
NATIONAL POLICY WITH LOCAL IMPACT

The U.S. military presence in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines engages policymakers at the highest levels of government. But the most pronounced impact of these forces on Asian soil is local. U.S. military bases have been a central part of the landscape of towns and villages, and these “little Americas” have affected the lives of local citizens in a variety of ways.

In contrast to their counterparts in Europe, the majority of U.S. military personnel stationed in Asia live apart from their hosts. American military bases have always been separate enclaves, with their own legal, social, and economic governance structures. Most of these bases were constructed in remote and once peripheral regions, giving the towns that grew up around them an identity apart. Arriving in Japan as occupation forces, the U.S. military took over the facilities used by the former Imperial Japanese Navy and Army, including the key ports of Yokosuka and Sasebo as well as airfields used by both prewar services along the Pacific coast. The defeat of the Japanese military on Okinawa in 1945 created the first opportunity for U.S. forces to be based on Japanese soil, and then the

outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 was the impetus for an expansion of U.S. bases on the island, including the two major airfields of Futenma and Kadena. Unlike on the main islands of Japan, where the land belonged to the Japanese state, most of the land used today by the U.S. military was forcibly expropriated from private landowners who were held in relocation camps after the war. Returning to find their fields had been turned into runways, most local residents began to rebuild their communities alongside these bases, and today densely populated urban cities and towns surround the U.S. military facilities in Okinawa. Moreover, these bases occupy privately owned land rented by the Japanese government on behalf of the U.S. military.

In South Korea, U.S. Army camps along the DMZ were on predominantly rural land, and the towns and villages that grew up alongside were often built to service the needs of the troops. Pejoratively dubbed *kijich'on*—camp towns—by South Koreans, these areas continue to be seen as places characterized by illegal and immoral activities, and are avoided by most local residents. Today, metropolitan Seoul has expanded to meet these camp towns, which now sit on the fringe of the capital, on crowded congested highways lined with high-rise apartment buildings. The consolidation of numerous small facilities in the Uijongbu-Tongducheon area releases land for development north of Seoul, but it is the longer-run prospect of moving the entire U.S. Army's Second Infantry Division to Pyeongtaek, south of the Han River, that raises significant questions about the future of towns the United States will leave behind. Alternative sources of revenue will be needed, and the relocation of 4,000 troops to Iraq has already impacted many small businesses, such as bars and clubs that catered to the servicemen, shops selling English language T-shirts, and restaurants serving American-style food. Some have closed, but others are moving to Pyeongtaek in anticipation of the government's relocation plan.

In the Philippines, the U.S. military presence dates from the defeat of the Spanish there in 1898 and the ensuing Philippine-American War (1899–1913). In 1900, the U.S. Navy chose Subic Bay, the former base of the Spanish naval and army forces, as a repair and supply base for their operations in the Philippines. Three years later, President Theodore Roosevelt claimed Subic Bay and 175,000 acres of adjacent land as an “American military reservation.” It fell under Japanese control during World War II, only to return to the United States in 1945. Despite Philippine independence in 1946, Olongapo remained under the administration of the U.S. Naval Reservation, and an air station with an 8,000-foot runway was built in the mid-1950s. It was only in 1959 that Olongapo was returned to Philippine government control and became a municipality. When the basing agreement with the Philippines ended in 1992, Subic Bay Freeport was created and a new era began for the people of Olongapo. With over US\$2 billion of investments in its first four years, the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) was seen as a model for U.S. base conversion throughout the region. In 1996, Subic hosted the Asia Pacific Economic Conference and by 1999, exports from the SBMA exceeded US\$1 billion. By 2000, 34,372 Filipinos were working at Subic, surpassing the peak level of employment under the U.S. Navy.¹⁵

Today, most U.S. military facilities and operations take place in peripheral regions, and thus seem far from the experiences of the metropolitan elites. But it is important to remember that at one time the U.S. military was a conspicuous and highly controversial presence in all three national capitals. It arrived in the Philippines as a colonial force, at war with those Filipinos who sought to gain independence at the turn of the twentieth century, and

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remained there for almost a century. General Douglas MacArthur led the U.S. military to Tokyo in 1945 in response to Japan's surrender. In 1952, when the American occupation ended, the U.S. Army vacated its headquarters across from the Imperial Palace, but the United States maintained its facilities and bases in and around metropolitan Tokyo until the 1970s when land prices increased and growing public sensitivity to the U.S. military's use of valuable Tokyo property grew.

In South Korea, U.S. troops arrived to halt a southern advance by North Koreans in 1950, but a UN armistice between the two Koreas provided the framework for the U.S. military command of UN headquarters in Seoul. South Korean sensitivities to the U.S. military presence in the capital city have led to the removal of American troops from Seoul. The UN Command and the USFK headquarters were housed in the buildings used by Japanese occupation forces prior to World War II, making Yongsan Base not only an impediment to urban development but also a painful reminder of Korea's past. Just as in Japan and the Philippines, the history of the U.S. military presence continues to infuse contemporary discussions about its role in South Korea.

TWO VISIONS OF AMERICA

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Today, two rather different types of U.S. military communities exist in these Asian societies. There are bases where U.S. military personnel live with their families. These installations tend to be large, and offer much the same amenities as are available in the United States. In Okinawa, 23,000 Americans live and work on Kadena Air Force Base, the largest air base in the Pacific Command. The Fifth Air Force, with approximately 7,000 airmen, is the only American air wing that has never been deployed in the United States. Its F-15 fighters train and operate throughout the Asia Pacific region. Kadena also is responsible for U.S. surveillance activities along the coast of the Asian continent, including North Korea. Covering 12,000 acres, Kadena is a small city, with churches, schools, PXs and commissaries, bowling alleys, golf courses, movie theaters, and extensive housing for military families. Some 3,300 Japanese citizens work on Kadena on a regular basis, and another 1,000 or more are hired for part-time or temporary contract work. In 1999, the U.S. Air Force operations budget for managing Kadena was estimated at US\$1.45 billion, a figure higher than the annual city and county budget of Honolulu, Hawai'i.¹⁶

Like most base communities, however, the off-base environs around Kadena provide numerous local enterprises that cater to U.S. military personnel. Local businesses offer a variety of services, from the basic provision of food, electricity, and water to specialized contract services including landscaping, construction, and language interpretation. Members of the U.S. military also work with host community leaders to support various community goals, such as fund-raising efforts for local schools, churches, and sports leagues.¹⁷ The base command also works with the local fire department and hospitals to enhance emergency service provisions.¹⁸

Other U.S. bases, however, are reminiscent of a wartime economy, and evocative of an earlier, more painful era when the balance of power between the United States and host societies gave local citizens little or no voice in the relationship with American soldiers. Because war was deemed potentially imminent throughout much of the Cold War, U.S. Army bases near the DMZ in South Korea were established for combat troops only. Most Koreans still see the small camp towns dotting the countryside near the DMZ as a nether

Until its 1992 closure following the American military pull-out from the Philippines, Subic Naval Station (shown here during the 1990-1991 Gulf War) was vitally important to U.S. global operations.



U.S. Navy

land of crime, prostitution, and “foreign” influence. U.S. Marine Corps bases in Okinawa, such as Camp Hansen, similarly house infantry units that deploy on short rotations and without their families. In Okinawa, there is less stigma attached to the local towns alongside these facilities, yet directly across from the base gates is a small red light district, where bars and clubs cater to the 18- to 24-year-old troops that make up the majority of U.S. Marine Corps personnel. American naval facilities, such as the former Subic naval base in the Philippines, are also famous for their designation as “rest and relaxation” stops for visiting warships. Outside all of these camps and ports are a host of bars and entertainment districts that cater to the predominantly male U.S. military personnel. For decades, arrangements were made between the U.S. military and local political leaders for “entertaining” the troops with formally sanctioned clubs and networks of prostitution exclusively for American military patronage.

Beyond the social stigma of the red-light districts, however, all of these bases represent a new post-World War II form of extraterritoriality that is uncomfortable for most citizens. To local residents, the barbed wire fences and imposing gates with armed guards and U.S. flags suggest a world unto itself, separate from and unaccountable to, the norms and practices that govern their communities. The U.S. military governs its own territory, with the SOFA offering limited sovereignty for Americans living on these facilities. Access to bases is off-limits to Japanese and South Korean citizens, unless they have the approval of U.S. military authorities. Access to the civilian communities that host these facilities is not restricted for U.S. military personnel and their families, revealing another inequality at the community level that is seldom appreciated by national policymakers. In legal terms, it is the SOFA that outlines the terms and conditions regarding how U.S. military personnel and their dependents interact with their hosts, but there are also many interactions that are managed by local U.S. military commanders, mayors, and other community leaders.

AVENUES OF ACCESS TO NATIONAL POLICYMAKING

Local governments, while bearing the bulk of the day-to-day management of the presence, have had little input into policymaking surrounding the U.S. forces and bases. This disjuncture between those who make policy and those who have to implement it has increasingly become a source of contention between local and national governments. In Japan, local governments have long been assigned a key role in carrying out a variety of social policies, including the national policy of hosting U.S. military forces. But the role of these governments in establishing policy, setting an agenda, and defining goals remains weak.

Citizens direct their concerns toward local politicians, and the ability of the local mayor or governor to address these directly with the U.S. military can be limited. For some issues, local base commanders and the mayors of the cities and towns that host them can often find resolutions to day-to-day frictions. In other instances, however, the solutions are simply beyond the capacity or authority of local politicians.

Local politicians must then summon the assistance of the national government. In some cases, this translates into appeals to national politicians. But for most issues, local politicians turn to the national bureaucrats charged with implementing the basing agreements. In the case of the facilities themselves, this is most often the national defense agency or military.

When transgressions of a SOFA occur, the ministry of foreign affairs becomes involved. The process of dispute resolution for issues related to the U.S. military presence, therefore, often pits local politicians against the security policy bureaucrats from the national government. Frustrations percolate in communities where the problems associated with the bases seem intractable, while national bureaucrats must act as emissaries between the U.S. military and local political leaders.

This tension at the local level was most obviously revealed in Okinawa after the 1995 rape, and the frustrations over the national government's handling of the U.S. forces ultimately led the governor at the time to align with citizen activists against the central government. Pitting himself against the bureaucrats in Tokyo who responded weakly and belatedly to the rising discontent in Okinawa, then-Governor Ota took issue with the lack of attention given to his constituents. To get the government's attention, the governor declared he would no longer participate in the legal process that granted the U.S. military use of Okinawa's land. He became the first Japanese prefecture governor to refuse to participate in government land expropriation procedures, siding with anti-war landowners who had long protested the use of their land by the U.S. military.¹⁹ It was a bold step, and one that

in the end brought him to Japan's Supreme Court to confront the national government's policy agenda. In his statement to the court, Ota claimed that as an elected official it was his duty to represent the interests of his constituents against Tokyo's policies. In the end, the Japanese Supreme Court ruled that the public interest of maintaining the U.S.-Japan

Both local governments and local citizens are affected by the U.S. military presence. Masao Arime and Shuden Teruya (above), two leading members of Okinawa's Anti-war Landowners discuss the U.S. confiscation of their land. Ginowan City Mayor Yoichi Iha (below), discusses pressures created by Futenma Marine Air Station and the challenges of urban planning for base land returned to civilian use.



security treaty superseded the rights of individual Okinawan landowners, but the argument brought into focus the role of locally elected politicians in establishing contested policies decided often by bureaucrats in the national government.

Local governments continue to ask for a more significant and formalized voice in the management of base issues. Today, the Okinawa Prefecture government, under the leadership of Governor Keiichi Inamine, continues to see its role as the advocate of change in the existing policies surrounding the U.S. presence in Okinawa, including a revision of the SOFA.²⁰ Thus, political leaders in Okinawa often find themselves walking with civil society activists, showcasing their positions in the media, traveling to Washington, D.C., and strategizing in much the same way as actors outside of government seek to make their voices heard.²¹

In South Korea, where local political leaders are taking the same tack regarding USFK relocation issues, local governments are only just beginning to be assigned formal positions in the management of U.S. military bases. Lack of institutionalized local government roles in policy implementation is, in large part, due to the legacy of authoritarian government, and the lack of attention to citizen needs and concerns at the local level. In preparation for the task of relocating U.S. military bases in and around the Seoul metropolitan area, the role of local governments has become that of coordinator of local interests, and to a certain extent, mediator in the national effort to craft policies that will support the agreement by Seoul and Washington to relocate and reduce U.S. forces.

In the prime minister's office, the recently created Commission for the USFK Relocation has the express task of creating the institutional and administrative linkages between the national government and local governments necessary for carrying out the 2004 U.S.–South Korean agreement. Unlike in Japan, there are no formal mechanisms for integrating local governmental policy concerns with national bureaucracies responsible for U.S. military basing policy. Roughly 65 percent of U.S. military bases in South Korea are located within Kyeonggi Province, and yet the provincial government has only recently established a special task force responsible for overseeing the relocation-related issues concerning its constituents.²² Both the municipalities in the north that will lose the bases and those in the south where existing bases will be expanded are under the jurisdiction of Kyeonggi province. And, it will be the municipal governments that bear the brunt of the national policy of relocating U.S. military forces. Under a national government initiative, special legislation in support of the U.S.–South Korean relocation agreement began early for the Pyeongtaek area, where new land will be purchased for the relocation of U.S. forces.²³ But there are many municipalities in South Korea that have already begun to feel the impact of this consolidation of U.S. forces, as bases close and land is returned to civilian use.

The impact of this lack of institutionalized policy coordination between local and national government in South Korea goes beyond the issue of USFK base relocation. Without a local window of government where citizens can go if they have trouble with U.S. forces, there has been little development of policy that can meet the needs and expectations

Landowners are also a major source of opposition to U.S. bases in South Korea. Ji Tae Kim (above), head of the Paengsong Committee against U.S. Base Expansion, explains the impact of the current USFK realignment plan on local residents near Pyeongtaek. Local government officials are also being brought into the policymaking process. Insun Yu (below), head of the newly formed Task Force on USFK Relocation in the Kyeonggi Provincial Government, explains the new role for local government in bridging national policy and local community needs.



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of South Koreans regarding their daily experience with these foreign troops. Especially sensitive has been the incidence of crimes and accidents, where local citizens have had little government support for their claims for prosecution and compensation. Instead, citizens turn to local citizen activists, often with links to national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) based in Seoul, as well as to the national media to gain attention and apply pressure upon national governments. For example, it was only in 1992, after the brutal murder of a club worker, Geumi Yun, that the violence in Korean camp towns by U.S. military personnel was brought to public attention through the combined efforts of the locally based Tongducheon Democratic Citizen's League and the newly formed NGO, the National Campaign for the Eradication of Crime by U.S. Troops in Korea.²⁴ Local activists have gathered information from citizens, and created complaint documentation processes, thereby offering local residents who have insufficient redress by government a means to lodge their complaints against U.S. military personnel.

The shift to a democratizing society thus brings with it new obligations for governance, and where policies regarding the U.S. military presence are concerned, local governments increasingly are expected to implement national policy and advocate constituent interests, even when they differ from those of the national government.