

US-Japan Alliance: The Future of ‘the Most Dangerous Base in the World’

Karen Kishi

Supervised by Dr. Harris Dousemetzis



Durham
University



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Introduction

First established in 1957, The United States Forces Japan (USFJ) currently deploys approximately 60,000 military personnel across 15 major bases in Japan (U.S. Forces Japan, n.d.), with 70% of these military facilities are stationed in Okinawa, a small prefecture south of Japan's mainland island, despite it constituting only 0.6% of the country's total land mass (Hikotani et al, 2022: 337). Originally taken under US occupation during WW2, and used as a base for the invasion of the Japanese mainland, the Japanese government agreed to permanently host military bases on their territory in exchange for economic alliance even after the island's return to Japanese control in 1972 (Takushi Crissey, 2017: 11). However, over the years, the local population has repeatedly demonstrated discontent towards the military presence, particularly the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, due to its central location in Ginowan City which is home to nearly 1000, 000 residents (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2026: 5). This has raised tensions between the Okinawan public and the Japanese government (Pajon, 2010: 19). As, this alliance moves away from its long-established dynamic of Japan focusing on defence strategies and the US providing offensive military power, with Japan's cabinet having approved the country's largest defence budget in history just last year (Davidson, 2025), it is a crucial time to reexamine the stability of this bilateral relationship.

The goal of this research is to encompass the varying advantages and disadvantages of the US military presence in Japan through investigating all stakeholders in the matter, such as Okinawan locals, military personnel and international governments. With Japan hosting the largest number of American military personnel abroad (Hikotani et al, 2022: 336), these military bases remain crucial to international security. However, it is the Japanese citizens who feel their immediate consequences. On the other hand, this military presence bolsters the Japanese economy, especially in Okinawa, where income is heavily reliant on tourism (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2026: 11). As the country's current economy faces a period of turmoil, complete removal could have ramifications. Hence, there is much debate domestically surrounding the necessity of these, which this research aims to address. Working towards a solution where the negative international externalities are kept to a minimum, whilst not overlooking the Japanese locals' voices, is crucial.

This research will be approached from two perspectives and concentrate only on Futenma Air Station as it is the most controversial, often being referred to as 'the most dangerous base in the world' (Lummis, 2018). Firstly, a quantitative analysis will examine general public survey results starting from the 1980s, following the return of the Ryukyu Islands to Japanese control (河野 and 小林, 2012: 2) to document changing opinions on the US military presence. This data will be collected through secondary sources, mainly newspapers and media outlets, that have conducted public surveys, such as the Japanese Broadcasting Company (NHK), and descriptive research will be carried out to describe trends over three decades. Official results of government referendums will also be reviewed as they will provide reliable data without methodological difficulties that surveys may face. Secondly, through a counterfactual analysis and the framework of Rational Deterrence Theory (RDT), the necessity of US bases will be evaluated utilising the Philippines as a case study. Their effectiveness as a deterrent and any potential security threats following Futenma's removal will be examined. Whilst limitations of both research methods will be presented, this report aims to evaluate the true necessity of the US Futenma military base and its future.

Analysis of Japanese Public Opinion

This section examines the quantitative data regarding the presence of US military bases in Japan and public opinion towards them. Three separate types of data, public surveys, government surveys, and

referendum results, are examined for triangulation. Since all three instruments evaluate public sentiment through a different method, convergence across all three creates a robust understanding of civilian attitudes. Structured longitudinal questionnaires, government-administered polling, and binary electoral votes taken together allow for a more detailed assessment. It should be noted that these survey instruments measure attitudes toward US bases generally or US base concentration in Okinawa, rather than Futenma specifically. However, findings are extrapolated to Futenma as it is the most contested case.

Firstly, public survey results will be examined. The Japan Broadcasting Company (NHK) has carried out longitudinal studies, documenting changes in public opinion since the 1980s. In 2012, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the return of the Ryukyu Islands to Japanese control, NHK carried out an opinion poll by interviewing 1,800 residents of Okinawa Island and 1,800 nationwide residents, with a valid response rate of 62% (河野 and 小林, 2012: 2). Similarly, in 2017 and 2022, NHK repeated similar surveys. In 2017, there were over 2,000 valid responses with a validity of 55.5% among Okinawan respondents and 61.8% among mainland respondents. In 2022, with 812 Okinawan respondents and 1,115 nationwide respondents, they had a validity of 45.1% and 61.9% respectively (中川 and 中山, 2022: 37). The results of these surveys are summarised in Figures 1 and 2 below.

Figure 1

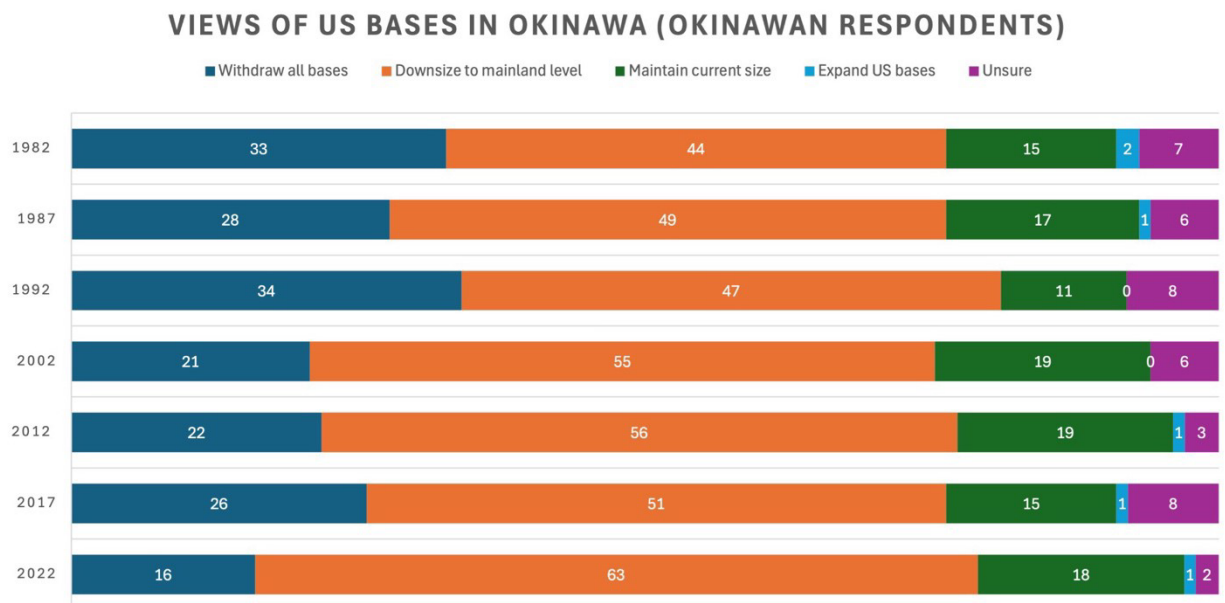
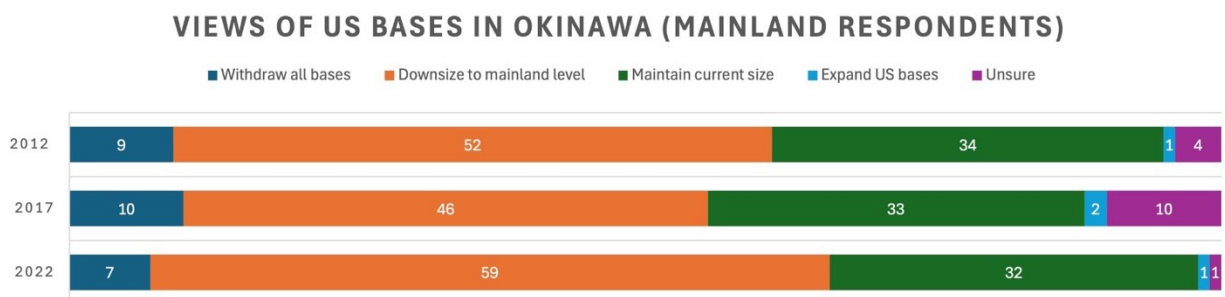


Figure 2



(河野 and 小林, 2012), (河野, 2017), (中川 and 中山, 2022)

Across the seven Okinawan survey data, the respondents consistently expressed substantial opposition to the US military presence, with the number of respondents favouring either the withdrawal of all bases or their reduction to the mainland level ranging from 79% to 81%. Comparing this to nationwide respondents, between 56% and 66% favoured either withdrawing US bases or reducing them to mainland levels over the three surveys conducted. Whilst notably lower than Okinawan respondents, these surveys show that even among the mainland public, there is substantial pushback against the presence of US military forces. However, Okinawans were substantially less supportive of maintaining the current base levels, with only 18% selecting this option, compared to 32% of mainland respondents in 2022. Additionally, 16% of Okinawans favoured complete withdrawal, compared to only 7% of mainland respondents. This gap is consistent with divergence driven by unequal base concentration rather than opposition to the alliance itself, though the survey data only provides correlation, not causation.

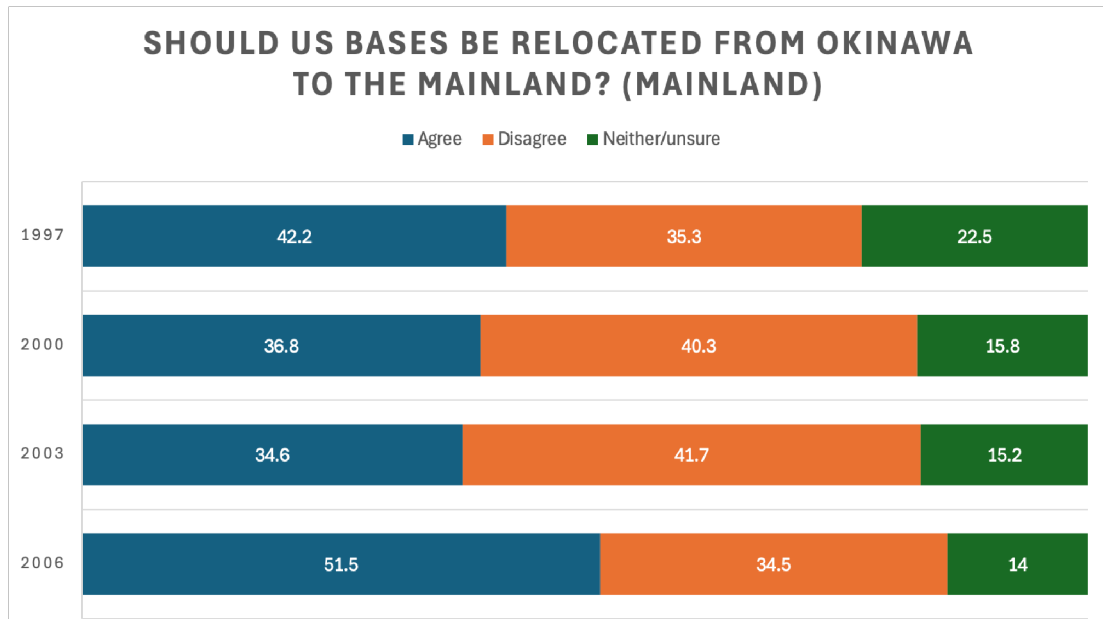
Moreover, the composition of the Okinawan opposition to the military presence has shifted over time. Support for complete withdrawal of bases declined from 33% in 1982 to 16% in 2022, whilst support for reducing the bases to the mainland level increased from 44% to 63%. This shift is consistent with growing concern over the geographical concentration of bases, rather than their overall presence. A prefectural referendum was carried out in 1996, where 89% of voters answered in favour of reviewing the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and reducing bases (Eldridge, 1997: 879). With a turnout of 59.5%, this was the equivalent to 53% of the entire electorate wanting the US-Japan alliance to be reevaluated, suggesting a degree of scepticism regarding the alliance. However, in 2012, when Okinawans as part of the same NHK survey detailed above were asked whether the US-Japan alliance should be either strengthened, maintained or reduced, 46% wanted a strengthened alliance compared to 43% wanting to either reduce or dissolve the security treaty (河野 and 小林, 2012: 8), demonstrating a split regarding the alliance. However, by 2017, as part of the 2017 NHK survey, it was found that 65% of Okinawan respondents and 83% of nationwide respondents believed that the US-Japan alliance was important (河野, 2017: 20). This suggests a growing consensus on the alliance's importance in national security in the last decade. The shift has continued in the 2022 NHK surveys. When questioned whether the security treaty was essential, 58% of Okinawans and 83% of mainlanders responded that the US-Japan Security Treaty was useful in maintaining Japanese national security (中川 and 中山, 2022: 42). This coincides with 82% of Okinawans and 85% of mainlanders believing that Japan is at risk of being involved in war or conflict (中川 and 中山, 2022: 43). Whilst in 1996 and even 2012, skepticism towards the US-Japan alliance as a whole was more present, this attitude seems to have shifted in more recently.

Hence, there appears to be a tension, as despite general support for the security alliance itself, opposition to the military bases seems to be consistent. Whilst this may appear contradictory, Hikotani et al (2022) attribute this divergence to the not-in-my-backyard (NIMBY) phenomenon (Hikotani et al, 2022: 335). They similarly analysed NHK's 2017 survey data and found that whilst the large majority of both mainland and Okinawan respondents considered the alliance with the US important, a considerably smaller proportion of Okinawans were willing to host the bases. This pattern reflects the NIMBY syndrome, where local populations adopt a protectionist attitude and resist an unwelcome development in their neighbourhood (Dear, 1992: 288). Residents often concede that these facilities are necessary but continue resistance as the costs of the developments fall disproportionately on them. Dear argues that the opposition arguments express three specific concerns: the perceived threat to property values, personal security, and neighbourhood amenity (Dear, 1992: 290). The latter two are especially applicable to the case of Okinawa. Personal security concerns centre on the perceived dangerousness of clients, which

correlates with crime statistics; between the island's reversion to Japanese power in 1972 and 2025, there have been 6,409 accounted criminal offences, 600 of which are violent crimes including murder, rape and robbery by US military-affiliated personnel. In 2016, a US military base civilian worker was prosecuted for the rape and murder of a local woman, triggering a prefectural protest (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2026: 8). Additionally, neighbourhood amenity, which Dear refers to as concerns including a degrading quality of life, can be seen through military and environmental concerns raised by locals. As of 2025, there have been 946 US military aircraft accidents, including 49 crashes, two of which occurred in 2016 and 2017 (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2026: 6). These incidents may explain the slight spike in the number of Okinawan locals who voted for a complete removal of the bases in the 2017 NHK survey. Higher concentrations of PFOS, an artificial chemical compound linked to various health conditions, have also been detected in groundwater downstream of Futenma Air Station (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2026: 10). These negative externalities have all contributed to the increasing NIMBY syndrome and offer an explanation as to why there is strong opposition to the US military presence but general support for the bilateral alliance.

In 2019, a second referendum concerning the bases was held, this time regarding Okinawan opinion over relocation of the bases within the prefecture, which was originally proposed in a report by the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) in 1996. It asked voters whether they supported the relocation of the Futenma base, out of the city, to Henoko Coast, north of where the current base is stationed. However, 71.7% of the Okinawan voters were against this relocation (Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, 2019), suggesting that relocation of the base within Okinawa is not sufficient for the local population and there is stronger support for relocation to the mainland. Despite this, due to the non-binding nature of this referendum, the government chose to undergo this relocation (*The Japan Times*, 2026). Since comparable public survey data prior to 2012 regarding nationwide opinions is limited, government surveys from the Cabinet Office can be examined instead. The data is presented in Figure 3 below, where results were collected between 1997 and 2006, showing adequate support among the mainland public to relocate the bases (Cabinet Office, Government of Japan). Between 1997 and 2006, the number of mainland respondents agreeing to the relocation of US military forces out of Okinawa prefecture increased from 42.2% to 51.5%. This consistent rejection from Okinawan and mainland respondents undermines the relocation of Futenma within the prefecture as an adequate solution. This implies relocation to the mainland would face less domestic resistance.

Figure 3



(Cabinet Office, Government of Japan, 1997-2006)

Evaluated together, all three sources deliver consistent findings: Okinawan locals are generally more likely to oppose the US military presence compared to nationwide responses, yet are not strongly opposed to the US-Japan alliance itself. The NHK surveys establish a stable baseline of Okinawan opposition to base concentration at 79-81% over nearly four decades. The data from referendums in 1996 and 2019 corroborate this, with these findings translating into actual voting behaviour. Lastly, the government conducted surveys focused on nationwide responses, corroborating this trend, showing an increase in support for relocating bases out of Okinawa between 1997 and 2006.

Deterrence Theory and Counterfactual Analysis

Rational Deterrence Theory is the idea that the credible threat of retaliation is sufficient to maintain peace and deter states from aggressing against another (Waltz, 1990: 731). RDT, first notably developed and applied to the field of Politics by Schelling, centres on the usage of power to hurt as bargaining power, specifically the credibility of military threats (Schelling, 1966: 3). He argues that the coercive value of military capability lies most importantly in its potential use rather than when exercised. RDT is utilised as a framework in this report as it directly addresses the central question at stake, whether the US military presence in Okinawa poses a necessary threat to prevent conflict and avoid potential Chinese aggression in the region as they increasingly challenge American regional hegemony (Mastro, 2022: 8). More specifically, in this scenario, extended deterrence, the use of deterrence in an attempt to protect state's allies, becomes more significant and difficult to maintain (Huth, 1988: 424). Huth hypothesised four variables that were most important in assessing whether extended deterrence remains credible: balance of military force between attacker and defender, interests at stake for the defender in protecting their ally, past behaviour of the defender when faced with the same attacker, and bargaining power during the confrontation (Huth, 1988: 425). These variables can be evaluated counterfactually.

Counterfactuals are speculative statements of what could have or will happen (Lebow, 2000: 551), and they remain necessary for normative evaluation and help to avoid hindsight bias, the tendency of

knowledge of the outcome to affect understanding of the past, ensuring research recognises the uncertainties in which actors operated in the past (Lebow, 2000: 559). Hence, countless academics have conceptualised frameworks for counterfactual experiments, including Tetlock and Belkin, who focused on increasing the plausibility of these thought experiments across six different dimensions: clarity, cotenability, historical consistency, theoretical consistency, statistical consistency and projectability (Tetlock and Belkin, 1996: 18).

This essay examines the central counterfactual claim that the closure of Futenma would significantly weaken US deterrence against China. The first criterion refers to the specificity of both the antecedent and the consequent. The antecedent here is the complete closure of the Futenma base, and the consequent is the reduction of extended US deterrence for Japan. Tetlock and Belkin's third criteria also argue for a small, realistic change that should be logically plausible, which is also referred to as the minimal rewrite rule first coined by Weber (Lebow, 2022: 125). Minimal rewrite counterfactuals are crucial in understanding causal claims. Whilst in reality, it is not simply a matter of event X affecting or causing event Y, with major events and outcomes having multiple causes all interacting in non-linear ways, ensuring event X (the antecedent) is a realistic event is important for evaluation (Lebow, 2022: 127). Applying this criterion, Futenma is a suitable antecedent as it is a plausible scenario. Since its relocation has been an actively contested policy since the 1996 SACO agreement, Futenma's closure is a realistic departure from the current situation and is more plausible than a withdrawal of the entire US forces from Japan, which would require reconsideration of entire alliance structures and policies. Having established that the antecedent is a minimal change, returning to the second criterion, cotenability examines the relationship between the antecedent and consequent: the connecting principles and events linking the two must be consistent with each other and the antecedent itself (Tetlock and Belkin, 1996: 18). Fearon argues that the focus of counterfactuals should not be whether the antecedent is plausible or not but if the antecedent were to occur and was sustained, would it then create a shift in events that independently causes the consequent (Fearon, 1991: 170). Therefore, a credible causal chain between the closing on Futenma and weakened deterrence must be demonstrated. Cotenability also requires that following events and variables are appropriately shifted following the antecedent. For example, in Mueller's non-nuclear counterfactual, postwar history is reimagined, including the Cuban missile crisis, whilst simply subtracting the presence of nuclear technology. Cederman critiques this, arguing that the consequents directly contradict the antecedent, as the Cuban missile crisis would not have originally occurred if not for nuclear weapons and hence contingency is not present (Tetlock and Belkin, 1996: 23). This implies that the antecedent cannot be isolated and altered without considering its knock-on effects. Applying this to the case of Futenma, Japan's broader security interests and policy stances cannot be assumed to remain the same after closure of the base. On the other hand, O'Shea's study suggests that deterrence lies primarily on the Seventh Fleet and the Fifth Air Force, suggesting that Futenma's closure can be relatively well separated from the wider US military presence in Japan (O'Shea, 2024: 58). Since deterrence credibility is determined by the overall US military posture in the region rather than by any single base in isolation, the closure of Futenma, a comparatively marginal post, does not undermine the aggregate credibility of US operations around the country. Hence, provided that other bases maintain their full operational capacity, the broader deterrent effect will not proportionally reduce.

However, a cotenable antecedent must be well supported. Tetlock and Belkin's fourth criterion examines whether connecting events and impacts are consistent with well-established theories (Tetlock and Belkin, 1996: 18). Huth, above, argues that a decline in military capability would lead to decreased credibility in a state's threat to counterattack and protect an allied state. This entails that closing the Futenma base would reduce capabilities, as the US military would have one less base on the island and therefore would reduce credibility in the eyes of China, weakening extended deterrence. However, O'Shea's report shows that this may not necessarily be the case; relocating the military base completely off the island would reduce the

human costs on Okinawan locals without significantly weakening deterrence (O'Shea, 2024: 63). This suggests that utilising Huth's variables to link the antecedent and consequent in this scenario may be insufficient, as capability and credibility can be treated as two individual principles. Whilst the closure of Futenma would remove a specific US military capability from Okinawa, it does not proportionally decrease the credibility of US extended deterrence. Huth's principles therefore provide a useful theoretical mechanism, but may not be sufficient to assert that the closure of Futenma would translate into a significant decline in overall credibility of US extended deterrence.

Tetlock and Belkin's last two criteria of statistical consistency and projectability examine the possible scenario against real-world observations. The Philippines can be used as a comparison case as it provides real-world observations, tests whether the projected chain of events is plausible and confirms it against historical scenarios. In 1991, the Philippine Senate voted against the renewal of alliance agreements with the US, triggering a process of US military base removals from the country after approximately ninety years (Austin, 2003: 42). Due to the Senate's historically pro-US stance, the American government underestimated the Filipino general public's lack of trust in them and the increasing nationalist sentiment. Nevertheless, despite their last remaining bases being returned to the Philippines in November 1992, the US-Philippine alliance was not completely terminated (Austin, 2003: 43). In the same year, the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was signed, which allowed the US continued access to Philippine military facilities on an occasional basis. Additionally, in 1994, an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was pursued, providing US forces with Filipino logistic support (Austin, 2003: 49). This meant that whilst the US did not officially have any of their military personnel or forces on Filipino land, they maintained military access and strategic influence in the region. Applying the cotenability criterion, the antecedent (complete US removal) did not hold constant the broader alliance position, which continued to adjust through alternative methods.

In 1994, China also began constructing a military observation post on Mischief Reef, located in the Spratly Islands, a cluster of islands situated in the South China Sea, which had long been an irritant in the US-Philippine security relationship (Austin, 2003: 45). China's action appeared to breach an agreement, previously made with the Philippines in 1986 as a promise to amicably resolve the dispute. The Filipino media sensationalised this news, arguing that it posed a threat to their national security (Austin, 2003: 46). However, Austin argues that this was not the case; China had previously carried out similar action in the Spratly Islands region without sparking much anger or retaliation from the Filipino government. Rather, this story was used to leverage US support, and the US used it as an opportunity to revive its alliance, as it provided them easier access to Taiwan in case of a Chinese attack. As a result of this, the US deliberately kept wording of the agreements over the Spratly Islands vague, never explicitly promising US intervention in case of another attack or further encroachment of this region (Austin, 2003: 50). Whilst a 2001 RAND report stated that the US did not need to permanently move back into military bases in the Philippines, they instead advised rotational deployments which have been renewed periodically and still exist to this day (Lariosa, 2026). Here, it is illustrated that the erosion of deterrence following base withdrawal is not automatic, but contingent on whether the US retains sufficient strategic interest in the region to reconstitute influence through alternative means.

The Philippines case therefore illustrates the extent to which US foreign involvement can persist without permanently stationed forces, suggesting that closure of a military base does not translate to an immediate termination of the alliance. Since the retreat of US forces in the Philippines was not their voluntary decision, American interest remained in the Asia Pacific region, particularly in relation to Taiwan and hence continued to pursue regional influence. However, this case also provides evidence that extended deterrence may weaken following the removal of permanent US forces. Although the alliance remained strong, the US avoided explicitly committing itself to the defence of Philippine territory regarding the

Spratly Islands (Austin, 2003: 49). Before the withdrawal, it can be argued that the US forces provided a stronger physical manifestation of American commitment. Continued alliance building and rotational deployments were shaped primarily by broader US strategic interest in foreign policy rather than an explicit protection and commitment to the Philippines. Therefore, it can be concluded that whilst base closure does not eliminate extended deterrence, it may shift it from a visibly demonstrated commitment to a more flexible arrangement based on military access agreements.

Evaluation

Consolidating the two sections above, firstly, the quantitative analysis demonstrates that Okinawans primarily oppose the concentration of bases in the prefecture rather than the alliance itself, which can be explained by the NIMBY syndrome. Similarly, the counterfactual analysis has found that Futenma's closure specifically is not likely to significantly weaken deterrence credibility; hence, the locals' voices do not completely contradict security needs. Whilst the counterfactual analysis above focuses on the complete closure of the Futenma facility, there is the possibility of a relocation of the base instead. However, due to the overwhelming and longstanding opposition to this decision as shown in the 2019 referendum results above, this essay has decided to focus solely on its closure despite government actions to go forward with the relocation.

Regarding the methodology, there are a few limitations to the research. Firstly, as seen above, the NHK survey validity rates rest between 45% and 62%, which is not exceedingly high. This could have been due to several reasons, including abstention from answering or, since these surveys were conducted as interviews, participants may not have given a clear answer. Despite this, the polling results show consistent trends with no overly large fluctuations in opinions over three decades. NHK also remains Japan's only public broadcast media group (NHK, 2026) and hence is a nationally accredited source for information, rendering it highly reliable. Secondly, in the scope of this report, the Philippines was the only analogue example that was assessed, perhaps making it difficult to generalise the findings or mirror possible scenarios without examining additional case studies. However, there are multiple similarities between the Philippines and Japan regarding their relationship with the US. At the time of American withdrawal, the Philippines maintained a close alliance, and the senate vote was not necessarily due to a fallout or disagreement between the two countries, but rather an increasing desire for change and rising nationalist movements (Austin, 2003: 43). In Japan, there is increasing nationalist rhetoric, with the Sanseito, Japan's far right party garnering the third highest vote share in the 2025 Japanese Upper House Election (Higuchi, 2025). Therefore, Japan is currently experiencing a similar political environment as when the withdrawal of US forces from the Philippines occurred, allowing for a more reliable comparison. Lastly, Cederman's critique of cotenability remains: Japan's broader security posture cannot be assumed constant after closure. Japan's cabinet has already approved the country's largest defence budget in history (David, 2025), suggesting a potential shift towards greater self-reliance that is independent of, but could be accelerated by, a change in military arrangements with the US. The essay's conclusion is therefore conditional on the assumption that Japan's broader security policy does not need to be independently altered.

Moreover, one potential counterargument referred to at the beginning of this essay is the potential economic hindrances caused in case of a US withdrawal since, for example, the bases provide employment opportunities for locals (Hikotani et al, 2022: 333). However, prefectural reports show that the economic impact of these bases is often inflated. Due to Okinawa's large tourism industry, it has been found that returned land that previously hosted military personnel generates more income as renewed tourist sites. For instance, the American Village which was built on returned land, previously hosting the Hamby Airfield generated 33.6 billion yen in 2015, compared to the previous 300 million yen (Okinawa

Prefectural Government, 2026: 12). With Futenma occupying one quarter of the city's total area, a 2015 study estimated that the return of Futenma base would generate 32 times more direct economic benefits in Okinawa. This would support the local economy and provide benefits for the local community, further solidifying their opposition to the military presence. Hence, economic impacts also favour a closure of the Futenma base.

The findings also carry theoretical implications for RDT. Huth's operationalisation of extended deterrence treats capability and credibility as two intertwined variables, assuming that a reduction in physical military presence translates relatively strongly to a reduction in credible threat. However, O'Shea's analysis of Futenma base and the Philippines case both suggest that credibility can be sustained by the overall regional presence and by a state's demonstrated willingness to uphold influence through alternative means, as done through separate security agreements or temporary deployments in the Philippines. This is consistent with Schelling's conception of RDT and the argument that effective deterrence hinges on communicating intentions of aggression or retaliation rather than simply possessing the capability to do so (Schelling, 1966: 36). These intentions are made credible through various interdependent political commitments, which are built through several methods including military bases (Schelling, 1966: 55). Some may argue that Schelling's logic undermines findings and suggests that closing Futenma risks the exact erosion of credibility that is warned against. However, this treats all commitments as equally significant, whereas credibility is highly dependent on whether it is managed as a coherent policy or a reactive and unplanned procedure. (Schelling, 1966: 63). In the Philippines case, where closure was triggered by a formal democratic process, coupled with the continued regional presence that was formalised through alternative means, RDT remains relevant. Applying this to Futenma, this means that if the base were to close, how it is managed and presented in the media and to the wider public becomes significant.

Conclusion

Overall, this research finds that the continued operation of Futenma Air Station is difficult to justify, considering local costs and its limited contribution to US extended deterrence. Its closure would be the best course of action for Japan and, specifically, the locals of Ginowan city. The quantitative analysis demonstrates longstanding and substantial opposition among the Okinawans to the concentration of US military bases in the prefecture, whilst simultaneously highlighting the increased perceived importance of the US-Japan alliance. The resistance is due to the disproportionate negative externalities locals must face, with the 2019 referendum demonstrating relocation within the prefecture to be inadequate to address these concerns. The counterfactual analysis additionally suggests that Futenma's closure is not likely to produce a significant decline in Japan's security due to its marginal capabilities compared to the wider US military presence in Japan, which is further supported by the Philippines case study, in which withdrawal of bases did not terminate an alliance or eliminate deterrence entirely. However, this does not mean the US military presence in Japan as a whole is unnecessary. Due to increasing tensions in the Asia Pacific region, the bilateral alliance still remains crucial for Japanese security. Rather, the findings from the public surveys suggest that the alliance itself retains strong public and strategic justification, and Futenma's closure could in fact sustain this alliance by demonstrating understanding and respect for the local population. Ultimately, this report concludes that Futenma Marine Corps Air Station is not indispensable to regional extended deterrence and its continued presence imposes significant costs on the Okinawan population. Therefore, closure of the facility is a viable means of reconciling Japan's security interests with the voices of its local population.

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