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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BASE COMMUNITY
RELATIONS IN JAPAN**

by

Jonathan M. Volkle

December 2012

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Robert J. Weiner
Michael Glosny

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BASE COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN JAPAN

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Lieutenant, United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(FAR EAST, SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC)**

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ABSTRACT

U.S. military bases in Japan have dealt with differing levels of controversy since the end of World War II. Since the mid-1990s, this has been especially true of Okinawa. After the 1995 rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl, protests aimed at closing the Marine Corps Air Station at Futenma have received an unprecedented amount of media attention. This thesis examines the relative level of controversy at four different U.S. installations: MCAS Futenma, Kadena Air Base, Naval Station Yokosuka, and MCAS Iwakuni. It identifies five causal factors: historical anti-militarism, major crimes, civil nuisance, aviation safety, and community profile. I assess the impact of these factors at the four installations and assign a relative level of controversy to each of the bases.

I found that Futenma is the most controversial. It is followed closely by its neighbor, Kadena. Next, due to its nature as an aviation facility, is Iwakuni. Yokosuka is, by a fairly wide margin, the least controversial of the four cases. The historical anti-militarism endemic to Okinawa is the primary driver of controversy in Japanese base politics, while aviation safety concerns and community profile are also significant. Major crimes, despite the media focus generate little controversy by themselves.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

COMREL	Community Relations
DoD	Department of Defense
JAL	Japan Airlines
JASDF	Japanese Air Self-Defense Force
JGSDF	Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force
JMSDF	Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force
JSDF	Japanese Self-Defense Forces
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MOD	Ministry of Defense
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
UA	Unauthorized Absence
USFJ	United States Forces Japan
USMC	United States Marine Corps

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many have studied and written about the tenor of base politics in Japan. The focus of such study and discussion has overwhelmingly centered on the highly controversial bases in Okinawa. My purpose in this thesis is to conduct a comparative study of the base community relations across four different installations: Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma, Naval Station Yokosuka, Kadena Air Force Base, and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni. I find that, while it is true that tensions at MCAS Futenma are indeed high, tensions at Kadena are lower and those at Iwakuni are lower still. Yokosuka is, to a great extent, a model of pacific base–community relations. This is all in spite of the reality that these facilities all share some certain factors that could exercise a deleterious effect on the base–community relationship. I argue that the level of controversy at different U.S. installations varies greatly depending on a number of factors, many of which are not usually examined in the academic literature. Is there any basis to the Kent Calder’s assertion that the Naval Base at Yokosuka is subject to the same level of anti-base sentiment and demonstration as controversial bases in Okinawa,¹ or is the base–community in Yokosuka actually significantly less controversial? How controversial are any of the bases in an absolute sense?

This thesis will address two main questions. The first is a simple question of measurement. Exactly how strained are base–community relations at different bases in Japan? Second, although it may seem obvious that Okinawa presents a “different animal” from the rest of the bases in Japan, I have found there to be substantial differences in levels of tension between bases in not just an Okinawa vs. Mainland comparison, but in a Futenma vs. Kadena and Yokosuka vs. Iwakuni comparison as well, so what factors account for that? Having spent my last tour in Yokosuka, my experience is that Yokosuka is considerably less tense than many of the other facilities around the country. My further research has supported this impression. Many of the factors commonly cited as causes of the very well documented tension in Okinawa are present in bases throughout Japan.

1. Kent Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 122.

Given the shared factors that could be said to cause base–community controversy, why is it that one base is fraught with tension and besieged by protest and controversy while others might be more quiet? I intend to demonstrate that the level of tension surrounding a given base is determined less by major crimes that get the most academic and media attention, but rather by pacifist politics and aircraft noise. I also argue that the more cosmopolitan a given area is, the less likely one is to find a strong anti-base movement. Hence, Yokosuka, in the Tokyo metro area is less tense while Futenma, located in the poorest and least economically and demographically diverse prefecture in the country, is more tense.

Particularly in light of the much vaunted “Pivot to Asia,” the importance of the answers to these two questions would be difficult to overstate.² The United States’ relationship with its longest standing and staunchest Asian ally is both dependent on and profoundly affected by the status of forward deployed forces on Japanese soil. Tensions surrounding the bases on Okinawa have sown deep doubts about the future of the alliance.³ As the home of the U.S. 7th Fleet, Yokosuka in particular is of vital strategic importance to the United States and Japan. If levels of tension there were as high as those found in Okinawa, the prospects for a successful “pivot” would be considerably dimmer than they are today. In the light of the results of my thesis, policy makers should be able to make more informed decisions about base–community relations and be better able to manage problems when they arise.

However, little effort has been expended on an actual attempt to get an objective measurement of the level of tension. Without an accurate assessment of the actual level of tension surrounding a given facility, it is impossible for policy makers, military officials and public affairs professionals to understand whether or not given measures are having any effect. Additionally, policy responses to a perceived level of tension that is higher than the actual level, even if well-intentioned, is at least a waste of resources and could even prove to be counter-productive. While the controversy surrounding Okinawa,

2. Bruce Klingner and Dean Cheng, “U.S. Asian Policy: America’s Security Commitment to Asia Needs More Forces,” *Backgrounder* 2715 (August 2012).

3. Gavan McCormack, “The U.S.–Japan ‘Alliance’, Okinawa, and Three Looming Elections,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, accessed November 16, 2012.

specifically Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is certainly unambiguous, it has yet to be quantified in any meaningful way. More importantly, the perennial uproar surrounding Okinawan bases has essentially drowned any meaningful conversation about the remaining bases in the rest of Japan.

It is of inherent value to establish first an objective assessment for the levels of tension at various facilities. Without this, progress in either direction, either improving or deteriorating base–community relations, is not as detectable as would be desired. Second, investigating whether or not the rest of Japan follows the Okinawa model of acrimonious controversy or, in contrast, tends to be enjoy more harmonious base–community relations could determine the nature of the threat to the overall alliance. Unfortunately, due to the lack of extant research on this topic, and the lack of record keeping in terms of size and number of protests at three of the four case studies (Yokosuka is the exception), a true quantitative analysis has proven to be beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I believe that through the conduct of my interviews with various public affairs professionals, journalists, and academics, I have been able to at least clearly establish a ranking of which of the four case studies are more controversial than others.

While it may be easily recognized by those conversant in Japan–U.S. relations that there is an obvious and substantial difference between bases on the mainland and bases in Okinawa, a casual assessment of opinion in the academic literature and the “talk” of “future policy makers” reveals something less than a consensus on this. It sometimes appears to be commonly assumed, though never explicitly stated, that all bases in Japan share the problems that plague the bases in Okinawa. Is it a bases in Japan problem? Or is it more accurately an *Okinawa Mondai* (Okinawa Problem)? Alexander Cooley, Kent Calder, and Andrew Yeo have all recently published books on base politics and only Calder gives even cursory attention to any of the facilities in mainland Japan.⁴ These are generally regarded to the definitive books on the subject of base–community relations. Given the tremendous focus on the problems in Okinawa and the lack of

4. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*; Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the U.S. Military Overseas* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

interest in and study of any of the other bases, one could be forgiven for developing the impression that the Okinawa model typifies base–community relations throughout the country. While the problems in Okinawa certainly cause problems for the U.S.–Japan alliance, a significantly lower level of tension in Yokosuka, home of U.S. 7th Fleet and perhaps the most important of all U.S. overseas bases, could indicate that there is less to fear than alarmists would have us believe. Perhaps even more important than the differences to be found between bases on Okinawa and the mainland, are the differences in tension levels between the other bases in mainland Japan. In particular, Yokosuka appears to be less tense than Iwakuni. Discovering the causes of this difference in tension will be helpful in shaping the future of base-host community interaction for all bases in Japan.

The answer to these questions could and should influence policy decisions on both sides of the alliance, politically for the two governments and organizationally for the military and the base commanders themselves.

A primary problem raised by these questions, as will be demonstrated in the literature review that follows, is the fundamental lack of any investigation into the level of tension to be found in bases outside of Okinawa. Even in Okinawa, there is a plethora of research and reporting on tensions that exist, but little discussion of the actual level of tension. We can assume that it is high in that there is much reporting on it, but has it increased or decreased over the last five years? What about the last five decades?

My research confirms that the bases in Okinawa do indeed suffer from a high level of tension surrounding their presence on the archipelago. However, my research as well as my experience as an officer stationed at Yokosuka from November of 2009 to June of 2011, indicates that there is a lower level of tension there than in Okinawa. In fact, Yokosuka appears to have the best base–community relations of any of the cases I examined. It is vital to note that while a lower level of tension than one finds in Okinawa is arguably to be expected (despite the presence of many potential controversy generating factors), Yokosuka is also less tense than Iwakuni, which shares Yokosuka’s mainland location.

Many factors are often cited as the cause of tension in Okinawa and the controversy that is reported about overseas bases in Japan in general. The problems associated with it range from aircraft noise to petty crime, from the threat (once or twice actually realized) of aircraft mishaps endangering the civilian population to, most horrifically, the violent sexual assault and murder of a teenage girl. Additionally, the fact that the Marines stationed on Okinawa deploy outside of Japan to do violence independent of Tokyo's wishes places Okinawa at risk of becoming the target of a strike from one of the United States' potential co-belligerents regardless of Japan's stance in any potential conflict.

However, Yokosuka shares all of these factors. Even if Okinawa is revealed to be (as expected) much more controversial than Yokosuka (or any of the other bases on the mainland), it would appear that of all the factors influencing the level of tension for a particular base, some are more important or influential than others. Yokosuka is also home to a nuclear powered aircraft carrier, nuclear power being an issue of perennial heartache in Japan (even more so after the disaster at the Fukushima power plant in early 2012).⁵ The USS George Washington could easily be expected to trigger mass public outcry and protest. However, despite sharing all these factors with Okinawa and other troubled bases, Yokosuka turns out to enjoy a more benign relationship with the surrounding community than *both* Okinawan bases and bases in the mainland. This indicates that some of these factors are less important than commonly thought in causing tension in base–community relations and that some less looked at factors are at work.

The U.S. military maintains more than 80 installations of various sizes throughout the country. Do they all share the same “level of contention?” While the “face-value” answer to this question is “no,” there are some scholars, particularly Kent Calder in *Embattled Garrisons*, who argue that the level of tension in Kanagawa Prefecture and the level of tension in Okinawa are both “high.”⁶ It seems at least arguable that if all these facilities generated the kind of civil and diplomatic turbulence produced by the *Futenma*

5. Justin McCurry, “Japan Plans to End Reliance on Nuclear Power in 30 Years,” *Guardian*, September 14, 2012.

6. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 122.

Mondai (Futenma Problem), not only would Futenma be closed, but the alliance as a whole would face higher levels of tension and seriously complicate efforts to pursue American interests in the western Pacific.

Clearly, as Tobias Harris asserts in a 2008 post on his *Observing Japan* blog,

[I]t is a mistake to view the U.S. forward presence in Japan uniformly. Okinawa is not Iwakuni is not Yokosuka: each area has its own dynamics depending on the population size and service, origin of service personnel, the size and density of the host community, the scale of the U.S. bases, the presence of Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) personnel, and the host community's history as a military base.⁷

Again, the lack of research covering non-Okinawan bases could lead one to believe that Okinawa is typical of the experience of both American service members and Japanese nationals living in “base communities.” However, a simple Google search in Japanese for Yokosuka Base Problem (横須賀基地 問題) generates 327,000 results in 0.12 seconds. That is pretty impressive, however a similar search for Futenma Base Problem (普天間基地 問題) delivers a staggering 3,940,000 hits. This is an admittedly crude metric, but the order of magnitude difference suggests at least that the possibility that contrasting Yokosuka with Futenma offers something more than a distinction without a difference.

An English search reveals a less stark difference in the actual numbers, 442,000 to 619,000 with Yokosuka actually generating more hits. However, the nature of the hits is laughably different. The first hit is a thread on www.japanbases.com where American personnel are complaining about the overly aggressive seahawks on base. The remainder of the first page of search results reveals complaints from base personnel about area hotels, the speed limit on base, and the on base travel agent. There is not a single search result even remotely related to community opposition to the base (unless the seahawks, *Tonbi* (鳶) count as community). The Futenma search results in contrast are exclusively

7. Tobias Harris, “Observing Japan,” accessed May 30, 2012, <http://www.observingjapan.com/2008/04/yokosuka-is-different.html>.

centered around the base controversy with titles like “Dangerous Futenma Base Must Not Become Permanent” from the Yomiuri Shinbun or “Noda Must Rethink Futenma Issue from Scratch” from the Asahi Shinbun.⁸

There is more than Google to let us know that there is a long history of controversy surrounding U.S. bases in Okinawa. It is essentially a history that extends all the way back to 1 April 1945 when U.S. Marines set foot on the beaches of Okinawa and initiated the 81 day conflict that constituted the bloodiest battle of the Pacific War.⁹ Since that time, not a day has gone by without Marines on the island, first as invaders, then as occupiers, and finally as “guests.”

However, controversy is not absent in the history of the other bases in mainland Japan. Immediately upon ratification of the U.S.–Japan Security Agreement in April of 1952, more than a million protesters staged demonstrations across Japan to express opposition to continued American control of Okinawa, but also to the presence of military bases in the rest of Japan in general.¹⁰ A similar outcry emerged when Prime Minister Kishi succeeded in re-negotiating the Security Treaty in 1960. Widespread public protests were staged and eventually succeeded in forcing Kishi’s resignation.¹¹ However, while the public protests and controversy over the bases in Okinawa have continued in wave after wave until the present day,¹² the public record goes comparably silent when discussing protest and controversy in the other bases in Japan. The Okinawan people’s collective memory of the horrors of the “Typhoon of Steel” has decided the course and colored the perceptions of the bases on Okinawa since the end of the war and constitute the most persistent irritant in the U.S.–Japan Alliance.¹³ Andrew Yeo, in his 2011 book, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests*, dedicates two chapters to discussion of the anti-base movement in Okinawa, but does not even mention the

8. Google Search, accessed May 30, 2012, <http://www.google.com>.

9. Yeo, *Activists*, 65.

10. Cooley, *Base Politics*, 181.

11. *Ibid.*, 187.

12. Yeo, *Activists*, 66–70.

13. *Ibid.*, 65–66.

remaining bases in Japan. Despite a continued, if slightly decreasing level of violent and other crimes committed by American service members and their dependents in Japan,¹⁴ it would appear that the protest and outcry against U.S. bases is largely confined to Okinawa. While Andrew Yeo does not mention any protest outside of Okinawa whatsoever, even Alexander Cooley, who does discuss protests throughout Japan as a whole, cites no examples beyond the controversy surrounding the 1960 revised security treaty. In fact, he explicitly informs us that “after 1970, political mobilization against the U.S. basing presence was confined mostly to Okinawa, especially as the issue became embedded in the triangular politics of the Okinawa–Tokyo–Washington relationship.”¹⁵

A notable exception to the academic silence regarding base related tensions outside of Okinawa is Kent Calder’s *Embattled Garrisons*. In his chapter entitled *The Base Politics Environment*, he elucidates his “contact hypothesis,” whereby the level of tension surrounding a particular installation is greatly affected by the population density of the host communities compared to the number of U.S. personnel stationed there. The more densely populated and the more military in the area, the more likely interaction or “contact” is to occur and consequently the higher the level of tension in a given area. He not only assigns both Kanagawa prefecture (the home of Yokosuka) and Okinawa a “high” for “level of tension” (“level of tension” is said to be based on “relative number of protests and incidents, but no citation is offered in support of his assertions), but asserts that “base relations are more delicate in Kanagawa prefecture near Tokyo, with a high population density of 3,639 per square kilometer, and major bases at Yokosuka and Yokota, than they are in Okinawa Prefecture, with three-fourths of total USFJ stations...”¹⁶

Whether Calder means to say that tensions in Kanagawa are actually worse than in Okinawa or just more susceptible to potentially derailing incidents, his argument flies in the face of Tobias Harris’ assertion in the wake of the 2008 stabbing that “that the

14. Teri Weaver and Hana Kusumoto, “Major Crimes Among Military Down in Japan,” *Stars and Stripes*, February 10, 2008, accessed June 8, 2012, <http://www.stripes.com/news/major-crimes-among-military-down-in-japan-1.74689>.

15. Cooley, *Base Politics*, 191.

16. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 121–122.

situation in Yokosuka is calm: no protests, little hysteria among the local population, and complaints from business owners who fear that business will be hurt by the new restrictions.”¹⁷

Calder bases his assertion that both Kanagawa and Okinawa share “high” levels of tension based on the “relative number of incidents and demonstrations.” At the same time, he tells us that Yamaguchi prefecture, host to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, enjoys a “low” level of tension.¹⁸ This is difficult to believe. A brief look at the websites of local newspapers, the Chugoku Shinbun and the slightly smaller circulation Yokosuka Keizai Shinbun tells a different story. Although this represents only a single snapshot of the reportage, on May 30, 2012, the top stories in Yokosuka Keizai about the Yokosuka base are a jazz festival, a rose festival, and the Spring Festa where the base is open to the Japanese public.¹⁹ In contrast, even where the Chugoku Shinbun is reporting on the Japan America Friendship Day, this is more to criticize the base for changing policy and requiring visitors to present an ID card upon entry. Other stories involve concerns about the move of planes from Atsugi to Iwakuni and the potential associated noise pollution, and the requests of residents for more money from the Defense Ministry for soundproofing their homes against the new jets.²⁰ Even accounting for the possibility that the Chugoku is a more left-leaning newspaper than the Yokosuka Keizai, two local newspapers having such disparate coverage of their local bases indicates that there may be something wrong with Calder’s measurements.

The available academic and policy literature on base politics in Japan indicates several things. First, there is controversy surrounding U.S. bases in Okinawa. That is

17. Harris, “Yokosuka.”

18. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 122.

19. Yokosuka Keizai Shinbun Search Page, accessed May 30, 2012, <http://yokosuka.keizai.biz/search.php>.

20. Chugoku Shinbun Search Results Page, accessed May 30, 2012, http://www.google.com/cse?cx=010130345668536379716%3AhlG489xspso&ie=Shift_JIS&q=%8A%E2%8D%91%8A%EE%92n&x=0&y=0&siteurl=www.chugoku-np.co.jp%2F&ref=www.google.com%2Furl%3Fsa%3Dt%26rct%3Dj%26q%3Dchugoku%2520shimbun%26source%3Dweb%26cd%3D1%26ved%3D0CF8QFjAA%26url%3Dhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.chugoku-np.co.jp%252F%26ei%3DsOrFT6rIH0TKsQLM95CVBg%26usg%3DAFQjCNGkvovLdxUOeXCee_SoI73Y6L05Rg#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=%E5%B2%A9%E5%9B%BD%E5%9F%BA%E5%9C%B0&gsc.page=1,

uncontroversial. Second, there is something short of consensus on the actual level of controversy in bases outside of Okinawa. Finally, there is a relative dearth of actual quantitative or qualitative assessment of the *level* of controversy in any of the bases beyond to say that controversy exists. The contribution my thesis can make to the body of knowledge is to provide a more clear understanding of the absolute level of tension at bases.

This thesis consists of an analytical attempt to compare the real levels of controversy or tension at USFJ installations in Japan and an attempt to explain the differing levels of tension in four bases in Japan: Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Yokosuka Naval Base, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, and Kadena Air Force Base.

The choice of these four installations should accomplish several goals at once. An in depth look at the available information on the frequency, scale, and nature of the anti-base protests, and the nature of press coverage of a given base should be able provide a good idea of the real level of tension that is more detailed than Calder's "high" or "low."²¹

Additionally, I examine the normally associated "causes" for base tension including petty and violent crime, incidents of drunk driving, and the potential for the presence of the base to turn the surrounding community into collateral damage in the event of a United States vs. third-party conflict. I investigated the presence or absence of these potentially exacerbating influences in an attempt to determine which actually have an effect on base tensions. Yokosuka is revealed to be less tense than, not just the bases in Okinawa, but other bases in the mainland of Japan that are sometimes assumed by casual observers, and asserted by Calder to be, less controversial overall.²² The data demonstrate not just that the problems of our bases in Japan are predominantly an *Okinawa Mondai*, but that Yokosuka in particular represents a positive model of base–community relations. This is something that both social scientists interested in base

21. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 122.

22. *Ibid.*

politics and policy makers will benefit from. Perhaps other facilities can learn from that success.

The thesis begins with an introduction of the basic roots of the broader anti-base movement in Japan. This is followed by a more detailed discussion of the movement as it played out in Okinawa and as it has been widely reported in both academic and commercial outlets.

This is followed by the case studies where I attempt to assess and rank the level of tension at each facility. Then, I discuss the question of causes. In my research, I examined major crimes and public safety incidents, base size, public nuisance like traffic and aviation noise, and how cosmopolitan a community surrounds the base. I also discuss the local political climate and look at how the political leanings of local politicians and press coverage influences the level of tension at each facility. I have determined that the well-publicized incidents of rape and murder, while certainly selling newspapers, have little influence on the tone of base–community relations. For one thing, all four case studies have had at least one major crime incident in the last ten years, yet there is significant variation in the level of tension across the case studies. What appears to matter more are the demographics and political leanings of the host community. The more cosmopolitan and the less influenced by radical politics a community is, the better a base will “get along” with its host community. Finally, I present my conclusions with regards to the qualitative analysis of the actual level of tension and then try to make policy recommendations based on my findings on the causal factors.

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II. CASE STUDIES

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: AN ALLIANCE BORN OF CONTROVERSY

Despite the nearly uncontested view that Japan is the United States' most important partner in East Asia and that the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty is among if not the strongest and most vital alliances for the 21st century,²³ it has not always been that way. Nor does it necessarily appear to be the case upon a casual examination. To begin with, the initial security treaty in 1951 was written while Japan was still an occupied nation and essentially negotiated at the end of a gun barrel, or, more precisely, amid the ashes of the double detonation of the only atomic attack in history. In this context, it is not difficult to imagine that many Japanese could have viewed the San Francisco Treaty as an unfair and unequal agreement forced upon them by the country that defeated the Imperial Military in the Pacific War.²⁴

As the Yoshida Doctrine, gradually at first, then more rapidly, led Japan out of the devastation of defeat into post-war economic prosperity, interest began to grow in the idea of revising the treaty in order to eliminate some of the perceived inequalities in the original document. The late 1950s were a time of great uncertainty, particularly in Japan. Additionally, despite the inequalities in the original treaty, there was a sense that Japan had aligned with the stronger of the two contenders in the emerging Cold War.²⁵ However, the aftermath of the Korean War, the construction of the Berlin Wall, the launch of Sputnik, and other developments gave elites as well as the “man on the street” pause as to whether they had actually picked a winner in the newly bi-polar world.²⁶

23. Ted Osius, *The U.S.–Japan Security Alliance: Why it Matters and How to Strengthen It* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2002), xiii–xv.

24. George R. Packard, III, *Protest in Tokyo: The Security Treaty Crisis of 1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 4–16.

25. *Ibid.*, 32.

26. *Ibid.*, 59.

As Prime Minister Kishi struggled to renegotiate the treaty, opposition erupted both from the communist and socialist left and the nationalist right.²⁷ Popular protest grew until riots rocked Tokyo in 1960 culminating in the cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit to Japan, Kishi's resignation, and the biggest rift in U.S.–Japan relations since Pearl Harbor. The revised treaty was signed and ratified, but both American and Japanese politicians and security professionals were shaken by the violence of the protests and uncertainty characterized the relationship for years afterwards.²⁸

The case studies that follow are by no means meant to represent a comprehensive of base–community relations throughout the entire country of Japan, but rather to provide a small sample of some of the most important and analytically useful bases in an effort to assess whether or not there are significant differences in the level of tension or lack thereof across different installation in Japan. What follows is a first attempt to conduct a comparative study of base–community relations in Japan, a topic that is rarely if ever examined outside of Okinawa Prefecture and has never been subjected to any kind of empirical comparison.

The cases selected were chosen based on the author's familiarity with the installation and the strategic importance to American interests in the case of Naval Station Yokosuka and the relatively low level of controversy there. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma was chosen to contrast with this as it exhibits a high degree of notoriety (or perhaps infamy). Kadena Air Base was selected based on its co-location with Futenma on the main island of Okinawa and the fact that it is a large installation comparable in size and strategic significance to Yokosuka. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni was chosen because it is a smaller base, a Marine Corps Air Station like Futenma, but located outside of Okinawa in “mainland” Japan.

While I initially anticipated a gradual degradation in the level of positive base–community relations the closer the installation was to Okinawa, what I discovered is that

27. Packard, *Protest*, 134–159.

28. *Ibid.*, 338–343.

outside of isolated flare-ups pursuant to major incidents of violent crime, the bases on the mainland of Japan are hardly controversial at all. Iwakuni suffers slightly higher levels of controversy than Yokosuka, but I find that this is mainly because it is an air facility more than anything else. Additionally even though Kadena is one of the largest and busiest Air Bases in the world and located a mere eight miles from Futenma, the epicenter of the Okinawan anti-base movement, Kadena enjoys a significantly lower level of controversy and protest than Futenma. It turns out that the Marines on Okinawa, due to a variety of factors, bear the brunt of the anti-base animus not just from Okinawans but from Japan as a whole.

In terms of causal factors for positive or negative base relations, I examine the presence or absence of high-profile violent crime incidents, traffic accidents and drunk driving, aviation noise, aviation accidents or other public safety issues, and general civil nuisance problems like crowding and traffic jams. On the positive side I discuss U.S.-initiated community relations/outreach programs designed to help the community view the bases they host as assets rather than burdens.

It is worth noting that while high-profile crime incidents are easy to point to as a reason for bases to be controversial, they are actually endogenous factors in this case. As illustrated below, all four bases have had high-profile criminal incidents, but there is significant variation in terms of the actual level of tension at these facilities *and* in the media treatment of these incidents. In short, the profile of these incidents is made “high” as a result of the controversy that surrounds a given base, not the other way around.

Additionally, I discuss broader, more systemic causes on the host nation side, such as the presence or absence of a strong tradition of opposition to U.S. policy specifically or more general anti-militarism. I also examine the state of the local economy, the level of education of the local population, and the likelihood of the population’s exposure to (non-military) foreigners. I attempt to argue that more prosperous, better educated, and most cosmopolitan communities whose politics trend towards the center enjoy the best overall base relations. Conversely, I argue that communities where political extremism tends to surface frequently, communities that suffer from lack of economic development, chronic under-education, and a lack of

exposure to non-military foreigners tend to display the most negative aspects of base–community relations. Some might argue that it is the bases themselves that tend to radicalize politics. However, if this were the case, then the bases in Yokosuka and Iwakuni should be expected to have the same radicalizing effect. Some amount of radicalization is caused by the bases themselves, of course, but host communities degree of radicalization varies for other reasons as well.

	Aviation Accidents in the Last Decade	Civil Nuisance	“Contact” Likelihood	Historical Anti-Militarism	% Non-Military Foreign Residents	Relative Economic Strength	Overall Level of Tension
<i>Futenma</i>	1	High	High	Yes	<0.04	Weak	High
<i>Kadena</i>	0	Medium	High	Yes	<0.04	Weak	Medium High
<i>Iwakuni</i>	0	Medium	Medium	No	0.8–1.2	Medium	Medium Low
<i>Yokosuka</i>	0	Low	High	No	≥1.6	Strong	Low

Table 1. Levels of Base Controversy

B. CASUAL FACTORS

There are essentially four factors generated on the United States military side that serve to make base–community relations more controversial. Most obvious simply due to the publicity associated with their occurrence are the major violent crimes like the murders in Yokosuka or the sexual assaults in Okinawa. Second and largely related to the first are the issues addressed by Kent Calder in his Contact Hypothesis. Calder suggests that the more dense a surrounding population is, there is increased likelihood of interaction with base personnel. This interaction will inevitably cause an increase in base–community tension. However, Yokosuka is the largest of all four case studies and appears to contradict Calder’s assertions. Third is the actual occurrence or even fear of aviation mishaps as characterized by the 2004 helicopter crash at Okinawa International University campus. The fourth and final factor to take into account is simple civil nuisance issues like aviation noise and traffic problems associated with day to day base operations.

Surprisingly enough, the well-publicized criminal cases that a casual observer would point to as the prime mover in base controversy appears, on closer examination, to make very little difference in the level of controversy around any given base. Certainly the sexual assaults committed by Marines in Okinawa have generated a great deal of controversy all on their own, but, as discussed in the individual case studies that follow, these types of crimes have been reported and dealt with at all four of the case study bases. The main difference lies not in the number or frequency or severity of the crime in question, but rather in the degree to which those crimes have been successfully politicized by anti-base activists.

Aviation safety and aviation noise are also a large and salient factors in accounting for the actual level of base controversy. The perception or characterization of MCAS Futenma as the “most dangerous airfield in the world” is a tremendous factor in making Futenma the most controversial of my four case studies. It is telling that most of the complaints and protests concerning Kadena and Iwakuni also center around aviation concerns. While the degree to which these concerns are rooted in reality is debatable, the fact that Yokosuka manages to avoid high levels of controversy (despite two very well publicized murders committed by Sailors in the last decade) indicates that the operation of aircraft, especially in populated areas, tends to generate controversy. This finding is not surprising. A look at the property values in the flight path for San Francisco International Airport in San Mateo compared to the surrounding areas tells the same story as those in Narita or Futenma. Jet noise is a public nuisance and a factor likely to produce controversy regardless of whether the aircraft tails are stamped Japan Airlines (JAL), USMC (United States Marine Corps), or United Airlines.²⁹

As for factors of petty crime, traffic and other related issues, these are factors that are shared across all four facilities in this study. Since there is little reported difference in the tendency of one facility or another to produce these minor events, but a clear difference in the level of controversy between facilities, it is apparent that this is not a significant contributing factor in determining the overall tone of base–community

29. Airports Council International, “Aircraft Noise and Community Relations,” *Airports Council International Position Brief*, 2010.

relations. While it certainly does not make the relationship any better, as a common feature of bases throughout the county (and likely throughout military facilities worldwide), it cannot be pointed to as a major factor in increasing controversy at a given facility.

On the Japanese side of the equation are more complicated issues. Of primary importance are political and historical factors. These are key especially in explaining the much more acrimonious base community relationships on Okinawa but they play a role in what controversy exists for the other facilities as well. But social, demographic, and economic factors also appear to have at least a correlative, if not explicitly causal relationship.

Given the drastic differences in the level of controversy between MCAS Futenma and everywhere else (even Kadena), it appears that the most important factors in determining the tenor of base–community relations lie in the political environment and the public perception of the mission of a given facility. Okinawa has a long history of being “Resistant Islands.”³⁰ The Okinawan anti-base activists draw their power from the Okinawan people’s collective memory of the horrors of the Pacific War.³¹ Also, while there are certainly sincere pacifists on the islands, there is a group of activists and politicians who have grown extremely adept at using the American military presence as leverage in order to extract concessions from the Central government in Tokyo.³² Any incidents that do occur are well publicized by the Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo with an eye to putting the Americans in the worst possible light and used to great effect by local politicians.³³

Social and demographic factors also contribute significantly in determining the positive or negative perception of a base in a given community. On the whole, the stronger the local economy and the greater the ratio of the non-military foreign

30. Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 9–10.

31. *Ibid.*, 18–22.

32. Major Neil Ruggiero, USMC, Public Affairs Officer for MCAS Iwakuni, telephone interview by author, October 11, 2012.

33. Major Christopher Anderson, e-mail message to author, October 20, 2012.

population, the more likely a base will have a positive relationship with its host community. Finally, the presence of a corresponding Japanese Self Defense Force in or around the local area of a U.S. base tends to greatly mollify any tension that might exist around the American facility. This is less true in Okinawa where, while there is a JSDF presence, Okinawans tend to view the Japanese military with at least equal rancor and animosity.

1. Major Crimes

Over the past quarter century, a number of violent crimes, perpetrated by American service members stationed at bases in Japan have received huge amounts of publicity and been credited at times with endangering the very foundations of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty. All four cases have been involved in at least one major crime story in the last 25 years.

Again, the most publicized events occurred in Okinawa involving the Marines stationed there. Futenma has borne the brunt of the controversy surrounding these events regardless of whether the perpetrators in these cases were assigned to Futenma directly or not. The 1995 rape case was the springboard for the latest wave of anti-base activism in Okinawa that has yet to subside.³⁴ Since that time, a number of recurring sexual assaults by Okinawa based Marines have made headlines in 2002, 2003, and 2008. Most recently in October of 2012 allegations of rape by two Sailors visiting Okinawa on temporary duty and the November 2012 assault charge leveled against an Air Force Airman from Kadena have re-energized the anti-base movement and led to larger pushes to close Futenma.

In 2005 and 2008, there were two widely reported murders committed by U.S. Navy Sailors. In 2005, a Sailor on Unauthorized Absence (UA) status robbed and beat an elderly woman to death near the base entrance in Yokosuka. Then in 2008, another sailor stabbed a taxi cab driver to death in an altercation over a fare. While further study might point to a significant difference between the Yokosuka murders and the sexual nature of the crimes in Okinawa, it is striking that the two murders have not had a dramatically negative impact on the facility's relationship with the community. Certainly on the

34. Yeo, *Activists*, 67.

whole, zero murders is preferable to two murders and any murders are certain to make the relationship more problematic than not. However, these crimes have not been able to permanently damage the relationship between Yokosuka city and the base.

Iwakuni and Kadena tell a similar story. In 2001 and 2005 Airmen assigned to Kadena were charged with sexual assaults and in Iwakuni sexual assault cases made headlines in 2004 and 2008. However, in these two cases as well, while they certainly provide ammunition to the pacifist left in general, the crimes have fallen short of galvanizing a strong popular effort to close these particular installations.

The unfortunate fact that these kinds of major crimes are a common feature to all four case study bases is surely something to be lamented. However, the outcome in terms of base controversy indicates that the media treatment and the public reaction to these crimes are the deciding factor in determining whether a given base will be controversial or not rather than the occurrence of the crimes themselves. Even if these crimes do have an impact in isolation, in all cases, they're trumped by the other factors that follow.

2. Aviation Safety

Concern about aviation safety and aviation noise more generally does seem to explain a portion of the differences in the level of controversy surrounding the four case studies. It does not, however, appear to be the deciding factor. While all three of the air facilities are subject to a higher degree of public outcry than Yokosuka is, there remains a large gap between the attention paid to Futenma and that received by Kadena and Iwakuni.

Interviews with Public Affairs officials from the Kadena and Iwakuni indicate that the majority of official and popular protests center around concerns of aircraft noise and overflight/safety concerns. The recent development and deployment of the V-22 Osprey have provided anti-base activists with another salient talking point to generate public discussion.³⁵ However, there have been no major publicly documented aviation accidents associated with these two bases in the past decade. Noise complaints are a

35. Japanese Journalist, telephone interview by author, October 9, 2012.

common feature of airports around the world and not in any way unique to U.S. military airbases in Japan. The Naval Station at Yokosuka has had no complaints in relation to its helicopter pad.

Futenma on the other hand, had a major aviation mishap in 2004 when a Marine Corps CH-53 helicopter crashed into the main administration building of Okinawa University. While there were no fatalities, and the only injuries were sustained by the air crew, the outcome could obviously have been much worse.³⁶ Additionally, the organized resistance to the base's presence has successfully lobbied the Tokyo government to provide sound proofing for houses that neighbor the flight line and the Osprey deployment has provided significant traction for anti-base activist forces in generating local public outcry as opposed to the resistance in Iwakuni where organizers are forced to bus in protesters from throughout the country.

The reason that aviation issues at Futenma generate so much more controversy than Iwakuni or even neighboring Kadena has little to do with the nature of the aviation noise itself, but the salience that any issue dealing with Futenma tends to have in the public discourse. In other words, Futenma is not controversial because of aviation issues, rather, aviation issues at Futenma are controversial because the base as a whole is described in the media as a "problem."

3. Civil Nuisance

With the exception of aircraft noise, other civil nuisance issues like traffic and petty crime are shared across all four case studies and probably exert no significant influence on public perception of a base's presence in any of the four communities.³⁷ The possible exception to this is in Futenma where, due to the dispersed nature of the other Marine Corps commands across the island, frequent convoys create more frequent and visible problems for the local populace. This is regarded as a nuisance by a significant portion of the population.

36. Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), 195–196.

37. Major Neil Ruggiero, USMC; Dr. Robert Eldridge, Public Affairs Official USMC Okinawa; Major Christopher Anderson, USAF, interviews by author.

4. Historical Anti-Militarism

Historical anti-militarism is by far the most significant factor in determining which bases suffer from the most controversy. While in the immediate post-war period and then particularly during the renegotiation of the Security Treaty in 1959–1960, anti-militarism reached a national peak,³⁸ nation-wide opposition to the U.S. military presence in Japan has been steadily waning. Okinawa prefecture is the sole exception to this broad trend.

Yokosuka has continuously hosted a naval base since the early Meiji Era. Iwakuni is located in Yamaguchi Prefecture, formerly part of Choshu, the home of many of the Meiji founders like Ito Hirobumi and Yamagata Aritomo.³⁹ Anti-militarism has never really taken root in either of these communities.

Okinawa on the other hand has no history of a strong support for any military presence. The anti-military sentiment there is not limited to an animosity towards American militarism, but Japanese militarism as well. Annexed by Tokyo in the Meiji Era and then victimized by both sides in the Battle of Okinawa, anti-base activists benefit from deep roots and still fresh memories of the horrors of war and military occupation.⁴⁰

At present, the most influential factor on the level of controversy surrounding bases in Okinawa is the entrenched nature of leftist and pacifist activists within the community. When the Ryukyu Shimpo has a banner link on its homepage leading to discussion of the Battle of Okinawa (which ended more than 60 years ago), it becomes apparent that anti-base sentiment runs deeper than the United States Marine Corps, the V-22 Osprey, or the handful of sexual assault cases reported since 1995.

5. Social, Economic, and Demographic Factors

The final set of factors that influences the outcome of base controversy, or is at least related to the dependent variable in this case is the state of the economy, level of

38. Packard, *Protest*, 3.

39. *Ibid.*, 48.

40. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 29–30.

education, and the number of non-military foreigners residing around these bases. It appears that bases in which the host communities have strong economies and a skilled and educated workforce tend to enjoy a better relationship with that community than bases located in communities where the economy is struggling. Communities that have a higher percentage of non-military foreigners tend to have less of a problem with the presence of their base.

I used a number of different measures available on the Japanese Statistics Bureau's website to assess the strength of the host communities' economies. The first is the number of businesses operating per square kilometer. As part of the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, Yokosuka City has the most: between 100 and 500 establishments per square kilometer. Yamaguchi and Okinawa Prefectures have prefectural averages of 10–25 and 25–50 businesses per square kilometer, respectively; however Okinawa's population density dwarfs that of Yamaguchi's. In 2010, Okinawa's population density was double that of Yamaguchi's.⁴¹ Employment figures tell the same story with Kanagawa well ahead and Yamaguchi and Okinawa fairly even when one corrects for overall population density.⁴²

Looking at the makeup of the labor force, one sees a more telling trend. While Kanagawa prefecture has a large contingent of managers and executives and Yamaguchi boasts a high number of skilled laborers and workers, Okinawa's employment is overwhelmingly centered on lower paying service related jobs. The average income of these three prefectures is the most telling. While Okinawans bring home less than half what the denizens of Kanagawa do, Yamaguchi's average income is nearly as high as Kanagawa's. The populations of Yokosuka and Iwakuni's host community enjoy a clear economic advantage over that of Futenma and Kadena's hosts.⁴³

41. Japan Statistics Bureau, Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards) & Statistical Research and Training Institute, "Statistics Bureau Home Page/Statistical Maps of Japan," <http://www.stat.go.jp/english/data/chiri/map/index.htm>.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid.

The number of non-military foreigners living in the area around the bases also illustrates an important difference in the community dynamic for these four facilities. Exposure of the native population to a broad cross section of non-military foreigners can change people's perception of the military presence as well. If a Japanese citizen knows foreigners who work in their office or teach their children in school, the idea of the military presence as just a burden on the community is likely to be diminished. Not surprisingly, Okinawa has the lowest ratio of non-military foreign population while Yamaguchi boasts considerably more and Kanazawa has even more than that.⁴⁴

While some of these factors are certainly related to each other and difficult to disentangle, the evidence indicates that while major crimes and civil nuisance issues are common to all four bases, political, demographic, and economic factors are what makes the difference in the level of controversy these bases confront on a daily basis. Questions remain as to the ultimate root cause. For example, I have argued that a political predisposition for anti-militarism and leftist tendencies make for a controversial base. At the same time, I have argued that successful economy and a more diverse public make bases less controversial. However, it is clear that the leftist politics tend to show up in places like Okinawa where the economy is struggling. It is also likely that it is the strong economy in Kanagawa and Yamaguchi that draws the non-military foreign population to settle there. Is the leftist/pacifist bend of politics simply an intervening variable along with non-military foreign residence rates? Or are the political leanings of Okinawans more drawn from history than modern economy? These are questions for further study.

C. OKINAWA: A HISTORY OF DOUBLE COLONIZATION

American military basing in Okinawa has been a perennial source of controversy since the end of the war as well.⁴⁵ Okinawa Prefecture's unique status and history first as an independent kingdom annexed by Meiji Japan, the site of the Pacific War's most ferocious battle,⁴⁶ and the last piece of Japanese territory to be restored to Japanese

44. Japan Statistics Bureau, "Home Page."

45. Yeo, *Activists*, 63–65.

46. *Ibid.*, 64–66.

sovereignty in 1972 (spending an additional 20 years under American military occupation) makes it doubly ripe to be a hotbed of anti-base activism.⁴⁷ Many Okinawans today view their islands as essentially suffering a double layered colonization, first by mainland Japan through the Tokyo government and then by the more than 50,000 U.S. military personnel stationed there on 14 separate installations.⁴⁸

The specter of the Battle of Okinawa is an especially important factor in the controversy surrounding the alliance in Okinawa and the acrimonious state of base community relations throughout the prefecture.⁴⁹ In addition to the savage fighting between U.S. Marines and the Imperial Army resulting in heavy American casualties and the complete decimation of the Japanese garrison, the civilian population of Okinawa was devastated before, during, and after the battle, suffering brutality at the hands of the Japanese defenders and the conquering Americans.⁵⁰

The end of the war and the reversion of Japanese sovereignty in 1952 did little to alleviate the suffering of the Okinawan people, who continued to bear the burden of American occupation for an additional 20 years. That 20 year period was marked by periodic protests against the seizure of private lands for base construction that, while falling short of an all-inclusive and unified movement, set the stage for the future that U.S. military personnel now confront on a daily basis.⁵¹

While there was some initial support for reversion to Japanese sovereignty in 1972 among Okinawans, the realization that that reversion was unlikely to reduce American military presence on the islands or in any way alleviate the Okinawan share of the Japanese defense burden led to a rapid evaporation of that support. Strong pacifist sentiment, rooted in the Okinawan memory and experience of the Battle of Okinawa developed into the current pattern of resistance against both the national government in

47. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 80–81.

48. Department of Defense, *Base Structure Report*, (2012).

49. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 15–17.

50. Yeo, *Activists*, 66–67.

51. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 80.

Tokyo and the American military presence as well as the overseas missions the Air Force and particularly the Marine Corps engage in.⁵²

Since the end of the Pacific War, Okinawans have endured a number of hardships as a result of the American military presence on the islands. From increased traffic to loud servicemen carousing the town to aircraft noise to accidents to horrific crimes perpetrated by service members, Okinawa has borne the bulk of the Japanese defense burden in terms of quartering and dealing with the United States military.

The current pattern that has emerged is for Okinawan activists, aligned with left-wing, anti-base, anti-military journalists, and local politicians, to use the base controversy as leverage to extract concessions from the central government.⁵³ This, combined with a growing tendency for the mainland Japanese electorate to sympathize or experience guilt over the perception that Okinawans have had to shoulder an unfair portion of the burden for Japan's defense, has led to an increasingly uncomfortable position for U.S. military bases in the prefecture.⁵⁴ Extraordinary media scrutiny has also served to exacerbate an already tricky diplomatic and security problem for U.S. military planners, diplomats, and the Tokyo government.⁵⁵

D. MCAS FUTENMA: CONTROVERSY EMBODIED

Marine Corps Air Station Futenma is a familiar name to anyone even slightly conversant with U.S.–Japan relations, Japanese politics, base politics, or U.S. foreign policy in Asia. It receives honorable mention in *Nemesis*, Chalmers Johnson's 2007 book subtitled *the last days of the American Republic*.⁵⁶ How is it that a base which houses only 4000⁵⁷ of the approximately 50,000 U.S. troops in Okinawa can be the source of

52. Yeo, *Activists*, 66–67.

53. Ruggiero, telephone interview.

54. Japanese Journalist, telephone interview.

55. Yeo, *Activists*, 68–69.

56. Johnson, *Nemesis*, 193–196.

57. Defense, *Base Structure*.

such controversy and even be considered a significant factor in the downfall of the American Republic by a serious scholar like Johnson?

As previously discussed, Okinawa has been the center of anti-base activism in Japan since the conclusion of the revised security treaty in 1960. Nationwide protests subsided after the rioting in Tokyo came to an end and President Eisenhower canceled his visit with Prime Minister Kishi⁵⁸ but the Okinawan resistance to U.S. presence remained.⁵⁹ In a way it resembled a volcanic nature of the islands themselves. At times the magma simply boiled away beneath the surface, but frequently erupted in well reported, well publicized, and extremely politicized flashes.

1. Timeline of Flashpoints

Throughout this period, Futenma itself was simply one of the many American bases that Okinawan activists and politicians wanted to relocate out of the prefecture or extract concessions from the American or Japanese government because of. Many incidents caused tension in Okinawa over the period between 1960 and the present. However, it was the 1995 abduction and rape of a 12-year-old school girl by a group of Marines that re-galvanized the Okinawan resistance movement and set events on the trajectory that put Marine Corps Air Station Futenma at the top of the Okinawan public enemy list.⁶⁰ That event was followed by a helicopter crash on a university campus that merely through blind luck resulted in no fatalities.⁶¹

Following the aviation accident, activists began to call Futenma “the most dangerous airfield in the world” citing both the aging fleet of helicopters and Futenma’s location right in downtown Ginowan city, a municipality with a population of nearly 100,000 people. According to Chalmers Johnson, even Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld remarked with wonder that there had not yet been a fatal accident.⁶²

58. Packard, *Protest*, 333.

59. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 9–10.

60. Yeo, *Activists*, 67.

61. Johnson, *Nemesis*, 195.

62. *Ibid.*

The controversy simmered on for the next 14 years with various solutions offered to resolve the problems surrounding the base both from the Liberal Democratic Party government and the American leadership. However, little progress was made towards enacting any of those plans.

Then, in 2009, the Democratic Party of Japan, led by future Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama campaigned successfully to wrest control of the government from the Liberal Democratic Party, which had held control of the Diet almost uninterrupted since 1952. Their success was based on a platform, one plank of which was a revision of an agreement between the United States and Japan to relocate 9,000 Marines currently based in Okinawa to Guam in exchange for building a new replacement facility for Futenma, this time in the far north of Okinawa in a town called Henoko.⁶³

This campaign promise, and his inability to deliver on it, was a partial cause for Hatoyama's extremely short tenure as Prime Minister. The other result was that it served to re-energize the movement to close Futenma permanently and move the base out of Okinawa Prefecture and, if possible, out of the country altogether. Suddenly, the fait accomplis of the replacement base in Henoko was called into question and Marine Corps Air Station Futenma essentially became the embodiment and symbol of the entire anti-base movement.

Even more recently, the decision to go ahead with phased replacement of the aging fleet of CH-46 helicopters stationed at Futenma with tilt-rotor V-22 Ospreys has also proven controversial and met with fierce opposition. According to a Japanese reporter who is well versed in defense issues, even people in mainland Japan who are generally supportive of the alliance and U.S. bases have been questioning the timing of the deployment of the Osprey to Futenma when tensions already seem to be at an all-time high.⁶⁴

63. Yeo, *Activists*, 168.

64. Japanese Journalist, telephone interview.

2. General Level of Controversy

Of the four case studies I will examine in this thesis, Futenma is, by an overwhelming margin, the most controversial and suffers the most strident criticism of all. It is unquestionably the most controversial base in Japan, possibly the most controversial U.S. base worldwide. While Futenma is the current focal point of Okinawan and Japan-wide anti-base activism, it is in fact the entire Marine Corps presence in Okinawa that suffers from an image problem.⁶⁵ While the majority of the mass demonstrations have centered around the current air station in Ginowan with protesters going so far as to fly kites in a deliberate effort to thwart and endanger flight operations, particularly of the new Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft,⁶⁶ as well as a constant presence of protesters at the site of the proposed replacement facility in Henoko, it is the Marine Corps as a whole that is the most reviled presence in Okinawa.⁶⁷

Futenma is only a small fraction of the Marine presence on the island and, according to Dr. Robert Eldridge the animosity that is currently manifest as a protest against Futenma is more accurately described as being caused by the animosity towards the Okinawan Marines as a whole. He asserts that this stems from a variety of factors. First, and most importantly in his estimation, there is an overall lack of understanding of the purpose of the Marine Corps. The Japanese people, he says, “can understand a Navy, they can understand an Army and Air Force” since modern Japan has the equivalent of these forces in the modern day Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), and the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF). However, owing to Japan's post war pacifist constitution, the expeditionary nature of the United States Marine Corps is a truly foreign concept.⁶⁸ The fact that Japan has deliberately not developed expeditionary military capabilities since 1945 leads to questions about the need for

65. Dr. Robert Eldridge, Public Affairs Official USMC Okinawa, telephone interview by author, October 14, 2012.

66. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 168.

67. Eldridge, telephone interview.

68. *Ibid.*

Marines to be stationed in Japan. This is especially so when one considers that, since 2001, the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) has deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan on multiple occasions, two missions that, even indirectly, seem to have very little to do with the defense of Japan. In fact, according to many activists, this only serves to increase the likelihood that Japan will become the target of terrorist attacks and international criticism.

Dr. Eldridge also reports that the nature of the Marine Corps mission and the training that it necessitates involves what he calls “the three ‘K’s,’ *kiken* (危険), *kitsui* (緊い), *kitanai* (汚い), dangerous, harsh, and dirty.” According to Dr. Eldridge, because the JSDF has only rarely deployed in its more than 50-year history, the average Japanese citizen has difficulty understanding the rationale behind such training making the Marines even more of an enigma.⁶⁹

Additionally, of the more than 60,000 U.S. military personnel based in Okinawa, more than two thirds are Marines.⁷⁰ Their presence dwarfs the size of the Air Force garrison at Kadena which the Department of Defense reports at just under 7,000, only a little more than a tenth of the total active duty population. If there is any truth at all to the Contact Hypothesis advanced by Kent Calder in his book *Embattled Garrisons*,⁷¹ the sheer number of Marines present on Okinawa at a given time means that overwhelmingly if Okinawans have contact with American service members, it will be with Marines and, consequently any negative interaction will also be with Marines. Any crimes reported will, simply due to statistical likelihood, be committed by Marines as well.

Exacerbating this problem of sheer numbers, Marine Corps facilities are spread across the island in discrete but mutually dependent facilities. This requires a lot of transit which results in, at a minimum, greatly increased visibility in the community. The visibility is not just Marines in civilian clothes patronizing local businesses, but convoys

69. Eldridge, telephone interview.

70. Defense, *Base Structure*.

71. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 75–76.

of military vehicles and high-tempo training and transport flights over populated areas. Inevitably this level and volume of transit causes traffic jams, accidents, and, in the case of aviation, noise pollution.⁷²

3. Contributing Factors

All of these factors combine to place the Marines on Okinawa squarely in the bull's eye of the anti-base movement. Kent Calder asserts that “‘Base–community conflict is a function of how frequently and intensely base inhabitants and the general community interact.’ Such interaction, which tends to generate civil–military conflict, is in turn postulated to be a function of population density in the areas where bases are located.”⁷³ With the Marines, this is almost surely a factor. More than 50,000 Marines on a small island that is already densely populated certainly leads to friction. Despite the fact that MCAS Futenma represents only a small fraction of that 50,000, the political reality is that Futenma has become the focal point for the anger towards the Marine presence in general and the perceived deleterious influence of American military basing in general.⁷⁴

Additionally, in Futenma, especially if one accepts the proposition that Futenma is being used as the effigy of the entire Okinawan Marine contingent, one finds every possible negative factor influencing base–community relations. Near round-the-clock flight operations, increasing lately with work-ups for the Osprey deployment, a history of near misses with aviation accidents,⁷⁵ safety concerns about the new Ospreys, a long series of horrible violent crimes and sexual assaults, and a dispersed infrastructure that causes traffic jams and accidents.⁷⁶

Add to this the fact that Okinawa's economy is the least developed and most depressed in the country. It is Japan's poorest and least educated prefecture. It also has

72. Eldridge, telephone interview.

73. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 75–76.

74. Eldridge, telephone interview.

75. Johnson, *Nemesis*, 195.

76. Eldridge, telephone interview.

one of the smallest populations of non-military foreigners.⁷⁷ Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Okinawa's long anti-militarist, anti-Tokyo, and anti-base tradition, rooted in leftist pacifist reaction to the horrific end of the Pacific War complete the picture.⁷⁸ It would be difficult to imagine positive base–community relations in that situation.

However frustrating, it is not an entirely negative story. In fact, of all four case studies, the Marines in Okinawa are making the biggest community outreach effort. Arguably, this is simply a function of the magnitude of the challenge they are facing, but this should not in any way diminish the outstanding efforts being made by the Marine Corps in Okinawa. In addition to “standard issue” military chaplain Community Relations (COMREL) activities like painting orphanages and volunteering at local schools or homeless shelters, the Government and External Affairs Office has created exchange opportunities with local trade schools and developed groundbreaking internship programs for Japanese medical professionals to gain experience working with wounded Marines in trauma centers in Okinawa and for Japanese youth to gain administrative, leadership, and diplomatic experience at Marine Corps Headquarters in Okinawa.⁷⁹

Unfortunately, so acrimonious is the local atmosphere regarding the bases that Okinawan doctors have yet to take advantage of the medical internship despite broad participation from mainland doctors. As for the youth Headquarters internship, the only nominally Okinawan participant was the son of a Marine Base commander stationed in Okinawa. In fact, none of these efforts has been published by either the Ryukyu Shimpo or the Okinawa Times and local universities and government officials refuse to endorse the programs publicly.⁸⁰

The Marines in Okinawa have had much better luck partnering with host nation entities outside of Okinawa. In particular, after their efforts after the March 2011 Tohoku Earthquake, a strong bond has been formed with the community of Oshima who benefited from the Marine Corps relief efforts. An additional partnership has been formed

77. Japan Statistics Bureau, “Home Page.”

78. McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 38–39.

79. Eldridge, telephone interview.

80. *Ibid.*

with Shizuoka Prefecture in a joint disaster preparedness initiative that involves annual joint training.⁸¹ These efforts have boosted the Marine image in Japan more broadly, but base–community relations in Okinawa remain at an all-time low, made even worse by new allegations of another rape on Oct 16, 2012 (it is worth noting that the allegations have been made against two U.S. Navy Petty Officers not even stationed in Okinawa. Apparently they were simply air crew on a stopover from Texas. Yet again, the Marines find themselves the whipping boy in the Okinawan controversy).⁸²

E. YOKOSUKA: CONTRAST WITH FUTENMA

The naval base at Yokosuka provides a stark contrast to the tense base–community relations surrounding MCAS Futenma. In the academic literature on issues of American base politics around the world, Yokosuka barely receives mention at all. Alexander Cooley in *Base Politics* discusses Yokosuka in some detail. However, his research indicates that, even in response to some rather provocative incidents, there was a distinct lack of public outcry or popular protest.⁸³ In fact, there is very little, if any kind of prolonged popular resistance to the U.S. Navy’s presence in Tokyo Bay. Kent Calder is a notable exception in that he asserts that both Kanagawa Prefecture and Okinawa Prefecture share a “level of tension” that he rates as “high.” However, as noted in the introduction to this thesis, he provides no evidence or explanation beyond this assertion.⁸⁴

In terms of size and strategic significance, Yokosuka is also a contrast to Futenma. While Futenma itself only houses around 4000 Marines, Yokosuka is home to approximately 2500 sailors assigned to the base itself as well as more than 10,000 assigned to ships that are permanently forward deployed there.⁸⁵ Strategically, Yokosuka is the backbone of the United States’ regional maritime posture and its significance

81. Eldridge, telephone interview.

82. Anderson, e-mail.

83. Cooley, *Base Politics*, 210–211.

84. Calder, *Embattled Garrisons*, 122.

85. Defense, *Base Structure*.

cannot be overstated. Futenma on the other hand, at least in the eyes of some analysts, is a bit of a wash creating very little bang for a lot of political bucks.⁸⁶

This is not to say that the base at Yokosuka has been completely unproblematic. Certainly, in the tumult of the 1960 riots, Yokosuka was a target of popular ire over the Security Treaty. Over the years, a number of well-publicized incidents have made headlines and prompted a certain degree of public outcry. I argue, however, that the popular protests against Yokosuka in no way even come close to the level found surrounding Futenma today.

1. Timeline of Flashpoints

The two relatively recent and well-publicized incidents involving personnel assigned to Yokosuka were the assault and beating death of a 53-year-old woman by an Airman assigned to USS Kitty Hawk in 2005, and the robbery and stabbing death of a taxi cab driver by a Seaman assigned to USS Cowpens in 2008. While there was significant media attention paid to both these events, as Cooley points out, “the most instructive aspect of this latest criminal jurisdiction case is how relatively little uproar it caused in Japan. Contrary to some claims that the murder might unleash a new wave of anti-U.S. Base sentiment and negatively affect ongoing realignment negotiations, the orderly resolution of the matter seemed to draw significant contrast, not comparisons, between the politics of U.S. base-related crimes in mainland Japan and in the more volatile setting of Okinawa.”⁸⁷

Another hot issue was the decision to replace USS Kitty Hawk, a conventionally powered aircraft carrier with USS George Washington, a ship that is powered by two nuclear reactors. Japan, understandably given the way the Pacific War ended, has a “nuclear allergy,” and it was widely regarded as a controversial move by the United States to deploy a nuclear-powered ship to Japan. Chalmers Johnson asserts that around this time, “powerful grassroots protests” were “unleashed” in Okinawa and Kanagawa Prefecture (home of Yokosuka Naval Base), which he takes care to inform the reader

86. Mochizuki and O’Hanlon, “Unnecessary Crisis.”

87. Cooley, *Base Politics*, 210–211.

includes former Prime Minister Koizumi's electoral district. Unfortunately, he provides no citation for his claim of these "powerful grassroots protests" in Kanagawa.⁸⁸ Perhaps there were protests in 2007 at the time his book was published, but even in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, in 2012, aside from a very small group of anti-nuclear activists, the presence of USS George Washington pier side in Yokosuka harbor is largely uncontroversial.⁸⁹

2. General Level of Controversy

Aside from the media outcry surrounding particularly shocking crimes like the two described above, the level of popular opposition to U.S. basing in Yokosuka is negligible. There is, according to an interview with a Yokosuka based defense reporter, a vocal minority that organizes the occasional demonstration. However, in contrast to the vocal minority behind much of the negativity in Okinawa, this minority in Yokosuka is much less vocal and much more minor and they get very little in the way of support from the media, academic circles, or public officials.⁹⁰

In late 2012, a relatively large event was organized by left-wing anti-war activists in the neighborhood outside the Yokosuka base gate. However, unable to deliver real numbers to an actual anti-base demonstration, they settled for a "Peace Festival." It was a family friendly event where pop singers performed on a small stage in an effort to promote peace. There was an information booth displaying information about the deployment of the Osprey to Okinawa and some of the reported safety concerns as well as information on George Washington's propulsion plant. There were also a lot of food vendors and other festival games. In other words, it was more like a typical Japanese seasonal festival, simply organized and put on by a group with left-leaning politics.⁹¹ This is a far cry from a "powerful grassroots movement" and certainly not anything to compare to the level of protest and demonstration in Okinawa. According to the same

88. Johnson, *Nemesis*, 202.

89. Japanese Journalist, telephone interview.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

Japanese reporter, “Yokosuka City has no military allergy.” In other words, the U.S. military presence in Yokosuka is uncontroversial and base–community relations are good.⁹²

3. Possible Contributing Factors

Yokosuka shares many of the possible controversy-inducing factors found in Futenma specifically and with the Marine garrison of Okinawa more generally. The number of personnel assigned to the base itself is comparable to the size of the Futenma garrison and, when one factors in the number of Sailors assigned to the ships home ported there, the base population is at least in the same order of magnitude as the total Marine presence in Okinawa.⁹³ As part of the sprawling Tokyo metropolitan area the surrounding community is even more densely populated than Okinawa. However, a possible advantage is that the Yokosuka base, in contrast to the dispersed nature of the Marine Camps that cover a huge area of the main island of Okinawa, is concentrated in one facility that covers a tiny fraction of the city seaside.

The concentrated nature of the base itself alleviates the need for military vehicles and convoys transiting the city streets. As for aviation, there is only one infrequently utilized helipad on base so aircraft noise is negligible and any additional noise pollution is likely to be drowned out by the thousands of aircraft that pass overhead to either of the nearby international airports at Haneda and Narita. Naval Air Station Atsugi is hosted by Kanagawa Prefecture as well, but a close look at issues there is beyond the scope of this thesis. Additionally, the impending transfer of the air wing to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in southern Japan will serve to alleviate any concerns about this issue anyway.⁹⁴

Yokosuka has had its share of public relations nightmares. Already cited were the two well-reported murders. Also a rape of an Australian national was well reported in the

92. Japanese Journalist, telephone interview.

93. Defense, *Base Structure*.

94. Travis J. Tritten, “At Iwakuni, Realignment Will Go As Planned,” *Stars and Stripes*, February 23, 2010.

foreign press but appears to have been largely ignored by the Japanese public.⁹⁵ As Alexander Cooley states, even the most horrendous crimes committed by U.S. service members tend not to develop the kind of anti-base traction found in Okinawa.⁹⁶ Overall, the number and scale of protests and demonstrations in Yokosuka, even in response to potentially alliance damaging incidents, pales in comparison to those found in opposition to Futenma.

The local economy and demographics of Yokosuka could contribute to a more amicable level of base–community relations. Kanagawa Prefecture ranks number three in household savings rates while Okinawa is number 47 (dead last). Overall, Kanagawa residents are better educated, better compensated, and more likely to be employed in management or technical fields than their countrymen in Okinawa.⁹⁷ Additionally, the number of non-military foreigners residing in and around Yokosuka is also exponentially larger than the number of non-DoD (Department of Defense) civilians in Okinawa Prefecture.⁹⁸ If a Japanese national has an interaction with a foreigner around Yokosuka, it is still most likely going to be a Navy Sailor, but if he/she has two interactions the second one might well be with a Briton working for a bank or an English teacher employed in a local school. Also worth noting, in either of the two case studies already discussed, or the two to follow, the odds that any interaction between a Japanese national and a U.S. military member will end in robbery, rape, or murder is absolutely minuscule.

Politically, Kanagawa Prefecture tends to be centrist to conservative. Chalmers Johnson acknowledges that it is Liberal Democratic Party territory and home to former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Yasukuni Shrine visit fame.⁹⁹ Historically, centrist and conservatives that fall short of the Ishihara Shintaro version of nationalism tend to be supportive of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty and the American military presence.

95. Simon Scott, “Yokosuka Rape Victim Takes Fight for Justice to U.S. Courts,” *Japan Times*, August 14, 2012.

96. Cooley, *Base Politics*, 210–211.

97. Japan Statistics Bureau, “Home Page.”

98. *Ibid.*

99. Johnson, *Nemesis*, 198–203.

Yokosuka is not just blessed by fortunate circumstances. Public affairs initiatives are a contributing factor. Open base days are frequent and popular events where the public is invited to visit the base and tour selected ships. Additionally, the same kinds of chaplain-initiated COMREL activities are a regular feature in the community.¹⁰⁰ However, these efforts in no way approach the level of sophistication of the efforts being made by the Marine Corps in Okinawa.

F. KADENA

Kadena is a useful case study in that it shares many of the attributes of both Yokosuka and Futenma. In terms of size and strategic significance as a single facility, Kadena is Yokosuka's Air Force counterpart in Japan. Kadena is a key American airbase for power projection in the Pacific and a hub of activity for many strategic contingencies in the same way that Yokosuka is.

The fact that Kadena is also an Okinawan air facility is the obvious comparison to Futenma. However, Kadena does not receive nearly the level of media attention or the concentrated effort of the anti-base protesters that Futenma is subject to. Why is it that Kadena is not more known outside defense circles? Why do the Marines get so much attention despite the fact that Kadena is a much bigger facility than Futenma?

The fact is that despite its collocation in Okinawa, Kadena enjoys a much more constructive relationship with its host city. There are occasional formal complaints lodged over aviation noise, but these are largely understood to be posturing for the local papers and an attempt to make political hay with constituents. Behind closed doors however, relations are reported to be at least cordial if not friendly.¹⁰¹

100. Joseph Schmidt, Public Affairs Official, Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, telephone interview by author, September 14, 2012.

101. Major Christopher Anderson, Public Affairs Official USFJ, Yokota Air Base, telephone interview by author, October 12, 2012.

1. Timeline of Flashpoints

In 2001, a Kadena Airman was convicted of rape by an Okinawan court. This incident served to further inflame anti-base sentiment in Okinawa as a whole.¹⁰² Additionally, Kadena tends to be the recipient of a certain level of collateral animosity any time there is a crime committed by any U.S. service member on the islands.¹⁰³ Additionally, while the safety record in recent years has been very good, there have been fatal accidents and crashes in past decades that are still tracked and reported in the Okinawa Times.¹⁰⁴ Overall, while certainly *implicated* in any incident that occurs within the Prefecture, Kadena itself has not *instigated* any crime or accident in the past ten years.

2. General Level of Controversy

In stark contrast to the acrimony surrounding Marine Corps installations in general and MCAS Futenma in particular, Kadena appears to enjoy a largely positive relationship with its host community. Not only does the Air Force appear to have managed to at least avoid becoming the focus of the anti-base activism in Okinawa, it has also put forth community engagement efforts that are comparable to the work being done by their Marine Corps neighbors. These efforts combined with their “head start” in terms of not being the main target of base opposition politics create a relatively benign environment in terms of controversy and there seems to be considerable success in convincing the surrounding community to view the base as an asset rather than a burden.¹⁰⁵

The absence of serious crimes committed by Kadena personnel and the fact that there have been no aviation incidents that affected the surrounding community means that, overwhelmingly, protests and complaints center around aviation noise complaints.

102. “U.S. Airman, Convicted of Rape,” *CNN World*, Accessed November 17, 2012, http://articles.cnn.com/2002-03-27/world/japan.rape_1_japanese-woman-timothy-woodland-okinawa-s-kadena-air-base?_s=PM:asiapcf.

103. Anderson, e-mail.

104. Major Christopher Anderson, Public Affairs Official USFJ, Yokota Air Base, telephone interview by author, October 12, 2012.

105. Anderson, e-mail.

According to the Kadena Air Base Public Affairs Officer, these protests come in the form of “ceremonial and peaceful event(s) where the town assembly will request to visit the base and present their demands/requests to wing leadership. I meet with most town assemblies to address their concerns and work to find solutions where possible. These meetings, in my view, are for the assemblies to show the community that they are taking action. This is a popular thing to do, because the two Okinawan newspapers will write about the protests (meetings).” According to Kadena’s Public Affairs Officer, behind closed doors, many of the officials delivering the protest or complaint acknowledge that the complaints lack merit, but the political gain to be made in having the Okinawa Times cite an official as “standing up against the bases” is too great to resist.¹⁰⁶

Kadena is also heavily involved in community engagement on many levels. At the annual Okinawa City International Carnival, the Airmen from Kadena play a major role in making the 300-meter rope used in the popular tug-o-war event. Kadena town and the base also partner in an extremely popular English language internship for local students. Even the Mayor of Kadena has expressed pride in the success of this program, which is surprising when one considers that many politicians in Okinawa are elected based on how extreme their anti-base stance is.¹⁰⁷ There is also a tenant farmer program that allows local farmers to utilize some less used portions of the base to grow crops. It is difficult to imagine such programs and community activism succeeding if Kadena were as controversial as Futenma. The Marine Corps’ level of effort seems to be at least equivalent, but there is almost no local support for their efforts.

3. Possible Contributing Factors

It is likely that, as Dr. Eldridge asserts, Okinawans have a Marine Corps “allergy.” While the Air Force has its Japanese equivalent in the JASDF, there is simply no Japanese Marine Corps and the expeditionary nature of the Marine Corps mission is

106. Anderson, e-mail.

107. Anderson, e-mail.

just incompatible with the pacifist norms of post-war Japanese and Okinawan politics. The relative level of understanding for the Air Force mission lends itself to a higher level of support for the base at Kadena.

Also, Kadena itself, despite being a tremendous air base compared to the Okinawa Marine presence, creates a relatively small footprint both in area and in terms of number of personnel. While the Marines account for more than 50,000 personnel, Kadena houses fewer than 7,000 active duty Airmen. Kadena's total acreage amounts to 11,000 acres, but the Marines take up nearly 40,000 acres.¹⁰⁸ It is also largely self-contained and off-base military traffic is limited. As a result, Calder's Contact Hypothesis has less opportunity to play havoc with base-community relations.

Aside from the above differences, Kadena shares most of the disadvantages of Futenma. The economic, social and demographic factors are also the same simply by virtue of being hosted by the same small island. Presence in Okinawa with its unique history and strongly anti-base political environment puts Kadena in the crosshairs any time there is a major U.S. related incident on the island.

In fact, a possible argument for Kadena's success is that anti-base activists are focusing their energies on Futenma and derailing the planned Henoko relocation. According to some, a success on that issue would simply encourage the leaders of that movement and the push to remove Kadena would begin.¹⁰⁹ After all, according to Kadena Public Affairs Officer (PAO) Major Christopher Anderson, both the Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo "have a mission to reduce the presence of U.S. military on Okinawa. This is their stated objective that is written on their wall for all to see when we visited their offices."¹¹⁰ Kadena is not immune to the anti-base activism on Okinawa. It is likely that it is simply benefiting from the focus on Futenma.

108. Defense, *Base Structure*.

109. Eldridge, telephone interview.

110. Anderson, e-mail.

G. MCAS IWAKUNI: FUTENMA'S TWIN

The last of my four case studies, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, is worth examining for several reasons. Most obvious is the fact that it is a Marine Corps Air Station, even larger than Futenma, but located outside Okinawa on mainland Japan. According to the Department of Defense Base Structure Report, Iwakuni houses nearly 4,000 Marines, almost three times as many as Futenma. It shares its mainland location with Yokosuka. Yamaguchi, the host prefecture, is also known as a relatively conservative area. From the time of the Meiji Restoration, that area of southern Japan, formerly known as Choshu, has produced more conservative Prime Ministers than any other area of the country.¹¹¹

The fact that it is another Marine Corps aviation facility that fields many of the same aircraft as Futenma and faces the relocation of the Navy's air wing from Naval Air Station Atsugi makes it the perfect comparison to Futenma while controlling for the extreme influence of Okinawan history and political concerns specific to the island prefecture. I argue that the controversial nature of MCAS Futenma specifically, and Okinawan Marine Corps facilities in general, is not only a function of something unique to the Marines, but also a function of Okinawa's unique history and political climate.

1. Timeline of Flashpoints

As with Kadena, and in contrast to both Futenma and Yokosuka, there is little record of any major media attention paid to crimes or incidents related to the Marines at Iwakuni in recent decades. There have been two major incidents of rape perpetrated by Marines assigned to Iwakuni, one in 2004¹¹² and the other in 2007.¹¹³ The first involved a single Marine and the second in 2008 echoed the 1995 case in Okinawa in that four Marines were charged with the gang rape of a local woman in a van outside a nightclub.

111. Packard, *Protest*, 48.

112. Greg Tyler and Hana Kusumoto, "Iwakuni Marine Denies He Was Seeking to Rape," *Stars and Stripes*, February 7, 2004.

113. Travis J. Tritten and Chiyomi Sumida, "Four Marines Held at Iwakuni in Alleged Rape of Japanese Woman," *Stars and Stripes*, October 21, 2007.

On top of this, there are surely minor nuisance crimes like DUIs or disorderly behavior. However, there is little that has received any attention outside the *Shinbun Akahata*, the official newspaper of the Japanese Communist Party. Even the incidents listed there are traffic accidents and drunken vandalism for which victims are compensated in a timely manner. Nothing on the scale of the Okinawa or Yokosuka incidents exists in the public record.

One issue that has arisen recently is the deployment of V-22 Osprey and the transfer of the Carrier Air Wing from Atsugi to Iwakuni. These developments certainly have the potential to generate considerable protest and opposition to the expansion of an already fairly large U.S. military installation. The Osprey deployment in Futenma has pressed anti-base activists to label it the “most dangerous airfield in the world.” Many have gone so far as to fly kites around the fence line of the base in an effort to interfere with flight operations there.¹¹⁴

Iwakuni has been comparatively quiet. Some civic resistance to the transfer of the air wing and the Osprey deployment has registered in the *Akahata*¹¹⁵ and the *Chuugoku Shinbun*,¹¹⁶ but there has not been the mass resistance and public outcry found in Okinawa. In fact, according to a recent *Yomiuri Shinbun* poll, 54% of Iwakuni residents supported the Osprey deployment as long as “safety could be ensured.”¹¹⁷ While this might fall short of unconditional support, it certainly does not qualify as opposition. It also indicates that any resistance would simply be from a public safety standpoint as opposed to ideological or political opposition to the U.S. presence in general.

2. General Level of Controversy

MCAS Iwakuni, like Yokosuka and Kadena, enjoys a relatively positive atmosphere when it comes to host community relations. Aside from the obvious cause of

114. Martin Fackler, “Arrests of 2 U.S. Sailors in Rape Case Threaten to Fan Okinawa’s Anger,” *New York Times*, October 16, 2012.

115. “Osprey Opposition Broadens,” *Shinbun Akahata*, September 3, 2012.

116. “Osprey: Coming Again to Iwakuni,” *Chuugoku Shinbun*, October 24, 2012.

117. “Osprey Deployment: Japan and America Cooperating to Prevent Deterioration of Alliance,” *Yomiuri Shinbun*, July 25, 2012.

Okinawa's unique political environment, there is no other reason that Iwakuni, which is a both larger and busier facility, should enjoy such a positive relationship with its host community while Futenma is the epicenter of controversy for the U.S.–Japan Alliance.

Additionally, Major Neil Ruggiero, a Public Affairs Officer with extensive experience in both Okinawa and Iwakuni, cites the strong support of the Ministry of Defense (MOD) compared with what he characterized as a consistent lack of support for the Okinawan Marines from the Okinawa Defense Bureau. He stated that the MOD is “very supportive of the base agreement” and often intercedes in issues of public complaints about aircraft noise.¹¹⁸

As for the controversy surrounding the deployment of the V-22 Osprey, despite the positive reaction indicated by the Yomiuri poll, there have been some public demonstrations organized in opposition to the change. However, local activists, finding a lack of support from the immediate community, have turned to out of area recruitment in order to pad their numbers at protests. A majority of the Iwakuni protesters are bussed in by organizers from outside the prefecture. Consequently, the small protests that have occurred cannot be understood as “local” by any means. They are a result of a nationwide, left-wing, anti-military constituency and the small numbers¹¹⁹ that they are able to turn out even through such out of area recruitment are indicative of their lack of popular support.

Aside from periodic public nuisance complaints regarding aviation noise, the level of controversy surrounding MCAS Iwakuni appears to be unremarkable. There is some evidence of anti-base sentiment in local newspapers and the fact that opposition groups are able to organize some popular protests (regardless of the non-indigenous nature of these protests) indicates that the resistance that does exist is part of a larger (and largely marginalized) anti-militarist constituency within the Japanese left as a whole.

118. Ruggiero, telephone interview.

119. Ibid.

3. Possible Contributing Factors

While Iwakuni is nearly double the size of Futenma on its own, Iwakuni enjoys the advantage of not being situated with 50,000 other Marines scattered at other camps in the surrounding area. Iwakuni is its own entity.

What little controversy does exist stems from aviation safety and noise issues.¹²⁰ The fact that Iwakuni is an air station cannot be helped. However, despite the expressed concerns of a vocal, non-local minority, these issues have not proven sufficient to develop any kind of critical mass or even a local expression of dissatisfaction with the base. As pointed out above, more than half of Iwakuni residents, barring any significant safety issues, even support expanding the role and mission of the base.¹²¹

Also, as addressed earlier, the active support of the MOD is assessed by public affairs officials to be key both in maintaining positive base–community relations and defusing any potentially disruptive disputes before they gain traction.

Yamaguchi Prefecture’s economy, while not as large or diverse as that of the Tokyo metropolitan area, dwarfs that of Okinawa prefecture. Both in terms of number of businesses per square kilometer and average household income, Yamaguchi vastly outstrips Okinawa. In terms of number of non-military foreigners residing in the prefecture, while Yamaguchi does not come close to Kanagawa’s nearly 2% foreign population, there are twice as many non-military foreigners as a percentage of population in Yamaguchi than in Okinawa. Also, since there are only the 3,000 or so Marines stationed directly at Iwakuni to contend with, any interaction a Yamaguchi resident has with a foreigner is at least equally likely to be with a civilian as with a Marine.¹²²

The Marines at Iwakuni also participate in a great deal of normal community outreach and open base type events.¹²³ However, since they are not faced with the

120. Ruggiero, telephone interview.

121. “Osprey Deployment.”

122. Japan Statistics Bureau, “Home Page.”

123. Ruggiero, telephone interview.

overwhelming challenges that their fellow Marines on Okinawa deal with, they have not been forced to work at engaging the community at the high level seen at Futenma and Kadena.

H. OVERALL MEASURES

While establishing a precise statistical measurement of the level of base–community relations at a given facility is difficult given the lack of attention paid to this issue outside of the facilities in Okinawa, the interviews and research I have conducted have allowed me to at least make a general assessment of the level of controversy at these four bases beyond a simple anecdotal level.

Clearly, and least surprising, Futenma is the most controversial base in Japan. It may be the most controversial base in the entire DoD inventory. Okinawa’s history, political culture, the tremendous demographic pressure of the number of U.S. bases located within the prefecture, and the frequency of major crimes and incidents that have taken place there combine to form a “perfect storm” of controversy around MCAS Futenma. Since the 2009 general election, when Prime Minister Hatoyama campaigned on “reevaluating” the relocation agreement, the situation has just been exacerbated. On top of that the deployment of the Osprey has contributed to make the worst of an already bad situation.

Kadena Air Base is next most controversial base. Despite enjoying a relatively benign relationship with the immediately surrounding communities, Okinawa’s political climate combined with all the problems that make Futenma so controversial act to put Kadena “at risk” of becoming another sore spot in the alliance as a whole. It is entirely conceivable that if the Futenma Problem is ever resolved, Kadena could become the next target of the anti-base activists in Okinawa Prefecture.¹²⁴

MCAS Iwakuni is by contrast much less controversial. All indications point to the base enjoying broad support within the immediate community and Yamaguchi Prefecture as a whole. Complaints revolving around aviation noise are certainly not to be completely

124. Eldridge, telephone interview.

disregarded, but close coordination with local MOD official seems to keep a lid on anything that might otherwise boil over into widespread dissatisfaction with the base and its operations. Certainly, its smaller footprint overall when compared with the entire Marine Corps presence in Okinawa decreases the risk of mass media publicized crimes that could damage the base's standing in the community. There does appear to be a vocal and organized minority of people who manage to garner enough outside support to put on regular demonstrations against the base's proposed expansion, but this has not been sufficient to undermine the support of the actual host community.

Yokosuka, despite a presence that is at least on the same order of magnitude as the Marine Corps presence in Okinawa and a recent history of well-publicized violent crimes perpetrated by Sailors in the community, appears to be the least controversial of the four case studies. The 2009 arrival of USS George Washington was expected to dramatically increase the local opposition to the U.S. Navy's presence. However, three years on, even in the wake of the nuclear disaster at Fukushima, such fears appear to have been largely unfounded. As with Iwakuni, there is a small contingent of anti-base activism, mostly centered around the Japanese Communist Party. But their major events need to be framed not as "anti-base" demonstrations, but rather as "peace festivals."¹²⁵ This is likely due to the overwhelmingly positive attitude of Kanagawa residents to the base presence. The upcoming Yokosuka Peace Festival is expected to draw most of its participation by including performances by Japanese pop-stars and building the festival around family friendly activities found at any festival in Japan. The activism that will be on display is expected to be just two "information booths" on nuclear propulsion and the V-22 Osprey and it is anticipated that these will largely be relegated to a side-show status, something for families to ignore as they walk from food stands to the music stage.¹²⁶

125. Japanese Journalist, telephone interview.

126. Ibid.

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III. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have attempted to conduct a comparative study of the base community relations across four different installations: Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Naval Station Yokosuka, Kadena Air Force Base, and Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni. Since little has been written either in academic literature or the popular press on community base relations at facilities outside of Okinawa, this thesis, in examining and comparing the state of relations at four separate facilities, points to some interesting conclusions. First and most glaring is that base relations throughout Japan are not equal. There is a vast spectrum with the controversy surrounding MCAS Futenma on one end and the relatively pacific relations at Yokosuka Naval Base at the other end.

For a number of reasons, Futenma is by far the most controversial of the four bases. Located in Okinawa, the political climate is such that the removal of the base is the stated objective of local officials, both local newspapers, and the activists of the anti-base movement. Okinawa's unique history as essentially a "double colonized" island chain puts all the bases there at a disadvantage in their efforts for constructive base-community relations. Additionally, Futenma is part of the larger USMC presence. The Marines are an organization that has no analogous counterpart in the Japanese military establishment and, in the eyes of Okinawan activists at least, does not contribute directly to the stated goal of "defense of Japan." Rather, the Marines are focused on expeditionary warfare, most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also potentially for contingencies on the Korean Peninsula or the Taiwan Straits.

Additionally, the dispersed nature of the Marine Corps facilities island-wide makes for added difficulties brought on by large truck convoys and the associated traffic and noise problems they generate. As a percentage of the prefecture's population, the Marines are the largest presence of any of the four case studies. Simply stated, there are a ton of Marines on the island and this greater visibility makes them an easy target for the opposition movement.

Futenma is further hampered in its efforts to peacefully coexist with the city of Ginowan and the prefecture as a whole by the fact that it is an air base that fields some of the largest and noisiest helicopters in the U.S. military inventory. This problem has been exacerbated by the recent deployment of the V-22 Osprey, an airframe which, at its outset, had a notorious safety record and was once touted as the number one “worst aircraft of all time.” While its safety record has considerably improved since initial fielding, the anti-base activists have seized on the negative reports of the Ospreys’ safety to call Futenma the “world’s most dangerous airfield.”

Perhaps, however, the most important factor in making Futenma the most controversial is simply that it is the easiest target for anti-base activists. The factors listed above, aviation safety and noise complaints, traffic associated with the larger Marine Corps presence, and Okinawa’s unique history and political climate, combined with the fact that Okinawa Prefecture is the least educated and economically developed of Japan’s prefectures *and* hosts the smallest number of non-military foreigners, place MCAS Futenma at the center of the bull’s eye for anti-base activists. Former Prime Minister Hatoyama’s declaration of intent to push for Futenma to be relocated outside of Okinawa Prefecture despite previous U.S.-Japan agreements to the contrary and his subsequent inability to deliver on that promise made Futenma *the* focal point of the anti-base movement in Okinawa and, to the extent that it exists, in Japan at large.

Kadena suffers the next highest amount of tension. Collocation on Okinawa is the largest factor in making this so. Kadena also shares some of the same concerns about aviation noise and safety. While in the past personnel assigned to Kadena have not been involved in serious crimes to the extent found at some of the other facilities in this study, the recent arrest of an Airman for trespassing and assault have done nothing to increase separation between itself and Futenma.

Iwakuni, while in a dissimilar political climate, shares many attributes with Futenma. Namely, it is also a Marine Corps Air Station currently fielding the controversial Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft and facing the additional relocation of the Naval Air Wing from Atsugi. Aviation noise and safety concerns are paramount for the base public affairs officials. However, Yamaguchi Prefecture does not share the same cultural

and political traditions that make the bases on Okinawa so controversial. There is no history of strong anti-militarism and, overall, people are at least accepting if not supportive of the base presence. Iwakuni also enjoys the full support of local Ministry of Defense officials who often serve as mediators between concerned citizens and the Marines there. This is an advantageous relationship that neither of the bases in Okinawa enjoys with the Okinawa Defense Bureau.¹²⁷

Yokosuka, the least controversial of the four case studies, is also conveniently the most geographically distant from Okinawa. It also benefits from the fact that the city of Yokosuka has a long history as a “Navy Town” going back all the way to the Meiji Restoration. Despite the two high-profile murders in the last decade, the presence of the USS George Washington, and the potential for Yokosuka to be a target in a U.S. conflict with a third party, the political and demographic realities of Kanagawa Prefecture prevent the public backlash that occurs in Okinawa from plaguing the base there. The naval base enjoys a close working relationship of cooperation and coordination with local officials, politicians, and civic groups.¹²⁸ As a naval facility, Yokosuka also benefits from the lack of air operations, so noise and public safety are not of primary concern. The base is also largely self contained so there are none of the traffic issues that are a problem for the Marine Corps on Okinawa. It is also interesting to note that, of the four case studies, Yokosuka is the only base that keeps a careful record of the exact number of anti-base demonstrations that do occur.¹²⁹ While these are nothing on the scale of the protests in Okinawa, they do exist and Yokosuka public affairs personnel keep tabs on both the frequency and size of the protests that do occur. This may indicate the seriousness with which the base leadership takes its mission of promoting harmonious community relations. It may also, however, illustrate the futility of the efforts of the bases in Okinawa to do the same.

127. Ruggiero, telephone interview.

128. Joseph Schmidt, Public Affairs Official, Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka, telephone interview by author, September 14, 2012.

129. Ibid.

A. POSSIBLE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions I have reached in this thesis point to several possible policy recommendations that could either help improve base-community relations at an individual installation, or at least guide leaders in dealing with the tension that controversy creates in the alliance as a whole. Taking steps to limit the amount of civic disruption a base causes is an obvious first step. While there is probably not a lot that can be done to allay concerns about aviation noise at an air base, a concerted campaign to educate the public about the more recent safety record of the Osprey would probably be helpful. Particularly in Iwakuni, where safety was cited as the only reason the majority of the citizenry would oppose the Osprey deployment, this could be effective. In Okinawa, where both local newspapers are aligned against the U.S. military presence, and have actively resisted printing anything positive about the U.S. presence whatsoever, this might prove more problematic.

In terms of the traffic issues caused by truck convoys, efforts to limit the frequency with which these convoys traverse the public roads or restricting them to low traffic hours (for example late evening or very early morning) might reduce both visibility and the traffic problems associated with this kind of movement.

Preventing the commission of crimes by service members, while certainly desirable and a worthy goal for its own sake, is likely to be ineffective. Educating service members with mandatory programs like Yokosuka's Area Orientation Brief is a good idea, but further restricting liberty range and hours (as has been the response for all U.S. Forces in Japan in the wake of the recent events in Okinawa) will have little effect on crimes of this nature. The reality is both of the Yokosuka murderers were already in an Unauthorized Absence status when they committed their crimes.¹³⁰ In short, these Sailors were already violating regulations. Crimes like this are generally not committed by personnel who are operating under established parameters. Forcing service members and their dependents who follow the rules to return to their residences by a given hour does nothing to stop the few people who flout the rules as a matter of course from committing

130. Schmidt, telephone interview.

violent crimes in the community. Short of a revision of the Status of Forces Agreement to allow Japanese law enforcement increased jurisdiction for crimes committed outside the base, nothing is likely to mollify citizens for whom this is a primary concern and even this will not stop the actual crime itself. An appropriate and timely response that holds the individuals responsible not if, but when these tragic events occur is the only course of action. The collective restriction of movement for all U.S. service members only punishes the local businesses that depend on military customers for their livelihood.

As for what to do about Futenma, some have asserted that the best course of action is simply to acquiesce to activists' demands for closure or out of prefecture relocation. However, the history of the Okinawan anti-base movement indicates that this would be a poor choice. Far from being satisfied by such an outcome, a victory over MCAS Futenma would only serve to embolden the anti-base movement and urge them forward to push for removal of one base after another. The re-ignition of popular protest in the wake of the DPJ victory in 2009 proves this correct. Once Futenma is gone, the rest of the Marine Corps camps in Okinawa would be next, and then Kadena, all of which are important, but collectively represent a vital U.S. security interest in the region. Compromise is clearly called for. However, the political climate within Okinawa makes dialogue difficult and the prospect for resolution unlikely. Perhaps policy makers in the United States and Japan can take some comfort in the realization that as intractable as the issues that surround MCAS Futenma seem, they are largely limited to that facility and the other bases in Japan and the alliance itself are not nearly so troubled.

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