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## LOOKING AHEAD

Since the end of the Cold War, much of the security policy debate regarding the Asia Pacific region has focused on the need to redefine the major U.S. alliances in the region in order to cope with a rapidly changing regional and international security environment. The premise of continued U.S. military presence in, and security cooperation with, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines that shaped the U.S. approach to the security equation in Asia has been relatively unquestioned.

Domestic politics matter today more than ever. The governments of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines must consider carefully the impact of the U.S. military on their societies. Not only are citizens giving these policies more scrutiny, but also governments are finding it more difficult to justify the need for a U.S. military presence in their countries. Furthermore, the policy of hosting American forces in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines engages domestic interests in ways that are not immediately transparent, and the complexities of managing a foreign military on national soil extend far beyond the terms of the various treaties and agreements negotiated with the United States.

### U.S. STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ALLIES IN ASIA

The United States is in the midst of reorganizing its military, and this will have important consequences for its allies in Asia. In 2004, the Department of Defense (DOD) began a three-year effort to revamp American military forces in a process referred to as the Global Posture Review. This overhaul of military strategy is designed to increase the mobility and flexibility of U.S. forces, enabling the United States to respond to new threats, such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. No longer will U.S. forces be dedicated to fixed contingencies such as the defense of specific countries. Rather, the United States aims to achieve greater strategic flexibility so it can respond to potential conflicts around the globe. The Cold War design that organized U.S. military deployments around the globe for the past half-century has been discarded, and the alliances that formed the core of U.S. strategy are also being transformed. In addition, the U.S. military's combat and post-conflict missions in Afghanistan and Iraq have accelerated a process of transformation that is shaping U.S. basing decisions at home and abroad.

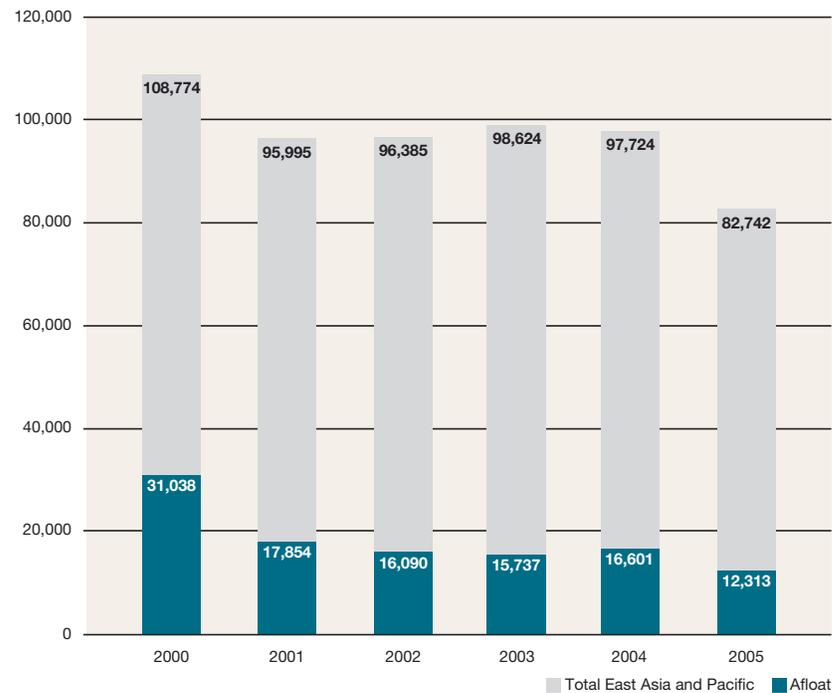
The United States plans to have fewer military forces deployed abroad, and they will be deployed differently. Today, the total number of U.S. troops is more than 1.3 million, with over 280,000 deployed outside the United States. In addition, another 180,000 American forces are engaged in operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Beyond the ongoing military deployments in the Middle East there are changes afoot in the U.S. basing of forces in Europe and East Asia. In 2005, Europe continued to host almost half of these forces, and the Asia Pacific region hosted 82,742, a reduction of more than 25,000 since 2000 (see Table 2). In the summer of 2004, President Bush announced that in the coming years, the United States would bring some 70,000 military personnel back to the United States, the bulk of these from Europe. In addition, family members and civilians (another 100,000 Americans) would also return.

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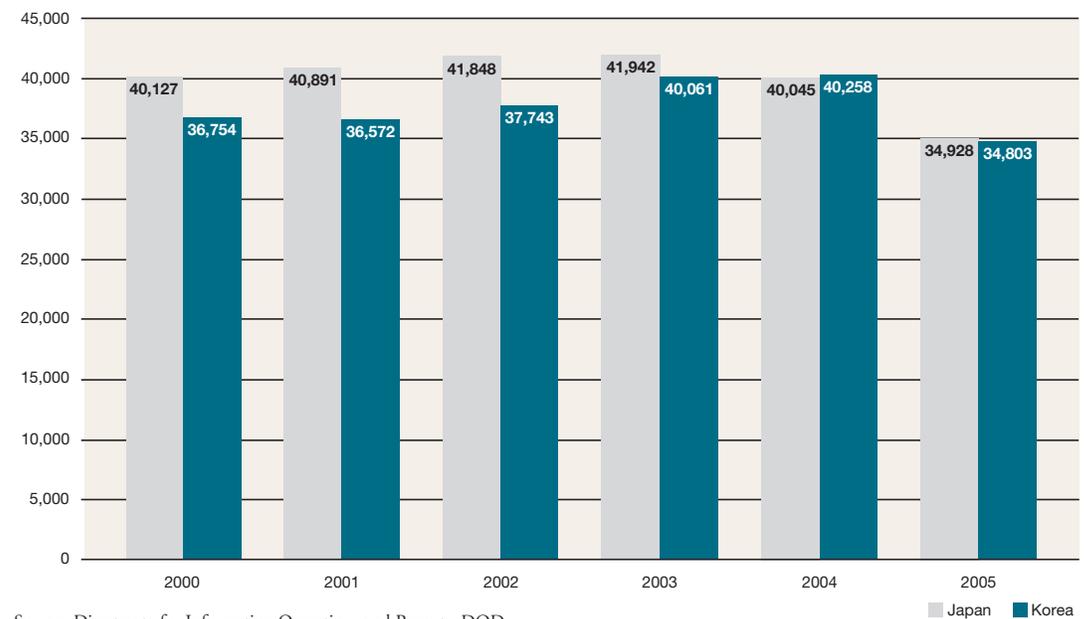
U.S. allies in Asia have already begun to feel the impact of this reorganization of U.S. forces. More than 7,000 American military troops stationed in Japan and South Korea have been redeployed to the Middle East, and the majority of these will likely not return to East Asia.<sup>52</sup> Bilateral negotiations between Washington and Seoul, and more recently between Washington and Tokyo, have produced agreements on U.S. force transformations within these two allied nations. The United States plans to withdraw 12,500 Army troops from South Korea, and up to 7,000 Marines from Okinawa (see Table 3).

These talks have been driven mainly by U.S. strategic goals, but they also reflect growing calls for fewer U.S. forces within these societies. Seoul's concerns about the impact of bases on an increasingly urbanized metropolitan area were also addressed in the bilateral Future of the Alliance Talks that produced the 2004 relocation agreement.<sup>53</sup> The controversial Yongsan base in Seoul will finally be closed. Korea's own defenses will also be strengthened. The United States agreed to spend US\$11 billion to upgrade the capabilities of its forces remaining in South Korea, and the South Korean military would take over 10 key missions from USFK for defense of the South. But there is considerable concern within South Korea that Washington's interests will determine the transformation of the alliance. In June 2004, the U.S. government informed South Korea that 12,500 troops—one-third of the U.S. military forces in that country—would be gone by December 2005. The quick pace of proposed U.S. troop cuts took many in South Korea by surprise. Public speculation there was that the

**Table 2: U.S. Military Forces Deployed in East Asia and the Pacific, 2000–2005**



**Table 3: U.S. Military Forces Deployed in Japan and South Korea, 2000–2005**



Source: Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, DOD.

[www.dior.whs.mil/mmids/m05/m05mar00.pdf](http://www.dior.whs.mil/mmids/m05/m05mar00.pdf), [www.dior.whs.mil/mmids/m05/hst0301.pdf](http://www.dior.whs.mil/mmids/m05/hst0301.pdf)

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Note: All figures are for March except for 2002, in which September figures were used due to the lack of availability of March figures.

United States was punishing South Korea for the anti-American demonstrations in 2002. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's public comment that the United States would not maintain forces in a country where they were not wanted only enhanced this sense that the decision was driven by political difficulties in the relationship. In July 2004, the United States announced that in response to South Korean concerns it would draw out the timetable for force reductions to 2008 in order to give Seoul time to adjust to the changes.

Japan is also affected by the U.S. strategic realignment, but there will be less of an impact on the overall scale of American forces stationed in Japan. Resolving the ongoing difficulties associated with U.S. military bases on Okinawa was a key Japanese goal in the talks. Elections in both countries in 2004—the Upper House elections in Japan during the summer and the presidential elections in the United States in the fall—hampered working level efforts to craft a relocation plan. More broadly, however, the two governments were on a better footing when it came to the overall strategic goals for the alliance.<sup>54</sup> In the wake of September 11 and Japanese participation in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Japanese government also undertook a review of its national defense strategy. In December 2004, the National Defense Program Outline—only the third such strategic review in Japan's postwar history—announced the reorganization of Japan's military capabilities and deployments over the next decade. In February 2005, the United States and Japan announced the blueprint of their common strategic objectives, including the concepts of interoperability and joint basing that would provide the framework for considering U.S. proposals for relocating its forces stationed in Japan. In late October, the two governments announced details of their agreement, a broad statement of the reorganization of capabilities for both the U.S. and Japanese militaries that also includes significant changes to U.S. bases in Okinawa.<sup>55</sup>

There are no more U.S. military bases on Philippine soil. But this has not kept the two countries from close military cooperation, particularly since September 11. The focus of security cooperation between Washington and Manila has shifted to the “war on terror,” and Manila's role is the containment of terrorism within the country. When President Arroyo visited the White House in May 2003, she left with a long list of economic and military assistance programs for the Republic of the Philippines.<sup>56</sup> Most of these programs were dedicated to supporting the Philippine president's efforts to counter terrorism and to end violence in Mindanao. The U.S. military pledged to help the AFP in operations against the Abu Sayaff Group—training and equipment would be provided for countering terrorist groups within the Philippines, and there would also be development assistance to conflict areas (US\$30 million for Mindanao and support for the peace process with the MILF).<sup>57</sup>

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#### **DOMESTIC POLITICS AND THE TERMS OF A FUTURE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE**

The domestic political influences on the basing of U.S. forces in Asia have changed significantly. The long history of a foreign troop presence and the usually less-than-transparent process of managing citizen complaints regarding the presence continue to color contemporary public attitudes in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. In addition, the changing relationship between national and local governments, and their respective roles in the policymaking process, also complicates what for many decades was almost exclusively the task of national security planning agencies. Outside of government, new social forces

and new norms of democratic practice have helped bring a multitude of voices to the debate. The U.S. military must now contend with changing domestic laws on preserving the environment, the growing demand within these societies for public policy attention to the needs of, and protections for, women, and the ongoing competition between localities for the economic and regulatory attention of the central government.

Intense moments of protest against the U.S. military in all three countries suggest deep cleavages within national politics over the influence of the United States. But the politics surrounding the U.S. military presence today cannot be understood simply in terms of pro-versus anti-American sentiment or ideology, although these certainly exist within Philippine, South Korean, and Japanese societies. Moreover, in each of these societies, there has been intense and often elite-led activism from within civil society against the U.S. military bases and the social problems associated with them. Mass peaceful protests have occurred in Okinawa and Seoul, organized and led by civil society groups. In response, politicians have taken up the cause of the citizen against the U.S. bases. But again, it is a mistake to consider these moments of protest, often deeply infused with the rhetoric of identity politics, as simply evidence of political posturing unrepresentative of mass public sentiments.

There is another layer of politics that shapes the U.S. military presence in these societies, and that is at the level of its impact on the daily lives and interests of citizens. There are significant bottlenecks that afflict the process of implementing policy, and the full range of impacts on local communities is coming to light more frequently and in greater detail than ever before. The costs associated with the U.S. presence—political, social, and economic—are becoming increasingly evident, at a time when the future goals of the U.S. military and the value of its contribution to Japanese, South Korean, and Philippine national priorities are being reconsidered. It is the combination of these varied, and often intersecting, forces within the societies that host American military forces that has produced the greatest impact on alliance management in Asia.

Comparison of three very different societies in Asia reveals that there is increasing concern within these countries about the role and the impact of U.S. troops within their borders. As the United States seeks to transform its military, and looks for greater cooperation from its allies on security goals, it will be more difficult to devise policies with host governments regarding the management of the long-term presence of U.S. forces. Several changes are already apparent.

*First, it will be very difficult to move forward with force transformation goals in the absence of broad public support for a shared security agenda.* This is clearly what is at stake in the difficulties between the United States and South Korea. Despite a common interest in resolving the North Korean nuclear problem, there is still tension between the two countries on how to develop a common security agenda. Many analysts warn that the alliance is deeply troubled, and that force relocation issues are only bringing to the surface deeper changes within South Korea regarding the United States. Korean attitudes toward the United States are deeply ambivalent. As the Pew study of world opinion in 2002 reported, “In Asia, there is strong support for the United States in Japan and the Philippines, both long-time allies. Yet South Koreans are much more skeptical despite that country’s close military and economic ties with the U.S. More than four in ten South Koreans (44%) have an unfavorable opinion of the U.S.”<sup>58</sup> President Noh’s vision of a neutral South Korea, balancing between the United States and China, has generated enthusiasm within South

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Kyodo News



*Admiral James Kelly, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Japan, and his senior officers attend the January 2006 funeral of a 56-year-old woman found beaten to death, allegedly by a U.S. sailor, in Yokosuka, Japan. The U.S. government has become increasingly sensitive to the impact of accidents and crimes on the reputation of the U.S. military within Asian societies.*

Korea. But this view obviously troubles Washington. Divided views within South Korea about the nation's foreign policy priorities and its future place in Asia suggest that the debate among the Korean people about the value of the U.S.–South Korean alliance has yet to reach a conclusion.

In contrast, the governments of the Philippines and Japan have articulated common security goals with Washington, and President Arroyo and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi have both argued the need for continued and even expanded security cooperation with the United States. Yet the U.S. decision to go to war in Iraq was roundly

criticized in both societies, and the dispatch of Japanese and Philippine troops drew particular fire. The decision by Arroyo to remove the small contingent of Philippine troops after the kidnapping of a Filipino in Iraq revealed just how compelling domestic politics can be despite a common security policy agenda.

In all three alliances, the role of the U.S. military in bilateral security cooperation is changing. In the Philippines, counterterrorism and cooperation against the spread of terrorism throughout Southeast Asia is now the goal of U.S. forces. This creates some sensitivity within the Philippines, since the American troops in Zamboanga and other parts of the southern Philippines are involved in assisting the Philippine army deal with what is typically seen as an internal insurgency. The role of U.S. forces in South Korea is also undergoing change, and the United States' idea to consolidate its forces in the country so as to achieve optimum strategic flexibility is unsettling to many. In the U.S.-Japan alliance, it is clear that the Japanese government is more willing to embrace a reordering of Washington's strategic priorities.<sup>59</sup> American forces will increasingly be based alongside Japan's own Self Defense Force, suggesting that the relocation of U.S. forces within Japan will also achieve Tokyo's own defense priorities.<sup>60</sup>

Despite Washington's efforts to reach agreement with all three allied governments regarding the future role and deployment patterns for U.S. forces in the Asia Pacific region, the implementation of these plans will be cause for considerable challenge domestically. In each country there will be leadership changes in the years ahead as the United States seeks to implement its global military transformation. Local and national elections in all three countries will test the national governments of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. Koizumi will leave office in 2006, and while the implementation of the U.S.-Japan understanding on force transformation in Japan may be resolved before then, his successors will continue to oversee a process of force reductions in Okinawa that could take a decade or more to complete. Arroyo, elected in 2004 for a six-year term, has come under intense domestic political pressure for electoral fraud. Her critics are watching the government's management of an alleged rape by U.S. Marines reported in November 2005 with great interest as this case represents the first real test of the terms of the Visiting Forces Agreement with the United States.<sup>61</sup> As such, it has stimulated a contentious debate in Manila over the

costs and benefits of military cooperation with U.S. forces. In South Korea, Noh's term ends in 2008, and the presidential election promises yet again to be hotly contested. Given the volatility of South Korean politics of late, U.S. troop relocation plans and the future of the U.S.–South Korean alliance could very easily become yet again an issue in the campaign.

*A second common theme across all three societies is the need for greater national policy attention to the local impacts of U.S. forces.* Local political leaders are increasingly sensitive to their role—and in some cases, the lack of a role—in U.S. basing policies. In the past, the defense bureaucracies in each country played the key role in mediating between local citizens and the U.S. military, but today elected politicians are increasingly playing pivotal roles. But so too are citizen groups. While decisions are made between national leaders in all three countries, local communities are where implementation gets thwarted.

In the U.S.-Japan and U.S.–South Korean relocation efforts, the key to the success of the plans lies with local communities. The reorganization of U.S. forces in South Korea and Japan will take several years, and the ability of the Korean and Japanese governments to implement their agreements with Washington will depend heavily on local political support in the base communities. In Okinawa, for example, despite an agreement to move the U.S. Marines to the northern part of the island in 1996, local opposition has stalled government efforts to construct a new facility. An anti-base sit-in, organized by local activists at the proposed construction site, slowed efforts to conduct environmental assessment tests and has continued to ensure that government efforts to move forward with the base receive media attention. More recently, citizen activists have sought to halt the new base by filing suit against the DOD in U.S. courts. The lawsuit calls for the DOD to comply with the U.S. National Historic Preservation Act by conducting a complete public assessment of the impacts of the proposed project on the Okinawa dugong, an endangered mammal species related to the manatee.<sup>62</sup> Soon after the United States and Japan announced plans for the “transformation and realignment” of their military alliance on October 29, 2005, there were signs that many Okinawans continued to oppose the construction of a new base for the U.S. Marines.

Likewise, in Pyeongtaek, the South Korean government's attempt to expand Camp Humphreys by purchasing farmland has run into difficulties from area residents. Local farmers are refusing to sell land, and more organized activists from Seoul have joined the coalition to step up pressure on the South Korean government. In July 2005, a clash between protestors and the South Korean police surrounding the U.S. base erupted in violence, with over 200 injuries. While it appears that some activists initiated the violence by taunting the police, the police reaction was widely seen as an overreaction.<sup>63</sup> The South Korean government had hoped to complete purchase of all land needed for the Pyeongtaek facility by the end of 2005, but residents continue to resist. The use of national authority without a local consensus of support will more than likely hinder efforts to consolidate U.S. forces, and could create the opportunity for more intense protest.

The legacy of the American military presence will also affect local communities, and national governments and U.S. military planners will need to consider the residual impacts after U.S. forces are gone. These include the transformation of military bases into civilian space. Significant private sector and government investment will be needed to transform the larger bases, such as Futenma Marine Corps Air Station in Okinawa and the USFK Headquarters at Yongsan in Seoul, into civilian communities. Private investors and developers will be interested in those areas close to or in the midst of urban areas, but

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the communities in more isolated or rural areas will need national assistance in their own transformations.

But the impacts are greater than those simply related to the infrastructure. In many communities, the impact on human lives will continue for generations. National policy attention will be needed to transform the shattered lives of those who have lived in the shadow of the U.S. military. Although small women's centers will continue to try to assist the women and children of Olongapo, Tongducheon, Kin, and other U.S. military towns like them, the stigma and isolation of their previous association with the U.S. military will continue to impinge upon their ability to transform their lives. In particular, the Amerasian children that continue to live in the margins of Korean and Philippine society reveal the real human costs of the discrimination associated with those who catered to the U.S. military. If left unattended, the legacy of the U.S. presence will be that of abandoned facilities and a substandard quality of life for those who lived alongside the American bases.

National policy attention will also be needed for training U.S. military personnel sent to these societies. Tolerance for crimes and accidents caused by American troops in these societies is diminishing, and while reporting on many incidents may have been confined to a local community in the past, today these incidents receive national attention. The U.S. military has become particularly sensitive to the damage to its reputation. American military personnel deployed to South Korea and Japan receive limited cultural training about their host societies. In Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has begun to offer cultural training for unit commanders in an effort to impress upon them the need for greater sensitivity to the concerns of local residents. Commands have become much stricter about the use of alcohol, about the issuance of driver's permits for off-base use, and about the accountability of American personnel who witness unacceptable or unlawful behavior by their peers. At the highest level of command, there has also been more attention to the tolerance for sexual misconduct within the military. In September 2005, the DOD presented an amendment to the manual on courts-martial that would make it an offense for U.S. troops to use the services of prostitutes. In addition, DOD officials have developed a training program for troops and contractors that explains human trafficking, the department's policy, and possible legal action against those who violate this policy.<sup>64</sup>

*Finally, as with any other government policy, the process and procedures for decision making regarding the U.S. military presence and its daily management will need to conform to domestic law and democratic practice.* The terms of the U.S. military presence are increasingly influenced by citizen demand for greater transparency in the activities of the U.S. military and for greater accountability of their own governments in oversight and control of the U.S. forces. Nowhere is the frustration of host societies more evident than in the implementation of the agreements that set forth the terms of the presence. In Japan as well as South Korea, despite efforts to respond to domestic criticism, there is still a strong aura of extraterritoriality that surrounds the treatment of the U.S. military.

American personnel appear to be above the law and protected by forces beyond the control of national judicial processes. South Korea has successfully renegotiated the terms of the U.S. presence there in concert with growing demands within South Korea for a more democratic society. Over time, amendments negotiated in the terms of the U.S. presence regarding the handling of sensitive issues have revolved around the need to create greater accountability of host governments to their citizens. Pressures have been growing within

these societies for assurances from national governments that citizen interests will receive equal treatment under the law, and this suggests the continuing perception that the Status of Forces Agreements prevent host governments from tending to citizen grievances. To date, the U.S. and Japanese governments have reached informal agreements on such issues as when to hand over a member of the U.S. military accused of a crime. In other words, citizen complaints about the handling of American troops accused of crimes have resulted in a change in government practices over time, as opposed to a change in the actual SOFA itself.

These new government policies for coping with the impact of domestic reaction in cases where U.S. forces are involved in crimes will not necessarily forestall public protest. The revision of the U.S.–South Korean SOFA in 2000 did not mitigate the impact of citizen reaction to the deaths of the two girls, nor did it prevent the intense politicization of the USFK presence in the presidential election that followed. The Japanese government continues to prefer to address these issues in procedural terms, adapting the practices within the alliance over the custody of suspects. When an American sailor was arrested for the murder of a 56-year-old woman in January 2006, the changes negotiated in the wake of the rape in Okinawa in 1995 were in place. The

accused individual was interviewed by Japanese police and transferred to custody a week later once it was clear that there was sufficient evidence for indictment.

Sensitivities within the U.S. government to the potential impact this crime might have on Japanese public support for the alliance and for the newly agreed upon plan to realign American forces there led to quickly issued apologies to the Japanese public. Perhaps the most perceptive statement came from the commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Japan, Admiral James Kelly. After expressing his regret and his commitment to fulfilling his responsibility in cooperating with Japanese authorities, he sought to assure the residents of Yokosuka that the members of the U.S. Navy are “all members of the Yokosuka community and are deeply affected by this tragedy.” Similar to the American military’s policy response after the 1995 rape in Okinawa, the U.S. Navy commander issued new initiatives to improve discipline and behavior by U.S. personnel. These directives of January 19, 2006, included curfews and prohibitions on the consumption of alcohol both off- and on-base. Kelly reminded those under his command that, “Every person representing the U.S. Navy in Japan must realize that behavior is a strategic issue, and that poor conduct can have a significant and lasting affect on the alliance and our continued presence here. Our goal is, and will continue to be, zero incidents.”<sup>65</sup>

The audience for these crimes and incidents extends beyond national borders. In the Philippines, where four U.S. Marines await trial for allegedly raping a Filipina, the media was quick to seize on the Japanese government’s handling of the Yokosuka murder, arguing that it demonstrates the Philippine government’s weakness in standing up to the U.S. government. Public ire over the U.S. refusal to hand over the suspects to the Philippine government while they await trial is casting new light on the sovereignty issue in Manila, and the contrast with the Japan case only exacerbates the outrage of Filipinos who are critical of the Philippine government’s handling of the U.S. troop presence.



*A candlelight vigil in Seoul, South Korea, in 2002.*

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But frustration with the terms of the U.S. presence can come from governments as well as from citizens. In talks over the implementation of the transfer of custody of suspects, the U.S. lawyers involved implied that Japan's prosecutors and police were not sufficiently respectful of a suspect's rights, angering Japanese government officials. After the Marine helicopter crash in the summer of 2004 in Okinawa, it was the director general of Japan's defense agency who suggested publicly that the SOFA might need to be revised. His comment was prompted by the U.S. military's initial refusal to allow Japanese police to enter the crash site. Only then did the two governments negotiate an agreement governing access by the Japanese government in case of an accident involving a U.S. military aircraft.<sup>66</sup> Because of the concentration of American forces in Okinawa, the Japanese government continues to be vulnerable to criticism that its policies privilege the U.S. military over the residents of Okinawa. As the two governments fundamentally reconsider their alliance goals and the future role of the U.S. military in Japan, it will become increasingly necessary to consider how to revise the SOFA so that the terms of the presence are clearly articulated to, and supported by, the public.

As with the United States, the national governments in Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines are engaged in a broad reconsideration of their national defense needs, and part of that reassessment is the domestic calculation of the costs and benefits associated with maintaining a foreign military presence. Democratic consolidation in these countries has also progressed sufficiently to introduce into national security and foreign policy debates new demands for strengthening democratic practice and diversifying policy choices in ways that were unthinkable in the mid-twentieth century. As a result, policymaking surrounding the U.S. military presence is more complex and less predictable. Governments must contend with new influences on policymaking. Domestic political dynamics and discourse surrounding the presence of foreign troops in Asia continue to be infused with broader debates over national identity and the role of U.S. power in a fluid international order.