMI traded its sovereignty for citizenship. This political history is important to re-examine in light of contemporary discussions of self-determination amidst the steady growth of military planning in the region, where the system of settler recognition ultimately couches Indigenous self-governance within the framework of U.S. sovereignty.

The Politics of Indigeneity

Contemporary media coverage of the Mariana Islands tends to center around a few salient themes: U.S. political controversies[57]; the lack of democracy being extended to the United States'

[57] The largest of these incidents is now described as the "Jack Abramoff CNMI scandal" which involved U.S. lobbyists and other government officials swaying Congressional actions in the CNMI.

territorial possessions; and more recently, the devastating effects of unprecedented typhoons hitting "U.S. soil".[58] Although seemingly disparate, these themes overlap in complex ways and point to the inextricable links between America's imperial reach and its ensuing militarization of the environment. This coverage seeks to portray a more inclusive and historically accurate representation of United States imperial history in U.S. territories where most inhabitants are Indigenous Peoples that do not possess the same constitutional rights as American citizens in the continental United States. It also highlights the general unfamiliarity that most American's have in regards to United States territories which engenders a sense of disbelief that such political arrangements continue to exist in today's world where overt forms of colonialism are no longer acceptable.

On the March 8, 2015 airing of HBO's "Last Week Tonight," John Oliver picked up on this paradox and noted that while, "more than four million people live in the U.S. territories, more than 98% of them are racial or ethnic minorities, and the more you look into the history of why their voting rights are restricted, the harder it is to justify, cause' it goes all the way back to when America first acquired them." By framing Indigenous people in the territories as racial or ethnic minorities that live in places that were "acquired" by the United States, Oliver's comments reflect a common practice of racializing Indigenous peoples (Moreton-Robinson,2015) in attempt to underscore the unequal application of democratic rights to *all* Americans. While his sketch was informative of America's imperial reach outside the continental United States, it continues to highlight the complex political realities that Indigenous people in territories and commonwealths must negotiate under American political hegemony that cannot be solved by voting.

[58] See Alia Wong and Lenika Cruz's critique of mainland America's scant coverage of Typhoon Yutu in their article entitled "The Media Barely Covered One of the Worst Storms to Hit U.S. Soil" published in *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/11/super-typhoon-yutu-mainstream-media-missed-northern-mariana-islands/575692/

Such perspectives portray a lack of political representation-specifically inequitable voting rights[59]-in an American system of governance as *the* root of the island's many social and economic issues. Increasingly, democratization and a growing American consciousness are understood as the panacea to the many social and political problems facing the people of the Marianas. I argue that while the critique of unequal political representation is well founded, it highlights state-centered approaches to decolonization that define political and social equality through the granting of U.S. citizenship and incorporation-a move in which democracy is viewed "as the ever-heralded justification and decisive promise of inclusion in settler states more broadly" (Goldstein 2014,20). From this perspective, statehood is upheld as the apex of assimilation into a seemingly homogenous American political system-a prospect that presents itself as a legal paradox in overseas insular territories[60] (which include the CNMI, Guam, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa and Puerto Rico) in which "the promise of statehood" (Goldstein 2014,16) existed but never manifested through their designation as *unincorporated*[61]. As Stayman (2009,7 in Pöllath 2018,237) points out, "The status of 'unincorporated territory' meant that fundamental individual rights were protected by the Constitution, but "Congress need not extend citizenship nor extend a promise of eventual statehood."

Thus, militarism overlaps with the politics of indigeneity in the CNMI in a number of important ways. For one, processes of self-determination complicate the politics of indigeneity

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[59] To be clear, I am not arguing that voting rights are not important, but instead that fighting for equality based on an assimilationist discourse propounded by United States policies does not go "far enough" in alleviating the deeply asymmetrical socio-political and economic structural relations that characterize the U.S.-CNMI relationship. This argument aligns itself with Indigenous scholarship that recognizes both the possibilities and limitations of describing Indigenous struggles within the framework of "human and civil rights based social justice projects" (Tuck and Yang 2012,1).

[60] The eight insular territories include: American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Guam, the Marshall Islands, the Northern Marianas, Palau, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The political status of the islands are as follows: FSM (Free Association), Marshall Islands (Free Association), Palau (Free Association), Northern Marianas (Commonwealth, unincorporated), Puerto Rico (Commonwealth, unincorporated), Guam (unincorporated), U.S. Virgin Islands (unincorporated), American Samoa (unincorporated).

[61] Both the CNMI and Guam are considered "organized and unincorporated" (Fallon 1991,25) despite their different political statuses.

across the archipelago, where decolonization between Chamorros on Guam, and Chamorros and Refaluwasch in the CNMI both overlap and diverge due to our different colonial and political histories. Two, Indigenous Chamorro and Refaluwasch peoples must contend with authenticating and differentiating their Indigenousness against the background of Americanization. Indigeneity overlaps with racial politics and highlights the influence that settler legacies of racial purity and blood-quantum have over the authentication of Indigenous peoples. Lastly, militarism forces both groups to reckon with the sometimes tenuous and paradoxical nature of having two groups fall within the same category of Northern Mariana Descent (NMD)-a category that often becomes conflated with indigeneity.

One of the most important consequences of the differential military and political histories of the Northern Marianas and Guåhan in terms of Indigenous self-determination, has been the formal recognition of two groups of people into the category of Northern Mariana Descent; the Chamorro and Refaluwasch peoples. The emergence of an "Indigenous" label surfaced among Chamorros in the 1980's on Guam as a response to issues of self-determination (Tolentino,n.d.). In the CNMI, however, indigeneity is often conflated with the legal categorization of "Northern Marianas Descent" which designates those individuals who meet the requirements of Article XII in the Northern Mariana Islands Constitution. Article XII is entitled "Restrictions on Alienation of Land" and is comprised of six main sections. In section 4, a person of Northern Marianas Descent is defined as,

> …a citizen or national of the United States and who is of at least one-quarter Northern Marianas Chamorro or Northern Marianas Carolinian blood or a combination thereof or an adopted child of a person of Northern Marianas descent is adopted while under the age of eighteen years.
>
> For purposes of defining Northern Marianas descent, a person shall be considered a full-blooded Northern Marianas Chamorro or Northern Marianas Carolinian if that person was born

> or domiciled in the Northern Mariana Islands by 1950 and was a citizen of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands before the termination of the Trusteeship with respect to the Commonwealth (Article XII, Northern Mariana Islands Constitution, n.d.).

The definition of NMD, taken directly from the experience of the drafting of the CNMI Constitution during the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) period, used a combination of time, location and political status as guidelines for identification of Indigenous peoples in the CNMI. This designation was important for the way that it linked the deeply meaningful and ancestral ties to the land with Indigenous people. Given the long historical use of blood-quantum as a tool for discrimination against Indigenous Peoples globally, the use of blood-quantum to define NMDs might appear somewhat contradictory. However, a closer examination reveals that the use of blood-quantum to define indigeneity need not be discriminatory and in fact, can work to promote Indigenous self-determination (Villazor 2020,476). This is an important distinction to make in the context of U.S. political hegemony in the Pacific where Indigenous rights buttress up against U.S. constitutional rights such as "equal protection and individual rights" (Villazor 2018,128).[62] In the CNMI, the definition of NMDs highlights the complexity of both indigeneity as a political and social category that intersects with a broader American national identity and citizenship.

Given this history, the perspectives of Chamorros from Guam often do not address Refaluwasch people's perspectives who re-located to the Northern Mariana Islands in the early 19th century after a massive typhoon hit their home islands (Alkire 1984,272)[63]. Despite evidence of pre-contact relationships between Carolinians and Chamorros from Guam (Goetzfridt,n.d.), this

[62] For an in-depth discussion of Article XII and its usage in the local court system in the CNMI and Guam, see "Problematizing the Protection of Culture and the *Insular Cases*" (2018) by Rose Cuison Villazor *and* "Reading Between the (Blood) Lines" by Rose Cuison Villazor (2010). While the legal ramifications of these tensions have continued to play out at the time of writing this dissertation, the question of whether or not U.S. laws can accommodate for Indigenous rights in the CNMI is outside the scope of this dissertation. However, I draw attention to Article XII to highlight the longer and more enduring role of U.S. political power and its ability to transform the politics of indigeneity in the CNMI.
[63] When the

contemporary Refaluwasch "blindspot" is often unintentionally promulgated by scholarship about Chamorros, particularly on Guam, where the same history between Refaluwasch is not shared. Camacho (2012,704) has touched on this issue when notes that,

> Guam, in their view, persists as the center of Indigenous injury, thereby foreclosing discussion of other "grievable" subjects in the Mariana Islands. The Guam-centrism is widespread. That is, the majority of the Catholic debates, Indigenous literatures, oral traditions, political issues, popular cultures, and women's organizations representing Chamorro society almost exclusively focus on Guam, if not portray Chamorros as Indigenous only to this island.

Teasing out the sociopolitical differences between Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands has the potential to shed new light on longstanding inequities that continue to shape our relationship with one another both politically and economically, as well as our differential relationships with the United States. Rather than an obstacle, these differences can be a key to shaping self-determination as we negotiate various legal avenues for demilitarization and decolonization. Although outside the scope of this dissertation, the differences ands similarities between Chamorros and Refaluwasch cultures and political histories have much potential for unpacking how colonization has influenced our understandings of indigeneity in today's world. As Kanaka Maoli scholar Haunani Kay Trask points out, "Because of colonization, the question of *who* defines *what* is Native, has been taken away from Native peoples by Western-trained scholars, government officials and other technicians" (Trask 1999,43). In the CNMI, the shared history between Chamorros and Refaluwasch (or mixed "Chamolinians") remain a sites of productive tension in which we can expand our visions of Indigenous sovereignty outside the bounds of political recognition.

Conclusion

How would it be possible to exercise self-determination amidst militarization if only Guam could technically achieve this goal or vice versa? What do two different political statuses within the same archipelago mean for decolonization? In the Marianas, reconfiguring the possibilities of

sovereignty are critical to confronting United States hegemony. Resisting militarization is key to this confrontation because "militarism and militarization both establish the conditions of the nation-state and claim justification for their further imperial expansion as the defense and redeployment of those conditions and calculated disposal of national sacrifice zones" (Goldstein 2014,9). Militarism works diligently to construct the discursive formation of such sacrifice zones, military borders, and strategic outposts, as necessary to national security through the construction of insular environments ripe for testing and training. The undoing of this particular colonial framing of sovereignty within the Northern Marianas remains critical amidst ongoing militarization, a process which continues to uncritically invoke the islands' political status, size, and geographic location as justification for increased militarization by presenting them as national defense necessities. This perspective also allows us to abandon the settler logic of incorporation and navigate us away from the notion that *more* political representation in Congress necessarily equates to increased self-determination. It does so by highlighting the primacy of Indigenous relationships through and within our "common wealth"-that is: to recognize that our political power lay in the relative ability to care for our ancestral lands, seas and skies that make possible our connections to this place, rather than a vision of militaristic consumption of island environments based on a loosely defined and problematic ideal of a national commons. To recognize the land as a "common wealth" from an Indigenous perspective means to literally break apart the term and wrestle back its meanings from its European and capitalist roots and instead understand the environment and our surroundings as a communal space that we become responsible for protecting rather than exploiting or extracting.

Since the first plans regarding the Build-up in the Marianas were made public in 2005, community members throughout the Marianas expressed explicit concerns about militarism as an impediment to decolonization particularly on Guam. In a statement before the UN Special

Committee on Decolonization in 2006, Guam Senator Hope Cristobal notes the absurd connection between self-determination on an island as militarized as Guam. She explains,

> The sheer number of eligible voters connected to the military, their dependents and contractors is of great concern when implementing the exercise of our inalienable right to self-determination in…Guam...Even more disturbing is the military's attitude that they, too, can vote to decolonize a non-self-governing territory! To be sure, the military can surely determinate a U.S. favorable outcome of any election (Cristobal,2006).

Sen. Cristobal's concerns echo the deeply problematic way that self-determination is framed in the context of settler colonialism, whereby the conflation of Indigenous peoples with American citizenship essentially erases Indigenous connections to the land. Furthermore, processes of militarization continue to reveal discrepancies in the way that the CNMI and Guam engage with processes of self-determination in their distinct political relationships and negotiations with the United States. The collapsing of socio-political differences between the CNMI and Guam risks oversimplifying the struggle for decolonization as one that can be framed only within and through the confines of U.S. legal frameworks. The argument that the CNMI was *never* colonized because we were able to "choose" our political status and that we were not a spoil of war as with Guam, is testament to this oversimplification. It restricts self-determination by linking decolonization to political status and depoliticizes U.S. political power. A myopic focus on political status therefore constrains possibilities for demilitarized futures. By incorporating the land and environment into discussions of self-determination, our viewpoints shift towards a more expansive politics of sovereignty and decolonization that is not shackled to the whims of military goals throughout Oceania.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

While conducting fieldwork in the summer of 2017 on Saipan, I watched on the news as North Korean President Kim Jong-un threatened to send missiles to the largest and southernmost island of Guam in the Marianas archipelago. In his now infamous speech in response to this threat U.S. President Donald Trump remarked, "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States" or "they will be met with fire and fury" (Baker & San-Hun,2017). Korean officials were reported to have been carefully examining a plan to attack Guam with long-range missiles just hours after President Trump's remarks. Less than two weeks later, local newspapers on Saipan and Guam picked up a news story about President Trump personally phoning the Governor of Guam, Eddie Calvo, to assure him that the threats coming from North Korea would boost tourism "tenfold" (Ahluwalia,2017). In the midst of provocations stemming from North Korea and China towards the U.S. and its allies, the U.S. Justice Department capitalized on this moment of crisis by stating, "With rapidly evolving security challenges in the Asia-Pacific region, "there is an unusual need for unquestioning adherence to the political decision already made" to relocate Okinawa-based Marines to Guåhan, and to maintain the United States' commitment to Japan…" (De La Torre,2017). In response, CNMI Governor Ralph DLG Torres similarly urged the public to "rally behind President Trump" (See Figure 5.1) as Guam's tourism market saw a brief but quick decline.

As the summer dragged on, the news coverage about North Korean missile testing, including a nuclear test that caused a 5.7 magnitude earthquake around its perimeter-gave way to new and emerging news stories. While the island's local news media covered the events, life seemed to go on as usual with the understanding that little could be done if such tests were conducted. This recent confrontation with North Korea does much to highlight the way in which crises contribute to accelerated militarization by guiding policy decisions that favor urgent security matters over the less spectacular and longer duration of socio-political and environmental consequences that arise from

this increased militarization. As a result, increased militarization is often offered as a solution to political crises while the Marianas remains more vulnerable than ever to increasingly violent political and military threats. As the text in Figure 5.1 depicts, the Marianas is understood as being at the "front lines" (Villahermosa,2017) of these threats which places a great deal of pressure on the CNMI government to support both U.S. policies and the U.S. Military in the midst of heightened security measures.

'Now is the time to rally behind President Trump'

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GOVERNOR Ralph D.L.G. Torres on Thursday expressed full trust and confidence in President Donald Trump's leadership amid mounting tensions with North Korea.

Donald Trump

"Being on the front line of the threat from North Korea, along with our brothers and sisters in Guam, I place my full faith and trust in our president to make the appropriate decisions for the security and protection of our nation," Torres said in a statement. "All Americans, from the Marianas to the mainland, are at risk given North Korea's threats and those from other foreign enemies."

He added, "Now is the time to rally behind our commander-in-chief… in order to protect our nation and the proud citizens of our country living in the U.S. territories. I support our president and our U.S. military, and I am

■ CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Figure 5.1. A newspaper clipping in the *Marianas Variety* dated August 11, 2017. *Source: Marianas Variety.*

These political crises have merged with a number of natural disasters in the CNMI, making "states of emergency"[64] the norm. Crises, as Joseph Masco (2017,65) argues, have become a "a

[64] In 2015 and 2018, CNMI Governor Ralph DLG Torres issued emergency declarations for both Super Typhoon Soudelor and Super Typhoon Yutu (Fritz,2015;RNZ News,2018).

means of stabilizing an existing condition rather than minimizing forms of violence across militarism, economic and the environment." In the Pacific, where islands remain highly aid-dependent and reliant on boom-and-bust economic industries such as tourism, disasters and security crises propel people into a further state of reliance on United States aid and military assistance in the form of social, political and economic support. Due to climate change, the preponderance of super typhoons has increased and the U.S. Military's post-disaster assistance has become a necessity. In the CNMI, akin to Puerto Rico, our political status allows us to apply and receive forms of federal aid including disaster assistance, as well as military humanitarian aid and relief. This includes public assistance and hazard mitigation in the time of disaster declarations, all of which were forms of aid extended to the CNMI in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Soudelor and Super Typhoon Yutu. These catastrophic weather events, while dire, distract from the systemic issues shaping these very emergencies such as the militarized policies that endanger the environment and place us in precarious socioeconomic positions. They also reinvigorate the narrative of indebtedness that many Indigenous Chamorros and Refaluwasch peoples express in the wake of disaster. A common refrain continues to echo on Saipan today when referring to assistance from the U.S. Military: "We are so grateful to the military for all they do for us. We are proud Americans." As both natural and man-made disasters continue to permeate our daily lives, critiquing U.S. Government and U.S. Military policies becomes a politically riskier endeavor. Time frames for adhering to military planning are condensed as the assumptions undergirding our "strategic location" are catalyzed for increasing securitization.

In this dissertation, the naturalization of militarism over the environment entrenches the idea that imperialism is part of a bygone era. Yet, imperial policies have informed the seemingly banal and somewhat monotonous application of federally enforceable environmental planning processes in the context of everyday militarization over the land, sea and sky. It is within these spaces of possibility

that this work questions what political worlds-what forms of self-determination-can be actualized in the midst of the hypermilitarization of our environments. Without careful attention to the discourses and political practices the render the environment visible, it will become increasingly difficult to identify how to exercise Indigenous sovereignty amidst the proliferation of militarism in the Marianas archipelago, especially as we are confronted by environmental policies that claim to tackle urgent security matters, global catastrophes and the consequences of climate change. How we choose to unsettle imperialism in its many quotidian manifestations, has much to do with the way we envision our environments, and thus our people.

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