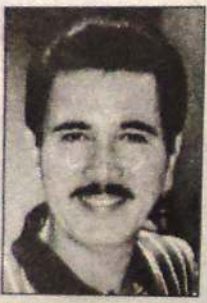


Voters must balance dreams, realities of status plebiscite

Last night, I had a dream: The Nov. 7 plebiscite was held peacefully. Independence prevailed with a narrow margin over statehood, while free association came third. Our leaders proclaimed immediately that July 4 would henceforth become the real independence date — not for the United States, but for Guam. It will be the Republic of Guam Independence Day.



Pat Duque

The government issued a decree that the election for president would be held immediately, and the inauguration will be on Thanksgiving Day at Freedom Park.

Now, we could negotiate and sign treaties with other countries, dump that infamous Organic Act, declare war to protect our national interests, etc.

We were excited receiving congratulatory messages from world leaders. There was the message from the United Nations secretary general that a pole was reserved for the Guam flag and a seat was waiting for the Guam ambassador.

Many of our politically connected citizens were already lobbying for ambassadorial posts in prestigious places like Paris, London, the Vatican, etc.

World leaders were being invited to the inauguration to witness this birth of

a republic of the millennium. Everything will be great! But wait! Many are concerned. I am not an ardent believer in numerology, but the election falling on 11-7 (Nov. 7) is the reverse of 7-11, a lucky number. This forebodes ill tidings.

Independence means that those non-U.S. citizens on island and subsequent children born on Guam definitely will no longer be granted U.S. citizenship. This will have divisive repercussions on family unity between U.S. citizens residing in the States and their relatives who, hereafter, will be born on Guam. These non-U.S. citizens shall use Guam passports and, as such, won't be able to freely travel to the U.S. mainland and other countries. One of the great benefits of being a U.S. citizen is the ease of travel.

In terms of currency, our senators were animatedly discussing whether we use the Guam dollar, the peso or a minted mini-latte stone coin. Those of Caucasian descent prefer the dollar, those of Hispanic ancestry prefer the peso, while the "nationalists" choose the mini-latte stone. But the discussion stopped upon realizing that we have no gold reserves to guarantee the currency. Investors, therefore, are apprehensive.

Other realities unfold before us. There's the news on CNN that hundreds of fishing boats from mainland China filled with thousands of Chinese are coming to populate our young republic.

How do we drive them away when we don't even have the ability to intercept them? We might as well wait for them at our shorelines and jail them. But

where do we get the money to feed them?

How could we protect our 200-mile economic zone comprising of 125,000 square miles of water? We don't even have a plane or ship to patrol the area.

The Joint Typhoon Warning Center is planning to relocate, and it's typhoon season. The Seismological Observatory, too, was alerted to leave. How about our infrastructure, expenses for the presidential election, inauguration of the new republic, etc.? There are no more federal aids and grants.

These are some harsh scenarios that could overwhelm us. They're just dreams, but can become real.

It reminds me of that impassioned and impatient statement of the late Manuel Quezon, president of the Philippine Commonwealth, who continually pressured the United States to grant independence until they got it in 1946. "Between a government that's run by the Americans like heaven, I'll prefer a government run by the Filipinos like hell!"

This historical statement became a prophetic judgment levied on the Filipinos who, up to now, are still burdened with a heavy stigma of misgovernance.

Guam and the Philippines are like twin brothers who have undergone similar historical and cultural transformations and have similar geopolitical circumstances.

Will the Philippine experience serve as profitable lessons for Guam? Or will we just sleep over them and dream again?

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Upcoming Sunday Forum topic: The Pacific Decade

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