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Research Report

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Fighting Abroad from an Ally's Land

Challenges and Opportunities for U.S. Forces in the Indo-Pacific

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Published by the RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, Calif.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available for this publication.

ISBN: 978-1-9774-1297-3

Cover: U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Rebeckah Medeiros

About This Research Report

This report documents research and analysis conducted as part of a project entitled *Fighting Abroad from an Ally's Land*, sponsored by U.S. Army Pacific. The purpose of the project was to identify constraints the U.S. Army may face when operating on allied or partner territory in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as opportunities for access in peacetime and in conflict, and provide recommendations for ways to improve basing and access outcomes.

This research was conducted within RAND Arroyo Center's Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program. RAND Arroyo Center, part of the RAND Corporation, is a federally funded research and development center (FFRDC) sponsored by the United States Army.

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Gil Mestler, Don Brown, Col. Marco Lyons, and the staff at U.S. Army Pacific for their support and feedback throughout the project. At RAND, we are indebted to Molly Dunigan and Jon Wang for numerous suggestions and improvements for our research. Finally, we would like to thank our three reviewers of this report: Peter Chalk (Institute for Security Governance), Eric Heginbotham (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Sean Barnett (RAND). All three of these reviewers highlighted different areas that helped strengthen the final version of this report.

Summary

The research reported here was completed June 2023, followed by security review by the sponsor and the U.S. Army Office of the Chief of Public Affairs, with final sign-off in August 2024.

The dramatic increase in Chinese power and military capabilities over the past two decades and greater Chinese coercion toward Taiwan and other states in the Indo-Pacific region have highlighted the importance of ensuring that the U.S. military is correctly postured in peacetime and able to rapidly respond should a conflict arise. Implicit in many of the U.S. military and broader U.S. government discussions on regional posture is the assumption that the United States will have the ability to not only quickly access its military capabilities stationed in the region but also be able to freely operate from bases in allied territories. This report explores this assumption, examining the opportunities and constraints that the U.S. military might face when operating from allied territory in the Indo-Pacific region. We examine the basing and access assumptions for the U.S. military should it wish to preposition supplies in, and operate from, key regional allies in peacetime and in a conflict over Taiwan when those allies themselves have not been attacked. While there are several allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region that could potentially provide the U.S. military access, our analysis focuses on the three treaty allies of Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the Philippines.

Approach

Our research focused on a specific set of research questions aimed at providing insight into how the three allies perceive issues of U.S. access in peacetime and conflict, as well as areas where U.S. forces could potentially take advantage of opportunities for improving basing and access:

- Do existing security agreements enable the United States to obtain the type of access it requires from each ally?
- Do the United States and its allies share similar interpretations of their respective agreements to minimize any potential friction of implementation?
- Should the United States seek to bring in a new capability into an ally's territory, what is the process that needs to be followed?
- How much do nonlegal factors (i.e., political considerations and public opinion) affect U.S. basing and access in each host country?
- What is the process for the United States to invoke its security treaty with each of the respective allies? Does invoking said treaty ensure ease of access?
- Do the challenges to basing and access change depending on whether it is peacetime versus a contingency?

We conducted our research in three phases. First, we conducted a comprehensive literature review of historical and current studies on access, including those published by the RAND Corporation and other organizations and think tanks. These studies illustrated the challenges that the United States has historically faced with access requests. We also reviewed summaries of wargames and simulations related to a conflict in the Indo-Pacific to determine commonly held access assumptions for key allies and partners in the region. Second, we conducted an internal RAND workshop with military experts to determine the types of capabilities and access requests the United States might make of Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines in a Taiwan contingency. This resulted in a consolidated list of categories of access requirements, including supplies, parts, and fuel; munitions; nonkinetic forces, such as headquarters, cyber units, or intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR); kinetic ground-based capabilities, such as precision strike missiles (PrSMs) and the High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS); and combat aircraft or naval ships. We also examined access pertaining to U.S. overflight to conduct ISR activities in the region, and combat sorties or other direct kinetic operations emanating from the ally's territory. Third, we used the research from the prior two areas to conduct extensive discussions with officials and experts in Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. We also conducted interviews with U.S. government personnel and experts in the United States who work on issues related to these three allies. A significant aspect of the research for this phase included an examination of important agreements the United States has with each treaty ally that are relevant for U.S. military access and basing:

- Japan: Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security; Status of Forces Agreement; 1960 Exchange of Notes; Fujiyama-MacArthur Oral Understanding
- ROK: Mutual Defense Treaty; Status of Forces Agreement; Strategic Flexibility
- Philippines: Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT); Visiting Forces Agreement; Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA).

Implications for U.S. Military Access in Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines

Japan

- *In peacetime, the United States faces few legal constraints on what capabilities it can deploy to its bases in Japan, but there is a political expectation to consult with Japan.* Because of the ramifications on local Japanese communities and the political sensitivities this causes for the Japanese leadership, Tokyo expects the United States to consult with Japan prior to changes in forces or capabilities.
- *Japan will likely agree to U.S. notifications for prepositioning nonkinetic capabilities, as long as they are unlikely to be opposed by local communities.* Prepositioning equipment parts, fuel, and fuel bladders, as well as non-airborne ISR assets and cyber units at U.S.

bases, would be acceptable to Japan, as these capabilities are unlikely to cause public protest and will not cause political challenges for the central government.

- *Deploying kinetic capabilities to Japan in peacetime would likely pose a greater challenge, particularly in the Nansei Shotō, or Southwest Islands.* U.S. notifications to deploy kinetic capabilities would likely be met with more resistance from Japan because of local opposition. Airborne ISR assets pose greater likelihood of agreement from Tokyo. However, U.S. requests to bring new aircraft units or kinetic capabilities onto U.S. military or Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) bases, such as PrSMs or HIMARS, would be especially challenging for Japan to agree to because of local community sensitivities and the perception of increased risk of Chinese retaliation.
- *U.S. access in a Taiwan contingency that does not directly involve an attack on Japan is much more challenging and will heavily depend on Japanese leadership's political definition of the situation.* The way Tokyo declares a situation will dictate the level of access that U.S. forces can expect. The government can declare an Important Influence Situation, an Anticipated Armed Attack Situation, an Armed Attack Situation, and a Survival Threatening Situation. Each situation has implications for U.S. access in a conflict. If Japan is not attacked, it is unclear what political leadership will decide, leaving U.S. ability to conduct combat operations directly from Japan unknown until the decision on the type of situation is made.

Republic of Korea

- *In peacetime, the United States has access to its bases and faces few constraints on what capabilities and equipment it can deploy to the ROK.* Legally, the United States can bring in any capability to South Korea, with a few exceptions. The challenge for national leaders is local leadership opposing U.S. military presence or raising fears of Chinese retaliation, creating political costs for Seoul. The ROK's response to U.S. notifications and consultations will therefore differ based on the capability.
- *Prepositioning additional nonkinetic capabilities in peacetime should prove unproblematic, as long as the capabilities are tied to deterrence against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).* Interviewees were generally positive that Seoul would not oppose U.S. initiatives, assuming they augment South Korea's defense against the DPRK. This includes prepositioning items such as fuel, fuel bladders, and spare parts and stationing nonkinetic units responsible for cyber-, space-, and ground-based ISR, as well as aerial ISR if it was not directed at China.
- *Prepositioning additional kinetic capabilities in peacetime should prove relatively easy, assuming that U.S. notifications are tied to deterring the DPRK.* Seoul is more likely to approve U.S. kinetic capability notifications if they are tied to deterring North Korea. Seoul would likely agree to notifications of U.S. units coming to the ROK that would add additional capability to what is that is already in-country, or that upgrade an existing capability.

- *U.S. access to the ROK in a Taiwan contingency is unlikely.* Seoul is primarily concerned about the DPRK. But possible Chinese coercion means that the political leadership's primary concern in a Taiwan conflict will be not giving the impression that it supports a side. This suggests that there is no guarantee that the United States can use any capability it has in South Korea for that Taiwan conflict.
- *Moving capabilities off the ROK for use from somewhere else is likely to elicit strong resistance from Seoul, particularly in a conflict.* Moving U.S. forces out of South Korea under strategic flexibility to position them elsewhere in the region is an option and sovereign right of the United States, but it likely will be strongly opposed by South Korean leadership, who would be concerned about the degradation of the U.S. deterrence umbrella against the DPRK. The ROK might consider the removal of some U.S. forces if the United States presented a replacement plan to guarantee that the force level does not drop below 28,500.

The Philippines

- *In peacetime, the United States has access to Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) bases but faces several constraints on what capabilities and equipment it can bring into the Philippines.* Legally the United States can bring in any capability it wants, with a few exceptions. However, the challenge of local elites opposing U.S. military presence creates political costs for Manila. Manila's response to U.S. access requests will therefore likely differ based on the capability and the likelihood of local community acceptance.
- *Prepositioning nonkinetic capabilities in peacetime is likely to be acceptable to the Philippine leadership.* Interviewees were unanimous that these would be acceptable to Manila if they are tied to exercises with the AFP or were for the country's defense.
- *Whether Manila would allow prepositioning of U.S. aerial ISR capabilities in peacetime is uncertain.* There was not agreement among interviewees on whether prepositioning U.S. overflight ISR capabilities would be permissible to Manila. If they are allowed, because of the Philippines' strict adherence to rotational presence, there would likely be a clear time limit for how long such an ISR asset could deploy to and operate from the same EDCA base.
- *Prepositioning kinetic capabilities in peacetime could prove very challenging.* Interviewees noted that something that is clearly meant for the Philippines' defense—such as Patriot systems—would "be easier" for Manila to accept than an "offensive weapon" with a longer range. Naval ships and fighter aircraft would also likely be refused access to Philippine bases and ports, because they appear to be "based," which would "raise red flags." It was acknowledged that if tensions were growing, the Philippines might grant access for these capabilities if the United States sought to bring them in for the Philippines' defense.
- *Despite challenges, two provisions of existing agreements provide the United States with greater flexibility for prepositioning and access in peacetime.* The first is the Visiting

Forces Agreement's provision of a legal framework for U.S. forces to conduct rotational exercises, which can help the U.S. military extend both its presence and deploy varied capabilities throughout the country. Second, U.S. forces can tie a desired capability to a specific training initiative with the AFP, which would then allow the capability to be stationed in the country for a longer period.

- *The majority of U.S. access requests are unlikely to be granted in a Taiwan contingency.* U.S. access in a contingency will be heavily dependent on how much the Philippine government connects a crisis over Taiwan with the Philippines' direct security interests. Fear of Chinese retaliation is likely to lead political leadership to reject the majority of U.S. access requests in conflict and restrict use of whatever U.S. forces are deployed in the country at the time that conflict breaks out. If Manila views a crisis over Taiwan as a significant threat to the Philippines, then it becomes more likely that the leadership will agree to U.S. access requests. with one major caveat: U.S. access would need to clearly contribute to the Philippines' defense, not just use the Philippines as forward operating base.

The analysis also highlighted some similarities and differences between the cases. First, despite differences in the bilateral agreements between the United States and its three allies that result in variations in basing and access and U.S. ability to deploy forces in peacetime, all of the agreements are ambiguous about U.S. military access in a conflict if the allied country is not directly attacked. Second, more than legal agreements, domestic political considerations prove to be the most important factor that determine whether U.S. forces are granted access—both in peacetime and in a contingency. This plays out not just at the national level, but also at the local level and in the relationships between local and national governments. Third, there appear to be areas of discrepancies in interpretations of key bilateral agreements related to basing and access that have the potential to lead to different expectations in terms of what types of capabilities or forces require consultation or consent, what U.S. military activities would be acceptable to the host country's leadership, and what U.S. forces can expect for basing and access for various U.S. capabilities and activities.

The analysis also highlighted a notable difference between the three countries in terms of the likelihood of access in a contingency involving Taiwan. Japan is the most likely to grant access to U.S. forces for various types of operations, although the extent of access would depend on how the Japanese leadership defines the threat to Japan, a decision that could take considerable time. Japan increasingly considers Taiwan as critical to its security and has made efforts to include the issue of Taiwan in foreign policy and security discussions. While challenges would still exist for access to certain types of capabilities and operations, and much would depend on the political leadership in power at the time, Japan is more likely to acquiesce to U.S. requests for basing and access at facilities in Japan during a contingency than the other two countries. South Korea, for example, considers the issue of Taiwan to be too sensitive to discuss and does not appear to factor Taiwan into its foreign policy or defense planning. Rather, in addition to the strong desire to avoid antagonizing China into poten-

tially engaging in economic coercion against the ROK, the prominent view in Seoul is that the main purpose of U.S. forces and capabilities on the Peninsula is to maintain the Armistice and defend South Korea against possible North Korean aggression. Taiwan also does not appear to factor heavily into Philippine decisionmaking on U.S. basing and access. Responses to U.S. basing and access requests in a Taiwan conflict would heavily depend on whether Philippine territory or interests are threatened, again making U.S. access in a conflict uncertain, particularly if Philippine territory is not struck.

Recommendations for the U.S. Military

The recommendations that flow from the findings of this report are applicable across the U.S. military and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). Given the sponsorship of this project, however, we will highlight recommendations for the U.S. Army, followed by recommendations for other parts of the U.S. government that fall outside of the purview of the U.S. military.

One overarching recommendation is that U.S. military leaders should plan for some amount of uncertainty related to access decisions in each of the three countries in a conflict. Our analysis highlights that even in Japan, where access is more likely, decisionmaking timelines could be slower than U.S. operational timelines, and Tokyo's decision to grant access for certain types of capabilities might depend on how the leadership defines the threat to Japan. Similarly, the Philippines would also likely delay decisions as much as possible, absent a clear threat from China. For all three countries, military planners should take into account host nation sensitivities to certain types of capabilities and fears over the risk of Chinese retaliation. Country-specific recommendations and those most relevant for the U.S. Army are presented below.

Japan

- *Discuss regional and local differences with respect to access with Japanese counterparts to determine the most accessible locations for certain capabilities or forces.* U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) could support this by consulting with Japanese counterparts early and often on the desire to introduce new capabilities, giving not just their counterparts, but the civilians in Japan's Ministry of Defense and broader government who will be leading the outreach effort, time to coordinate with the local hosting communities.
- *Increase exercises and rotational training to normalize U.S. military presence and build relations in communities where the U.S. would like to increase posture.* USARPAC could consider adding "liaison" personnel to exercise and training deployments in challenging parts of Japan to build local relations and interact with the local military and civilian officials on Army-specific operations and capabilities.
- *Focus on expanding deployment of nonkinetic capabilities, which are most likely to be agreed to by Japanese leadership.* USARPAC should focus on ensuring that it preposi-

tions the critical nonkinetic capabilities that would be important for a Taiwan contingency, such as ISR.

Republic of Korea

- *Increase the "floor" to flex options.* The current number of 28,500 troops in the ROK is considered to be the minimum "floor" necessary to deter North Korea. USARPAC could facilitate conversations between its leadership and ROK counterparts on specific Army requirements for troop numbers to discuss flexibility in numbers and specific uses for ground forces that exceed the numerical requirement.
- *Frame access requests as meant for deterring North Korea when relevant.* USARPAC should ensure that all of its access requests are framed as augmenting South Korean deterrence, as well as bolster the message of U.S. military intent to use capabilities for South Korea's defense through discussions with ROK military counterparts.

The Philippines

- *Use rotational access to maintain a persistent presence throughout the year, including exercises that bring in diverse capabilities at different locations throughout the country.* Through these exercises, USARPAC can maintain a persistent presence with varied capabilities in strategic locations throughout the country. For example, to ensure that key U.S. Army capabilities are in-country, work to include ground-based fire units in at least one exercise at all times.
- *Conduct a public messaging campaign to support broader strategic initiatives.* USARPAC could support this public messaging effort though discussions with counterparts in the AFP, the Philippine Department of National Defense (DND), and the broader Philippine government.
- *Ensure compatibility between U.S. access requests and AFP requirements.* USARPAC could hold discussions with the AFP to determine specific ground-force capabilities that the AFP currently uses and is interested in operating in the future.
- *Let the AFP be the champion for U.S. access requests.* USARPAC should work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to ensure that AFP and DND counterparts are involved in the relevant access discussions and that these are connected to broader DoD efforts on security cooperation and access.

Recommendations for the U.S. Government

Japan

- *Discuss with Japan the need for rapid decisionmaking on access in a conflict*, to message clearly to Tokyo the critical need for its political timelines to synch with U.S. operational timelines.

- *Conduct more engagement with Japan* to better understand what Japan is willing to do in different phases of a crisis.

Republic of Korea

- *Clarify the conditions under which the MDT applies.* The United States should lead discussions to reach an understanding of what the "mutual" means in the MDT. Seoul interprets the MDT as solely applicable for a DPRK contingency, but questions remain as to whether the treaty applies to other U.S. territories and situations. The United States should also ensure that South Korean leaders understand that the United States has a sovereign right to redeploy from the Peninsula if forces are needed elsewhere, particularly for a large-scale contingency, such as a Taiwan conflict.
- *Internationalize the alliance to ensure greater flexibility in use of forces.* U.S. Forces Korea should regularize exercising off the Peninsula with other regional armed forces, particularly with Japan and Australia, and encourage the ROK military to exercise and train off the Peninsula with like-minded regional militaries.

The Philippines

- *Prioritize countering Chinese efforts to influence local leadership.* The United States should find creative counterincentives, coordinated across the U.S. government, to counter the misleading narratives spun by China about the intent or impact of U.S. military activities in the country, as well as message the broader economic benefits of U.S. military presence.
- *Work to clarify details on important implementing agreements*, including on how to invoke the MDT and what would happen if the MDT is invoked (this would be documented in an IRR [Implementing Rules and Regulations], similar to the Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation).

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The dramatic increase in Chinese power and military capabilities over the past two decades and greater Chinese coercion toward Taiwan and other states in the Indo-Pacific region have highlighted the importance of ensuring that the U.S. military is correctly postured in peacetime and able to rapidly respond should a conflict arise.[1] Against this backdrop, there are increasing statements by U.S. leaders and analysts regarding the need to prepare for a regional contingency by considering how the United States can work with allies and partners.[2] Implicit in many of these discussions is the assumption that the United States will have the ability to not only quickly access its military capabilities stationed in the region but also be able to freely operate from bases in allied territories. Even though these U.S. allies have independent foreign policies of their own, their perspectives on allowing U.S. forces access, particularly in a conflict, as well as how they perceive their own agency regarding U.S. operations from their territory, are often not well understood or accounted for in U.S. military posture and planning.

There is a wide range of academic literature, including numerous RAND Corporation studies, on the challenges the United States has encountered in securing access in other countries both during peacetime and for military operations. Historical examples of U.S. allies and partners in other theaters refusing to allow access in conflict include Qatar's denial of access for U.S. forces to conduct airstrikes against Islamic State forces in 2014 and multiple North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies refusing to support U.S. base access to provide supplies to Israel during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War.[3] Prior RAND studies have concluded that

[1] For a discussion of U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific region, see Kristen Gunness, Bryan Frederick, Timothy R. Heath, Emily Ellinger, Christian Curriden, Nathan Chandler, Bonny Lin, James Benkowski, Bryan Rooney, Cortez A. Cooper III, Cristina L. Garafola, Paul Orner, Karl P. Mueller, Jeffrey W. Hornung, and Erik E. Mueller, *Anticipating Chinese Reactions to U.S. Posture Enhancements*, RAND Corporation, RR-A1581-1, 2022.

[2] For example, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has repeatedly stressed the importance of U.S. alliances and partnerships in the Indo-Pacific to counter China (Ellen Knickmeyer, "US Strategy for Indo-Pacific Stresses Alliances on China," Associated Press, February 11, 2022).

[3] Renanah M. Joyce and Becca Wasser, "All About Access: Solving America's Force Posture Puzzle," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 3, September 2021; Andrew Yeo and Stacie Pettyjohn, "Bases of Empire? The Logic of Overseas U.S. Military Base Expansion, 1870–2016," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 40, No. 1, January 2021.

there have been frequent challenges to U.S. military access and that these challenges would be difficult to overcome in a conflict.[4] One of the most relevant RAND studies to examine access challenges is a 2016 report entitled *Access Granted*.[5] This report, which elevates the issue of political challenges to access, includes not just the challenges that arise at the local level but also how third-party states can seek to bully, bribe, delegitimize, or incite opposition to U.S. bases in an allied territory. Another 2016 RAND report, entitled *War with China*, assumes that Japan's decision on U.S. forces using U.S. bases in Japan, as well as Japan's own entry into a war involving Taiwan, is contingent on the cause and locus of the conflict, as well as whether Japan is attacked, thereby highlighting the political variable inherent in any access decision.[6] This focus echoes a RAND study from a decade earlier that examines the political threat to U.S. overseas access stemming from divergent interests between the host nation and the United States.[7]

A larger body of RAND studies offer lessons from other regions and fields. Some of these studies focus on other theaters, such as Europe and the Middle East.[8] Others are largely historical, thereby providing limited understanding into what current access conditions are and under what conditions the United States can leverage them.[9] Finally, many of the RAND

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4 Stacie L. Pettyjohn and Jennifer Kavanagh, *Access Granted: Political Challenges to U.S. Overseas Military Presence, 1945–2014*, RAND Corporation, RR-1339-AF, 2016, p. 143. For a discussion of conflict-phase access in the Indo-Pacific region, see Bryan Frederick, Kristen Gunness, Gabrielle Tarini, Andrew Stravers, Michael J. Mazarr, Emily Ellinger, Jonah Blank, Shawn Cochran, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Lyle J. Morris, Jordan Ernstsen, Lydia Grek, Howard Wang, and Lev Navarre Chao, *Improving Conflict-Phase Access: Identifying U.S. Policy Levers*, RAND Corporation, RR-A1742-1, 2023.

5 Pettyjohn and Kavanaugh, 2023.

6 David C. Gompert, Astrid Stuth Cevallos, and Cristina L. Garafola, *War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable*, RAND Corporation, RR-1140-A, 2016.

7 Roger Cliff, Mark Burles, Michael S. Chase, Derek Eaton, and Kevin L. Pollpeter, *Entering the Dragon's Lair: Chinese Antiaccess Strategies and Their Implications for the United States*, RAND Corporation, MG-524-AF, 2007.

8 Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Patrick Mills, David T. Orletsky, and David E. Thaler, *Working with Allies and Partners: A Cost-Based Analysis of U.S. Air Force Bases in Europe*, TR-1241-AF, 2012; and unpublished research on fuel supply and distribution challenges in Europe by Bryan Boling, Elvira Loredo, Tony DeCicco, David DeSmet, Bryce Downing, Krystyna Marcinek, Jason Mastbaum, Scott Stephenson, and Andrew Stravers.

9 Adam B. Siegel, *Basing and Other Constraints on Land-Based Aviation Contributions to U.S. Contingency Operations*, Center for Naval Analyses, March 1995, p. 1; Owen R. Cote, Jr., *The Future of Naval Aviation*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 2006; Stacie L. Pettyjohn, *U.S. Global Defense Posture, 1783–2011*, MG-1244-AF, 2012; Alan J. Vick, *Air Base Attacks and Defensive Counters: Historical Lessons and Future Challenges*, RAND Corporation, RR-968-AF, 2015, pp. 19–37; Lawrence R. Benson, *USAF Aircraft Basing in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, 1945–1980*, Ramstein Air Base, Germany: Office of History, Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe, 1981, declassified July 20, 2011; Diana Johnstone and Ben Cramer, "The Burdens and the Glory: U.S. Bases in Europe," in Joseph Gerson and Bruce Birchard, eds., *The Sun Never Sets: Confronting the Network of Foreign U.S. Military Bases*, South End Press, July 1, 1999.

studies are largely limited to the U.S. Air Force and do not account for joint capabilities.[10] However, these studies do offer important lessons that a new study on access in the theater can seek to explore. One major lesson is that there is a danger in conflating the separate issues of peacetime access to U.S. bases and contingency access for a specific operation.[11] A second lesson, related to the first, is that political challenges by host nations—both at the national level and host community level—can affect access requests. Third, access can be contingent on domestic considerations, including public support and local conditions within the hosting communities. Fourth, the type of capability may matter, because smaller and more agile military footprints in a host nation's territory are potentially less likely to cause friction with hosting communities and are thus more likely to be accepted by the host nation. Fifth, the nature of a crisis—and the political will of host nation leaders—are important determinants to the extent that restrictions, limitations, or delays are imposed on U.S. requests in a contingency. Finally, and arguably most critically, having a host nation share a common threat perception with the United States helps with basing and access requests, but is never the determinant in and of itself.

These studies, and other historical examples, suggest a likelihood that U.S. forces could find themselves unable to access regional bases or capabilities hosted by allies that are needed to fulfill specific military operations in conflict.[12] The reasons for being denied access are varied and could stem from an ally's political concerns, security concerns, or broad strategic concerns about allowing the United States to conduct military operations from their territory. It is therefore imperative that U.S. decisionmakers understand both the likely challenges and opportunities for basing and access of U.S. military forces in an allied country in the Indo-Pacific theater. This report explores these issues by answering three overarching questions:

- What can the United States military assume it can preposition in allied territories in peacetime given legal and political constraints?
- What can the United States military assume it will be able to do from a host country in terms of operations, access, and use of capabilities in a contingency where that ally is not attacked?
- How can U.S. military forces improve the likelihood of access given the unique legal and political environments that exist in ally and partner nations?

[10] Pettyjohn and Kavanaugh, 2016, p. 5. Other studies include Stacie Pettyjohn and Alan Vick, *The Posture Triangle: A New Framework for U.S. Air Force Global Presence*, RAND Corporation, RR-402-AF, 2013; Patrick Mills, Adam R. Grissom, Jennifer Kavanagh, Leila Mahnad, and Stephen M. Worman, *A Cost Analysis of the U.S. Air Force Overseas Posture: Informing Strategic Choices*, RAND Corporation, RR-150-AF, 2013; John Stillion and David T. Orletsky, *Airbase Vulnerability to Conventional Cruise-Missile and Ballistic-Missile Attacks: Technology, Scenarios, and U.S. Air Force Responses*, RAND Corporation, MR-1028-AF, 1999.

[11] Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, p. 6.

[12] Siegel, 1995, p. 27; Owen R. Cote, Jr., "Assuring Access and Projecting Power: The Navy in the New Security Environment," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, April 1, 2002.

Current U.S. Posture and Access in the Indo-Pacific Region

Despite being geographically separated from the Asian continent by over 6,000 miles of water, the United States is a Pacific power. In addition to the state of Hawaii and the territory of Guam, the United States also maintains special relationships with three countries—the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia—via the Compact of Free Association. Through these territorial and compact relationships, the United States is not only responsible for these islands' defenses, which are associated with special basing and access privileges, but is able to maintain an active military presence in the region. While that presence is the largest in Guam, with 6,667 active-duty personnel as of September 2022, U.S. military presence exists in each location.[13] Additionally, the United States maintains five active treaty alliances in the region—with Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia—the first three of which serve as case studies in this report. These alliances afford the United States additional opportunities for military basing and access.

The largest U.S. military footprint is in Japan, where the United States has retained a permanent presence since the end of World War II. The U.S. presence was over 200,000 troops immediately following the U.S. occupation and declined to an average of approximately 80,000 in the 1960s.[14] It fell further in later years of the Cold War, to between 40,000 and 50,000, and hit a low point in 2007 of under 33,000 troops as the number of U.S. personnel deployed to Iraq peaked.[15] Following the Barack Obama administration's rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, U.S. presence increased to approximately 50,000 U.S. personnel. Today, Japan is home to 53,973 active-duty U.S. armed forces personnel representing all services.[16] If National Guard/Reserves and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) civilian personnel are added to that, the total increases to 61,009.[17] This large number of personnel reflects the significant presence the United States maintains in Japan. This includes U.S. Forces, Japan, a sub-unified command to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command; the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet, the largest forward-deployed fleet in the U.S. Navy; the U.S. Air Force's 18th Air Wing, its larg-

[13] As of September 30, 2022, totals were Guam: 11,638 (active duty: 6,667; National Guard/Reserve: 2,473; DoD civilian: 2,498); Marshall Islands: 82 (active duty: 15; National Guard/Reserve: 0; DoD civilian: 67); Palau: 31 (active duty: 31; National Guard/Reserve: 0; DoD civilian: 0); and Micronesia: 3 (active duty: 3; National Guard/Reserve: 0; DoD civilian: 0) (Defense Manpower Data Center [DMDC], "U.S. Military Personnel by Country," webpage, September 2022. In January 2023, the Marine Corps activated a new facility at Camp Blaz in Guam (Rubin Tan, "Why Guam? Reactivation of Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz," U.S. Marine Corps, January 25, 2023).

[14] All personnel numbers have been taken from the DMDC, 2022.

[15] Kristen Bialik, "U.S. Active-Duty Military Presence Overseas Is at Its Smallest in Decades," Pew Research Center, August 22, 2017. Over 218,000 U.S. service members were deployed in and around Iraq in 2007.

[16] As of September 30, 2022, totals were Army: 2,455; Navy: 20,647; Marine Corps: 17,995; Air Force/Space Force: 12,859; and Coast Guard: 17 (DMDC, 2022).

[17] National Guard/Reserves: 262, and DoD civilian: 6,774 (DMDC, 2022).

est combat air wing; the U.S. Marine Corps III Marine Expeditionary Force, which includes a fully scalable Marine Air-Ground Task Force; and the U.S. Army's I Corps Forward element.[18] While some of the changes in U.S. presence have varied over time, there is no evidence that they were due to constraints placed by the Japanese government; most decisions appear to have been made either bilaterally or based on U.S. discretion.[19]

The United States also maintains a sizable presence in the ROK, although there U.S. presence is predominately the U.S. Army. With access to over 60 facilities in the ROK, the United States currently stations 25,372 active-duty troops there, of which 16,765 are active-duty U.S. Army personnel.[20] In addition to U.S. Forces Korea and operational U.S. Marine Corps, Navy, and special forces elements, major formations include the 8th Army and 2nd Infantry Division and the 7th Air Force.[21] The 2nd Infantry Division is permanently forward-stationed at Camp Humphreys, but it has one rotational unit: an armored brigade combat team (approximately 4,000 soldiers) that deploys from other divisions stationed in the United States.[22] Major permanent installations include Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek (Headquarters of USFK and 8th Army), Osan Air Base (Headquarters of 7th Air Force), Kunsan Air Base, and Camps Walker and Henry in Daegu.[23] In addition to the units described above, Camp Humphreys hosts the 35th Air Defense Artillery Brigade.[24] Osan Air Base houses the permanently stationed 51st Fighter Wing, which includes more than 20 different squadrons, such as two fighter squadrons composed of A-10 attack aircraft and F-16 multirole fighters.[25] Similarly, Kunsan Air Base permanently deploys the F-16s of the 8th Fighter Wing and the Army's 2nd Battalion, 1st Air Defense Artillery equipped with Patriot missiles.[26] As with Japan, the level

[18] For further details on the U.S. elements and structures in Japan, see Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Managing the U.S.-Japan Alliance: An Examination of Structural Linkages in the Security Relationship*, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2017a. The Marine Corps plans to shift the 4th Marine Littoral Regiment from Okinawa to Guam in the next several years (Ellen Nakashima and Dan Lamonthe, "U.S., Japan Set to Announce Shake-Up of Marine Corps Units to Deter China," *Washington Post*, January 10, 2023).

[19] See, for example, United States–Japan Security Consultative Committee, "United States-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation," May 1, 2006. For a case of unilateral U.S. decision making, see Jennifer M. Miller, "Fractured Alliance: Anti-Base Protests and Postwar US–Japanese Relations," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 38, No. 5, 2014.

[20] As of September 2022, 28,281 total if DoD civilians and National Guard are included. This includes Army: 16,765; Navy: 349; Marine Corps: 372; Air Force/Space Force: 7,885; Coast Guard: 1; National Guard: 69; and DoD civilian: 2,840 (DMDC, 2022).

[21] U.S. Forces Korea, "United States Forces Korea," webpage, undated-c.

[22] Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Ground Forces in the Indo-Pacific: Background Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, R47096, May 2022. The brigade will soon transition to a Stryker brigade combat team.

[23] U.S. Forces Korea, "Installations," webpage, undated-a.

[24] 35th Air Defense Brigade, "About," 8th Army, webpage, undated.

[25] Osan Air Base, "Units," webpage, undated.

[26] Kunsan Air Base, "Units," webpage, undated.

of U.S. forces in the ROK has undergone some variation over the decades.[27] For example, in the early 1990s, under the East Asian Strategic Initiative, the United States moved to transfer key roles and missions to ROK forces and withdrew 7,000 personnel from the Peninsula.[28] However, the United States and the ROK temporarily ceased realignment efforts in 1992 due to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK's) nuclear development and the increased threat level to Seoul.[29]

U.S. presence in the other three U.S. allies is not nearly as sizable, largely because the United States does not have permanent bases in these countries. As of September 2022, there were only 211 active-duty U.S. personnel in the Philippines and an additional 14 DoD civilians, for a total footprint of 225 U.S. men and women, though U.S. rotational presence is more substantial, as will be discussed in Chapter 4.[30] There are even fewer U.S. troops deployed to Thailand, totaling 110 active-duty military personnel and 12 DoD civilians.[31] In both countries, there are no forward-deployed units or formations and no major headquarters. In Australia, despite the lack of permanent U.S. facilities to deploy troops to, there is a persistent U.S. military presence of 1,580 active-duty personnel, mostly U.S. Marines as of late 2022.[32]

As the above discussion illustrates, the United States enjoys a network of permanent and rotational presence throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Despite this, U.S. ability to leverage that access for a regional conflict remains untested. For any regional contingency involving China, People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces will benefit from the geographic advantage of being closer to the conflict than U.S. forces, which will be spread throughout the Indo-Pacific

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[27] Michael J. Green and Nicholas Szechenyi, *U.S. Force Posture Strategy in the Asia Pacific Region: An Independent Assessment*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012, pp. 27–29.

[28] In 1992, the George H. W. Bush administration issued a report to Congress outlining a planned reduction of U.S. forces in Asia from 135,000 to roughly 100,000 personnel. The Clinton administration continued this effort as part of an overall realignment toward greater burden-sharing with allies and partners (William T. Tow, "Rebalancing and Order-Building: Strategy or Illusion?" in William Tow and Douglas Stuart eds., *The New U.S. Strategy Towards Asia: Adapting to the American Pivot*, 2015, pp. 34–35; Scott Snyder, "Expanding the U.S. South Koreas Alliance," in Scott Snyder, ed., *The U.S.–South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012.

[29] Snyder, 2012. The East Asian Security Initiative, also known as the Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim, was a 1990 policy that the George H. W. Bush administration implemented to realign U.S. force posture in Asia (U.S. Department of Defense, *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward the 21st Century*, 1990).

[30] As of September 2022, 225 total if DoD civilian and National Guard/Reserves are included. This includes Army: 10; Navy: 11; Marine Corps: 179; Air Force/Space Force: 10; Coast Guard: 1; National Guard/Reserves: 0; and DoD civilian: 14 (DMDC, 2022).

[31] As of September 2022, 122 total if DoD civilian and National Guard/Reserves are included. This includes Army: 32; Navy: 11; Marine Corps: 43; Air Force/Space Force: 24; Coast Guard: 0; National Guard/Reserves: 0; and DoD civilian: 12 (DMDC, 2022).

[32] As of September 2022, 1,607 total if DoD civilian and National Guard/Reserves are included. This includes Army: 44; Navy: 72; Marine Corps: 1,370; Air Force/Space Force: 93; Coast Guard: 1; National Guard/Reserves: 0; and DoD civilian 27 (DMDC, 2022).

region. Chinese capabilities are also positioned to deny U.S. forces access to air and maritime space in a Taiwan conflict, further increasing the challenges of flowing U.S. forces in from farther away once hostilities have begun.[33]

To negate China's advantages and position U.S. forces for a more favorable operational situation, the United States requires access to bases in-theater in peacetime, as well access to those bases and the capabilities stationed at them in conflict. Without this, generating and sustaining kinetic effects closer to the conflict will be more challenging, and such activities as naval and air reloading, refueling, and repairs will become much more time-consuming. Additionally, because any U.S. military operation is likely to require units from outside of the immediate theater, the United States will need to flow forces into the area of responsibility. These force flows, in turn, will require facilities for reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) activities. Guam is a U.S. territory in the Western Pacific, but it is far from the Asian continent, where any conflict will likely originate from. This means that the United States will need to depend on other countries for access to fulfill these critical tasks. Finally, and critically, while developments in technology enable the United States to increasingly rely on long-range weaponry that can be delivered by aircraft and ships far from the combat zone, being able to draw on forces closer to the fight will ensure that the United States can react quickly. Because the United States does not enjoy any territorial advantages in the region that enable this, having agreements in place to not just preposition those critical capabilities, but use them once a conflict starts, is essential. Reflecting this assessment, U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) Commander General Charles Flynn has stated that the Army is focusing on strengthening relationships with allies and partners to develop a more agile force that is "distributed, networked, and mobile" and that can respond more quickly in a contingency.[34]

U.S. Military Access Assumptions in the Indo-Pacific Region

America's network of allies and partners has long been identified as a unique strength that no adversary can match.[35] The capabilities these allies and partners may bring to conflict is an asset for the U.S. military, but *access* to those countries' bases and ports from which the United States can execute a conflict is arguably a more critical factor for a conflict in the Indo-Pacific region. Despite this, many U.S. discussions pertaining to hypothetical conflict scenarios assume that U.S. forces will have unfettered access to these bases and ports in key

[33] Edmund J. Burke, Kristen Gunness, Cortez A. Cooper III, and Mark Cozad, *People's Liberation Army Operational Concepts*, RAND Corporation, RR-A394-1, 2020, p. 5.

[34] Andrew Eversden, "Reassuring Regional Allies, US Army Pacific Not 'Distracted' by Ukraine Crisis: General," *Breaking Defense*, April 13, 2022.

[35] For example, see Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Saving America's Alliances: The United States Still Needs the System That Put It on Top," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 99, March/April 2020, pp. 127–140.

allied locations in the region.[36] Sometimes, access assumptions are conflated with strategic discussions prevalent in the country. An example of a commonly held assumption is that, because Japan sees China as a security threat, it will allow the United States to operate from its territory in a conflict, either directly or indirectly.[37] Other discussions highlight the benefits for the United States of operating from an allied territory close to China, but the assumption of whether access is granted in the first place—to take advantage of those benefits—is not questioned.[38] While Japan is the country most often discussed in this manner, a similar logic is prevalent in pieces discussing other allies, such as the Philippines.[39]

It is common to find implicit assumptions in public discussions from various research institutes regarding U.S. basing and access in the region. For example, a 2022 Foreign Policy Research Institute report argues that Japan's principal deterrence role regarding China and Taiwan includes providing the United States with adequately defended or defensible bases.[40] The report lists this provision of bases and extended logistical support for U.S. forces as one of Japan's main responsibilities.[41] Rather than exploring the conditions under which this may be accurate, the report highlights concerns about moving U.S. assets into place soon enough to deter China in the event of a crisis.[42] Similarly, a 2022 American Enterprise Institute report focused on defending Taiwan calls on the United States to preposition long-range precision fires on allied territory in potential conflict zones and to forward deploy more air-, sea-, and ground-based missile forces in the region (with a priority on Japan and the Philippines).[43]

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[36] For example, see Ian Sullivan, "337. 'No Option Is Excluded'—Using Wargaming to Envision a Chinese Assault on Taiwan," Mad Scientist Laboratory blog, Army Training and Doctrine Command, July 1, 2021; and James Lacey, "How Does the Next Great Power Conflict Play Out? Lessons from a Wargame," *War on the Rocks*, April 22, 2019.

[37] Steven F. Jackson, "Defending a Country That Doesn't Exist with a Military That Isn't Allowed: Japan-Taiwan Relations and Potential Defense Role," Network for Strategic Analysis, July 12, 2022; David Sacks, "The United States and Japan Should Prepare for Chinese Aggression Against Taiwan," Council on Foreign Relations, January 18, 2022; David Wertime, "Former Intel Officers: U.S. Must Update Its Thinking on Taiwan," *Politico*, October 8, 2020; Giselle Donnolly, "Bigger Might Be Better," in Kori Schake and Allison Schwartz, eds., *Defending Taiwan*, American Enterprise Institute, 2022. Donnolly argues that Japan and Korea cannot "sidestep" involvement in a Taiwan conflict.

[38] Hal Brands, "Why Japan Is Gearing Up for Possible War with China," Bloomberg, November 6, 2022; Jackson, 2022.

[39] Julian Spencer-Churchill, "America Can't Win a War for Taiwan Without the Philippines," *National Interest*, October 9, 2022; Susannah Patton, "What the Philippines Has at Stake in Taiwan," *The Interpreter*, Lowy Institute, August 16, 2022.

[40] Jacques deLisle, *U.S.-Japan-Taiwan Dialogue*, Foreign Policy Research Institute, December 12, 2022, p. 5.

[41] deLisle, 2022, p. 6.

[42] deLisle, 2022, p. 6.

[43] Michael Beckley, Zack Cooper, and Allison Schwartz, "Deterring Coercion and Conflict Across the Taiwan Strait," in Schake and Schwartz, 2022, p. 63.

The report therefore appears to assume that basing such capabilities is unproblematic.[44] Not only does the report not explore the potential challenges to basing and access, a later recommendation in the report calls for the United States to develop *additional* ports, airfields, and missile batteries in the region, including securing access to facilities in the Philippines.[45] Finally, in a 2021 Center for a New American Security report that examines how the United States would respond if China seized one of Taiwan's outlying islands, such as Pratas/Dongsha in the South China Sea, the authors do not specify from what locations U.S. forces will operate, either directly or deployed.[46] Instead, the authors argue for the need of the United States to rely heavily on Japan for basing infrastructure to conduct military operations to support Taiwan, suggesting an assumption that those forces will come from U.S. bases in Japan.

Several Taiwan-focused wargames repeat many of these same implicit assumptions regarding access. A U.S. Marine Corps War College game assumed that the United States defended Taiwan with air and naval power.[47] While this game's access assumptions are not spelled out, it appears to assume access in at least Japan, because the author describes effective tactical airpower despite the retreat of U.S. Navy carriers out of the theater. Similarly, although the countries are never specified, a U.S. Air Force game assumed access to remote airfields across the Pacific, as well as the ability to preposition repair equipment and fuel so that forces could deploy to these locations during the war.[48] In another example, a 2021 U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command blog post describes a narrative of a wargame concerning Taiwan.[49] It rightly identifies that time and distance are a challenge for the United States because of China's geographical proximity and anti-access, area-denial capabilities, but it also makes several assumptions about U.S. operations to defend Taiwan: the pre-conflict deployment of U.S. Marine Corps strike aircraft and a U.S. Navy carrier battlegroup to the Philippines and the 1-82 Brigade Combat Team and Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battalion to Japan; the U.S. ability to operate from the Philippines during the conflict; and the Philippine and Japanese direct participation in operations to defend Taiwan. These assumptions of direct involvement are similarly made in a game conducted by Reuters that assumed that the United States and Japan would directly involve themselves in attacking PLA units for the defense of Taiwan, before Japan or U.S. bases in Japan are attacked.[50]

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[44] Elaine McCusker and Emily Coletta, "Is the United States Military Ready to Defend Taiwan?" in Schake and Schwartz, 2022, pp. 123–139.

[45] Beckley, Cooper, and Schwartz, 2022, p. 64.

[46] Chris Dougherty, Jennie Matuschak, and Ripley Hunter, *The Poison Frog Strategy: Preventing a Chinese Fait Accompli Against Taiwanese Islands*, Center for a New American Security, October 2021.

[47] Lacey, 2019.

[48] Valerie Insinna, "A US Air Force War Game Shows What the Service Needs to Hold Off—or Win Against—China in 2030," *DefenseNews*, April 12, 2021.

[49] Sullivan, 2021.

[50] David Lague and Maryanne Murray, "T-Day: The Battle for Taiwan," Reuters, November 5, 2021.

The games described above were conducted out of the public eye; two publicly conducted games by notable think tanks spelled out similar assumptions in greater detail. The Center for a New American Security, in partnership with NBC's *Meet the Press*, conducted a strategic-operational wargame looking at a Taiwan conflict in 2027 and produced a report that included an examination of the political and military issues related to a Taiwan conflict. Even though the report explicitly states that the purpose of the wargame was "to illuminate the dilemmas that U.S. and Chinese policymakers might face in such a conflict," it did not explore questions regarding basing and access.[51] Instead, in addition to avoiding discussions of moving capabilities in during peacetime—when a Chinese attack appeared imminent—the game swept aside potential access challenges in a conflict by assuming that Red forces would attack U.S. bases in Japan, thereby enabling U.S. freedom of access to act directly from Japanese territory. It also assumed that the Philippines would allow U.S. forces to operate from its territory.

A separate game conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies examining a potential Chinese invasion of Taiwan explicitly identified the game's base assumptions. For the base case, U.S. basing in Japan was granted and full Self-Defense Force participation was assumed if and when China attacked those bases. It was assumed that the Philippines did not grant access to basing for U.S. operations (because of Philippine domestic politics).[52] For South Korea, the authors assumed that the United States would release two of its four squadrons located on the Peninsula to dedicate to the Taiwan crisis, leaving only two squadrons for deterrence.[53] Although there were a handful of excursion cases that explored other possibilities, at least with regard to access in Japan and the Philippines, the bulk of the cases did not explore whether the United States is granted use of its bases if Japan is not attacked or has the right to operate directly from Japan in the same situation. Nor did the cases distinguish between Japan allowing the United States to operate different kinds of capabilities from Japanese soil. In all cases, the game appears to have implicitly treated host country acceptance of U.S. access as all-or-nothing. And in all cases, apart from accommodating changes in Japanese rules of engagement after attacks on bases in Japan, access decisions were fixed from the onset of the game. In its defense, the game was designed to test the operational impact of different conditions, and the report states that the teams played as military command authorities, not civilian leaders, and therefore avoided issues of political decisionmaking.[54] Given that, it is not surprising that the authors did not explore whether these are accurate assumptions to hold.

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[51] Stacie Pettyjohn, Becca Wasser, and Chris Dougherty, *Dangerous Straits: Wargaming a Future Conflict over Taiwan*, Center for a New American Security, June 2022, p. 1.

[52] Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2023, p. 53.

[53] Cancian, Cancian, and Heginbotham, 2023, p. 61.

[54] Cancian, Cancian, and Heginbotham, 2023, p. 21.

Admittedly, wargames involve artificial constructs meant to test various U.S. military capabilities and thus assume certain aspects of the environment and the conflict; publicly available game summaries and reports do not reflect the entirety of DoD thinking and discussions on access. But they do illustrate the common tendency to implicitly assume that U.S. treaty allies will allow U.S. forces to operate from their territory in a regional conflict. The assumptions and conclusions reached in such games, reports, and commentaries may in fact be true, but without a thorough exploration of whether they are realistic assumptions, there is a risk that they represent overly optimistic expectations that may not reflect current realities in these countries. In doing so, they could be providing false expectations of U.S. basing and access in allied countries, both before a conflict breaks out and during a conflict, if that country is not the target of attack.

In addition, assumptions related to access frequently do not distinguish between different categories of access, nor do they address any distinctions allies may make in allowing access to some categories of capabilities versus others and the types of access that host countries may allow in different phases of a conflict. While it is understandable that Japan, for example, would allow the United States under Article V of the U.S.-Japan security treaty to operate kinetic capabilities directly from its territory after it has been struck by China, it is not clear whether the United States can easily base those capabilities—if they are new—in Japan prior to conflict.[55] It may also be the case that the United States is restricted from using certain types of capabilities from Japan in peacetime versus in a conflict to which Japan is not a party. Finally, most of the publicly available scholarship and games tend to focus heavily on Japan, with assumptions leaning toward expectations of access and an ability to operate from Japanese soil, largely because of the existing footprint of U.S. forces and supporting facilities already stationed in Japan, which makes force flow and prepositioning capabilities in peacetime an easier task than in other countries in the region. Very rarely are similar assumptions made about the Philippines, and the ROK is almost never analyzed for access challenges for a non–Korean Peninsula contingency.[56] All three are important regional treaty allies, yet understanding of their differences in expectations and willingness to provide access for U.S. forces in peacetime and conflict, and in different scenarios, is often assumed rather than explored.

There are a several notable examples of research in which basing and access are questioned or explored as a variable, covering crucial ground for areas that this report seeks to

[55] Article V states: "Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes" (Governments of the United States and Japan, Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, January 19, 1960a).

[56] While not games, two notable exceptions of scholarship examining the ROK's role in a Taiwan contingency include Sungmin Cho, "South Korea's Taiwan Conundrum," *War on the Rocks*, December 31, 2021; and Oriana Skylar Mastro and Sungmin Cho, "How South Korea Can Contribute to the Defense of Taiwan," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 2022, pp. 109–129.

address. A 2002 Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments report, for example, details political limits that can be placed on access, such as internal opposition and local resentment by host nations against the United States.[57] One of the conclusions the report makes is that, despite the United States having powerful economic, diplomatic, and military cards to play in securing access, a critical variable is political support from host countries. Similarly, the aforementioned 2022 American Enterprise Institute report devotes an entire chapter to questions of whether any U.S. allies would help the United States and, if so, what that support would look like (including basing access) and under what constraints it would occur.[58] This analysis highlights the challenges that come with local host communities, prior consultation in Japan, fears in Seoul of antagonizing Beijing or widening the conflict to the Korean Peninsula, domestic political fluctuations in Manila, and a general reluctance regionwide to allow U.S. troops to operate from the country if the country itself is not attacked. And the aforementioned 2023 Center for Strategic and International Studies wargame explores a situation in which Japan denies the United States use of U.S. bases in Japan, essentially problematizing the assumption of U.S. access.[59] Finally, noted Japan scholar Mike Mochizuki has detailed the complexities involved in how Japan's political leadership defines a situation and the effects this could have on U.S. operations in different scenarios.[60]

Research Approach

In this report, we explore the opportunities and constraints the U.S. military may face when operating on allied or partner territory in the Indo-Pacific region. It examines the basing and access assumptions for the U.S. military should it wish to preposition supplies in, and operate from, the territory of key regional allies in peacetime and in a conflict over Taiwan when those allies have not been attacked. While there are several allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region that could potentially provide the U.S. military access, we, with sponsor input, selected Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines, given their geographical proximity to Taiwan and the fact that they are treaty allies with different types of agreements allowing U.S. forces access to their territories. We also make recommendations for U.S. forces to enhance existing access or opportunities for new access for the three case countries, and we highlight areas where access is unlikely because of political and legal constraints. Specifically, the questions we examine are as follows:

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[57] Christopher Bowie, *The Anti-Access Threat and Theater Air Bases*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2002.

[58] Zack Cooper and Sheena Chestnut Greitens, *Asian Allies and Partners in a Taiwan Contingency: What Should the United States Expect?* American Enterprise Institute, 2022.

[59] Cancian, Cancian, and Heginbotham, 2023.

[60] Mike Mochizuki, "Tokyo's Taiwan Conundrum: What Can Japan Do to Prevent War?" *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3, 2022.

- Do existing security agreements enable the United States to obtain the type of access it requires from each ally?
- Do the United States and its allies share similar interpretations of their respective agreements to minimize any potential friction of implementation?
- If the United States seeks to bring in a new capability into an ally's territory, what process needs to be followed?
- How much do nonlegal factors (i.e., political considerations and public opinion) affect U.S. basing and access in each host country?
- What is the process for the United States to invoke its security treaty with each of the respective allies? Does invoking said treaty ensure ease of access?
- Do the challenges to basing and access change depending on whether it is peacetime versus a contingency?

While we seek to examine common assumptions regarding basing and access, there are several caveats in order. First, in this report, we examine opportunities and challenges to basing and access in the three case study countries in peacetime and conflict, but we do not make arguments regarding the operational benefits of using bases in one country versus another. Nor do we explore the operational impact that U.S. access in any one of these countries will have on the defense of Taiwan. We do, however, argue what types of requests for basing and access may encounter fewer or more challenges in the three countries. Second, we do not comment on whether access in any of the countries do a better job at deterring a Chinese invasion before it commences. Just as politics plays an important role in the cases examines, the Chinese government's decision to invade or not invade Taiwan will be based on multiple factors, and U.S. presence in the region is only one of these. Finally, we do not touch on issues regarding whether Japan, the ROK, or the Philippines are directly involved in the conflict. While host country involvement in a conflict would likely affect issues related to U.S. access, broadening the analysis to explore what U.S. allies might do with their armed forces in an active combat operation and how that would affect U.S. access is beyond the scope of this study.

Defining *Access* and Determining Access Requirements for U.S. Operations

While the term *access* is broadly applied in military planning discussions and contains numerous elements of U.S. posture, for this study, we defined access as the U.S. military having the ability to (1) base and preposition capabilities, materiel, and supplies on either an overseas U.S. military base or a base of an allies' armed forces and (2) operate in and from an allies' territory, either in peacetime or a contingency. This overarching definition contains the key elements of *access* articulated in the academic literature and RAND studies discussed above.

Next, we sought to determine which types of access the United States may require in a regional conflict, to better understand the potential opportunities and challenges related to

U.S. access in Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines, particularly in a contingency where these allies are not directly attacked. For this, we held an internal RAND workshop that included a group of U.S. military experts to discuss the types of capabilities and access the United States military would likely request in the region in two generic time periods: (1) peacetime and (2) conflict. We could have included a third category of "crisis," but we believed that many of the issues surrounding a conflict scenario will also be included in a crisis scenario. Therefore, we chose to simplify our analysis to two generic time periods to assess what type of activities the United States would potentially wish to conduct in and from Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. From among numerous fictitious scenarios that we could have used for this study, we chose a hypothetical conflict involving China's invasion of Taiwan and a decision by the United States government to intervene on Taiwan's behalf. The decisions made in the peacetime scenario were also focused on how best to prepare for this possible Taiwan conflict scenario.

Based on this discussion, we determined the types of access the United States would most likely request of Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. We compiled a categorical list of capabilities that include

- supplies/parts/fuel
- munitions
- nonkinetic forces, such as headquarters, cyber units, or intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)
- kinetic ground-based capabilities, such as precision strike missiles (PrSMs) or High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS)
- combat aircraft or naval ships.

Additionally, we examined access pertaining to U.S. overflight to conduct ISR activities in the region and combat sorties or other direct kinetic operations emanating from the ally's territory. Finally, we explored whether any of these activities would be limited to U.S. bases or if there are means by which to access other locations within the host country, such as the allies' armed forces bases, civilian facilities, or public land.

We then explored the legal frameworks related to U.S. military access, U.S. and ally interpretations of those agreements, and political understandings for access in peacetime and conflict. To conduct the research, we examined relevant treaties and agreements pertaining to alliance issues for each country. This included

- Japan: Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security; Status of Forces Agreement; 1960 Exchange of Notes; Fujiyama-MacArthur Oral Understanding
- ROK: Mutual Defense Treaty; Status of Forces Agreement; Strategic Flexibility
- Philippines: Mutual Defense Treaty; Visiting Forces Agreement; Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement.

In addition to these, we also relied on interpretations of these formal agreements. This research therefore relied heavily on official documents signed bilaterally with the United States and statements or interpretations released unilaterally by the ally in question.

Because legal agreements are only one variable that determines access for U.S. forces in an ally's territory, we also examined the domestic environment in each country—including public opinion polls and leadership political statements relevant to access issues. This includes leadership perspectives on the country's relationship with the United States and China, and recent developments in alliance relations. We understand that there is no monolithic public opinion for any one country. Differences exist between national-level leadership and local governments, just as much as differences exist between local governments in different parts of a country. We also understand that leadership changes—particularly between political parties—lead to differences in opinion. While we understand these differences, operationalizing this in a simplified manner proved too difficult to carry out. Therefore, the research contained in this report focuses largely on current opinion, with differences mentioned where relevant (i.e., Duterte versus Marcos in the Philippines; progressives versus conservatives in the ROK).

The information we used came from a variety of sources. For public opinion, we drew on several types of polling data, including polls by in-country media sources, international organizations, and scholars. To assess interpretations of agreements and expectations for U.S. access, as well as determine political considerations likely to play a role in the United States seeking basing and access in peacetime and a contingency within the host countries, we conducted extensive discussions in Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines (a total of 29 interviews).[61] These interviewees included officials—both current and retired—from the countries' government agencies responsible for foreign and defense policies and from their armed forces. This was supplemented with input from country experts on these issues and, in a few cases, elected lawmakers. All interviewees were selected based on their expertise on U.S. basing and access issues. Many of these interviews involved multiple people in small-group settings. These discussions provide rich detail on each country's leadership's perspective and expectations related to U.S. military access. Complementing these discussions, we also conducted interviews with U.S. government personnel that were either located in the three countries or serving in positions in which they were directly involved in access issues for these allies. Given the sensitivity of the topic, all interviews were conducted anonymously and identified in the report only by the interviewee's country and the date the interview was conducted. Finally, to supplement the information from polls and interviews, we also drew on official government speeches and agreements, where relevant.

The remainder of this report is organized as follows. Chapters 2 through 4 provide the analysis of the three case studies—Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. Each chapter describes one country's threat perception of China and view of the defense alliance with the United States, followed by sections analyzing public opinion on U.S. military presence and

[61] Country breakdown: Japan: 10; the ROK: 12; and the Philippines: 7.

effects on access. The case study chapters then examine existing agreements, as well as interpretations of these agreements by each country's leadership and how that compares with U.S. views. The case study chapters conclude with implications on access challenges and opportunities for each country. Chapter 5 articulates conclusions and recommendations for U.S. policymakers, the U.S. military and the U.S. Army in particular, on ways the United States could better position itself to improve basing and access in the host countries, as well as any insights gleaned from looking across the three cases.

CHAPTER 2

Japan

Introduction

The United States has had a significant military presence in Japan since the end of World War II. While these forces have been committed to the defense of Japan, per the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan, they also provide deterrence for the broader region. In recent years, this latter purpose has become the topic of increasing discussions over the use of U.S. forces, capabilities, and locations in Japan for contingencies not involving the defense of Japan. This chapter explores the framework through which U.S. forces and capabilities in Japan might be used in this manner. In doing so, we demonstrate that, while there is a legal component to consider, U.S. access in Japan is also a political question that is based on the willingness of the Japanese government to support the United States or possibly risk reprisal by China in a conflict in which it may not be directly involved.

Given that the question of U.S. forces gaining contingency access in Japan involves an assessment of political will, we begin this chapter with an examination of the factors that are likely to dictate political will: Japan's perceptions of China, Japan's current views of its security alliance with the United States, and Japanese public opinion of the United States, its military, and its presence in Japan. Following this, we examine the specific agreements and understandings that dictate U.S. access in Japan, including key insights into the interpretations of those agreements. We close with a summary of implications for U.S. basing and access in Japan in both peacetime and in conflict in which Japan itself is not directly attacked.

Japan's Perception of China

Despite robust economic ties between Japan and China, according to official statements, the Japanese government considers China both an "unprecedented" challenge and "the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of

the international community."[1] Japan's concerns about China are threefold. First, Japanese leadership is concerned with China's increasing military capabilities and its lack of transparency about its military modernization program. Second, Japanese leaders have voiced concerns about China's ability to use its military capabilities to coerce regional countries and attempt to change the status quo by force. Third, Japan, like other countries in the region, is concerned about China's ability to retaliate through economic coercion.

Opaque Military Modernization

The first concern for Japan is China's increased military modernization and implications for Japan's security, particularly given the growing gap between China and Japan's military capabilities.[2] For example, Japan's December 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) refers to historical changes in military power balances in the Indo-Pacific region and East Asia, a clear reference to China's rise.[3] The document further describes China as "increasing its defense expenditures at a continuously high level and extensively and rapidly enhancing its military power, including its nuclear and missile capabilities."[4] Particularly concerning for Japan has been China's lack of transparency during its military buildup.[5] Japan's NSS, for example, notes that China's defense trajectory, including its nuclear modernization, has increased dramatically "without sufficient transparency."[6]

Japan has responded to China's growing military capabilities through a series of external and internal actions.[7] Externally, it has strengthened its security ties with other like-minded countries, both in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.[8] Japan has also pursued significant diplomatic initiatives among like-minded countries, such as the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy—later rebranded as a vision—and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, or Quad, with the United States, Australia, and India. Internally, Japan has taken a series of

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1 Government of Japan, *National Security Strategy of Japan*, 2022a, p. 9.

2 For a discussion of China and Japan's military balance, see Miranda Priebe, Kristen Gunness, Karl P. Mueller, and Zachary Burdette, *The Limits of Restraint: The Military Implications of a Restrained U.S. Grand Strategy in the Asia-Pacific*, RAND Corporation, RR-A739-4, 2022.

3 Government of Japan, 2022a, p. 2.

4 Government of Japan, 2022a, p. 8.

5 "Japan Calls for Chinese Military Transparency," *Voice of America*, November 1, 2009.

6 Government of Japan, 2022a, p. 8.

7 Jeffrey W. Hornung and Mike M. Mochizuki, "Japan: Still an Exceptional Ally," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 1, April 2016.

8 Scott W. Harold, Derek Grossman, Brian Harding, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Gregory Poling, Jeffrey Smith, and Meagan L. Smith, *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation: Deepening Defense Ties Among U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific*, RAND Corporation, RR-3125-MCF, 2019; Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Allies Growing Closer: Japan-Europe Security Ties in the Age of Strategic Competition*, RAND Corporation, RR-A186-1, 2020a.

measures to make its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) more robust at the same time that it has sought to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance.[9] These efforts continue in the current Kishida Fumio administration.[10] In December 2022, the government released a package of new strategic documents that signals Japan is more serious about investing in its own defense.[11] These documents include an increase in Japan's defense spending to fund new initiatives in cyber, space, unmanned platforms, and stand-off missile capabilities, including counterstrike, thereby putting Japan into a position to be able to strike enemy bases far from Japanese territory, a topic of debate that has been ongoing for years.[12]

Gray Zone Coercion

Japan's second concern focuses on Chinese gray zone activities in the region, specifically China's use of military coercion to change the status quo with Taiwan and dispute the sovereignty of maritime territories with Japan and in the South China Sea. The 2022 NSS notes that China's regional stance and military activities "have become a matter of serious concern for Japan."[13] While China has increased its military activity, such as maritime and air patrols around the Japanese archipelago, an issue of more proximate concern and focus for Japan has been China's claim to and activities around the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, which are administratively controlled by Japan. This area in the East China Sea has seen numerous maritime and air incursions by China in recent years, including both increases in the number of assets active around Japan and qualitatively more lethal capabilities involved in these activities.[14]

Japan is also worried by China's coercive activities against Taiwan and states in the South China Sea. There has been a lot of attention to comments made by Japanese politicians regarding the linkages of Taiwan to Japan's security. Two of the more notable ones came from

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[9] Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Japan's Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency*, RAND Corporation, RR-A314-1, 2020b.

[10] Government of Japan, *National Defense Strategy*, December 16, 2022b; Government of Japan, 2022a.

[11] Jeffrey W. Hornung, "Japan's Long-Awaited Return to Geopolitics," *Foreign Policy*, February 6, 2023.

[12] "Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan in Joint Press Conference," The White House, May 23, 2022; Emiko Jozuka and Blake Essig, "Japan Turns Away from Post-WWII Pacifism as China Threat Grows," *CNN*, May 21, 2022. Admittingly, these efforts may not be purely the result of the challenges China poses. After all, the threats posed by Russia and North Korea have, for years, fed into Japanese security anxieties.

[13] Government of Japan, 2022a, p. 8.

[14] For a comprehensive overview of China's gray zone activities, including those with Japan, see Bonny Lin, Cristina L. Garafola, Bruce McClintock, Jonah Blank, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Karen Schwindt, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Paul Orner, Dennis Borrman, Sarah W. Denton, and Jason Chambers, *Competition in the Gray Zone*: *Countering China's Coercion Against U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific*, RAND Corporation, RR-A594-1, 2022; Edmund J. Burke, Timothy R. Heath, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Logan Ma, Lyle J. Morris, and Michael Chase, *China's Military Activities in the East China Sea: Implications for Japan's Air Self-Defense Force*, RAND Corporation, RR-2574-AF, 2018.

former prime ministers. Asō Tarō, in his personal capacity at a private fundraising event in 2021, said that "If a major problem occurred on Taiwan, it is not too much to say that it would unmistakably relate to a situation threatening [Japan's] survival. Japan and the U.S. must defend Taiwan together."[15] A few months later, Abe Shinzō said that a Taiwan contingency is a Japanese contingency, and therefore a contingency for the alliance.[16] While Japan's policy on Taiwan has not changed, and there has been no declaration that Tokyo would defend Taiwan if it were attacked, the Japanese government has been including reference to the importance of the stability of situation surrounding Taiwan in government documents, demonstrating the government's thinking of how Chinese actions vis-à-vis Taiwan matters for to Japan's security. The 2022 NSS, for example, notes that despite maintaining the policy of peaceful reunification, China has intensified "military activities in the sea and airspace surrounding Taiwan, including the launch of ballistic missiles into the waters around Japan."[17] The document states that "concerns are mounting rapidly" in Japan and throughout the international community over peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.[18] Similarly, the 2022 *Defense of Japan* states that "the stability of the situation surrounding Taiwan is also critical for Japan's security."[19] These concerns have even become commonplace in joint U.S.-Japan statements since 2021. The Japanese government has also expressed concern over China's "unlawful maritime claims" in the South China Sea, stating that they are an afront to freedom of navigation under the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[20] Like his predecessors, Prime Minister Kishida has emphasized his opposition to Chinese militarization of reclaimed features in the South China Sea and coercive activities against regional states.[21]

Demonstrating Japan's concerns about Taiwan and states in Southeast Asia, Japan has increased its own efforts to build regional partnerships with these actors. Much of this has been under the rubric of its FOIP vision, which the government uses to frame its engagement

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15 "Possibility of Taiwan Contingency 'Survival Threatening Situation' Deputy Prime Minister Asō" ["台湾有事「存立危機事態」にあたる可能性" 麻生副総理"], NHK, July 6, 2021.

16 Abe Shinzō, "Keynote Speech/Impact Forum," [キーノートスピーチ / インパクト　フォーラム], 國策研究院 [Institute for National Policy Research]," video, December 1, 2021.

17 Government of Japan, 2022a, p. 8.

18 Government of Japan, 2022a, p. 8.

19 Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Defense of Japan 2022*, 2022a, p. 11.

20 "Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order," White House, May 23, 2022; "Joint Statement of the 2023 U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 11, 2023.

21 "Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order," 2022. This is a concern for Japan because, should China try to leverage its position to assert control over sea lines of communication, this could prove damaging to the Japanese economy, as nearly 42 percent of Japan's trade flows through the South China Sea (China Power Project, "How Much Trade Transits the South China Sea?" Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 2, 2017).

with regional actors.[22] In addition to these initiatives, Japan has also increased its maritime footprint in the region via transits and friendly port visits by its Maritime Self-Defense Force to allies and partners in an attempt to demonstrate Tokyo's support for the region.[23] This has also included security cooperation, training, and at least one case of a direct sale of an air surveillance radar system to the Philippines.[24]

Paralleling the government's concern over Chinese military actions is growing concern over China among the Japanese public. Japanese public opinion has been uniformly negative toward China for well over a decade.[25] Polls by Japan's Cabinet Office even show, that since 2001, a majority of Japanese citizens have viewed China negatively (e.g., not having an affinity for it).[26] The 2022 iteration of the poll showed that this percentage remains high, at 81.8 percent.[27] A large majority of Japanese citizens (84.4 percent) do not think that Japan-China ties are good overall. [28] The last time a majority of the public did think bilateral relations were good was in 2003. Other Japanese polls support this. A May 2022 *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll found that 88 percent held no affinity toward China.[29] And in a separate poll by the same newspaper, 76 percent of respondents felt that bilateral ties were bad and that 90 percent did not trust China.[30] Even the more liberal-leaning *Asahi Shimbun* found in a 2022 poll that 90 percent of respondents perceived China as a military threat.[31] This is supported by other, nongovernment polls. In October 2021, a poll conducted by the Japanese think tank Genron NPO found that over 90 percent of the Japanese public viewed China either unfavorably or

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22 Krzysztof Iwanek, "Japan Steps in to Support India Against China in South Asia," *The Diplomat*, December 6, 2021; "Japan's View on South Asia Changed After China Expanded Its Influence: Report," *The Print*, December 25, 2022.

23 Derek Grossman, "Military Build Up in the South China Sea," in Leszek Buszynski and Do Thanh Hai, eds., *The South China Sea: From a Regional Maritime Dispute to Geo-Strategic Competition*, 2020.

24 Embassy of Japan in the Philippines, "Japan Begins Transfer of Air Surveillance Radar Systems to the Philippines," October 21, 2022.

25 Laura Silver, Kat Devlin, and Christine Huang, "Unfavorable Views of China Reach Historic Highs in Many Countries," Pew Research Center, October 6, 2020.

26 See the China sections in the Cabinet Office polls on diplomacy: Cabinet Office (Japan), Government Public Relations Office, *Summary of the Public Poll on Diplomacy* [外交に関する世論調査　の概要], February 13, 2023.

27 Cabinet Office (Japan), Government Public Relations Office, 2023, p. 19.

28 Cabinet Office (Japan), Government Public Relations Office, 2023, p. 22.

29 "50th Anniversary of the Reversion of Okinawa Public Opinion Poll Questions and Answers" ["沖縄復帰５０年　世論調査　質問と回答"], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 2022.

30 "68% of Japanese, 65% of Americans Approve of Strengthening Japan's Defense Capabilities, Joint Yomiuri-Gallup Poll" ["日本の防衛力強化「賛成」日本６８％　米６５％　本社　ギャラップ共同世論調査"], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 16, 2022.

31 "In an Unstable World, the Constitution, Asahi Shimbun Public Poll" ["不安定な世界、憲法は　朝日新聞社世論調査"], *Asahi Shimbun*, May 3, 2022, p. 6.

somewhat unfavorably, similar to the peak of 93 percent of individuals surveyed expressing an unfavorable view of China in 2013.[32]

Economic Coercion

A third, and much lesser, concern of Japanese leaders related to China is the potential for economic coercion. Like other regional countries, Japan is vulnerable to economic coercion by China. China is the top recipient of Japanese exports, amounting to US$ 206.2 billion in 2021 (32.1 percent of total).[33] Japan is also deeply reliant on Chinese imports, amounting to US$ 165.9 billion in 2021 (26.1 percent of total).[34] The People's Republic of China (PRC) has previously attempted to use economic coercion against Japan in response to a political dispute, an incident that policymakers have not forgotten and have taken steps to prevent from happening again.[35] In 2010, following a dispute in which a Chinese fishing vessel rammed Japan Coast Guard vessels near the Senkaku Islands, Japan responded by detaining the captain of the Chinese boat for more than two weeks.[36] China retaliated by suspending the export of rare earth minerals to Japan shortly thereafter, though the PRC denied it had done so or that any reductions were connected to the incident, and Chinese tourism, which is shaped by PRC government policies, dropped precipitously.[37] Japan responded by reducing its own investment into China and diversifying its sources for rare earth minerals, but it did not pursue any domestic policies that sought to assuage China.[38] This incident, similar to what we see in the ROK and the Philippines, continues to remind Japanese policymakers of the potential for Chinese economic retaliation.

China has also maintained pressure on Japan in other ways that could affect Japan's economy. Chinese entities have constructed ocean rigs in the waters where the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) of both countries overlap in the East China Sea, which Prime Minister Kishida has said is "unacceptable," noting concern that China is exploiting natural resources that

[32] Hitoshi Tanaka, "The China Challenge and US-Japan Relations Under Fumio Kishida," Japan Center for International Exchange, 2021; Silver, Devlin, and Huang, 2020.

[33] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), "Japan-China Relations (Basic Data)," February 24, 2022; UNData, "Japan," United Nations Statistics Division, webpage, undated.

[34] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), 2022a; UNData, undated.

[35] For a full description of this case, see Michael J. Mazarr, Bryan Frederick, John J. Drennan, Emily Ellinger, Kelly Elizabeth Eusebi, Bryan Rooney, Andrew Stravers, and Emily Yoder, *Understanding Influence in the Strategic Competition with China*, RAND Corporation, RR-A290-1, 2021.

[36] "Japan Frees Chinese Boat Captain amid Diplomatic Row," *BBC News*, September 24, 2010.

[37] Michael Green, Kathleen Hicks, Zack Cooper, John Schaus, and Jake Douglas, *Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia: The Theory and Practice of Gray Zone Deterrence*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2017, pp. 66–94.

[38] Howard Schneider, "A Key Chinese Advantage Erodes," *Washington Post*, October 27, 2012.

legally belong to Japan.[39] For Tokyo, Beijing's repeated engagement in such unilateral activity is in violation of a 2008 agreement to cooperate on such development.[40]

In sum, Japan views China in largely negative terms. Rather than a partner with which to cooperate, China is viewed as a threat to its security, although Japan does not use that specific language in any official document. Because the United States is Japan's primary means by which to deter Chinese aggression against Japan, maintaining continued U.S. military presence in Japan for that purpose is strongly supported by the Japanese leadership and the public, as we will see next.

Japan's Perception of the United States

The Japanese government views the United States, its sole treaty ally, as its primary defense partner. Echoing similar comments by his predecessors, current Prime Minister Kishida has stated, "It goes without saying that Japan-U.S. alliance is the linchpin of Japan's diplomatic and security policy."[41] The Kishida government has expressed confidence in the U.S. commitment to Japan and has pledged to work with the Biden administration to further enhance extended deterrence.[42] The U.S. military presence in Japan is treated as an important element of this deterrence in Japanese policy documents. The Ministry of Defense's (MOD's) 2022 *Defense of Japan* describes the U.S. military presence as both a deterrent against contingencies and a security enabler for the greater region.[43] It also notes that locating the majority of the U.S. presence in Okinawa, a strategic location, further strengthens deterrence.[44] Likewise, Japan's 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) calls the U.S. alliance the "key pillar" of Japan's peace and security, while the NSS emphasizes the importance of strengthening the alliance's deterrence and response capabilities.[45] Collectively, Japan views the alliance in very positive terms, leading top U.S. and Japanese officials to not only agree that the alliance is "the cornerstone of regional peace, security and prosperity" but that it shares an "unprecedented align-

[39] "Japan's Prime Minister Calls China's Development in East China Sea Unacceptable," Reuters, 2022.

[40] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), "The Current Status of China's Unilateral Development of Natural Resources in the East China Sea," webpage, November 30, 2021.

[41] "Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan in Joint Press Conference," 2022.

[42] "Remarks by President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio of Japan in Joint Press Conference," 2022.

[43] Ministry of Defense (Japan), 2022a, pp. 63–67

[44] Ministry of Defense (Japan), 2022a, p. 302.

[45] Government of Japan, 2022b; Government of Japan, 2022a.

ment of their vision, priorities, and goals."[46] As President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida agreed, the "security Alliance has never been stronger."[47]

In addition to the positive view Japan has of the United States, the two allies have expressed a united position regarding the security challenge posed by China. This is captured by joint statements by the Kishida and Biden administrations describing the increasingly severe threat environment in the Indo-Pacific caused by China.[48] For example, the allies have

> concurred that China's foreign policy seeks to reshape the international order to its benefit and to employ China's growing political, economic, military, and technological power to that end. This behavior is of serious concern to the Alliance and the entire international community, and represents the greatest strategic challenge in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.[49]

Additionally, the administrations have expressed a shared commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region, a concept first created and proposed by Japan and later adopted by the United States that focuses on promotion of the rule of law, the pursuit of economic prosperity, and a commitment to peace and stability in the region.[50] The two countries have further noted that coercive Chinese behavior is inconsistent with a rules-based order.[51] Significantly, there is no evidence of Japanese policymakers seeking to balance or calibrate these strong ties with the United States by actions meant to appease China.

The willingness of the Japanese government to support specific forms of U.S. access over time has varied in part because of concerns that U.S. activities may make Japan a military target from various adversaries. For example, when a U.S. U-2 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down over the Soviet Union in May 1960, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev threatened to strike any bases from which U-2 aircraft departed, including with nuclear weapons. In response, the Japanese government asked the United States to remove all U-2 aircraft from Japan, a request to which the United States complied, believing that doing so was necessary to ensure continued support for the revised defense agreement.[52]

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[46] "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (2+2)," U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Japan, January 11, 2023.

[47] "Joint Statement of the United States and Japan," The White House, January 13, 2023.

[48] "Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order," 2022. See also "Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee ('2+2')," January 6, 2022; and "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (2+2)," 2023.

[49] "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee (2+2)," 2023.

[50] Jeffrey W. Hornung, "Abe Shinzō's Lasting Impact: Proactive Contributions to Japan's Security and Foreign Policies," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2021. The United States was one of a number of countries to adopt this concept.

[51] "Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order," 2022.

[52] Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation*: Oxford University Press, 1997; Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, p. 23.

This has not been a universal response to military threats facing Japan. In fact, it may represent the exception that proves the norm. In other instances, threats from adversaries have failed to alter Japan's behavior or pushed Japan closer to the United States. Military threats made by the Chinese government during the Vietnam War, for example, did not prevent the Japanese government from continuing to provide the United States with significant support.[53] The North Korean launch of the Taepodong-1—a medium range ballistic missile that could reach all of Japan—in August 1998 led to concerns in both the Japanese public and the Diet about the increased military threat posed by North Korea missile capabilities.[54] This helped provide the impetus for Japan to begin formal participation in the U.S. ballistic missile defense program after years of stalled discussions.[55] And in recent years, increasing provocations by China against its neighbors, including Japan, have led to a tightening of the U.S.-Japan alliance, including the revising of *The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation* that provided for new roles and missions of the allies.[56]

Japan views the United States and U.S. military presence in Japan in extremely positive terms. In the face of increasing threats, Japan appears to want to cooperate more with the United States, not less. The January 2023 announcement welcoming a Marine Littoral Regiment in Okinawa (at an existing base) supports this, as well as the notion that the central government strongly values the alliance and supports U.S. basing and access in Japan for the defense of Japan.[57]

Public Opinion of U.S. Military Presence and Its Effects on Access

Evaluating the effects of Japanese public opinion on U.S. military access requires a broader contextual understanding of public perceptions of the United States and the U.S.-Japan alliance. According to the same Cabinet Office poll cited above, a sizable majority of Japanese citizens have consistently expressed strong affinity to the United States since the poll began

[53] Schaller, 1997; Thomas R. H. Havens, *Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan 1965–1975*, Princeton University Press, 2014.

[54] Michael D. Swaine, Rachel M. Swanger, and Takashi Kawakami, *Japan and Ballistic Missile Defense*, RAND Corporation, MR-1374-CAPP, 2001.

[55] Swaine, Swanger, and Kawakami, 2001. For a discussion of the impact of the North Korean threat on Japanese ballistic missile defense efforts, see Christopher W. Hughes, "'Super-Sizing' the DPRK Threat: Japan's Evolving Military Posture and North Korea," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 2009.

[56] Governments of Japan and the United States, The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, April 27, 2015.

[57] Tim Kelly, "Explainer: Why the U.S. Is Overhauling Its Marines on Japan's Okinawa," Reuters, January 11, 2023. The Marine Littoral Regiment's makeup and role are part of the Marine Corps Force Design 2030. The unit acts as a mobile, low-signature, and persistent force in theater and will include an anti-ship missile battery, an anti-air battalion, and a combat logistics battalion. The Regiment's capabilities are highly relevant to potential conflicts in the South China Sea and Taiwan (U.S. Marine Corps, "Marine Littoral Regiment," webpage, January 11, 2023).

in 1978. In 2022, it stood at 87.2 percent.[58] The lowest the favorability rating for the alliance was 67.5 percent in 1986. Similarly, in 2022 a clear majority of Japanese (84.9 percent) report that U.S.-Japan ties are good overall.[59] And even higher percentage (93.8) say that the development of bilateral ties is important for both Japan and the broader region.[60] Other Japanese polls support these findings. One poll by *Yomiuri Shimbun* found that 72 percent felt an affinity for the United States.[61] In a separate poll by the same newspaper, 58 percent of respondents said that bilateral ties were good.[62] And a 2022 poll conducted by Pew found that 70 percent of Japanese respondents had a favorable view of the United States, a number that has remained consistent since the end of the Trump administration.[63]

Importantly, polls show that the public widely views the U.S.-Japan alliance as improving Japan's overall security. In one of the *Yomiuri* polls cited above, 87 percent of respondents said the U.S.-Japan alliance played a role for Japan's security.[64] An *Asahi Shimbun* poll mirrored this, with 82 percent agreeing the alliance should be maintained.[65] Another poll found that those who believe that U.S. troops help secure Japan against foreign threats outnumber those who believe that the U.S. presence exacerbates these threats more than 4 to 1.[66] Furthermore, the United States was seen as a reliable partner by 76 percent of those polled by Pew in 2022.[67] Perhaps as a consequence, nearly 70 percent of survey respondents in a 2022 poll wanted to either keep the alliance with the United States the same or increase Japan's commitment to the alliance.[68]

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58 Cabinet Office (Japan), Government Public Relations Office, 2023, p. 1.

59 Cabinet Office (Japan), Government Public Relations Office, 2023, p. 4.

60 Cabinet Office (Japan), Government Public Relations Office, 2023, p. 7.

61 "50th Anniversary of the Reversion of Okinawa Public Opinion Poll Questions and Answers" ["沖縄復帰５０年　世論調査　質問と回答"], 2022.

62 "68% of Japanese, 65% of Americans Approve of Strengthening Japan's Defense Capabilities, Joint Yomiuri-Gallup Poll" ["日本の防衛力強化「賛成」日本６８％　米６５％　本社　ギャラップ共同世論調査"], 2022.

63 Richard Wike, Janell Fetterolf, Moira Fagan, and Sneha Gubbala, "International Attitudes Toward the U.S., NATO and Russia in a Time of Crisis," Pew Research Center, June 22, 2022.

64 "50th Anniversary of the Reversion of Okinawa Public Opinion Poll Questions and Answers" ["沖縄復帰５０年　世論調査　質問と回答"], 2022.

65 "Looming House of Councilors Election, Voters, Asahi Shimbun Public Poll" ["迫る参院選、有権者は　朝日新聞社世論調査"], *Asahi Shimbun*, May 3, 2022, p. 7.

66 Michael Allen, Michael E. Flynn, Carla Martinez Machain, and Andrew Stravers, *Survey on The Political, Economic, and Social Effects of the United States' Overseas Military Presence, 2018–2019*, February 14, 2020.

67 Wike et al., 2022.

68 Craig Kafura, Toshihiro Nakayama, Naoko Funatsu, Takeshi Iida, Satoshi Machidori, Satoru Mori, and Ryo Sahashi, "Strong Partners: Japanese and US Perceptions of America and the World," Chicago Council on Global Affairs, March 29, 2022.

Perceptions of the U.S. military presence have also been generally favorable among the Japanese public. One poll found that favorable views of the U.S. military outnumbered unfavorable views roughly 3 to 2.[69] While favorable views still outnumber unfavorable views significantly, we do note that the U.S. military has lower favorability rates in Japan than in the Philippines or South Korea.[70] Despite this, the desire for a continued U.S. military presence remains higher in Japan than in the other allies we examined. When asked how long the U.S. military presence should be maintained, Allen et al. found that over 80 percent of respondents believed that the U.S. presence should remain in Japan for the foreseeable future.[71]

While public opinion polls are broadly positive, local dynamics, including regional differences among the prefectures, show more variation. This is particularly true regarding public opinion on U.S. military presence in Okinawa. Contrary to the polls that show nationwide support for the United States and the alliance when asked in general terms, polls regarding U.S. military presence in Okinawa show critical views of the United States and the U.S. presence. Polls taken prior to the 50th anniversary of the reversion of Okinawa show that 61 percent of people in Okinawa think that the heavy U.S. military presence there is "unequal" (compared with 40 percent nationwide).[72] A similarly high amount look at this concentration in Okinawa and believe it is discriminatory.[73]

This is not unique to just the people of Okinawa, as 81 percent in a nationwide *Yomiuri* poll thought that the U.S. presence in Okinawa is too heavy (compared with 83 percent among the Okinawa public).[74] And when asked about continuing with the construction of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma in a *Ryūkyū Shimpō* poll, only 17.3 percent agreed, while 69.52 percent said that it should be moved elsewhere outside of Okinawa.[75] Recent surveys in Okinawa also indicate that people in Okinawa are more likely to say that U.S. military pres-

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69 Allen et al., 2020. We note, however, that a plurality held neutral opinions on the U.S. military.

70 Michael Allen, Michael Flynn, Carla Martinez Machain, and Andrew, *Beyond the Wire*, Oxford University Press, 2022.

71 Michael A. Allen, Michael E. Flynn, Carla Martinez Machain, and Andrew Stravers, "Military Deployments," webpage, undated. This includes 76 percent of respondents who chose the answer "For the foreseeable future" and 4 percent who chose "Three or more years."

72 "Base Concentration Is 'Unequal' in Okinawa Prefecture (61%), Different from 40% Nationwide, Shimpo/Mainichi Public Poll" ["基地集中は「不平等」沖縄県内61％　全国40％と落差　新報　毎日世論調査"], *Ryūkyū Shimpo*, May 10, 2022.

73 Respondents who "agreed" (39.4 percent) or "somewhat agreed" (26.9 percent) with this concentration being discriminatory were in the majority, compared with those who "somewhat disagreed" (12.4 percent) and "disagreed" (10.7 percent) (Okinawa Prefecture Planning Department, "11th Okinawa Prefectural Residents' Opinion Poll" ["第 11回県民意識調査"], March 2022, p. 83).

74 "50th Anniversary of the Reversion of Okinawa Public Opinion Poll Questions and Answers" ["沖縄復帰50年　世論調査　質問と回答"], 2022.

75 "Opposition to Henoko 61%, Support for Abe Cabinet 18% Ryūkyū Shimpo, OTV, JX News Prefectural Public Poll ["辺野古反対61％　安倍内閣支持率18％　琉球新報　OTV　JX通信県民調査"], *Ryūkyū Shimpo*, June 17, 2020.

ence has a negative influence on their local area.[76] All of this largely stems from the fact that 70.4 percent of areas exclusively used by U.S. forces stationed in Japan are in Okinawa, despite the prefecture only amounting to 0.6 percent of Japan's total land area.[77] What is more, this presence occupies approximately 14 percent of the main island of Okinawa.[78] Yet, when asked whether these bases in Okinawa play a role for Japan's security, 54 percent thought they did (compared with 65 percent nationwide).[79] In addition to noise and accidents, the people of Okinawa prefecture often are angered by crimes committed by U.S. servicemen.[80] When something egregious happens, negative public opinion is mobilized, and Okinawa becomes the site of protests against the U.S. military presence.

Japanese public opinion is important for U.S. military access because there is evidence that the public's views have influenced the Japanese government's decisions in the past. One example is the Sunagawa protests. The United States sought to expand runways at several U.S. Air Forces bases in Japan to accommodate larger aircraft, which required removing local populations from the land. A series of local protests opposing this erupted, thereafter expanding into a widespread national movement and culminating in a series of violent clashes between protestors and the Japanese police.[81] As a result of the protests and the violence that followed, the United States and Japan ultimately agreed not to continue with the planned runway expansion, demonstrating that local opposition can affect U.S. military deployment plans.

There are other, less confrontational examples that demonstrate the linkage between public opinion and decisions regarding access. For example, the U.S. and Japan announcement to deploy a second Army Navy/Transportable Radar Surveillance system (AN/TPY-2) in Japan immediately mobilized local opposition.[82] While this opposition did not stop implementation, construction was slowed because of continued opposition. To obtain local approval and quiet the opposition, instead of expropriating the land for the U.S. military, the central government arranged rental contracts with the landowners that were more lucrative than the market price.[83] Because these efforts did not eradicate all local opposition, the U.S.

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[76] Takako Hikotani, Yusaku Horiuchi, and Atsushi Tago, "Revisiting Negative Externalities of US Military Bases: The Case of Okinawa," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2022.

[77] Okinawa Prefectural Office, *What Okinawa Wants You to Understand About the U.S. Military Bases*, March 2018, p. 2.

[78] Ministry of Defense (Japan), *Defense of Japan 2021*, 2021.

[79] "50th Anniversary of the Reversion of Okinawa Public Opinion Poll Questions and Answers" ["沖縄復帰５０年　世論調査　質問と回答"], 2022.

[80] For example, see Tomomi Tomita, "Okinawa Women's Civic Group Chronicles Sex Crimes by U.S. Military," *Japan Times*, March 18, 2021.

[81] For a full description of this case, see Miller, 2014.

[82] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), "Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting," February 22, 2013.

[83] "Gov't Uses Power of Money to Have Residents Accept US Radar Base Construction," *Japan Press Weekly*, May 11, 2014.

Army had to apply noise-reducing mufflers to the equipment. In the meantime, opposition efforts created logistical challenges to the site, delaying construction of requisite facilities.

The linkage between access and a negative view of the U.S. military presence in Okinawa prefecture is best represented by the U.S. Marine Corps' plans to relocate MCAS Futenma. In 2006, the United States and Japan agreed to move Futenma from a highly urban area in Ginowan to a more remote location in Henoko in hopes of reducing the friction between the U.S. presence and the local population.[84] The original relocation of this facility within Okinawa was supposed to occur over several years, but nearly three decades later it remains an ongoing issue. This is because groups in Okinawa that oppose the move, often supported by the Okinawa governor, want the facility to be relocated outside of Okinawa entirely.[85] Although every Japanese prime minister, with one exception, has vowed to move forward with the relocation plan since its inception, local opposition has proven effective at delaying construction, leaving the project incomplete.[86] And several Okinawa prefectural governments have used legal and administrative tools to further slow the process down.[87] In light of these efforts, the United States has made a number of concessions throughout the years to keep the project moving forward. For example, as an effort to reduce the burden on Okinawa, both governments agreed to a realignment of forces from Okinawa that would remove roughly 8,000 marines, with the majority being redeployed to Guam.[88]

Of note, the impact public opinion can have on access is not unique to U.S. forces. Public opinion has caused changes to Japanese government plans for SDF basing and access. In one example, local opposition to Japan's deployment of Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft to its Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) in 2020 proved so problematic that the government was forced to change its plan. Initially, in 2014, Tokyo's plan was to deploy the GSDF Ospreys to Saga prefecture.[89] Not only did local officials oppose, but landowners, residents, and fishermen refused to allow the MOD to build new facilities on their plots.[90] Because of the opposition,

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84 Emma Chanlett-Avery and Ian E. Rinchart, *The U.S. Military Presence in Okinawa and the Futenma Base Controversy*, Congressional Research Service, R42645, 2016.

85 Olivia Tasevski, "Okinawa's Vocal Anti-US Military Base Movement," Lowy Institute, February 17, 2022.

86 C. Douglas Lummis, "USMC's Futenma Replacement Facility in Okinawa Delayed—for How Long?" *The Diplomat*, January 4, 2020.

87 Chanlett-Avery and Rinchart, 2016.

88 Emma Chanlett-Avery, Christopher T. Mann, and Joshua A. Williams, *US Military Presence on Okinawa and Realignment to Guam*, Congressional Research Service, IF10672, 2019. The United States has also returned thousands of acres of land from U.S. bases to Japan (Jeffrey W. Hornung, *The U.S. Military Laydown on Guam: Progress Amid Challenges*, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 2017b).

89 "Osprey, Provisional Use of Saga Airport Until Henoko Completion" ["オスプレイ、佐賀空港使用　辺野古完成まで暫定"], *Ryūkyū Shimpō*, July 23, 2014.

90 "Saga Residents Protest Against Plan to Deploy Ospreys to Local Airport," *Japan Press Weekly*, July 23, 2014; "GSDF Ospreys Rejected by Saga Get 5-Year OK to Deploy in Chiba," *Asahi Shimbun*, December 25, 2019; "GSDF to Deploy Ospreys to Chiba as Fishermen in Saga Block Move," *Asahi Shimbun*, May 15, 2019.

Tokyo was forced to seek temporary alternatives, eventually deciding to temporarily deploy them to Camp Kisarazu in Chiba prefecture.[91] But this too faced opposition by local residents and landowners, forcing the MOD to delay the planned shipment of Ospreys that was scheduled to occur in the fall of 2018.[92] In May 2020—two years after the initial planned start—the GSDF received the first delivery of an Osprey and deployed it to Camp Kisarazu, where it remains today, as ongoing opposition in Saga prevents the permanent deployment plan to move forward.[93]

Local opposition also contributed to the cancellation of the deployment of its Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense system. In 2017, Japan decided to purchase the Aegis Ashore system, with plans to deploy two units at two GSDF bases and for the systems to be operational by the mid-2020s. Yet, by 2020, the Japanese government canceled its plans because of opposition by local residents.[94] Despite the plan being supported by the ruling party, the government was sensitive to local concerns as residents mounted protests, voiced opposition against central government officials, launched signature campaigns, and pressured prefectural and local officials to oppose the central government's plan.[95]

These examples support the argument that public opinion can negatively affect access, but public opinion does not wholly dictate the Japanese central government's response. There are examples where negative public opinion, while able to delay government policies, has been insufficient to significantly alter U.S. presence or access. In the late 1950s, for example, public support for U.S. bases was minimal, reaching a low of 8 percent in 1958 and culminating in a series of protests that surrounded the discussion over a new security treaty.[96] The mantle of this public sentiment was taken up by the then–Japan Socialist Party, which sought to prevent

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91 "Japan Defense Ministry to Deploy Osprey Aircraft to Chiba Pref. Base," *The Mainichi*, March 27, 2018.

92 Shinichi Akiyama, "GSDF to Delay Shipment of Ospreys to Japan as Local Opposition Mounts," *The Mainichi*, September 24, 2018.

93 "Japan Officially Takes Delivery of First Bell Boeing Tiltrotor Aircraft V-22 for Japanese Self-Defense Force," Navy Recognition, July 2020.

94 "Japan Halts Deployment of U.S.-Made Missile Defense System," *Kyodo News*, June 16, 2020; Ishibashi Otohide, "Statement by Chairman Opposing the Deployment of Aegis Ashore in Araya Training Area" ["新屋演習場へのイージス　アショア配備に反対する会長声明"], Tohoku Federation of Bar Associations, July 12, 2019; "About the Resolution Regarding Opposition to the Deployment Plan to the GSDF's Araya Training Area of the Ground-Deployed Aegis System (Aegis Ashore), Which Threatens the Safety of Residents" ["住民の安全を脅かす陸上配備型イージス　システム（イージス　アショア）の　陸上自衛隊新屋演習場への配備計画反対に関する決議について"], Akita City, June 3, 2019; "About Information Relating to Aegis Ashore" ["イージス　アショアに関する情報について"], Akita City, undated.

95 Shun Kawaguchi, "Signature Campaign Opposing Aegis Ashore Missile Defense System Held in North Japan," *The Mainichi*, December 16, 2019; Hayashi Kunihiro, "At the Town Meeting in Abu Town, Voices of Opposition to the Ground Aegis Deployment" ["陸上イージス配備に反発の声　阿武町で住民説明会"], *Asahi Shimbun*, December 21, 2019.

96 Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016.

the ratification of the treaty.[97] However, when the Socialists staged protests in Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke's office and in the Diet, Kishi had them forcibly removed from the building and passed the treaty in a snap vote with only the ruling Liberal Democratic Party present.[98] While the protests resulted in Kishi resigning as premier, U.S. military access remained, and the U.S.-Japan security treaty was strengthened. Thus, while public protests did result in domestic political change, they had very little effect on the alliance itself or U.S. basing and access.

The central government has the legal decisionmaking authority, but policymakers in Tokyo carefully listen to the local host communities. Obtaining the understanding of communities hosting U.S. units is considered the "foundation" for Tokyo to make a decision.[99] Additionally, policymakers feel that ignoring them comes with political risks. If Tokyo takes a hard line against the local community, for example, that may cause that local community to increase its obstruction.[100] And if local communities strongly resist or oppose an initiative, it could cause anti-U.S. sentiment, which is not conducive for long-term sustainability of the alliance.[101] As one interviewee bluntly stated, the alliance needs "local buy-in for the sustainability of U.S. operations; otherwise you'd face constant protest and interference."[102] That, in turn, makes Tokyo unwilling to ignore strong opposition. Public opinion, therefore, strongly affects political considerations, giving the local community somewhat of a "veto" over alliance intentions.[103] This is especially true in Okinawa prefecture, where getting consent on changes or any new capabilities is "very hard, even in small numbers."[104] Okinawa prefecture, however, is not monolithic, and diverging views of the United States and SDF are present across the different islands in the Nansei Shotō.

When viewed together, should the United States consider bringing in a new capability into Japan or transforming the U.S. military presence, Japanese politicians would closely monitor local community sentiment. This, in turn, provides the potential for local communities to disrupt new U.S. posture initiatives. Consequently, Tokyo expects that the United States has a *political* obligation to consult Japanese leaders when bringing in new capabilities, even if it does not have a *legal* obligation to do so. With this context, the next section discusses the legal obligations related to U.S.-Japan military access.

97 Schaller, 1997.

98 Schaller, 1997.

99 Japanese official, interview with authors (Japan Interview 9), December 12, 2022.

100 Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

101 Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 4), December 10, 2022.

102 Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

103 Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 3), October 21, 2022.

104 Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 10), December 12, 2022.

U.S.-Japan Agreements and Effects on Access

This section examines the current agreements in place that govern U.S. access and discusses the constraints or opportunities that those agreements present for access and basing in peacetime and in conflict. U.S. access in Japan is dictated by a series of formal legal agreements, the two most relevant of which are the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security and the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). But implementation of these agreements also relies heavily on two more agreements: an Exchange of Notes and an oral understanding.

Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security

The 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States and Japan grants U.S. forces access to Japan and commits both states to maintain their capacities to resist attack through self-help and mutual aid.[105] The treaty's key provision, Article V, commits each state to act to meet armed aggression against either party "in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes"; however, this clause geographically limits the duty to respond to attacks within "the territories under the administration of Japan."[106] The treaty is not restricted to just Japan's defense, however, as Articles IV and VI also include reference to the "international peace and security in the Far East."[107] The term *Far East* has been understood as referring to the area north of the Philippines, Japan, and its surrounding area, which includes South Korea and the area governed by the Republic of China.[108] Therefore, the treaty has a limited geographic scope when compared with other mutual defense treaties in the region that encompass attacks in either states' territory or cover attacks on either state in the Pacific region.[109]

Article VI is important in that it grants the United States "use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan" to contribute to both the security of Japan and the maintenance of peace in the Far East.[110] The treaty states that a separate agreement will govern the U.S. armed forces' use of these facilities and areas. Importantly, once Article V

[105] Governments of the United States and Japan, 1960a. This agreement replaced a prior security treaty from 1951.

[106] Governments of the United States and Japan, 1960a, Art. V. The limitation complies with the Japanese Constitution, which restricts Japan's ability to maintain forces with "war potential" and renounces the state's right to use force to settle international disputes (Government of Japan, Constitution of Japan, November 3, 1946, Art. IX).

[107] Governments of the United States and Japan, 1960a, Art. IV and VI.

[108] Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Japan), "Far East Range (February 26, 1960, Unified Government Opinion) Japan-U.S. Security Treaty System Q&A" ["極東の範囲（昭和35年2月26日政府統一見解，日米安保Q＆A体制）"], webpage, undated.

[109] See the Republic of Korea and Philippines chapters of this report for discussion of those agreements and how the parties interpret them.

[110] Governments of the United States and Japan, 1960a, Art. VI.

is invoked, U.S. forces can use their bases and SDF bases and civilian facilities and public parks throughout Japan.[111] This is because invoking Article V always comes with an armed attack declaration (described below). Without Article V invoked however, U.S. forces' access to civilian facilities and public land will depend on what situation the government declares (described below) or whether civilian administrators meet a Japanese government request for allowing access. Invoking Article V requires both parties to agree, whereas invoking Article VI is something only the United States can do, based on prior consultation with Tokyo (see below).[112]

Status of Forces Agreement

The United States and Japan entered into a SOFA as stipulated in Article VI of the Security Treaty in 1960 to create procedures for U.S. access.[113] Article II of the SOFA represents the key provision granting the United States access in Japan.[114] Article II.1 (a) grants the United States the use of facilities and areas in Japan. Exclusive use of these facilities is granted by Article III.[115] Article II.4 is also critical for access. Article II.4 (a) provides the legal basis for joint use of U.S. controlled areas by the SDF, stipulating that when "facilities and areas are temporarily not being used by the United States armed forces, the Government of Japan may make, or permit Japanese nationals to make, interim use of such facilities and areas."[116] Because there may be times that the United States wants to operate from facilities outside of its own bases, Article II.4 (b) authorizes U.S. forces to use "facilities and areas . . . for limited periods of time."[117] This applies to not just SDF bases but to civilian facilities as well. Should the United States want to establish a semi-permanent forward operating base somewhere else in Japan, for example, Article II.4 (b) would be the legal basis upon which this is done.[118] Importantly, these processes take time. To date, whenever the United States has wanted to use the II.4 (b) process, it has taken about three months to complete.[119] Having never used it before in a

[111] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 10), December 12, 2022.

[112] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 8), December 12, 2022.

[113] Governments of the United States and Japan, Agreement Under Article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America, Regarding Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan (U.S.-Japan SOFA), January 19, 1960b. Like other SOFAs, the agreement also establishes rules of jurisdiction for U.S. Forces Japan personnel.

[114] U.S.-Japan SOFA, 1960, Art. II(a)–(b).

[115] U.S.-Japan SOFA, 1960, Art. III.

[116] U.S.-Japan SOFA, 1960, Art. II.4 (a).

[117] U.S.-Japan SOFA, 1960, Art. II.4 (b).

[118] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

[119] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 3), October 21, 2022.

crisis, it is unclear how much that could be shortened in a contingency, because it involves discussions with actors at the local level.

For all of these matters, a Joint Committee established by Article XXV of the SOFA serves as the negotiating body for issues of SOFA interpretation.[120] This committee is composed of one representative and several deputies from each party.[121] When the Joint Committee agrees to an interpretation of the SOFA, the committee issues a policy statement called an *Agreed View* that outlines this interpretation.[122] Should the United States seek to make a request, someone in the U.S. military would make a request to their counterpart in the SDF and the SDF would, in turn, make that request to the civilian side of the MOD, which then goes to the Joint Committee for discussion.[123]

Exchange of Notes

An Exchange of Notes was conducted on January 19, 1960, between Japanese Prime Minister Kishi Nobusuke and U.S. Secretary of State Christian Herter regarding the implementation of Article VI of the security treaty. According to this Exchange of Notes, the United States and Japan agreed that

> major changes in the deployment into Japan of United States armed forces, major changes in their equipment, and the use of facilities and areas in Japan as bases for military combat operations to be undertaken from Japan other than those conducted under Article V of the said Treaty, shall be the subjects of prior consultation with the Government of Japan.[124]

This agreement affects U.S. access in two major ways. First is the use of forces for combat operations not tied to the defense of Japan—in other words, an Article VI operation (versus an Article V operation).[125] In particular, prior consultation applies to U.S. combat forces being used directly from Japan. Other nonkinetic operations do not legally require this. Impor-

[120] U.S.-Japan SOFA, 1960, SOFA, 1960, Art. XXV.

[121] U.S.-Japan SOFA, 1960, SOFA, 1960, Art. XXV.

[122] Timothy D. Stone, "US-Japan SOFA: A Necessary Document Worth Preserving," *Naval Law Review*, Vol. 53, 2006.

[123] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

[124] Nobusuke Kishi and Christian A. Herter, Exchanged Notes, Regarding the Implementation of Article VI of Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States of America, World and Japan Database, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo, January 19, 1960.

[125] Article VI identifies the United States as having a responsibility not only to the security of Japan, but "the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East" (Governments of the United States and Japan, 1960a). The scope of "combat operations" that is subject to prior consultation is defined by the nature of actual missions that the forces in question will be engaged in.

tantly, troop movement out of Japan for redeployment in another country does not require prior consultation if the troops do not have orders to conduct combat directly from Japan.

In practice, prior consultation would work with officials from the U.S. and Japanese governments (likely the U.S. ambassador to Japan and the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs) meeting to discuss the intended operations the United States seeks to undertake before those operations are initiated.[126] For some in Japan, this is viewed as Japan having veto power over U.S. operational decisions. While multiple respondents referred to prior consultation as having veto power over the United States, one said it effectively enables Japan to "stop the U.S." from doing something it disagrees with.[127] For others, it is seen as simply an opportunity to get political buy-in, given the likelihood that such actions will result in an attack on Japan. After all, it is called "prior consultation, not prior approval."[128] This notion is supported by political assurances President Dwight Eisenhower gave to Prime Minister Kishi in 1960, promising to consult and not take any action against the wishes of Tokyo.[129] Where there is consensus in Japan is the view that prior consultation is something the United States has an obligation to do, especially on issues relating to a potential conflict and if Japan is not under attack.[130] If the United States ignored its prior consultation obligation, or if Japan opposed an action and the United States pursued the action anyway, "it would create crisis in the alliance."[131] While it may not result in a complete collapse of the alliance, "it could cause severe damage."[132] Therefore, approval for the United States to launch such operations cannot be considered automatic, as they will depend on political consultations with Tokyo.

The second way the Exchange of Notes matters for access is in regard to the type and size of capabilities the United States can bring into Japan. Although it is not specified, the agreement puts limitations on "major changes" to U.S. deployment and "major changes" to

[126] The following discussion is adapted from Hornung, 2020b.

[127] Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 4), December 10, 2022.

[128] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 8), December 12, 2022.

[129] On January 19, 1960, they issued a joint communique that included the following language:

> In this connection, the Prime Minister discussed with the President the question of prior consultation under the new treaty. The President assured him that the United States Government has no intention of acting in a manner contrary to the wishes of the Japanese government with respect to the matters involving prior consultation under the treaty. (Kishi Nobusuke and Dwight D. Eisenhower, Joint Communique of Japanese Prime Minister Kishi and U.S. President Eisenhower, World and Japan Database, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Institute for Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo, January 19, 1960)

[130] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 2), October 21, 2022.

[131] Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 4), December 10, 2022.

[132] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 8), December 12, 2022.

U.S. equipment.[133] What constitutes "major" is spelled out in a second agreement called the Fujiyama-MacArthur oral understanding.[134]

Fujiyama-MacArthur Oral Understanding

The Fujiyama-MacArthur oral understanding takes its name from an agreement negotiated by Foreign Minister Fujiyama Aiichirō and U.S. Ambassador Douglas MacArthur II. Agreed to in the process of negotiating the 1960 security treaty, it was meant to provide a more precise definition of points that required prior consultation. It was eventually submitted to the Diet in a written format for clarification on April 25, 1968.[135] The agreement describes broad changes in U.S. force disposition under which the United States has a legal obligation to seek prior consultation with Japan as stipulated in the Exchange of Notes. The first of these is that prior consultation is required for a major change in deployment at the size of a division unit for ground units, at an equivalent to a division unit for the Air Force, and at the equivalent of a maneuver unit for the Navy. For the Air Force, this would likely mean something like the 5th Air Force; for the Navy/Marine Corps, it would likely be a carrier strike group or amphibious ready group.[136] Additionally, the oral understanding provides two other conditions that would require prior consultation: (1) the introduction of nuclear warheads and mid-to-long range missiles and the construction of bases for that[137] and (2) the use of facilities and areas in Japan as bases for combat operations from Japan (except for action taken under Article V). In totality, the oral understanding means that changes to U.S. force presence that involve a unit smaller than a division-equivalent unit and that do not involve nuclear weapons or combat operations from Japan do not necessitate prior consultation. For example, introducing PrSMs or HIMARS would not fall under this requirement, unless the sole intent was to use those capabilities for something other than defending Japan.

Collectively, these four agreements mean that, short of a few restrictions, the United States is not legally constrained in what it can bring into Japan. And yet, the United States "can't introduce whatever it wants."[138] Japan expects that Washington would notify Tokyo of any changes, even if those changes do not trigger any of the legal requirements stipulated above. This is particularly the case if the capability the United States plans to bring into Japan is noisy (e.g., it flies), very large (e.g., it has a lot of personnel), or is a new kinetic capability that

[133] Kishi and Herter, 1960.

[134] Hard copy of agreement obtained by RAND researcher.

[135] Hard copy of agreement obtained by RAND researcher.

[136] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 9), December 12, 2022. The interviewee referred to "amphibious ready brigades," but we believe that *amphibious ready groups* is the more contemporary term.

[137] Although it is not specified whether the missiles are nuclear or conventional, it is generally understood that conventional missiles would not be included.

[138] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 9), December 12, 2022.

is currently not in the country.[139] Also of interest is whether the new capability is permanent (versus rotational). For Japan, capabilities that touch on any of these areas are likely to be politically sensitive and thus have political ramifications if the hosting community opposes. Therefore, regardless of the absence of legal obligations, Japan sees the United States as having a *political* obligation to consult.

Through this consultation process, Japanese officials can push back on U.S. intentions if they touch on these sensitive areas and risk upsetting the local communities. But on the positive side, the consultation process gives Japan an opportunity to craft the messaging and shape the outreach to the local communities to help coordinate the introduction of a new capability, should the government agree with the United States on the necessity of the new capability. Moreover, it provides the government of Japan the opportunity to fight the narrative that placing kinetic capabilities in a location will automatically make it a target of an attack.[140]

Table 2.1 summarizes U.S.-Japan security agreements and their effects on U.S. military access.

Other Considerations

As important as these four agreements are, there are domestic legal interpretations in Japan that frame the context for how any U.S. interest in basing and access may transpire in a situation that is transitioning from peacetime to crisis and a contingency. Importantly, deciding on any interpretation rests solely on the sitting premier and others in government at the time who may be advising that leader.

In 2015, a package of security laws was passed by the Abe Shinzō administration that introduced three new situations that a prime minister needs to declare in an unfolding situation. This legislation brought the total number of possible situations to six; however, only four of these are relevant for our purpose.[141] One is an *Important Influence Situation*, which is a situation that affects Japan's peace and security that, if not addressed, will have the potential

[139] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022; Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 2), October 21, 2022; Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 10), December 12, 2022.

[140] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 9), December 12, 2022.

[141] The three situations that Abe added were Important Influence Situation (as a modification of the Situation Surrounding Japan, or 周辺事態) and the new addition of Survival Threatening Situation (detailed in the text) and the Situation Threatening International Peace That the International Community Is Collectively Addressing (国際平和共同対処事態). Of the six situations (four of which are covered in the text), the two that are not relevant (and therefore not covered in the report), are Situations Threatening International Peace That the International Community Is Collectively Addressing (国際平和共同対処事態) and Emergency Response Situation (緊急対処事態). The former would be a situation in which Japan cooperates and supports other countries responding to ensure the international community's peace and security; it requires a UN resolution. The latter would be an emergency in Japan other than armed attack against Japan, such as a terrorist attack. In this situation, law enforcement agencies would take the lead, not the SDF.

TABLE 2.1
U.S.-Japan Agreements and Effects on U.S. Military Access

Agreement	Key Features	Effects on Access
Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security	• Article V commits U.S. and Japan to maintain capacity to resist attack on Japan • Not limited to just defense of Japan, but also to "Far East" • Article VI concerns use of U.S. facilities in Japan for security of Japan and the Far East	• If Article V is invoked, U.S. forces can use their bases and SDF bases and civilian facilities and public parks throughout Japan
Status of Forces Agreement	• Article II is key provision granting U.S. use of facilities in Japan, as well as legal basis for joint use of U.S. controlled areas by the SDF • Joint Committee serves as negotiating body for SOFA interpretation	• Creates procedures for U.S. access and provides legal basis for U.S. use of facilities and areas in Japan
Exchange of Notes	• Establishes prior consultation for major combat operations, major changes to equipment, and use of facilities in Japan for combat operations not tied to the defense of Japan • Limits the type and size of capabilities the U.S. can bring into Japan	• Requires consultation for the use of forces for operations not tied to the defense of Japan
Fujiyama-MacArthur oral agreement	• Describes changes in U.S. force disposition that trigger prior consultation	• Prior consultation required if – any deployment changes at the level of division in the Army or its equivalent in other services – introduction of nuclear weapons and mid-to-long range missiles – using Japan as bases for combat operations not related to Article V

to lead to a direct armed attack against Japan.[142] The second is an *Anticipated Armed Attack Situation*, which is a situation in which an armed attack has not occurred against Japan, but tensions have increased and an armed attack is anticipated. The third, an *Armed Attack Situation*, which is closely connected to the second, is a situation where an armed attack on Japan has taken place, or a clear and imminent danger of an armed attack on Japan is acknowledged. The fourth is a situation that is a threat to Japan's survival, or *Survival Threatening Situation*, which is defined as an armed attack against another country with which Japan

[142] Government of Japan, Law Concerning Cooperation and Support Activities Conducted by Japan in Response to International Peace Cooperation Situations by Armed Forces, etc. of Foreign Countries [我が国が実施するに対する協力支援活動等に関する法国際平和共同対処事態に際して諸外国の軍隊等], September 19, 2015a; Government of Japan, Law for Partial Revision of the Self-Defense Forces Law, etc. for the Purpose of Contributing to the Maintenance of Peace and. Security of Japan and the International Community [我が国及び国際社会の平和及び安全の確保に資するための自衛隊法等の一部を改正する法律], September 19, 2015b.

shares a close relationship that results in a clear danger to fundamentally overthrow Japan's people's right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[143] Understanding these situations is important because each carries relevant authorities for the SDF which, in turn, will dictate what type of activity U.S. forces can conduct from Japan, as well as access rights.[144]

Important Influence Situation

In the first situation, in which the government declares an Important Influence Situation (重要影響事態), or IIS, Japan will not authorize its SDF to use force. Instead, it will limit SDF activities to noncombat, rear-area support, such as logistical or ISR.[145] These are described in the defense guidelines and include things such as logistic support, provision of supplies, repair and medical services, and noncombat search and rescue operations. There are two notable caveats. First, the SDF can provide U.S. forces with live ammunitions, but not weapons.[146] Second, rear-area support activities must not take place in the area "where combat activities are actually occurring" and cannot be regarded as violating the prohibition on integration with the use of force with another military (武力行使との一体化).[147] Importantly, in terms of access, the Japanese government can only ask for the "cooperation" of civilian facility administrators for their use by U.S. forces. At SDF bases, normal procedures for joint/shared use by U.S. and Japanese forces continue to apply. Whether Tokyo is comfortable with U.S. operations directly from Japanese territory will be a political decision determined in the prior consultation process. Finally, this situation can be declared simultaneously with an Anticipated Armed Attack Situation.

Anticipated Armed Attack Situation

In the second situation, in which Japan anticipates an armed attack (武力攻撃予測事態), or AAAS, the SDF will prepare for a potential attack on Japan.[148] Japan does not have to be

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[143] Governments of Japan and the United States, 2015.

[144] Hornung, 2020b.

[145] Government of Japan, Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Peace and Security of Japan in Situations That Will Have an Important Influence on Japan's Peace and Security [第一条 [Article 1], 重要影響事態に際して我が国の平和及び安全を確保するための措置に関する法律], Law No. 60, 1999.

[146] Governments of Japan and the United States, Agreement Between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of America Concerning Reciprocal Provision of Logistic Support, Supplies, and Services Between the Self-Defense Forces of Japan and the Armed Forces of the United States of America, September 26, 2016.

[147] Ministry of Defense (Japan), "Response to an Important Influence Situation" ["重要影響事態への対応"], *Defense of Japan 2022* [令和4年版防衛白書], 2022b.

[148] In Japanese laws, this situation is treated collectively with Armed Attack Situation, which has led to the misperception that this is not a stand-alone situation. See Government of Japan, Law for Ensuring the Peace and Independence of Japan and the Security of the State and the People in Armed Attack Situations, Etc., and Situations Threatening Japan's Survival [武力攻撃事態等及び存立危機事態における我が国の平和と独立並びに国及び国民の安全の確保に関する法律], Article 1 [第一条] and Article 2, Clause 3 [第二条第3項], Law No. 79, 2003.

under direct attack for the government to declare this situation. Like IIS, the SDF is authorized to take action but it is not authorized to use force. Different than IIS, and reflecting the escalation in severity, the government can request and, if denied, force administrators of civilian facilities to allow the U.S. military to use them.[149] Similarly, use of SDF bases by U.S. forces can be made by an order of the Defense Minister. As noted above, this can be declared simultaneously with an IIS. Finally, in this situation, there is no automatic approval for the United States to conduct combat operations from Japan. Whether Tokyo is comfortable with U.S. operations directly from Japanese territory will be a political decision determined in the prior consultation process.

Armed Attack Situation

In the third situation, in which Japan is under armed attack (武力攻撃事態), or AAS, the SDF can be authorized to use force to defend Japan. However, for this to occur, three conditions must be fulfilled:[150]

1. When an armed attack against Japan has occurred, or when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness;
2. When there is no other appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure Japan's survival and protect its people; and
3. The use of force will be limited to the minimum extent necessary.

Similar to an AAAS, the use of SDF bases by U.S. forces can be made by an order of the Defense Minister. Additionally, SDF support for U.S. operations will fundamentally increase because there would be no constraints by the "integration with the use of force" prohibition mentioned above.[151] Importantly, like an AAAS, the government can order civilian administrators to make their facilities available for use by the U.S. military.[152] Finally, this situation would trigger Article V of the security treaty. In addition to the aforementioned different nature of support activities authorized by this, the prior consultation expectation as

[149] Government of Japan, Law Regarding the Use of Specified Public Facilities, Etc. in Armed Attack Situations, Etc. [武力攻撃事態等における特定公共施設等の利用に関する法律], Article 9 [第九条], Law No. 114, 2004.

[150] Quoting from Ministry of Defense (Japan), "The New Three Conditions on the 'Use of Force' for Self-Defense Measures Allowed Under Article 9 of the Constitution" ["憲法第9条のもとで許容される自衛の措 置としての「武力の行使」の新三要 件"], *The Constitution and the Right to Self-Defense* [憲法と自衛権], undated.

[151] It is assumed that U.S. forces will act under Article V of the security treaty (Governments of the United States and Japan, 1960a) in a manner that involves the use of force. SDF will therefore be able to provide support for U.S. forces that is considered as use of force.

[152] Government of Japan, 2004.

stipulated in the Exchange of Notes would be exempt since U.S. support would fall under Article V, thereby allowing U.S. combat operations directly from Japan without the need for prior consultation.

Survival Threatening Situation

The final situation, called a Survival Threatening Situation (存立危機事態), or STS, is similar to an AAS because Tokyo can authorize the SDF to use force, even if Japan itself is not under attack.[153] In fact, the situation provides Japan the authority to use force based on collective self-defense, even if this is an attack on a third country. Legally, Japan does not differentiate between an AAS and an STS in terms of the authority to use force.[154] In other words, it could be in response to an event where the United States is under armed attack, potentially undermining the security alliance upon which Japan's security relies. Like the IIS, there is no automatic approval for the United States to conduct combat operations from Japan. Whether Tokyo is comfortable with U.S. operations directly from Japanese territory is still a political decision that will be determined in the prior consultation process. Importantly, similar to both an AAAS and AAS, the use of SDF bases by U.S. forces can be made by an order of the Defense Minister. Although Japan's laws do not necessarily stipulate the ability of the government to order civilian administrators to make their facilities available for use by the U.S. military, if the STS is one in which the defense of Japan is at risk, it is likely the government will declare an AAAS or AAS, thereby allowing the government to order civilian administers' compliance.

Declarations of a situation, and the authorization of whether force can be used, will, in turn, translate into what the Japanese government will allow the United States to do from its bases or to request in terms of access of non-U.S. facilities. In an IIS, Japan will likely restrict the United States to noncombat logistical support while granting no special access to civilian facilities and no access to SDF facilities beyond normal procedures. In an AAS, Article V of the security treaty would kick in, opening up full access to not just U.S. bases but civilian and SDF Japanese facilities, as well. In this situation, U.S. forces would be expected to use kinetic force from Japan's bases, and the prior consultation as defined in the Exchange of Notes would not be needed. In an AAAS, like the AAS, the government can request and, if denied, force civilian facility operators to cooperate with granting access to U.S. forces even if an attack has not begun. But the SDF itself would not be authorized to use force in an AAAS. Similarly, there is no automatic approval for the United States to conduct combat operations from Japan in an AAAS; that would be subject to the prior consultation process. The potential tricky area is an STS, as U.S. forces have access to SDF facilities but the government may be hesitant to agree to allowing U.S. forces to use kinetic force from its bases early on in a crisis when Japan is not attacked, thereby necessitating the prior consultation process. If Japan is not attacked,

[153] Government of Japan, 2003.

[154] Government of Japan, Self-Defense Forces Law [自衛隊法], Articles 76, 88 [第七十六条　第八十八条], Law No. 165, 1954.

Tokyo "would face a very hard political decision to take a side with the U.S."[155] And flooding U.S. forces and capabilities with personnel and equipment at this stage, meant to execute the conflict or preposition capabilities that were not currently stationed in Japan, such as PrSMSs or HIMARS, "would raise alarms" in Tokyo.[156] Importantly, declaring any of these situations is solely a political decision, resting with the sitting prime minister in office at the time that an event occurs. In addition to uncertainty regarding how any future premier will interpret any specific situation occurring in the international context at that time, it is also unclear how long any decision will take. A notable example of how difficult this decision could be is a tabletop exercise on a Taiwan contingency held in Tokyo among coalition lawmakers and former defense officials in 2022. Defining the unfolding situation proved so difficult that it took two months to decide (in the course of the game).[157]

Implications for U.S. Access in Japan

Considering the above, we can draw several implications for U.S. access in both a peacetime context and a contingency.

In peacetime, the United States faces few legal constraints for what capabilities it can deploy to its bases, but there is a political expectation to consult with Japan

As noted above, per the Fujiyama-MacArthur oral understanding and terms of the Exchange of Notes, the United States is legally bound to consult Japan if it seeks to bring in units at the size of a division or larger, if it includes nuclear weapons, and if it includes mid-to-long-range missiles (commonly interpreted as nuclear missiles). Short of these, however, the United States faces no significant legal obstacles should it change its presence or capabilities on U.S. bases in Japan in peacetime. Legally, then, the United is allowed to deploy any capability not covered by that understanding to Japan without first seeking Tokyo's approval. That said, because of the ramifications on local Japanese communities and the associated political sensitivities for the central government regarding U.S. military presence, unilaterally deploying a capability would come at tremendous political cost for the alliance if those capabilities are strongly opposed by the communities that host them. This creates a political expectation from the Japanese side for the United States to consult with Japan prior to changes in forces or capabilities.

[155] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 10), December 12, 2022.

[156] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

[157] Takahashi Kosuke, "How Would Japan Respond to a Taiwan Contingency?" *The Diplomat*, August 20, 2022.

Japan will likely agree to U.S. notifications for prepositioning nonkinetic capabilities, as long as they are unlikely to be opposed by local communities

Japan's response to U.S. nonkinetic access notifications will likely differ based on the capability the United States is inquiring about, because anything the United States wants to do in peacetime to increase its force posture could cause political challenges for Tokyo.[158] That said, interviewees were unanimous in their view that prepositioning nonkinetic capabilities would likely be nonproblematic for Japanese leadership in peacetime, especially if the United States sought to place those capabilities on bases in Honshū, Kyūshū, or Hokkaidō. Therefore, prepositioning equipment parts, fuel, and fuel bladders at U.S. bases would pose no problem. While such capabilities are unlikely to cause public protest in Okinawa prefecture, there is always a potential for local disagreement, depending on the island and the political environment at the time. The same is true for prepositioning nonkinetic units, such as non-airborne ISR assets and cyber units housed on base. Even storage of critical munitions would likely be politically acceptable to Tokyo if they are stored at existing munition depots. That said, one interviewee acknowledged that these types of nonkinetic capabilities could become challenging to preposition if local groups that opposed the U.S. military presence found out and chose to make a big deal out it.[159] The key point is that because none of these capabilities are visible or perceived to endanger the local communities (i.e., they are not noisy, large, or kinetic), they are unlikely to spark local opposition and thus will not be a political issue for the central government.

Deploying kinetic capabilities to Japan in peacetime would likely pose a greater challenge, particularly in the Nansei Shoto (Southwest Islands)[160]

U.S. interest to deploy kinetic capabilities would likely be met with more resistance from Japanese officials because of political considerations. Because of local concerns over noise and accidents, for example, the Japanese government would want the United States to consult with it prior to any increase in ISR assets that fly, but it is likely that these types of capabilities would ultimately be approved by Tokyo.

However, more resistance from Japan would likely occur should the United States bring in new aircraft or kinetic capabilities onto U.S. or SDF bases, such as PrSMs or HIMARS,

[158] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 2), October 21, 2022; Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 8), December 12, 2022.

[159] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 6), December 12, 2022.

[160] In Japanese, the islands that stretch from the southern tip of Kyūshū to the farthest island of Yonaguni are collectively called the Nansei Shotō, or Southwest Islands. These are not synonymous with what English-speakers normally refer to the Ryūkyū Islands. Japan's official documents and defense strategy do not use that term; instead, the term that is used is Nansei Shotō. Therefore, this report uses that nomenclature.

because expected resistance in local communities would raise the political costs for the central government. Bringing in kinetic capabilities that are currently not in Japan would be especially challenging, according to interviewees.[161] And any type of U.S. missile launchers would likely pose particular difficulty, because the only such capabilities currently in Japan are for air defense.[162] One interviewee said that this would particularly be the case in the Nansei Shotō and thus would be a "nonstarter" for Japan.[163] This is because some local communities may feel that such capabilities will make their communities a target should a conflict erupt.[164] The political sensitivities in Okinawa prefecture make such capabilities even more of a lightening-rod issue.[165] The coordination with the local communities in these areas that would be necessary for these types of deployments would result in high political costs that Tokyo may be unwilling to pursue.

U.S. access in a Taiwan contingency that does not directly involve an attack on Japan is much more challenging and will heavily depend on Japanese leadership's political definition of the situation

The way Tokyo declares a situation will dictate the level of access U.S. forces can expect. If the government declares an IIS, the United States would likely not be able to conduct combat operations from Japan. Instead, the most U.S. forces can assume with some degree of certainty is the ability to conduct noncombat support. For example, interviewees agreed that if the United States wanted to use existing ISR or cyber assets located in Japan, Tokyo would likely agree, as these capabilities can be used without an adversary attributing their use to Japan. Potential issues arise when the United States seeks to access its bases for operations for a conflict elsewhere, in which case would trigger prior consultation, either the legal requirement or the political one. For example, if the United States is engaged in conflict and wants to access its bases for resupply and reloading, something not included in the Exchange of Notes, the Japanese government would still want the United States to engage in prior consultation because using Japan as a rear area base may pull it inadvertently into a conflict.[166] If the United States wanted to conduct combat operations, the legal requirement for prior consultation would be triggered. None of this is to say that Tokyo would oppose. The problem is less about bringing these capabilities into Japan and more about using them in an operation

[161] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 5), December 12, 2022.

[162] Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 4), December 10, 2022.

[163] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 2), October 21, 2022.

[164] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022; Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 4), December 10, 2022; Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 6), December 12, 2022; Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 7), December 13, 2022.

[165] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 3), October 21, 2022.

[166] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

directly from Japan, thereby creating the optics that Japan is a part of the war. It is for this reason that prior consultation would be critical to any U.S. intended action, even in this stage. However, it is unlikely that Japan would be comfortable with anything beyond noncombat, rear-area support.

In an AAS, Tokyo will fully expect the United States to fulfill its Article V security treaty obligations. In this situation, "political considerations change dramatically" because the defense of Japan becomes the primary objective for Tokyo, and Article V obligations are initiated.[167] Under this scenario, the U.S. military can safely assume that it will be able to not only bring in any capability it deems necessary to win the fight (short of nuclear weapons) but also be able to conduct both combat and noncombat operations directly from Japanese territory for the defense of Japan.

An STS is arguably the hardest of all regarding access, especially early in a crisis when Japan has not been attacked but the United States is gearing up for combat operations. In this situation, Tokyo may be hesitant to allow the United States to use its forces for combat purposes directly from Japan.[168] For example, a prime minister who is less hawkish and may seek to avoid a war coming to Japan's shores could choose to deny or delay U.S. access to bases in Japan for combat purposes. A more forward-leaning prime minister may choose the opposite. The fact is that this decision is purely a political one and rests with the sitting prime minister at that time. The closer the situation edges to conflict, however—for example, if China were to implement a full blockade around Taiwan—the more likely Japan will support U.S. access requests because this will start to have immediate effects on Japan's economy.[169] Still, the point remains that in the crisis phase, nothing is automatic. And a decision is likely to take time. If the United States is seeking rapid military action, this political decision-making timeline may not match up with U.S. operational timelines.

Summary

First, the level of access the United States is likely to have depends on the situation—whether in peacetime or a contingency—as well as the political leadership. The United States has significant peacetime access in Japan, with very few—but real—constraints. Legally, the United States can bring a broad spectrum of capabilities and units onto U.S. bases in Japan, but there are political risks to Tokyo that a changed posture brings, requiring the United States to consult with Japan. The United States' ability to access these bases during a contingency short of an attack on Japan will depend solely on political decisions made by Tokyo, and these will be based largely on public opinion and threat perceptions. If the government declares an IIS, the United States is likely to be limited to nonkinetic, noncombat operations. If instead

[167] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

[168] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 2), October 21, 2022.

[169] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 5), December 12, 2022.

Tokyo declares an STS, U.S. access for kinetic capabilities and combat operations is likely to be expanded, but still would not be guaranteed. This means that getting Tokyo's agreement to any U.S. request will be a political decision. And, as one respondent eloquently summed up, this means the "U.S. can't assume it will use its bases" in a conflict in which Japan is not attacked.[170]

Second, U.S. ability to not just access but conduct combat operations directly from Japan in a contingency that does not involve Japan appears limited. Regardless of what capabilities the United States has in Japan during peacetime or a crisis, if a conflict occurs in which Japan is not attacked, there would be strong opposition to allowing to the United States to access its kinetic capabilities and operate them directly from Japan. There is maximum flexibility if Japan is attacked, but, short of that, there is a strong reluctance to allow the United States to use Japan as a forward operating base from which to conduct combat operations that are not directly tied to Japan's defense.

Third, approval for any U.S. access request is largely a political decision. This, in turn, depends on how realistic Japanese leaders can be about the prospect of Japan being attacked and how difficult it would be to stay out of a looming conflict.[171] The more likely that hostilities appear, the easier access discussions become. The more hostilities appear contained or at least unlikely to spread to Japan, there is only "a 50-50 chance Japan will allow the United States to use its forces" from U.S. bases in Japan.[172] Japanese leaders do not want to voluntarily join a war with China by granting the United States access to U.S. bases in Japan for a conflict if Japan has not been attacked, but there is also a realistic understanding that if Tokyo rejects U.S. requests, the alliance would be negatively affected. One respondent said, if there were to occur, "our alliance would be broken."[173] Another said the "alliance would be done."[174] Having to choose between involvement and sitting out will be difficult for any Japanese leader, made harder by political pressures.

Finally, until Japan is attacked, "the GOJ [government of Japan] would agonize over the situation," likely resulting in taking a lot of time before deciding.[175] While there is an expectation that Japan will eventually grant access in a conflict in which it has been attacked, Japan's decisionmaking timelines for everything short of that scenario are unlikely to match U.S. operational timelines. Japan has a lot at stake in a regional conflict, but the nature of its system relies heavily on the prime minister to defining a situation that frames what type of action is legally possible. Any conflict that appears limited (e.g., does not involve Japan) will likely lead decisionmakers to adopt more conservative approaches to avoid prematurely

[170] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 6), December 12, 2022.

[171] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 1), September 28, 2022.

[172] Diet member, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 4), December 10, 2022.

[173] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 6), December 12, 2022.

[174] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 9), December 12, 2022.

[175] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 9), December 12, 2022

involving Japan in the war. In so doing, Japan will likely not only refrain from permitting any U.S. activity beyond strictly nonkinetic ones, but could refrain from declaring a situation—or only declare an IIS—thereby causing the government to lack the legal authority to forcefully authorize Japanese administrators of civilian facilities to allow the United States to disperse military forces to their locations. Japan can authorize access to SDF facilities under Article II of the SOFA, but such access would need to be arranged between forces via the Joint Committee. In a situation in which Japan is attacked, U.S. use of either type of facility is possible and governed under Article II of the SOFA.[176] Problematically however, by the time this decision comes, dispersal of such forces may be too late. Importantly, there currently is no set process in place for the United States to rapidly do so.[177] Obtaining approval from the Japanese government for dispersing U.S. forces will take time. By the time the government decides, the conflict may already be well underway and the opportunity to leverage dispersal opportunities or bring critical capabilities into Japan may be lost.

[176] Governments of Japan and the United States, 2015.

[177] Japanese official, interview with the authors (Japan Interview 3), October 21, 2022.

CHAPTER 3

The Republic of Korea

The ROK has been a key U.S. ally since the Korean War, hosting U.S. capabilities and forces aimed primarily at deterring the threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). While U.S. forces in the ROK are there primarily to uphold the Armistice and defend the ROK from a DPRK attack should the Armistice cease, they could also play a role in deterrence related to China. This chapter explores the possibilities and constraints in current U.S.-ROK bilateral defense agreements that affect how U.S. forces stationed in the ROK could be used in peacetime or for a regional conflict with China that does not involve an attack on the ROK by China or by the DPRK.

The chapter begins with an examination of three domestic factors that likely play a significant role in South Korean access decisions for U.S. forces: South Korean leaders' perceptions of China, their views of the ROK's relationship with the United States, and the South Korean public's views of the U.S. military. Following this, we discuss legal agreements that the United States has with the ROK that are most pertinent to the deployment and use of U.S. forces and capabilities in the ROK, and we provide key insights into the interpretations of those agreements from current and former ROK officials and in-country experts.

The Republic of Korea's Perceptions of China

While there are differences in how China is viewed by administrations of different political leanings (e.g., progressives versus conservatives), the ROK has generally preferred to maintain positive ties with China, both for economic reasons and because of a desire to cooperate with China on DPRK issues. This relationship, however, is balanced with the ROK's security alliance with the United States. Nevertheless, broadly speaking, irrespective of political leanings, South Korean leadership appears to harbor two primary concerns related to China. The first concern is the potential for Chinese economic retaliation should the ROK host U.S. capabilities that China perceives to be threatening to its security. The second concern relates to threats to South Korea's security from a potential conflict involving China that could adversely affect the U.S.-ROK alliance or destabilize the Korean Peninsula.

Economic Retaliation

South Korea enjoys strong economic ties with China. China is South Korea's largest trading partner, by far. In 2020, for example, 24.7 percent of the ROK's exports went to China, and 24.6 percent of its imports came from China. By comparison, only 14.1 percent of South Korea's exports were to the United States, its second-largest trading partner, and the United States accounted for only 12 percent of South Korea's imports.[1] In addition, Chinese direct investment into South Korea is significant, surging in 2020 in the wake of COVID-19 and accounting for 11 percent of all South Korean foreign direct investment in the first half of that year.[2] While these economic ties are mutually beneficial for both countries, they leave South Korea vulnerable to potential Chinese economic retaliation, which Beijing used to coerce ROK leaders in response to the 2016 U.S. deployment of a THAAD battery to South Korea.[3]

In July 2016, the United States and the ROK announced the deployment of the anti-ballistic missile defense system in response to DPRK missile testing. Despite the stated intent of deterring the DPRK, China opposed the deployment, expressing concerns that, among other things, the THAAD radar could be used against China, undermining its nuclear deterrent.[4] China responded with significant unofficial economic sanctions against the ROK: forced cancellations of ROK theater performers in China, legal maneuvering to close Korean-owned shops, and limiting licenses to cut Chinese tourism to the ROK by half.[5] The ROK National Assembly Budget Office estimated that the tourism sector alone lost nearly $7 billion in revenue.[6] Lotte, the South Korean company that offered its golf course as the location of the THAAD deployment, saw most of its stores in China closed by PRC regulators because of alleged safety concerns.[7] Chinese regulators also imposed limits on Korean imports: For

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1 Observatory of Economic Complexity, "South Korea," webpage, undated-c.

2 "S. Korea's Dependence on China for Exports, Investment Increases Amid Coronavirus," Yonhap News Agency, September 3, 2020.

3 Mazarr et al., 2021.

4 Ethan Meick and Nargiza Salidjanova, *China's Response to the U.S.–South Korean Missile Defense System Deployment and its Implications*, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, July 26, 2017, p. 5. China strongly opposed this move and has declared that the included radar system's ability to detect missile launches from deep within the Asian mainland would threaten China's nuclear deterrent. See Mazarr et al., 2021, p. 103; "US to Deploy THAAD Missile Battery to South Korea," *DOD News*, Defense Media Activity, U.S. Army, September 16, 2016.

5 Mazarr et al., 2021, p. 104; "S. Korea Still Smarting from China's THAAD Retribution," Yonhap News Agency, March 14, 2018; Bryan Harris, Song Jung-a, Sherry Fei Ju, and Tom Hancock, "China Bans Tour Groups to South Korea as Defence Spat Worsens," *Financial Times*, March 3, 2017; Kim Oi-hyun, "More Lotte Marts in China Closed Down for One Month over Supposed Safety Violations," *Hankyoreh*, March 7, 2017; Adam Jourdan, "China Hints at Trade War Strategy in South Korea Standoff," Reuters, March 3, 2017.

6 Meick and Salidjanova, 2017, pp. 7–8.

7 Meick and Salidjanova, 2017, pp. 7–8.

example, food exports to China in 2017 dropped more than 5 percent from the prior year, and ROK automakers' sales in China dropped more than 50 percent because of boycotts.[8]

China's leveraging of their economic ties for political purposes concerned Korean leadership. When President Moon Jae-in took office in 2017, he took several conciliatory measures to deescalate tensions. While he maintained the THAAD deployment, he issued a policy called the "Three Nos" to placate China: no new THAAD deployments (beyond the initial one announced in July 2016), no additional U.S. missile defense systems, and no participation in a trilateral security alliance with the U.S. and Japan.[9] Given that the initial deployment of THAAD was eventually completed, the United States had minimal reaction to the shift in South Korean policy. China, on the other hand, responded favorably to the Three Nos. By late 2017, Chinese imports of some South Korean industries (such as semiconductors and cosmetics) had rebounded and expanded.[10]

But the damage China's actions caused went beyond the economic. South Korean public opinion of China changed significantly following this dispute. In 2015, just 37 percent of South Korean respondents had negative views of China.[11] In the years after, there has been a steady decline. A 2022 poll, for example, found that 81 percent of South Koreans had a negative view of China, the highest of all 56 polled states.[12]

Problematically, this lingering memory of Chinese willingness to engage in economic coercion haunts South Korean leaders. Consequently, they remain hesitant to make decisions that may invite Chinese retaliation. Summed up by one interviewee, "China did it before, we fear they will do it again."[13] Because of this experience, "the ROK is not willing politically to put themselves in the game" when it comes to China.[14] So, there is reason to believe that ROK leadership will remain cautious on taking actions with U.S. forces that could trigger an adverse Chinese response in the future.[15] Should the United States seek to get the ROK involved in an off-peninsula conflict, for example, South Korean elites will be concerned about "economic blowbacks" like they suffered because of THAAD.[16]

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8 Meick and Salidjanova, 2017, pp. 7–8.

9 Mazarr et al., 2021, p. 104.

10 Sui-Lee Wee and Jeyup S. Kwaak, "China's Harsh Words Mask a Trade Boom with South Korea," *New York Times*, September 29, 2017.

11 Bruce Stokes, "How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders," Pew Research Center, September 2, 2015.

12 Richard Q. Turcsanyi and Esther E. Song, "South Koreans Have the World's Most Negative Views of China. Why?" *The Diplomat*, December 24, 2022.

13 Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

14 Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

15 This sentiment was also clearly reflected in our interviews.

16 Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

As much as the THAAD episode continues to haunt Korean policymakers, there are limits to the extent to which one should interpret this economic coercion as overtly changing South Korean strategic thinking on China. For example, despite China's retaliation against the ROK, it does not appear to have significantly caused changes in Seoul's behavior regarding the U.S. THAAD deployment. While it was initially paused, the Moon administration subsequently reinstated it following additional DPRK missile tests—with little further economic consequences from China. Additionally, the Yoon Suk-yeol administration (2022–present) has continued the process by accelerating procedures to normalize operations at the THAAD location.[17] Yoon even expressed his openness to a second THAAD deployment in the face of further North Korean missile tests.[18] In defense of the first THAAD deployment, Yoon stated: "It is a matter of sovereignty and security, which is not subject to any compromise."[19] And in a signal that the Yoon administration has shifted away from the Three Nos, ROK Foreign Minister Park Jin stated in August 2022 that "The Three Nos was not a promise or agreement we made to China but an explanation of our position."[20] In response to a PRC statement, the ROK Foreign Ministry reiterated that THAAD is "not a matter for debate" with China.[21]

As important as these statements are in showing Seoul's willingness to stand up to Beijing, there are countervailing pressures that will likely limit the extent to which South Korea can comfortably push back on China. One is economic. The ongoing importance of the Chinese economy to the ROK means that Seoul will continue to fear potential economic coercion from China. Another pressure is geopolitics. Leaders across administrations have spoken of the importance China plays in South Korea's foreign policy. Even Yoon, despite his stronger

[17] Ji Da-gyum, "S. Korea Offers Unfettered Access to THAAD Battery," *Korea Herald*, September 4, 2022b.

[18] Jung Min-ho, "Experts Say Additional THAAD Deployment Unlikely—for Now," *Korea Times*, November 17, 2022. Then-candidate Yoon successfully campaigned on buying an additional THAAD battery, among other expansions of U.S.-ROK cooperation (Scott Snyder, "China–South Korea Relations Under South Korea's New Yoon Administration: The Challenge of Defining 'Mutual Respect,'" *Forbes*, May 2022). However, this was not included in the administration's policy roadmap (Nam Hyun-woo, "President-Elect in Hot Seat Over Backpedaling on Key Pledges," *Korea Times*, May 5, 2022).

[19] Choe Sang-Hun, "New South Korean President Tries to Make His Mark on Foreign Policy," *New York Times*, September 18, 2022a.

[20] Christy Lee, "South Korea's THAAD Missile Shield Reconsidered After North Korean Threats," *Voice of America*, August 5, 2022; Jo He-rim, "After China's Top Legislator's Seoul Visit, THAAD Remains Source of Conflict with Beijing," *Korea Herald*, September 19, 2022a.

[21] Such statements have led PRC officials and scholars to issue warnings against future THAAD deployments, an indication that China may attempt similar retaliatory moves in the future (Snyder, 2022; David Choi, "Chinese Ambassador Warns Against a Second THAAD Battery in South Korea," *Stars and Stripes*, April 11, 2022a; Esther Chung and Jeong Jin-woo, "Beijing Wags Finger at Seoul on THAAD, Three No's," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, August 11, 2022). To date, Seoul has not committed to any stance on a potential second THAAD deployment, with South Korean officials noting that there are currently no plans to do so (Park Chan-kyong, "Seoul Has 'No More Plans' to Deploy China-Opposed US THAAD Missiles, Hopes for Xi-Yoon Summit," *South China Morning Post*, September 7, 2022). Experts say that it is unlikely a second deployment will occur in the near term but note that North Korean behavior may change this calculus despite the potential for economic retaliation from China (Jung, 2022).

approach to China, has signaled that the ROK's relationship with China is still important.[22] This is particularly important in ROK officials' views that PRC political assistance is crucial to any diplomatic efforts with the DPRK.[23] President Moon stated in 2021 that "We need the constructive efforts of China to enable denuclearization of DPRK," and President Yoon has called for China to play a more active role in in reducing DPRK nuclear provocations.[24] The Yoon administration's 2022 strategy describes China as "a key partner for achieving prosperity and peace in the Indo-Pacific region" and promises that the ROK "will nurture a sounder and more mature relationship . . . based on mutual respect and reciprocity."[25] According to interviewees, this leads some experts to interpret that the ROK government does "not consider China a threat."[26]

The Potential to Undermine South Korea's Security

The second concern South Korean leaders have about China is how a U.S.-China conflict could undermine the country's security. There are two parts to this concern. First, ROK leaders worry that a conflict will degrade the U.S.-ROK alliance and the deterrent that the United States provides against the DPRK, if the United States pulls any of its forces out of the peninsula to fight China. Interviews support this: According to experts we spoke with, Korean officials fear that a conflict between the United States and China that requires a reduction in U.S. military presence in South Korea could undermine ROK security, because the DPRK may take advantage of a reduced U.S. presence to commit to an attack on the ROK, perhaps even with the tacit support of China.[27] One retired South Korean official noted that if the United States sought to relocate its forces anywhere off the Peninsula, this action "could trigger a North Korean miscalculation of the U.S. [intent] to defend the ROK."[28] Short of offset-

[22] Lee Haye-ah, "(3rd LD) Biden Arrives in S. Korea for First Summit with Yoon," Yonhap News Agency, May 20 2022a.

[23] Mark Manyin, *South Korea Elects a New President*, Congressional Research Service, IN 11892, March 15, 2022, p. 2.

[24] Mark Manyin, Caitlin Campbell, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mary Beth Nikitin, and Brock Williams, *U.S.–South Korea Relations*, Congressional Research Service, R41481, February 24, 2022, p. 45; Hyonhee Shin, "South Korea Urges Bigger China Role in Curbing North Koran Arms Tests," Reuters, November 15, 2022a.

[25] Government of the Republic of Korea, *Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region*, December 2022, p. 14.

[26] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

[27] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 4), December 8, 2022; Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022; Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 9), December 9, 2022; Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 10), December 9, 2022; Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 11), December 13, 2022.

[28] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

ting any troops that leave, "there is nothing to reduce the security threat [Koreans] feel" in this situation.[29]

A lesser concern that interviewees voiced about a regional conflict undermining South Korean security is the potential for China to attack U.S. bases in South Korea if the United States employs its forces on the Peninsula for a conflict elsewhere in the region. Interviewees indicated this concern is primarily related to whether the ROK assists the United States in a conflict not involving the DPRK.[30] For example, if U.S. troops based in South Korea were involved in a conflict over Taiwan in which South Korea is not attacked, the fear is that the ROK could face military retaliation from China for providing U.S. support, even if only logistical.[31] However, the potential for China to attack the ROK was generally not as prominent a concern in interviews compared to the potential for a regional conflict to undermine South Korea's deterrent through U.S. removal of forces and potential subsequent DPRK actions.

A conflict over Taiwan, therefore, is likely seen by Seoul as a potential security threat. However, according to interviewees, the issue of Taiwan is not yet deeply considered among South Korean strategists, nor does it feature in South Korea's national security paradigm. As one expert noted, the South Korean government is "not ready to talk about Taiwan" with the United States.[32] In fact, many share the sentiment that Taiwan "is [a] very sensitive issue for Korea."[33] The "government is not ready to talk about anything related to any fight with China."[34] As one expert noted, "South Korea tends to not want to get involved in a U.S.-China conflict."[35] According to another Korean official, Taiwan matters for the ROK because "if something happens in Taiwan, it affects the ROK because it could cause provocation by the DPRK so the U.S. needs to consider what the North will do."[36]

The ROK's lack of focus on Taiwan as an issue in and of itself and of broader regional concerns might be changing, however. The Yoon administration appears to be taking a broader regional view of security to include its own Indo-Pacific strategy, which states that "freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea" and "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" are important for the peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific.[37] At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in November 2022, Yoon emphasized that the ROK is

[29] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 4), December 8, 2022.

[30] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[31] Josh Smith, "Home to 28,000 U.S. troops, South Korea Unlikely to Avoid a Taiwan Conflict," Reuters, September 26, 2022; Cho, 2021.

[32] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

[33] Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 11), December 13, 2022.

[34] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[35] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[36] Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 9), December 9, 2022.

[37] Government of the Republic of Korea, 2022, p. 28.

"[e]xpanding [its] diplomatic horizon beyond the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia."[38] He also indicated plans to increase ROK participation in U.S. regional initiatives and eventually seek membership in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.[39] The purpose of these initiatives was for South Korea to help maintain a free and open and rules based Indo-Pacific.[40] Although China is not directly named in the Indo-Pacific strategy, and no interviewee suggested that the Yoon administration considers China an adversary, the strategy and Yoon's remarks are significant given that they indirectly implicate China.

To summarize, South Korea does not appear to view China as being a direct security threat. Still, the ROK is concerned over possible Chinese economic coercion and the security implications of a potential conflict between the United States and China that could degrade South Korea's deterrent against the DPRK should Peninsula-based U.S. forces be used in a conflict away from the Peninsula. In the next section, we examine the ROK's perception of the United States and how China and the DPRK have played a role in Seoul's current interest in maintaining a strong U.S.-ROK alliance, which has implications for future U.S. military access in a crisis or contingency not involving the DPRK.

The Republic of Korea's View of the United States

South Korean leadership views the United States as a key ally and security guarantor for deterring a nuclear-armed DPRK.[41] Consecutive South Korean administrations have therefore strongly valued the treaty alliance with the United States. The current Yoon administration is no different. Throughout his campaign, Yoon vowed to restore and normalize military exercises with the United States, which were scaled back during the Moon administration, and "rebuild" the alliance.[42] The Yoon administration's Indo-Pacific strategy suggests a stronger policy alignment with the United States in the region, based on the inclusion of such principles as supporting a "free and open Indo-Pacific," which mirrors the language used by the Biden administration.[43] Yoon also helped reestablish the high-level Extended

[38] Government of the Republic of Korea, 2022, p. 13.

[39] Manyin, 2022, p. 2. The Quad's current members are the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia.

[40] Julian Ryall, "South Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy Pivots Toward US," *Deutsche Welle*, November 16, 2022; Jo He-rim, "South Korea Aligns Indo-Pacific Strategy with US, Japan: Experts," *Korea Herald*, November 15, 2022b; Lee Haye-ah, "(LEAD) Yoon Unveils S. Korea's Strategy for Free, Peaceful, Prosperous Indo-Pacific," Yonhap News Agency, November 11, 2022b.

[41] Scott A. Snyder, *South Korea at the Crossroads: Autonomy and Alliance in an Era of Rival Powers*, Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 12–14; "United States–Republic of Korea Leaders' Joint Statement," The White House, May 21, 2022; Lee Haye-ah, 2022b.

[42] "Yoon Pledges to Normalize Military Drills with U.S. to Enhance Deterrence Against North," Yonhap News Agency, January 24, 2022.

[43] Ryall, 2022; Jo, 2022b; Lee Haye-ah, 2022b.

Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group, through which the United States and South Korea discussed cooperation on information sharing and in the space and cyber domains.[44] Yoon has also indicated openness to acquiring additional THAAD batteries from the United States, though he has taken no concrete actions at this point, highlighting that Seoul remains wary of Chinese retaliation should it agree to host U.S. capabilities that could be perceived by China as threatening its security.[45]

Yoon also vowed to restore and normalize military exercises with the United States.[46] Following a 2018 decision by the United States and South Korea to suspend Vigilant Ace, a large-scale joint air exercise, Yoon and Biden agreed in May 2022 to "initiate discussion to expand the scope and scale of combined military exercises and training on and around the Korean Peninsula."[47] This was followed in late August by South Korea resuming the Ulchi Freedom Shield large-scale live-fire exercises with U.S. forces, despite domestic concerns that the drill would push China and the DPRK closer together.[48] In January 2023, Minister of National Defense Lee Jong-Sup and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III agreed to expand the scope and scale of combined field training exercises and intelligence-sharing, including joint live-fire exercises.[49] These exercises are in response to the DPRK's increased missile tests, but they also signal to China that U.S.-ROK relations remain strong.

Yoon's desire to strengthen the alliance also reflects Seoul's concern that the United States might reduce U.S. military presence in South Korea, thereby degrading the deterrent against North Korea. For example, during the Trump administration, there was discussion about reducing the U.S. global footprint, including the size of U.S. presence in the ROK.[50] This discussion caused ROK leaders to look for ways to increase the ROK's financial contributions to the stationing of forces in South Korea.[51] Ultimately, the U.S. Congress placed firm limits on potential reductions. First, in 2019, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) prevented funds from being used to reduce forces deployed to U.S. Forces, Korea (USFK) below

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44 "Joint Statement on the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group Meeting," September 16, 2022.

45 Lee Haye-ah, 2022b; Choe Sang-Hun, "'Yankees, Go Home!': Seoul Gets Squeezed Between the U.S. and China," *New York Times*, October 19, 2022b.

46 "Yoon Pledges to Normalize Military Drills with U.S. to Enhance Deterrence against North," 2022.

47 "United States-Republic of Korea Leaders' Joint Statement," 2022.

48 Michael Green, "Resuming Ulchi Freedom Shield," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, August 25, 2022a. See also Kang Seung-woo, "Ulchi Freedom Shield Drill Faces Backlash from North Korea," *Korea Times*, August 30, 2022a.

49 "Joint Statement: Minister of National Defense Lee Jong-Sup and U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III," U.S. Department of Defense, January 31, 2023.

50 Mark Landler, "Trump Orders Pentagon to Consider Reducing U.S. Forces in South Korea," *New York Times*, May 3, 2018.

51 Anthony Kuhn, "Seoul Agrees to Pay More for U.S. Forces Stationed in South Korea," *NPR*, March 8, 2021.

22,000 without justification to Congress, a number that was later revised to 28,500 in the fiscal year (FY) 2020 and FY2021 NDAAs.[52] The FY2022 NDAA changed that, stating instead that it is "the sense of Congress" that DoD should strengthen alliances by "maintaining the presence of approximately 28,500 members of the United States Armed Forces" in Korea, but there is no longer an accompanying notice to Congress regarding a requirement.[53]

One area of tension in the alliance is the issue of operational control (OPCON) of forces on the Peninsula.[54] Although South Korea now holds OPCON over its forces during peacetime, U.S. forces maintain OPCON during wartime.[55] This is an area of friction between the United States and South Korea, because, from the South Korean perspective, OPCON is tied to its sovereignty and ability to control its national security.[56] Multiple South Korean administrations across the political spectrum have attempted to change the OPCON status to be fully under the ROK in both peacetime and wartime, beginning with President Roh Moo-hyun pushing for greater ROK self-reliance and OPCON transfer in 2006.[57] In 2014, the United States and South Korea agreed to three conditions for the transfer to take place: The ROK must acquire key military capabilities to lead the combined defense of the country, it must secure capabilities to respond to the DPRK's nuclear and missile threat, and the security environment on the Peninsula must be conducive to the transfer.[58] To date, those conditions have not been met, and analysts have raised concerns about Seoul's readiness for OPCON, given extant gaps in its capabilities and command structure.[59] In 2022, Presidents Yoon and Biden reiterated their shared commitment to "a conditions-based transition of wartime oper-

[52] See Public Law 116-283, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021, January 1, 2021, Sec. 1258; Public Law 116-92, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, December 20, 2019, Sec. 1254.

[53] Public Law 117-81, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, December 27, 2021, Sec. 1252.

[54] Institute for Security and Development Policy, "Not a Sovereignty Issue: Understanding the Transition of Military Operational Control between the United States and South Korea (Backgrounder)," April 2021.

[55] Kathryn Botto, "Why Doesn't South Korea Have Full Control over Its Military?" Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 21, 2019; Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2021. The ROK secured peacetime operational control of its forces in 1994, but wartime OPCON remains with the United States.

[56] Botto, 2019.

[57] Bruce Klingner, *Transforming the U.S.-South Korean Alliance*, Heritage Foundation, June 30, 2008.

[58] Hwang Joon-bum and Yoo Kang-moon, "Defense Minister Says 'Foundation for OPCON Transfer Has Been Laid,'" *Hankyoreh*, November 1, 2018.

[59] As one commentator assessed, recently resumed joint military drills will be necessary for the ROK to ready its forces for transfer (Soo Kim, "U.S.-South Korea OPCON Transition: The Element of Timing," *RAND Blog*, April 2, 2020; Duyeon Kim, "Washington and Seoul Must Heal Their Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, January 26, 2021).

ational control."[60] Analysts have suggested that if this issue is pressed too strongly, it could weaken the political underpinnings of the alliance.[61]

To summarize, despite the issue of OPCON, the ROK leadership's view of the United States and the alliance is positive but tied very strongly to deterring the threat from the DPRK. In the face of increasing threats from Pyongyang, President Yoon has worked to revitalize the alliance. South Korea also continues to balance relations with China to maintain strong economic and political ties. As one interviewee stated, as the U.S.-ROK relationship becomes stronger, "the relationship with China gets more challenging [for Seoul]" because Seoul does not "want to anger China."[62] This balancing will likely continue for the foreseeable future, with Seoul supporting U.S. military presence but remaining cautious about hosting additional capabilities that could be construed by China as threatening. The next section will discuss how public opinion of U.S. military presence ties into Korean basing and access decisions for U.S. forces on the Peninsula.

Public Opinion of U.S. Military Presence and Its Effects on Access

South Korean public opinion of the United States and its military presence has generally been positive. In a 2021 Pew Research Center poll, 77 percent of South Korean citizens polled expressed very or somewhat favorable views of the United States.[63] This is supported by a 2021 Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll that rated South Korean views of the United States a mean score of 6.0 on a 0–10 scale of favorability, where higher values indicate higher levels of favorability.[64] South Korean views of the U.S.-ROK alliance are even more favorable. In 2020, a Chicago Council on Global Affairs poll found that 90 percent of South Koreans polled expressed a favorable view of the alliance with the United States.[65] An even higher 96.4 percent of those polled by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in 2022 said that it was necessary to maintain the alliance.[66]

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60 "United States–Republic of Korea Leaders' Joint Statement," 2022.

61 Kim, 2020.

62 Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

63 This was a nearly 20-point rebound from the previous year, which corresponded to a significant unfavorable opinion of President Trump. Only 17 percent of South Korean respondents expressed confidence in the U.S. President in 2020 (Pew Research Center, "International Public Opinion of the U.S. Remains Positive," June 22, 2022).

64 Karl Friedhoff and Suh Young Park, *Ahead of Biden-Moon Summit, South Koreans and Americans Align on China and North Korea*, Chicago Council of Foreign Affairs, May 19, 2021.

65 Karl Friedhoff, *Troop Withdrawal Likely to Undermine South Korean Public Support for Alliance with United States*, Chicago Council on Global Affairs, August 2020.

66 J. James Kim, Kang Chungku, and Ham Geon Hee, *South Korean Public Opinion on ROK-U.S. Bilateral Ties*, Asan Institute for Policy Studies, May 2022.

Perceptions of the U.S. military presence were also generally favorable among the South Korean public. Polling performed by Allen et al. in 2019 found that, in the ROK, favorable perceptions of the U.S. military outnumber unfavorable opinions nearly 3 to 1.[67] Furthermore, those who expressed that the U.S. presence was somewhat or very helpful for South Korean security outnumbered those who expressed that it was somewhat or very unhelpful nearly 4 to 1.[68] A Chicago Council poll in 2021 found similarly that 74 percent of respondents in the ROK believed that the U.S. military presence in the Indo-Pacific increases regional stability.[69] In addition, South Korean public opinion has, in the past, been more positive toward U.S. military presence when regional security tensions increase or when the threat from the DPRK becomes more pronounced. For example, in 2010, the South Korean warship *Cheonan* sunk after being struck by a torpedo launched from a DPRK submarine.[70] Following the attack, anti-base movements across the ROK lost momentum, and public opinion generally moved toward the view that USFK should remain in place.[71] Increased regional tensions with China may have a similar effect. Unfavorable perceptions of China have increased dramatically in South Korea since 2017, and, according to a 2021 poll, 83 percent of South Korean now public identifies China as a security threat.[72]

Polls also show a willingness among the South Korean public to continue to host U.S. forces for the foreseeable future. Allen et al. found that, of those who expressed a preference for continued U.S. deployment of forces, 80 percent put no significant conditions on the length of deployment.[73] The 2022 poll by Asan found similar numbers: 82.1 percent of respondents answered that it is necessary to have U.S. forces in South Korea for the foreseeable future.[74] Among those respondents which Asan found favored indefinite U.S. deployments, 70 percent preferred to keep the size of USFK at its present level. Importantly, they also found that support for reducing the size of USFK has declined over time—26.7 percent

[67] In evaluating perceptions of the U.S. military presence, it is important to note that some polls allow respondents to offer a neutral response, while others constrain a response to favorable and unfavorable options (though all allow respondents to state they do not know or otherwise refuse to answer). This is potentially significant. For example, in Allen et al., undated, 33 percent of respondents in South Korea expressed a neutral opinion on the United States when asked about their support for the U.S. presence—the modal response. When we discuss our results here, we focus on the relative responses placed between favorable and unfavorable opinions.

[68] Allen et al., undated.

[69] Friedhoff and Park, 2021.

[70] Andrew Yeo, "Anti-Base Movements in South Korea: Comparative Perspective on the Asia-Pacific," *Asia-Pacific Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 24, June 2010a.

[71] Yeo, 2010a.

[72] Friedhoff and Park, 2021; Kim, Kang, and Ham, 2022.

[73] Allen et al., undated. This includes 69 percent of respondents who chose the answer "For the foreseeable future" and 11 percent who chose "Three or more years."

[74] Kim, Kang, and Ham, 2022.

in 2019 to 23.8 percent in 2020 and 15.5 percent in 2022—and support for increasing the size of USFK has risen over time—7.8 percent in 2019 to 10.4 percent in 2020 and 12.3 percent in 2022.[75] Similar numbers were found by the Chicago Council in 2021 regarding the U.S. regional presence—68 percent of respondents believed that the size the U.S. presence in the region should be maintained, and 15 percent believed that the U.S. presence should be increased.[76] These polls suggest public support for continued U.S. military presence in the ROK at the level it is today, with a very small number supporting an increase in the size of that presence.

This sentiment was highlighted in discussions with experts. Interviewees noted that U.S. forces are seen as important to Korea's security—so much so that the public would be nervous if the United States removed its forces from the Peninsula below the current 28,500 "floor" by relocating any number of them off the Peninsula for other missions (such as a conflict over Taiwan, for example) with no guarantee of when or if those forces would come back. One interviewee stated that this type of redeployment of U.S. forces would cause "huge economic and social impacts on the ROK" that could even "affect political elections" because using these forces for something other than defending South Korea "will have huge political implications."[77]

Public opinion polls infrequently examine how the public would view the deployment of additional U.S. military capabilities to the Peninsula. The one exception to this, which provides insight into how the public may respond to possible future deployments, are polls on the THAAD deployment. A 2022 Asan survey found that 57.7 percent of respondents supported additional THAAD deployment, while 38.9 percent opposed.[78] By contrast, a survey conducted by *JoongAng Ilbo* and the East Asia Institute found just 16.3 percent of respondents supported additional THAAD deployments, whereas the majority of respondents (58.4 percent) supported maintaining the current THAAD battery with no further deployments (a minority of 13.5 percent favored the removal of the battery).[79] This latter figure perhaps supports the notion that there is a strong not-in-my-backyard sentiment in local politics.[80]

Despite the positive views of the United States in South Korean public opinion polls, there are examples where local opposition to U.S. actions or presence has translated into negative outcomes for U.S. military access. Like in other countries, local communities that host large concentrations of U.S. forces have historically placed the most pressure on both the ROK government and USFK to reduce the U.S. military presence. After the ROK's democratization in the late 1980s, the anti-base movement took on a more national profile, beginning with a U.S.

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75 Kim, Kang, and Ham, 2022.

76 Friedhoff and Park, 2021.

77 Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

78 Kim, Kang, and Ham, 2022.

79 Michael Lee, "Koreans Are Growing Much Less Fond of China," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, August 22, 2022.

80 Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

serviceman's rape and murder of Yoon Geumi in 1992, leading to continued protest activities throughout the 1990s. The early anti-basing movement that resulted led to pressure to grant the ROK greater sovereignty over USFK criminal investigations under the SOFA, though without success at that time.[81]

The public opposition that existed continued and even escalated in the early 2000s, largely in response to two major events. First, in February 2000, U.S. military personnel were discovered dumping formaldehyde into the Han River.[82] Second, on May 8, 2000, an American A-10 attack plane dropped its payload early in an emergency procedure, resulting in significant property damage in the village of Maehyangri.[83] Each prompted a larger national backlash against U.S. military presence than previous events. While these incidents did not lead to any calls from South Korean government for the United States to leave or its presence to be reduced, the anti-base campaigns are cited as a major factor in U.S. officials agreeing to amend the SOFA in 2001.[84]

However, beyond changes in the SOFA, local opposition has influenced U.S. access and presence in South Korea. One example is that of the Kooni Firing Range. Anti–U.S. base movements were associated with public efforts to close the Kooni Firing Range because of noise and the danger of strafing practice as early as 1988.[85] Yet, the protest efforts remained local. It was not until the accidental bombing of nearby Maehyangri in 2000 that the issue was raised by the broader community, with protests that occupied the firing range.[86] In light of these protests, the United States made several concessions to the local community, including the prohibition of live ammunition, and ultimately closed the range in 2004.[87]

There have also been examples of local pressure leading directly to changes in U.S. presence, most notably following illegal or dangerous actions by U.S. personnel. The most prominent example is the Yangju highway incident in 2002, in which U.S. servicemen in an armored vehicle struck and killed two 14-year-old Korean girls on Highway 56.[88] This event became a

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[81] Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, pp. 17–18; Andrew Yeo, "Local-National Dynamics and Framing in South Korean Anti-Base Movements," *Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2006, p. 41; Andrew Yeo, "Not in Anyone's Backyard: The Emergence and Identity of a Transnational Anti-Base Network," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 3, September 2009, p. 581. This included the creation of the Pan-National Solution Committee to Return U.S. Bases in 1997.

[82] Yeo, 2006, p. 42.

[83] Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, pp. 17–18.

[84] Youngjin Jung and Jun-Shik Hwang, "Where Does Inequality Come From? An Analysis of the Korea–United States Status of Forces Agreement," *American University International Law Review*, Vol. 18, No. 5, 2003, p. 1117; Yeo, 2006, p. 42; Alexander Cooley, *Base Politics: Democratic Change and the US Military Overseas*, Cornell University Press, 2008, pp. 121–24.

[85] Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, pp. 17–18; Yeo, 2006, p. 41.

[86] Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, pp. 17–18.

[87] Pettyjohn and Kavanagh, 2016, pp. 17–18; Yeo, 2006, p. 41.

[88] Cooley, 2008, p. 125.

key issue in the 2002 South Korea presidential campaign, generating massive rallies in Seoul and leading all major candidates to vow to review the details of the alliance.[89] Subsequently, in 2004 the ROK and the United States established the Land Partnership Plan, which recommended closing 15 of the 41 major bases and consolidating USFK onto the remaining 26 bases.[90]

Local community opposition has also affected the THAAD installation and operation in North Gyeongsang province. In 2017, local citizens who opposed the plan sought to interrupt the deployment of the system by blockading the entrance to the facility.[91] Provincial leadership used its institutional power to block a necessary step for the construction of the THAAD encampment by refusing to provide representatives to a committee for a required environmental impact study.[92] Because of this local resistance, the Moon administration delayed pushing the study forward.[93] In 2022, the Yoon administration formed the required consultative committee, but it still faces resistance from local residents, who have described the group as invalid and urged committee members to quit.[94] As a result, the THAAD facilities remain underdeveloped, with U.S. officials referring to the status of the site as "unacceptable" as recently as 2021.[95] Basic supplies for troops and fuel have, at times, had to be airlifted into the installation, further delaying construction and affecting operations.[96]

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89 Cooley, 2008, p. 126.

90 Chang-hee Nam, "Relocating the U.S. Forces in South Korea: Strained Alliance, Emerging Partnership in the Changing Defense," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 4, July 2006, p. 618; Andrew Yeo, "U.S. Military Base Realignment in South Korea," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*, Vol. 22, 2010b, p. 113.

91 "South Korea Deploys U.S. Anti-Missile Launchers Amid Clashes with Protesters," Reuters, September 6, 2017.

92 Under the Environmental Impact Assessment Act, proposed additions at military facilities must receive approval from a government-civilian consultative body that includes local community members and provincial government representatives following an environmental study. However, the provincial leadership has refused to provide representatives for the committee, delaying its formation (Ministry of the Environment [ROK], Environmental Impact Assessment Act, Act No. 14532, January 17, 2017; Ji Da-gyum, "New S. Korean Government Hits Roadblock with Plans to Normalize THAAD Base," *Korea Herald*, July 5, 2022a). The committee must "consist of representatives from provincial governments, regional environment agency staff, civilian environmental experts, residents and Defense Ministry officials as stipulated by law" (Ji, 2022a). The Yoon government sent two letters requesting appointments, but the local community has not responded.

93 "Gov't Pushes Environmental Study of THAAD Bases," *Chosun Ilbo*, June 17, 2022.

94 Lee Jung-Youn, "Defense Ministry Ensures Active Communication over Normalizing THAAD," *Korea Herald*, August 30, 2022.

95 Protests have continued to block access to the single road to the facility, limiting U.S. ability to operate there and undertake additional construction. In both 2018 and 2021, protestors had to be dispersed to allow heavy construction equipment access (Ser Myo-ja and Kim Jung-seok, "Police Clash with Protesters over Deliveries to THAAD Base," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, April 28, 2021; Lim Min-hyuk, "U.S. Unhappy at Neglect of THAAD Base," *Chosun Ilbo*, March 26, 2021.

96 Lim, 2021.

The effect of local opposition should not be overstated, however. At the local level, the historical evidence suggests that U.S. access to facilities in the ROK can be disrupted and construction of facilities can be delayed, but there is no evidence of the government reversing course or calling for U.S. forces to leave in response to negative public opinion. For example, the expropriation of farmland around Camp Humphreys created major protests, rallies, and other organized resistance, delaying construction.[97] From 2003 to 2006, organized groups such as "No Bases," in concert with local farmers, set fire to fields and seized construction equipment to delay the expansion.[98] In spite of these protests, the government reached an agreement with local residents to move out of the area in 2006–2007.[99] Nevertheless, activities related to U.S. basing or deployment of capabilities that may spark local opposition provide opportunities for public opinion and local opposition to pressure national leadership that may, in turn, disrupt U.S. military activities or posture initiatives. For example, should the United States seek to bring in new capabilities, opposition parties and local governments that oppose the U.S. military presence will publicly question U.S. intentions, making it difficult for the President to accept posture changes.[100]

U.S.-ROK Agreements and Effects on Access

In this section, we examine the current agreements that govern U.S. basing and access in the ROK and discuss the constraints or opportunities that those agreements present. This provides a foundation for the following section, in which we articulate insights on implications for U.S. access notifications regarding specific capabilities in peacetime and crisis, as well as in a conflict that does not involve an attack on the ROK, based on discussions with experts and officials.

U.S. basing and access in the ROK is dictated by two formal legal agreements: a Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) and a SOFA. The key points from these agreements are described below.

Mutual Defense Treaty

The MDT was signed in 1953. Article III dedicates both states to "act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes" in the event of an armed attack "in the Pacific area" on either's territory under their respective administrative control.[101] In fact,

[97] Yeo, 2010b, p. 115.

[98] Yeo, 2009, p. 574; Yeo, 2010b, pp. 116–117.

[99] Yeo, 2010b, pp. 116–117; Yeo, 2006, p. 35.

[100] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 10), December 9, 2022.

[101] Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States, Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, October 1, 1953, Art. III.

the MDT contains four references to "Pacific." That said, Article II requires joint consultation in response to an "external armed attack," as perceived by either state, to either's "political independence or security."[102] The United States is granted military access to ROK lands and facilities under Article IV, as determined by "mutual agreement."[103] Nowhere in the MDT is the DPRK specifically referred to, nor are there any references to the MDT being solely tied to the Korean Peninsula. At the same time, there is no article in the MDT similar to Article VI in the U.S.-Japan security treaty that would provide a basis for the United States to use forces stationed in the ROK to provide for the security of the broader region.[104] In terms of invoking the MDT, the South Korean President has the power to declare war, while the National Assembly maintains the right to consent to such a declaration.[105] U.S. invocation of the MDT would also occur at the presidential level, with notification to Congress required in accordance with the War Powers Resolution.[106] Therefore, invocation of the MDT would be a political process that occurs primarily at the direction of each state's president, with each legislature playing a consenting role.

That said, how the two parties would execute these provisions in a non-DPRK contingency remains somewhat uncertain. For example, the geographic limitation to the "Pacific area" blurs the potential invocation of the MDT. As some analysts have argued, the MDT clearly contemplates the ROK rendering assistance to the United States if its forces come under attack in the region.[107] Therefore, if China attacks U.S. bases in the ROK in response to U.S. participation in a Taiwan contingency, the MDT could obligate the ROK to respond.[108] The same would be true if China attacked a U.S. territory, such as Guam. The inclusion of "Pacific area" in the MDT suggests it can apply to a territory of the United States in the region.

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[102] Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States, 1953, Art. II. The parties also agree to "maintain and develop appropriate means to deter armed attack."

[103] Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States, 1953. The language reads:

> The Republic of Korea grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement.

[104] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[105] Government of the Republic of Korea, Constitution of the Republic of Korea, Korean Law Information Center, 1987, Arts. 60, 73, 76. In limited exigent circumstances, the President may act without the consent of the National Assembly.

[106] U.S. Code, Title 50, War and National Defense; Chapter 33, War Powers Resolution; Sections 1541–1550. The War Powers Resolution requires the President to notify and seek authorization within 60 days of any military operation, pursuant to Congress's power to declare war. Some scholars have argued that the U.S. defensive alliances in Asia serve to avoid congressional requirements and concentrate military power in the executive branch. See, e.g., Matthew C. Waxman, "Presidential Use of Force in East Asia: American Constitutional Law and the U.S.-Japan Alliance," Columbia Public Law Research Paper No. 14-676, 2020.

[107] Jeremy K. Davis, "Bilateral Defense-Related Treaties and the Dilemma Posed by the Law of Neutrality," *Harvard National Security Journal*, 2020, pp. 455, 481.

[108] Mastro and Cho, 2022, p. 116; Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States, 1953, Art. III.

From Seoul's perspective, there is no flexibility to apply the MDT to places in the region outside the Peninsula.[109] Seoul understands an attack by North Korea as the sole trigger of the MDT, nothing else.[110] As experts noted, when the MDT was created, there was no possibility of Guam being attacked; therefore, it was not intended to include situations like this.[111] According to one interviewee, Seoul would view any use of U.S. bases on the Peninsula for a non-Peninsula conflict as a violation of the MDT and would likely strongly insist that U.S. bases cannot be used for such purposes.[112]

Because the dominant view in Seoul does not view the MDT as applying to a non-DPRK scenario, it is interpreted "only as a Peninsula treaty."[113] For this reason, using ROK-based U.S. forces for a non-DPRK conflict under the MDT is problematic, even if it is not explicitly legally prohibited.[114] All our interviewees said that this is the strict interpretation by progressive governments, and it even appears to be a view shared by the current conservative government of President Yoon. In a September 2022 interview, Yoon argued that in a conflict over Taiwan, the alliance's top priority should be responding to any North Korean provocation.[115] However, he refused to specify his expectations regarding Korean-based U.S. forces' role in a Taiwan contingency.[116] Our interviews support this. While acknowledging that there is nothing written specifically in the MDT that ties U.S. forces to the Peninsula, one expert noted that some people in the Korean government interpret the MDT and mission of the USFK as to support the Combined Forces Command, making the main purpose of U.S. forces in Korea to be defending the ROK.[117] Collectively, then, although there is nothing specifically written that ties U.S. forces stationed in the ROK to the Peninsula, it appears that there is an "unwritten" understanding in the ROK that those forces are there solely to defend the country.

This interpretation appears to be different from that of the U.S. military, which often assumes that U.S. forces in the ROK can be used flexibly. Statements by U.S. military officials support the notion that the United States believes it can use U.S. forces stationed in the ROK for operations not involving the DPRK, such as a Taiwan scenario. For example, in September 2022, former USFK commander General Robert Abrams stated that U.S. forces in the ROK could be deployed to Taiwan in the event of a contingency, and the current USFK

[109] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors(Korea Interview 4), December 8, 2022; Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[110] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 3), December 8, 2022.

[111] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[112] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 3), December 8, 2022.

[113] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[114] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 6), December 9, 2022.

[115] Fareed Zakaria, "South Korean President: North Korea Remains an Imminent Threat," *CNN Videos*, September 25, 2022.

[116] Zakaria, 2022.

[117] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

Commander, General Paul LaCamera (at the time of writing), noted that USFK commanders plan for such contingencies.[118] In congressional testimony, LaCamera said that he would "advocate for inclusion of USFK forces and capabilities in USINDOPACOM [U.S. Indo-Pacific Command] contingency and operational plans supporting U.S. interests and objectives in the region."[119] These statements were not met with much enthusiasm in Seoul. One interviewee noted that LaCamera's testimony was purely "hypothetical" and "USFK should focus on defending the ROK."[120] Others believed that U.S. forces operating directly from the ROK for other regional contingencies did not make any operational sense. Should the United States seek to use forces flexibly in a contingency not involving the DPRK, it is likely to cause friction in alliance ties, particularly if a U.S. action off the Peninsula is seen as jeopardizing South Korean security.

Status of Forces Agreement

As noted above, Article IV of the MDT grants access to U.S. forces "by mutual agreement." The 1966 SOFA has formalized procedures for such access. It states that the United States can bring armed forces and civilian personnel into the ROK with notification to the ROK government "at regular intervals," according to future procedural agreements.[121] Article II of the SOFA provides the legal authorization for the United States to base personnel in the ROK. Likewise, the SOFA grants access for U.S. vessels, aircraft, and vehicles including armor to ROK ports and airports and to facilities in use by U.S. forces.[122] The SOFA established a Joint Committee to make decisions by mutual agreement on specific land grants to USFK and returns of existing facilities,[123] and various USFK regulations create operating procedures for areas granted under the SOFA.[124]

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[118] Michael Lee, "Hints Dropped that USFK Might Have to Help Defend Taiwan," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, September 27, 2022.

[119] Paul LaCamera, "Advance Policy Questions for General Paul LaCamera, USA Nominee to Be Commander, United Nations Command, Commander, Republic of Korea–United States Combined Forces Command, and Commander, United States Forces Korea," U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, May 14, 2021, p. 8.

[120] Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 8), December 9, 2022.

[121] Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States, Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Korea: Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea (U.S.-ROK SOFA), July 9, 1966, Art. VII, para. 1.

[122] U.S.-ROK SOFA, 1966, Art. X, paras. 1–3. Notification is required for all vessels and for any personnel or cargo not exempted by the agreement.

[123] U.S.-ROK SOFA, 1966, Art. XXVIII.

[124] U.S. Forces Korea, "SOFA Documents," webpage, undated-b. See USFK Regulation 550-51, *International Agreement*, Headquarters, U.S. Forces Korea, March 1, 2010, authorizing USFK to make agreements with ROK counterparts concerning operational command in the area of responsibility.

While there appears (based on interviews) some specific capabilities deployed to the ROK require that the United States consult with the ROK (e.g., electromagnetic; nuclear weapons) because of local community sensitivities, most capabilities do not legally require prior consultation, and the SOFA does not provide much clarity on this.[125] In fact, the SOFA itself does not demand any reporting requirements; the United States has "very broad authorities to bring troops and materiel on post on the Peninsula and take them off."[126] The one apparent caveat to this is munitions. Because U.S. forces store all its munitions in Korean-controlled ammunition depots, all munitions that are brought onto the Peninsula must be discussed, or at least announced.[127] It was only following the departure of the U.S. Army's 2nd Infantry Division (below) that a more formal host nation notification and consultation process was established.

Despite not having a legal requirement to consult, because of how politicized deploying new U.S. capabilities in the ROK has become, consultations are viewed by Seoul as a *political* requirement.[128] This is especially true for kinetic capabilities. As one interviewee commented,

> Even one battery of HIMARS would need to go through consultations with the ROK. We don't have force agreements like [the U.S. and] Japan. Every capability or new forces brought into the ROK need approval. Anything the United States wants to bring in, even fuel bladders, would require agreement [from Seoul].[129]

This may be a bit of an exaggeration (because not everything requires agreement), but the bottom line is the United States "cares about what the Korea reaction is going to be" for whatever they bring in.[130] For the ROK, it is critical that the United States assure the Korean leadership that U.S. capabilities will contribute to deterring the DPRK threat.[131]

Consultations are also considered a political requirement should the United States seek to move forces *off* the Peninsula for other missions. There is nothing legally requiring the United

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The U.S. Ambassador to the ROK appoints one representative and one deputy to the Joint Committee, and the ROK likewise appoints a representative and deputy; the Deputy Commander of USFK has traditionally served as the chief U.S. representative, while the ROK has appointed its Director General for North American Affairs from the MOFA (USFK Regulation 10-10, *Joint Committee and Subcommittees Under the United States of America–Republic of Korea Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)*, Headquarters, U.S. Forces Korea, December 13, 2017). The revised SOFA calls for the Joint Committee to conduct at least an annual review of all facilities and bases granted under the MDT to determine if the USFK no longer needs the area.

[125] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022; Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

[126] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 6), December 9, 2022.

[127] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

[128] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 3), December 8, 2022.

[129] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

[130] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

[131] Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 8), December 9, 2022.

States to seek permission from the South Korean government if it wanted to move troops off the Peninsula in peacetime.[132] In fact, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy assets are not OPCON to USFK, so they have the flexibility to move when they want to during Armistice.[133] The U.S. 8th Army, on the other hand, is OPCON to USFK, so any movement would require discussions to ensure that "fight tonight" readiness is maintained and the North is deterred.[134]

However, from a *political* perspective, the United States is expected to notify Seoul, particularly given the fear of North Korean actions should the United States reduce its presence and possibly jeopardize its "fight tonight" requirements. At the same time, there is an understanding that as a strong strategic partner, the ROK cannot "flatly refuse U.S. requests" to move its troops off the Peninsula in peacetime, especially because it is America's sovereign right to decide how to use its troops.[135] While movement of small numbers of capabilities off the Peninsula is not likely to present challenges, it becomes difficult politically for the ROK leadership the larger the redeployment, as Seoul must also contend with a nervous public that would view a decrease in U.S. presence as increasing the potential threat from North Korea.[136]

Discussions are expected to be most difficult if the United States wants to talk about *using* these capabilities directly from the Peninsula for a conflict not involving the DPRK.[137] Using forces in a situation such as a Taiwan conflict is challenging because, as discussed above, ROK leaders interpret the MDT as being solely for the defense of South Korea against the DPRK. However, while there is no treaty obligation or other legal requirement to consult, customary international practices require the United States to consult with the ROK because launching any operation from Korean territory would make the ROK a belligerent in the conflict.[138]

Other Considerations: Strategic Flexibility

There is nothing in the MDT or SOFA that legally "tethers" U.S. forces to the Peninsula. Yet, removing them to deploy for a non-Peninsula mission proved challenging when it was attempted two decades ago. The result was an agreement of strategic flexibility that, while ambiguous, enshrines for the United States the opportunity to use its forces in a more flexible manner.

[132] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022; Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 6), December 9, 2022.

[133] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

[134] Eighth Army, "History," webpage, undated.

[135] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

[136] Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 8), December 9, 2022.

[137] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 3), December 8, 2022.

[138] Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 8) December 9, 2022.

In 2004, as part of the Global War on Terror, the United States moved a brigade of roughly 3,700 soldiers from the U.S. Army 2nd Infantry Division from Camp Red Cloud near the demilitarized zone to Iraq to address personnel shortages and a growing insurgency.[139] The removal of these forces created considerable tension in the alliance, causing the ROK government to "do a lot of damage control" with its own people.[140] This was for two major reasons. First, as we have discussed, ROK officials emphasized that USFK's purpose was deterrence of the DPRK and security on the Peninsula, which their removal potentially threatened. Second, both officials and civic groups expressed concerns that allowing U.S. forces to redeploy elsewhere could draw the ROK into a conflict outside the Peninsula, even if those forces did not directly operate from the Peninsula, including a war with China over Taiwan.[141] However, ROK officials also recognized that if USFK forces could not be used for flexible purposes, this may result in a major U.S. drawdown on the Peninsula.[142]

The tension that resulted led both governments to negotiate an understanding in what became termed *strategic flexibility* for U.S. forces in the ROK. In a joint statement, the United States and the ROK both acknowledged the necessity for the United States to employ its forces for non-Peninsular contingencies, while noting that the United States respects Seoul's position that the ROK will not be involved in a regional conflict against the will of its people.[143] The agreement, therefore, was meant to provide the United States flexibility to move troops out of the ROK, if needed, for other purposes.[144] The agreement, however, is ambiguous. One interviewee argued that, when it was made, both sides made it vague to allow their leaders to shape it to the political environment.[145] Another expert said that the circumstances of the time will shape the reality of what the agreement means.[146] This situation, however, which has been described as "still ambiguous," has led some to argue for the need of further negotiation and clarity of the agreement.[147]

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[139] "Some U.S. Troops in S. Korea to Go to Iraq," Associated Press, May 17, 2004. The ROK also sent nearly 4,000 troops to Iraq in 2004 at the request of the U.S., and the last of those forces returned home in 2008 (Jon Herskovitz and Kim Junghyun, "Last South Korean Troops Sent to Iraq to Return Home," Reuters, December 18, 2008).

[140] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

[141] Dong Shin Kim, "Meeting Challenges in Transforming the Alliance Prudently," Seoul-Washington Forum, Panel 3, May 1–2, 2006, p. 6.

[142] Hyon Joo Yoo, The Korea-US Alliance as a Source of Creeping Tension: A Korean Perspective," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2012, pp. 338–339; U.S. Department of State, "United States and the Republic of Korea Launch Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership," January 19, 2006.

[143] U.S. Department of State, 2006.

[144] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[145] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

[146] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[147] Smith, 2022.

Allowing both sides to interpret the agreement in ways that make it palatable in their countries may help with political expediency, but it leaves an open question of in which situations Seoul would permit U.S. forces to redeploy from the ROK to a conflict outside the Peninsula.[148] There is widespread consensus in South Korea that, in peacetime, the United States has to consult with Seoul on removing currently deployed troops, given that such force posture changes could affect ROK security. In a crisis, if the United States tries to use strategic flexibility to redeploy its troops for a separate regional conflict not involving the DPRK, the United States faces no explicit legal restrictions on moving any of its capabilities. That said, the United States cannot operate directly from South Korea in such a situation.[149] As with the SOFA, established international practices require the United States to consult with the ROK before commencing any operations directly from Korean territory.[150] Interviewees noted that in such a situation, regardless of strategic flexibility, U.S. access will not be easy and a U.S. request for access is likely "to hit a wall because leadership is not on board with this."[151]

These agreements highlight that the United States does not appear to be legally constrained in what forces and capabilities it can bring into the ROK. Nor is there any legal restriction on what the U.S. military can do with its forces on the Peninsula. However, the United States is not completely free to act as it sees fit due to political considerations. And there is strong hesitancy in Seoul to allow the United States to operate directly from its bases on the Peninsula for non-DPRK operations, thereby necessitating U.S. coordination of any basing and access notification well in advance with ROK counterparts.

Table 3.1 summarizes the agreements between the United States and the ROK and their effects on U.S. military access to the ROK.

Implications for U.S. Access in the ROK

Considering the above, we can draw several implications for U.S. access in both a peacetime and a contingency context.

In peacetime, the United States has access to its bases and faces few constraints on what capabilities and equipment it can deploy to the ROK

Legally, the United States can bring in any capability it wants to South Korea, with few exceptions. However, the challenge is local leadership opposing U.S. military presence, creating political costs for Seoul if U.S. capabilities are strongly opposed by the local communities

[148] Hyon, 2012, pp. 339–340.

[149] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 6), December 9, 2022.

[150] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 6), December 9, 2022.

[151] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022.

TABLE 3.1
U.S.-ROK Agreements and Effects on U.S. Military Access

Agreement	Key Features	Effects on Access
Mutual Defense Treaty	• Enables the United States to use forces to defend South Korea in the event of an armed attack	• Allows United States to use its forces and capabilities in a DPRK contingency; is legally ambiguous as to use of forces for a non-DPRK contingency • DPRK contingency not specified, but ROK leadership interprets the MDT to be tied specifically to defense of South Korea against the DPRK • United States has a different interpretation of the treaty, assuming that forces in the ROK could be deployed elsewhere in a regional conflict
Status of Forces Agreement	• Article IV grants access to U.S. forces • Requirement to consult with ROK only for deployment of certain capabilities • Otherwise, no legal requirement for prior consultations, but political expectation by Seoul	• Provides legal rationale for U.S. to base personnel in the ROK and grants access for U.S. vessels, aircraft, and vehicles, including armor, to ROK ports and airports and to facilities in use by U.S. forces
Strategic Flexibility	• Joint statement allowing United States to flexibly employ its forces off the Korean Peninsula while respecting South Korea's position on avoiding conflicts	• Intentionally ambiguous to allow the United States to use as needed; leaves an open question of whether Seoul would agree to U.S. forces being moved off the Peninsula for a Taiwan conflict

that host them. Any U.S. military notification for access that could be interpreted by China as being threatening, and thus elicit a strong Chinese response, would therefore be challenging for Seoul to accept. Because of this, the ROK's response to U.S. access notifications will likely differ based on the capability the United States is interested in bringing into the country. However, in keeping with the history of the United States bringing in a wide spectrum of capabilities meant for deterring North Korea, there is little concern that the ROK government will oppose U.S. access notifications in peacetime.

Prepositioning additional nonkinetic capabilities in peacetime should prove unproblematic, as long as the capabilities are tied to deterrence against the DPRK

For prepositioning nonkinetic capabilities, interviewees were generally positive that Seoul would accept U.S. notifications, assuming that the capabilities augment South Korea's defense

against the DPRK.[152] This includes prepositioning such items as fuel, fuel bladders, and spare parts. While these are expected to be largely unproblematic to South Korean leadership, some experts suggested U.S. efforts to increase prepositioned nonkinetic supplies would be even easier (if there was a challenge) during a time of increased tensions on the Korean Peninsula.[153] It also helps that much prepositioning of materiel is less visible to the public and can be done "without mentioning" them publicly, thereby avoiding any local opposition that these efforts might otherwise elicit.[154] Similarly, interviewees said that stationing nonkinetic units responsible for cyber-, space-, and ground-based ISR would be acceptable to Seoul as well, assuming that the capabilities are meant for deterring North Korea. These insights are supported by historical evidence of the United States moving in nonkinetic units.[155]

Aerial ISR assets elicited mixed reactions from interviewees, but largely because of how interviewees thought the assets would be used, not because of their deployment to South Korea. Interviewees who thought that more U.S. ISR capabilities would help enhance the allies' defense against North Korea welcomed more U.S. ISR capabilities. Interviewees who were wary that the United States was possibly basing these capabilities in the ROK to use against China, especially ISR assets with long ranges, viewed U.S. access interests with more caution, as they were concerned about China's reaction if the PRC viewed the enhanced ISR as threatening. Given the history of the United States bringing in such capabilities—including long-range platforms—such as the U-2, P-8A, and unmanned MQ-1C Gray Eagle, we believe that South Korean leadership will consent to U.S. interest to base and use aerial ISR platforms in peacetime.[156] Where issues arise is how they are used: "There could be political pushback if they don't fly north."[157]

[152] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 2), December 8, 2022

[153] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 3), December 8, 2022.

[154] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[155] Upgraded and replacement parts for THAAD Systems: David Choi, "US Military Delivers Upgrades for THAAD Missile-Defense System in South Korea," *Stars and Stripes*, October 7, 2022b; Hyonhee Shin, "U.S. Forces Launch Space Unit in South Korea Amid North's Growing Threats," Reuters, December 14, 2022b.

[156] "USFK Declines to Comment on Reported Deployment of MQ-9 Drones," Yonhap News Agency, January 6, 2020; Kang Seung-woo, "USFK Deploys Advanced Gray Eagle Drones," Korea Times, August 31, 2022b; Kim Gamel and Marcus Fichtl, "U-2s, Other Aircraft Redeploy While Osan's Korean War–Era Runway is Rebuilt," *Stars and Stripes*, June 7, 2017; Joshua Bryce Bruns, "P-8 Poseidon Performs First Mission in Korea," USFK, March 31, 2014.

[157] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

Prepositioning additional kinetic capabilities in peacetime should prove relatively easy, assuming that U.S. notifications are tied to deterring North Korea

The ability to preposition kinetic capabilities will depend on how the United States presents the access consultation. Interviewees stated that, as with the nonkinetic capability consultations, Seoul is more likely to approve U.S. notifications if they tie the capabilities to deterring the North Korean threat. Toward that end, Seoul would likely take no issue with U.S. units coming to the ROK that would add additional capability to what is that is already in-country or that are an upgrade to an existing capability.[158] For example, storing munitions that both U.S. and ROK forces can draw from would demonstrate to Korean leadership that the capability is dual-use and thus for South Korea's security.[159] Similarly, shorter-range capabilities, such as small arms (e.g., grenades, artillery shells) and rockets with shorter ranges, did not elicit any negative response from interviewees, because these can be used to enhance South Korea's security. Because all U.S. munitions are stored at Korean-controlled depots, however, there is always the possibility that ROK leadership could tell the United States there is no space should they oppose it.[160]

The question of prepositioning larger kinetic capabilities emerged as an area of disagreement among the interviewees. Some interviewees offered examples of particular capabilities they thought would be met with a hard "no" by Korean leadership, such as long-range ground-based fire units, aircraft carriers, or fifth-generation fighters. PrSMs were also explicitly mentioned as a capability that Seoul would oppose, given their long-range nature.[161] One interviewee said that if a U.S. capability appears specific to a maritime and aerial conflict over Taiwan, "it would be a lot harder politically" for the ROK to agree to, compared with capabilities tailored to a land war on the Peninsula.[162] While not discounting these opinions, there is considerable historical record to draw on that shows that such notifications have, in fact, been largely unproblematic for Seoul given the routine use of such capabilities on the Peninsula by U.S. forces. For example, the United States has routinely brought carrier strike groups and fifth-generation fighter aircraft (e.g., F-22s, F-35s) to the ROK.[163] The United States has also routinely brought ground-based fires, such as the Patriot missile system, the Multiple Launch

[158] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

[159] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[160] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

[161] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022; Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 10), December 9, 2022.

[162] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[163] Sam LaGrone, "Carrier USS Ronald Reagan Headed Back to Korean Peninsula After North Korean Missile Launch," *USNI News*, October 5, 2022; "U.S. Aircraft Carrier Ronald Reagan Joins Jeju Fleet Review," Yonhap News Agency, October 11, 2018; Franz-Stefan Gady, "US Deploys F-22 Stealth Fighters to South Korea to Deter Pyongyang," *The Diplomat*, February 17, 2016; Franz-Stefan Gady, "F-22 and F-35 Stealth Fighters Kick Off Massive US-ROK War Games," *The Diplomat*, December 4, 2017; Brad Lendon and

Rocket System (MLRS), and HIMARS.[164] History is replete with examples of these capabilities, and more, being routinely brought onto the Peninsula.

This discrepancy, therefore, leads us to the conclusion that perhaps interviewees were confusing *basing* them on the Peninsula or using them on the Peninsula in *peacetime* (which has to date been acceptable to Seoul) with *use* of such capabilities against China at any time (discussed below). Viewing their answers as such makes more sense given that Seoul views prepositioning for an operation not directly tied to deterring North Korea as challenging to agree to, particularly because of ongoing concerns that China may retaliate, as it did after the THAAD deployment.[165]

U.S. access to the ROK in a Taiwan contingency is unlikely

As discussed throughout this chapter, Seoul is primarily concerned about the DPRK and the possibility that a regional contingency will give Pyongyang an opportunity to launch an attack on the ROK. At the same time, given concerns about possible Chinese coercion directed at the ROK, the political leadership's primary concern in a Taiwan conflict will be not giving the impression that it supports a side.[166] This suggests that, if a conflict erupts, there is no guarantee that the United States can use any capability it currently has based in South Korea to directly employ from the ROK for that Taiwan conflict. As one interviewee described, while the United States can preposition materiel and deploy forces on the Peninsula, "once something happens, using them is different."[167]

There was consensus among interviewees that, short of an attack on the ROK, Seoul would not allow any direct U.S. combat from the Peninsula, even though there was recognition that such a decision would likely cause friction in the alliance. One analyst described the situation of being entrapped into choosing sides in a conflict between Beijing and Washington as "Seoul's worst nightmare."[168] Apart from using kinetic capabilities directly from the ROK, there was less agreement. Many interviewees argued that fears of Chinese retaliation and a North Korean surprise attack will lead Seoul to oppose even the general use of nonkinetic capabilities directly from the Peninsula during a Taiwan conflict, but there were notable

Gawon Bae, "US and South Korean F-35 Stealth Fighter Jets Team Up for First Time in Message to North Korea," *CNN*, July 6, 2022.

[164] "US Deploys More Patriot Missiles in South Korea Following North's Nuclear Test," *The Guardian*, February 13, 2016; Michelle Tan, "DoD: MLRS Battalion Deploying to Korea," *Army Times*, March 20, 2015; Jessica Tait, "Pacific Joint Partners Team Up to Provide Precision Firepower," 353rd Special Operations Wing, July 24, 2017.

[165] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 4), December 8, 2022.

[166] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 5), December 9, 2022.

[167] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 1), December 8, 2022.

[168] Ellen Kim and Victor Cha, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: South Korea's Strategic Dilemmas with China and the United States," *Asia Policy*, Vol. 21, January 2016, p. 112.

opinions to the contrary. One individual hinted that strictly nonkinetic (e.g., fuel, parts) or even ISR around the Peninsula would "likely be OK."[169] Another suggested that the ROK may be able to replenish nonkinetic U.S. stocks in Japan but not provide these directly to the United States on the Peninsula.[170] And a third argued that, in addition to ISR operations to get situational awareness of the region, "we could probably use Korea as a logistics base," making sustainment and maintenance operations likely.[171] Collectively, the lack of consensus on the issue suggests that a decision to allow the United States to engage in kinetic activity directly off the Peninsula during a contingency is highly unlikely, while nonkinetic activity is uncertain.

Moving capabilities off the ROK for use elsewhere is likely to elicit strong resistance from Seoul, particularly in a conflict

Even if the United States were to avoid fighting directly from the ROK, moving U.S. forces out of South Korea under the mantel of strategic flexibility to position them elsewhere in the region is an option, but one that likely will be strongly opposed by Seoul, particularly if a crisis has erupted. The concern in this scenario would be over the ability to maintain deterrence on the Peninsula if the U.S. drew down its forces to devote to other missions. South Korean leaders might be more willing to work with the United States on removing some forces from the Peninsula if the United States presented a plan of how it would replace any "lost" capabilities to guarantee that the force level does not drop below 28,500.[172] This does not guarantee that Seoul would easily acquiesce, and most interviewees expected that the ROK would still strongly resist, but a U.S. plan to replace capabilities would help assure the ROK leadership (assuming that the United States could, in fact, backfill these forces).

Summary

Our analysis suggests that while the alliance between the United States and South Korea remains strong, certain issues pertaining to access and a non-DPRK adversary remain particularly contentious. Fear of Chinese retaliation and opposing public opinion remain potential challenges to the capabilities that can be introduced into South Korea during peacetime. However, these challenges can, and have been, overcome, as the case of THAAD demonstrates. In that instance, although China placed significant pressure on South Korea that resulted in diplomatic concessions and public protests that delayed progress, the THAAD battery was nevertheless installed.

[169] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 7), December 9, 2022.

[170] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 10), December 9, 2022.

[171] Korea expert, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 12), February 22, 2023.

[172] Retired Korean official, interview with the authors (Korea Interview 3), December 8, 2022.

More challenging is a strong belief in South Korea that U.S. forces and their capabilities are "tethered" to the Peninsula and there solely to defend against the threat posed by North Korea. The ROK is specifically concerned about the possibility that U.S. forces in Korea could be moved or used for a contingency outside the Peninsula, which would be seen as negatively affecting South Korean security. Requests for basing and access for such a contingency may therefore be fraught, suggesting the need for greater policy alignment between the United States and South Korea when it comes to these discussions.

The ROK is extremely sensitive to the possibility of taking an action that could result in a deterioration of its security. Supporting the United States in a conflict related to China touches on two primary concerns. First, because the ROK fears that China would either attack it or coerce it through economic measures, Seoul does not want to choose sides between the United States and China. Second, because of the threat posed by the DPRK, Seoul is heavily reliant on U.S. forces in Korea. If the United States chose to move any of its forces off the Peninsula for a conflict over Taiwan, there is a fear that the U.S. deterrent capabilities would be weakened, thereby inviting the DPRK to attack the ROK. This double fear paralyzes the ROK, preventing any realistic type of support U.S. forces could expect both before and during a crisis in Taiwan. Beyond this, there are three main points to consider.

First, the United States benefits from being able to permanently deploy forces to the ROK. Although there are no legal requirements on what the United States can bring in or out of the country, consultations with leadership in the ROK are needed for political reasons. This, in turn, makes approval for any U.S. requests largely a political one. This also means that the calculations of the sitting ROK president are critical. While this is not an issue in peacetime, in a crisis or contingency off the Peninsula, it has the potential to cause significant friction in the alliance due to a strong desire to avoid a conflict involving China while also wanting to retain alliance ties. Because of this, it is unclear both how Seoul will respond to U.S. access notifications in a conflict and how quickly those responses will come. In the very least, in peacetime, the most the United States can assume is an ability to preposition nonkinetic rear-area support capabilities, assuming they can be tied to operations on the Peninsula.

Second, there is a strong constraining factor that may limit what the U.S. military can preposition. Because of the fear of getting involved in a conflict with China, local communities and opposition parties will pressure a sitting ROK president to ensure that any U.S. capability on the Peninsula is meant solely for the defense of South Korea from the North. As long as this is the case, U.S. forces can safely assume that Seoul will agree to the prepositioning of equipment and supplies on U.S. bases, assuming they abide by the notification and consultation process. While interviewees viewed nonkinetic capabilities as relatively uncontroversial, capabilities that were either of significantly long-ranges or deemed better suited for a maritime or aerial conflict far from the Peninsula could be difficult for Seoul to accept, depending on the political environment (although, historically, this has not been the case).

Finally, the United States' ability to not just access its bases, but operate from the ROK in a contingency not involving the DPRK, appears to be very limited. Because of the ROK's desire to avoid possible Chinese retaliation, if a conflict breaks out in which the ROK is not

attacked, there would be strong opposition to allowing the United States to access any of its forces on the Peninsula and operate them directly from the ROK. There is even hesitation to agree to the United States moving some of its capabilities off the Peninsula to a third country where they can stage and move onward to combat from there.

CHAPTER 4

The Philippines

The Philippines and the United States have maintained their alliance since 1951, and in that time their relationship has experienced several peaks and troughs. In the past decade alone, it has swung from a high under President Benigno Aquino III to one of difficulty under President Rodrigo Duterte. Today, under President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Romualdez Marcos Jr., relations appear to be swinging back to one that is more amicable.

This chapter examines opportunities and challenges associated with U.S. access in the Philippines. We begin by looking at the Philippines' perception of China and views toward relations with China given the security alliance with the United States. Next, we describe the Philippines' perceptions of the United States. Taken together, this discussion of Philippine perceptions of China and the United States provides context for Philippine leaders' willingness to grant or deny U.S. forces access to facilities in the country. We then examine Philippine public opinion concerning the U.S.-Philippines alliance and the role of public opinion in shaping Manila's decisions related to U.S. access and basing. Finally, we explore the legal agreements and interpretations of the agreements between the two countries that dictate access and articulate possible obstacles and opportunities for access for U.S. forces both in peacetime and in contingencies that do not involve an attack on the Philippines.

The Philippines' Perceptions of China

The Philippines has historically shown a strategic preference for balancing between the United States and its obligations to the alliance, and China, with which it has substantial economic and political ties. Previous Philippine administrations' approach to China can be viewed as building relations in an attempt to protect Philippine interests while not choosing sides—a position that has been harder to support given increased U.S.-China competition in the region.[1] The rise in U.S.-China tensions and in Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea territorial disputes has also made it more challenging for the Philippine leadership to

[1] U.S. State Department official, discussion with authors, February 15, 2023; International Crisis Group, "The Philippines' Dilemma: How to Manage Tensions in the South China Sea," *Asia Report*, No. 316, 2021, p. 1.

draw closer to China, and has instead led to a turn toward the United States (as examined below).[2]

Current Philippine leadership appears to have two major concerns about China and the potential for Chinese retaliation if it should grant the U.S. military access. The first concern is the military threat posed by China, particularly given ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea.[3] The second concern is the potential for the PRC to use economic coercion against the Philippines.

Threat Against Philippine Interests in the South China Sea

The first concern revolves around the territorial disputes between the two nations in the South China Sea, including the Spratly Islands and Scarborough Shoal. The two countries have a long history of disagreement over their maritime borders and sovereign control of islands, and tensions have increased considerably since the early 2010s.[4] Early in the tenure of President Benigno Aquino III, strategic documents focused minimally on China, noting only that China now had a more active presence in the West Philippine Sea.[5] The Scarborough Shoal standoff in April 2012, in which a Philippine naval patrol vessel confronted Chinese fishing vessels anchored in the vicinity of Scarborough Shoal, changed the Philippines' threat perception of China significantly.[6]

Following this incident, in 2013, Aquino instituted arbitral proceedings against China under the dispute settlement provisions of the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).[7] The arbitration decision was made in 2016 and stated that China's historical claim to the area and its resources was not consonant with UNCLOS and was thus legally

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[2] Julius Cesar Trajano, "US-Philippines: Resetting the Security Alliance?" RSIS Commentary, No. 035, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyand Technological University, Singapore, 2021, p. 3.

[3] Manila and Beijing are at odds over various territories and features in the South China Sea, such as Reed Bank, Mischief Reef, and Second Thomas Shoal. Sovereign control of these locations and features, in turn, dictates control over petroleum, fishing rights, and natural resources.

[4] Michael J. Green, John Schaus, Jake Douglas, Zack Cooper, and Kathleen H. Hicks, *Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia: The Theory and Practice of Gray Zone Deterrence*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 9, 2017, p. 97.

[5] Rodrigo Roa Duterte, *National Security Policy for Change and Well-Being of the Filipino People*, April 2017, p. 13.

[6] This change in threat perception can be seen in Aquino's Administrative Order No. 29, which named the waters off the Philippines' west coast as the West Philippine Sea. See President of the Philippines, Administrative Order No. 29, s. 2012: Naming the West Philippine Sea of the Republic of the Philippines, and for Other Purposes, September 5, 2012; Green et al., 2017, p. 100; "Chinese Fishermen Recall Clash with Philippine Navy," *China Daily*, April 18, 2012.

[7] The arbitration concerned the role of historical rights and the source of entitlements in the South China Sea, the status of certain maritime features there, and the lawfulness of certain related actions by China that the Philippines alleged to be in violation of UNCLOS (Mark Valencia, "Trying to Solve the Philippines' South China Sea Conundrum," *The Diplomat*, June 5, 2018).

invalid, meaning that the resources within some of the Philippines' claimed zones, such as the fisheries outside the territorial sea around Scarborough Shoal and oil or gas reserves under the Reed Bank, belonged to the Philippines.[8] However, the ruling provided no formal enforcement mechanism, leaving the Philippines to manage continued threats posed by China.[9] The change in Philippine administration from Aquino to Rodrigo Duterte saw a swing back toward China. Duterte at first chose to treat China as a reliable partner with which the Philippines could work. During a visit to Beijing in late 2016, he announced a separation from the United States, claiming he would be "dependent" on China and aligned with its "ideological flow."[10]

Despite this lean toward China, much of the goodwill China had cultivated in Duterte's early years dissipated as Beijing became increasingly assertive in the South China Sea. Chinese aggression continued in the Scarborough Shoal,[11] in nearby Whitsun Reef,[12] and around Thitu Island,[13] all located in the Spratly Islands. This activity eventually forced Duterte to reconsider the Philippines' relations with China and the South China Sea security threat.[14] Strategic documents released during the Duterte administration highlight this concern: The 2017 National Security Policy, for example, describes the territorial disputes as the "foremost security challenge to Philippines' sovereignty and territorial integrity."[15] Similarly, the 2018 National Defense Strategy notes the occupation of key features in the South China Sea "as a grave threat to [the Philippines'] national security" and even specifically pointed to China's construction of artificial islands.[16]

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8 Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2018*, U.S. Department of Defense, May 16, 2018, p. 13. See also "South China Sea Arbitration Case," *Global Times*, March 31, 2018.

9 Maritime Awareness Project, "Incident Timeline: South and East China Seas," Scarborough Shoal Standoff, National Bureau of Asian Research, webpage, undated.

10 Barbara Demick and Tracy Wilkinson, "Philippine President Duterte: 'I Announce My Separation from the United States,'" *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 2016.

11 Jason Gutierrez, "Overwhelmed by Chinese Fleets, Filipino Fishermen 'Protest and Adapt,'" *New York Times*, July 11, 2021.

12 Samir Puri and Greg Austin, "What the Whitsun Reef Incident Tells Us About China's Future Operations at Sea," International Institute for Strategic Studies, April 9, 2021.

13 Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "The Long Patrol: Staredown at Thitu Island Enters its Sixteenth Month," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 5, 2020.

14 Other factors also contributed to this decision, including the PRC's failure to deliver on many large-scale infrastructure projects pledged to the Philippines. See Andreo Calonzo, "China Yet to Deliver Promised Billions Despite Duterte's Pivot," Bloomberg, July 4, 2021; Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, "Three Rounds of Coercion in Philippine Waters," Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 26, 2022; Derek Grossman, "Duterte's Dalliance with China Is Over," *RAND Blog*, RAND Corporation, November 2, 2021.

15 Duterte, 2017, p. 13.

16 Government of the Philippines, National Defense Strategy 2018–2022, November 2018, p. 11.

Current Philippine President Marcos initially made statements in favor of reducing areas of tension with China. During his campaign, Marcos suggested that territorial disputes could be solved by bilateral agreement.[17] He even stated his willingness to engage with Beijing on exchanges—diplomatic, cultural, or military—that might expand ties between the two nations and resolve ongoing conflicts.[18] Like Duterte before him, however, ongoing Chinese provocations have led Marcos to take a more realistic approach to China and acknowledge the security challenges it poses. For example, Marcos suggested that there is no territorial conflict with China; rather China is "claiming territory that belongs to the Philippines."[19] Unlike his predecessor, Marcos also pledged to uphold the 2016 Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling in favor of the Philippines in the South China Sea dispute.[20] More generally, Marcos has noted the security challenge posed by China's military power, stating that there is no comparison between China and the Philippines when it comes to military capabilities.[21] This discrepancy has likely led Marcos to seek closer ties not just with the United States, but also other regional states.[22] Importantly, despite this view of China, a conflict over Taiwan does not appear to be a significant security consideration for Philippine officials.[23] Instead, Manila primarily focuses on the direct challenge China poses to the Philippines in the South China Sea.[24]

The threat posed by China is also a salient issue for the public. Polling by the ISEAS-Yusok Ishak Institute in 2021 concluded that 87 percent of Philippine citizens considered Chinese encroachments in the Philippines' EEZ in the South China Sea to be their top security concern.[25] A 2019 poll by the Social Weather Stations found that 93 percent of Philippines adults believe "it is important that the Philippines regain control of the islands occupied by China in the West Philippine Sea," a number which increased from 87 percent and 89 percent in polls

[17] Tom Allard, "Analysis: Marcos as Philippine President a Boon for China, Awkward for U.S.," Reuters, May 11, 2022.

[18] Andreo Calonzo, "Philippines' Marcos Open to Military Exchanges with China," Bloomberg, July 5, 2022.

[19] Office of the President (Philippines), "Speech by President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. at the Meeting with Asia Society (with Q&A)," September 24, 2022.

[20] Nester Corrales and Tina G. Santos, "Marcos to Assert Hague Ruling," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, May 27, 2022; Permanent Court of Arbitration, *In the Matter of the South China Sea Arbitration Before an Arbitral Tribunal Constituted Under Annex VII to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea Between the Republic of the Philippines and the People's Republic of China (Award)*, Case No. 2013-19, July 12, 2016a; Permanent Court of Arbitration, "The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of The Philippines V. The People's Republic of China)," press release, July 12, 2016b.

[21] Office of the President (Philippines), 2022.

[22] Office of the President (Philippines), 2022.

[23] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022.

[24] U.S. Department of Defense, "Fact Sheet: U.S. Philippines 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue," April 11, 2023b.

[25] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022.

taken the previous years.[26] More generally, the Pew Research center found that 62 percent of Philippine citizens view China as the greatest threat to their country in the future.[27] Recent RAND studies have also found that the Philippine public has historically harbored negative views of China and the Chinese Communist Party.[28]

This suggests that most Philippines citizens view Chinese aggression in the South China Sea as a direct security threat.[29] Interviewees with whom we spoke with agreed: One noted that the Philippine public are generally believed to be anti-China.[30] Another suggested that Duterte eventually hardened his approach to China because China became highly unpopular with the Philippine public, and he valued public opinion more than the country's relations with China.[31] While public opinion is only one factor that drives Philippine decisions on access, the fact that the public has a more negative view of China and the threat that the PRC poses to Philippine interests in the South China Sea makes it easier for Manila to agree to closer relations with the United States, which could potentially lead to more military access.

Economic Coercion

While the Philippines has sought to push back on Chinese activities in the South China Sea, it finds more difficulty taking a similar position in the economic domain, because of the Philippines' dependency on the Chinese economy. China is by far the Philippines' top bilateral trading partner, totaling $98.8 billion in 2021. By comparison, bilateral trade with the United States, the Philippines' next largest trading partner, was $23.3 billion, and bilateral trade with Japan totaled $22 billion.[32] In 2020, China was the Philippines' top export partner, with 16.2 percent of all Philippine exports going to China.[33] This includes major exports of

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[26] Paterno R. Esmaquel, "93% Of Filipinos Want PH to Regain China-Occupied Islands," *Rappler*, July 11, 2019.

[27] Laura Silver, "U.S. Is Seen as a Top Ally in Many Countries—but Others View It as a Threat," Pew Research Center, December 5, 2019.

[28] See, for example, Bonny Lin, Michael S. Chase, Jonah Blank, Cortez A. Cooper III, Derek Grossman, Scott W. Harold, Jennifer D. P. Moroney, Lyle J. Morris, Logan Ma, Paul Orner, Alice Shih, and Soo Kim *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: Study Overview and Conclusions*, RAND Corporation, RR-4412-AF, 2020; Scott W. Harold, Derek Grossman, Brian Harding, Jeffrey W. Hornung, Gregory Poling, Jeffrey Smith, and Meagan L. Smith, *The Thickening Web of Asian Security Cooperation: Deepening Defense Ties Among U.S. Allies and Partners in the Indo-Pacific*, RAND Corporation, RR-3125-MCF, 2021, pp. 298–299.

[29] Harold et al., 2021, p. 301.

[30] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

[31] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[32] Observatory of Economic Complexity, "China/Philippines", webpage, undated-a; Japan External Trade Organization "Japan's International Trade in Goods (Yearly)," Japanese Trade and Investment Statistics, webpage, undated.

[33] Observatory of Economic Complexity, "Philippines," webpage, undated-b.

integrated circuits, which totaled $4.33 billion in 2020 (33.6 percent of all exports from the Philippines to China), and nickel ore, which totaled $1.3 billion (10.1 percent of all exports to China). The Philippine economy is also heavily dependent on Chinese imports. In 2020, 31.9 percent of imports to the Philippines came from mainland China, with major imports including refined petroleum products and rare earth elements.[34] Finally, China is the Philippines' largest foreign investor, with $1.45 billion flowing into the Philippines in 2020.[35] Beijing has also provided, or pledged to provide, substantial funding for infrastructure projects under China's Belt and Road Initiative.[36] The country's economic dependency on Chinese trade and investment has enhanced the fear of economic retaliation, which would also likely play a role in the Philippines leadership's decisions related to U.S. military access.

While not as severe as the actions China took against the ROK in response to the THAAD deployment (Chapter 3), Chinese economic coercion during the 2012 Scarborough Shoal incident encapsulates the fear of Chinese economic retaliation.[37] During the crisis, China enacted several economic measures directed toward Manila that functioned as unofficial sanctions. At the time, China was the third-largest export destination for Philippine goods.[38] China enacted strict quarantine procedures on fruit coming from the Philippines, particularly bananas, which at the time accounted for 30 percent of total Philippines banana exports.[39] The result was significant economic hardship for the Philippine workers in that sector.[40] China also curtailed tourists from visiting the Philippines.[41] China lifted the restrictions after the Scarborough Shoal crisis had ended, but the incident left a lasting memory among Philippine citizens and leaders of China's ability to economically retaliate. These concerns over economic impacts link to a possible Taiwan conflict because of the existence of close to 150,000 *Overseas Filipino Workers* (referred to as OFWs in Manila) who work in Taiwan and send remittances back to the Philippines. There is a concern in Manila that, should a conflict break out, the OFWs would be adversely affected.[42] In addition to the loss of the remittances the OFWs send, Manila would be forced to find a way to evacuate these individuals and bring them back to the Philippines safely, something the Philippine leadership recognizes would be difficult in a conflict.

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[34] Observatory of Economic Complexity, undated-b.

[35] Observatory of Economic Complexity, undated-a; American Enterprise Institute and Heritage Foundation, "China Global Investment Tracker," webpage, undated.

[36] Department of Trade and Industry (Philippines), "Trade and Investment QuickStats," webpage, 2021.

[37] Mazarr et al., 2021, pp. 101–102.

[38] "The China-Philippine Banana War," *Asia Sentinel*, June 6, 2012.

[39] "Philippines Seeks New Markets Amid Sea Dispute with China," Reuters, May 17, 2012.

[40] "The China-Philippine Banana War," 2012.

[41] "Philippines Seeks New Markets Amid Sea Dispute with China," 2012.

[42] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

In summary, the Philippines views China with caution. In addition to being a substantial economic partner with influence over the Philippine economy, China is viewed by the Philippine public and the leadership as a threat to the country's security in the South China Sea. As we will discuss in the next section, this perception of China has played a role in Manila's current interest in maintaining a robust U.S.-Philippine alliance, which has implications for U.S. military access.

The Philippines' View of the United States

Manila's view of its security alliance with the United States has varied depending on the administration in power. President Aquino oversaw a revitalization of bilateral security relations after the relationship hit a rough spot in the 1990s and largely stagnated thereafter. Aquino's initiatives included welcoming U.S. military assistance, strengthening ministerial meetings, and implementing more leader-level engagements.[43] Aquino also oversaw the negotiation and signing of the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) between the allies, marking the most significant increase in U.S. access in the Philippines since the end of the permanent U.S. basing in the 1990s.[44]

These positive developments were partially negated under President Duterte, who initiated a period of strain in the alliance. In September 2016, Duterte declared his military and economic "separation" from the United States.[45] This was consistent with his desire to "maintain an independent foreign policy."[46] This cooling of relations with the United States can be attributed to the Philippine economic dependence on the PRC. In addition, Duterte faced criticism from the U.S. Department of State for his human rights record, particularly with his connections to extra-judicial killings.[47] While in office, Duterte's war on drugs was reportedly responsible for more than 12,000 deaths, 2,555 of which are attributed to the Philippine National Police.[48] Regardless of cause, Duterte's pivot away from the United States was public and visible.

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[43] Prashanth Parameswaran and Ernest Z. Bower, "President Aquino's U.S. Visit Will Cap Revitalization of Alliance," Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 4, 2012.

[44] Kristine Angeli Sabillo, "Aquino: EDCA has Practical Purpose of Boosting PH's Armed Force," *The Inquirer*, January 15, 2016.

[45] Rodrigo Roa Duterte, "Speech During the Philippines-China Trade and Investment Forum," speech delivered at the Great Hall of the People, Beijing, China, October 20, 2016.

[46] Duterte, 2017, p. 25; Rodrigo Roa Duterte, "5th State of the Nation Address," Session Hall of the House of Representatives, Quezon City, Philippines, July 27, 2020.

[47] Mazaar et al., 2021, p. 102; U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, *2021 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Philippines*, 2016; Ed Markey, "Letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken," July 26, 2021.

[48] Human Rights Watch, "Philippines' 'War on Drugs,'" webpage, undated.

However, increased Chinese provocations against Philippine core interests in the South China Sea meant that Manila continued to view the U.S. alliance as important even as Duterte talked of separation. The 2017 *National Security Policy*, for example, stated that "A continuing U.S. security presence in the Asia Pacific is a stabilizing force."[49] As relations with China continued to cool, Duterte even noted the importance of the United States for Philippine security.[50] In 2021, Duterte agreed to renew the Visiting Forces Agreement, and in the Philippine government's 2021 *Joint Vision for a 21st Century Philippine–United States Partnership*, the importance of the U.S.- Philippines alliance was once again recognized.[51]

Given the volatility in the alliance relationship under Duterte, there was some uncertainty about what the election of Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. would mean for the U.S.-Philippines alliance.[52] While Marcos suggested that he would continue an independent foreign policy, he also noted that he expected the relationship with the United States to be different than under Duterte, suggesting a more positive trajectory.[53] Since taking office, Marcos has emphasized the importance of the alliance in several key statements. Like presidents before him, Marcos stated that the Mutual Defense Treaty is the basis for both the security cooperation and economic cooperation between the two nations,[54] and that he "cannot see the Philippines in the future without having the United States as a partner."[55] He also suggested that the United States plays a role in enhancing regional stability, and that the Philippines looks to the United States to promote peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.[56]

Beyond rhetorical praise, Marcos has taken several steps to rebuild security ties with the United States that suffered during the Duterte administration, which has resulted in expanded U.S. military access in peacetime. In November 2022, his administration announced the intention of the United States to spend $66.5 million and build training and warehouse facilities at Cesar Basa Air Base, Fort Ramon Magsaysay, and Lumbia Airport Base under the auspices of the EDCA, a number that had grown to more than $82 million as of February 2023.[57]

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[49] Duterte, 2017, p. 89.

[50] Renato Cruz de Castro, "Duterte Finally Admits the Importance of the U.S. Alliance," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, February 24, 2021.

[51] Governments of the Philippines and the United States, "Joint Vision for a 21st Century United States–Philippines Partnership," November 16, 2021.

[52] Derek Grossman, "New Philippine President Marcos Jr. Likely Won't Repeat Duterte's Foreign Policy Mistakes," RAND Blog, RAND Corporation, May 10, 2022.

[53] Office of the President (Philippines), 2022.

[54] Office of the President (Philippines), 2022.

[55] Catherine S. Valente, "Marcos Eyes Stronger Ties with US," *Manila Times*, September 21, 2022a.

[56] Office of the President (Philippines), 2022.

[57] Karen Lema, "U.S. to Spend $66 Mln on New Facilities at Philippines Military Bases," Reuters, November 15, 2022; Priam Nepomuceno, "EDCA Projects on Agreed Locations for Implementation in 2023," Philippines News Agency, November 15, 2022.

Philippine Department of National Defense (DND) spokesperson Arsenio Andalong stated: "The department is committed to accelerating the implementation of the EDCA by concluding infrastructure enhancement and repair projects at existing EDCA sites," many of which were shelved under the Duterte administration.[58] In fact, the scope of U.S. access under the EDCA has increased under Marcos.[59] In February 2023, the United States and the Philippines designated four additional sites under the agreement.[60] The two parties announced that the new facilities would allow them to provide "more rapid support for humanitarian and climate-related disasters in the Philippines, and respond to other shared challenges."[61] The Marcos administration has thus already made proactive efforts to grant greater rotational access to the United States. That access, however, comes with limitations, as will be examined below.

To summarize, the Philippines' view of the United States and the alliance is generally positive. In the face of increasing threats from China, the Philippines sees value in maintaining the alliance with the United States, as the February 2023 announcement of new EDCA bases indicates. The next section will discuss how public opinion of U.S. military presence ties into Philippine access decisions for U.S. forces and bases.

Public Opinion of U.S. Military Presence and Effects on Access

Philippine public opinion has generally been positive regarding the United States.[62] In 2019, a poll conducted by Pew Research Center found that 80 percent of Philippines citizens had a favorable view of the United States.[63] Although this was a decline from the over 90 percent favorability ratings in years prior, Philippine public opinion remained high even as favorable views of the United States in other countries in the region declined during the Trump

[58] Nepomuceno, 2022; "Philippines to Speed Up US Defense Pact for Troops, Bases," Bloomberg, November 7, 2022.

[59] Furthermore, Marcos has discussed the possibility of "extending" and "redefining" the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), as opposed to Duterte's efforts to cancel it (Neil Jerome Morales, "Philippines' Marcos Says He Discussed Defence Deal with U.S. Envoy," Reuters, May 23, 2022; Catherine S. Valente, "Marcos Mulls 'Redefining' VFA," *Manila Times*, May 24, 2022b).

[60] The original five locations are Cesar Basa Air Base in Pampanga, Fort Magsaysay Military Reservation, Lumbia Air Base, Antonio Bautista Air Base and Mactan Benito Ebuen Air Base. The four new sites are Naval Base Camilo Osias in Santa Ana, Cagayan; Camp Melchor Dela Cruz in Gamu, Isabela; Balabac Island in Palawan; and Lal-lo Airport in Cagayan. (Rene Acosta, "U.S., Philippines Add Four More Sites to EDCA Military Basing Agreement," USNI News, February 2, 2023; U.S. Department of Defense, "Philippines, U.S. Announce Four New EDCA Sites," February 1, 2023a.

[61] Acosta, 2023.

[62] There has been a dearth of opinion polling of the Philippines since the Biden administration took office.

[63] Richard Wike, Jacob Poushter, Janell Fetterolf, and Shannon Schumacher, "Trump Ratings Remain Low Around Globe, While Views of U.S. Stay Mostly Favorable," Pew Research Center, January 8, 2020, p. 4.

administration.[64] Public opinion of the U.S. military has also been consistently high in the Philippines. Polls conducted in 2019 found that nearly 75 percent of Philippine citizens had a favorable view of U.S. military presence in the country.[65] This corresponds to a very similar percentage, 76 percent, who indicated in 2020 that the U.S. military presence is good for the security of the Philippines in response to foreign threats.[66] This polling suggests that a clear majority of Philippine citizens support the U.S. military's presence in the country.

The polling does not provide conclusions on what Philippine citizens may think about a return to a permanent presence, but there are some related polls that hint at possible views. Over half (approximately 52 percent) of respondents who held favorable views of the U.S. military in a 2019 poll believed that the U.S. presence should remain indefinitely.[67] We note, however, that these numbers are significantly lower than those found in Japan or South Korea, both of which have far greater numbers of U.S. military forces, most of which are permanently stationed in those countries.[68] Furthermore, approximately 36 percent of respondents from the 2019 poll believed that the United States presence should remain for no more than a year. [69] This suggests that the question of long-term U.S. military presence remains contentious, even as the public's view of the U.S. military remains favorable. There are also some regional differences. For example, public opinion toward the United States tends to be more negative in the Philippines' south. This especially holds true in Mindanao, where Philippine-based grassroots peace groups, such as the Moro-Christian People's Alliance, the Muslim Women Peace Advocates, and the Sulu Civil Society Organization, have criticized the increased attention by U.S. Special Operations groups in the Philippines and the negative impact on vulnerable groups in the conflict zone.[70]

The best example of negative public opinion playing a role in curtailing U.S. access in the Philippines is the cessation of the Philippines bilateral basing agreement with the United States in 1991. In 1947, the United States and the Philippines agreed to the Military Bases Agreement (MBA), which granted the United States rent-free access to Philippine land for

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64 Jacob Poushter and Caldwell Bishop, "People in the Philippines Still Favor U.S. over China, but Gap Is Narrowing," Pew Research Center, September 21, 2017; Wike et al., 2020, p. 4.

65 This is similar to the total who thought the U.S. presence was a good thing in 2017 (Allen et al., 2020; Poushter, 2017).

66 Allen et al., 2020.

67 This includes 45 percent of respondents who chose the answer "For the foreseeable future" and 7 percent who chose "Longer than 3 years" (Allen et al., undated).

68 As discussed in previous chapters, figures for both Japan and ROK are above 80 percent.

69 Allen et al., undated.

70 Danilo P. Vizmanos, "The People's Struggle Against Foreign Military Presence in the Philippines," Conference on Military Bases Held at Seoul, South Korea, June 26, 1999; Bayani C. Dilag, "Access Issues Associated with U.S. Military Presence in Thailand and the Philippines," Naval Postgraduate School, March 2005, p. 61; Roland G. Simbulan, "People's Movement: Responses to Evolving US Military Activities in the Philippines," *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against US Military Posts*, 2009, pp. 147–162.

military bases first for 99 years, later revised in 1966 and scheduled to end in 1991.[71] Under this agreement, the United States operated Subic Bay Naval Station, Clark Air Force Base, and other smaller sites. While anti-base movements had existed since the United States and the Philippines first signed the MBA, these groups grew stronger and more organized in the 1980s.[72] They opposed U.S. presence for a number of reasons, including nationalist concerns over Philippine sovereignty, with the bases serving as a visible reminder of the vestiges of American colonialism; belief that the bases provided a target both for a potential nuclear attack and for the extant Communist insurgency in the Philippines; and concerns that the bases exacerbated social ills in nearby communities.[73]

As a result of this negative public sentiment, lawmakers revised the country's constitution to prevent the establishment of foreign military bases in the Philippines.[74] Nevertheless, as the MBA reached its expiration, the United States sought to extend its lease through the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Security. However, on September 16, 1991, the Philippine Senate voted to reject the treaty, resulting in the closure of all six remaining military bases, bringing the permanent U.S. presence in the Philippines to a close.[75] Although a number of factors led to this decision, the opposition groups, which coalesced into the Anti Treaty Movement, played a part in the rejection of the treaty and closure of the bases.[76] In addition to this example, public opinion following violent incidents involving U.S. military personnel committing crimes against Philippine citizens have led to backlash against U.S. military presence, though these incidents did not appear to directly influence the government's decisionmaking on access or agreements.[77]

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71 Andrew Yeo, *Activists, Alliances, and Anti-U.S. Base Protests*, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

72 Yeo, 2011.

73 Rafael A. Porrata-Doria, Jr., "The Philippine Bases and Status of Forces Agreement: Lessons for the Future," *Military Law Review*, 1992.

74 Government of the Philippines, Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, February 2, 1987, Article XVIII, Section 25.

75 William Branigin, "U.S. Military Ends Role in Philippines," *Washington Post*, November 24, 1992.

76 While analysts have argued that a number of factors led to this decision, such as the end of the Cold War and a volcanic eruption that would have required enormous funds to clean up the bases, the Philippine anti-base movements were also a major contributing factor (Yeo, 2011).

77 For example, in 2006, a U.S. marine received a 40-year sentence for raping a Filipina woman, the first American soldier convicted since the termination of the MBA. In response to the case, enthusiasm among Philippine citizens for joint exercises with the U.S. military decreased by 33 percent from 2003 to 2006, and trust in the United States reached historical lows. Although protestors called for the termination of the VFA, the agreement remained (Carlos Conde, "U.S. Marine Guilty in Philippine Rape Case," *New York Times*, December 4, 2006; "U.S. Marine Convicted in Philippines Rape Case," *ABC News*, December 4, 2006; Senate of the Philippines, "Villar: Peoples Sentiments Regarding the VFA Should Be Considered," press release, January 28, 2008; Alex B. Brillantes, "The Philippines in 1991: Disasters and Decisions," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 1992).

Chinese Efforts to Influence Public Opinion and Political Leadership

A critically important factor in the Philippines, which is not present as much in Japan or the ROK, is the impact that Chinese influence has on both public opinion and political leadership in the Philippines. Many of our interviewees noted that it is a well-known fact throughout the Philippine government that China employs social media and other disinformation campaigns to convince the public that the United States is an enemy. Even more concerning is that China conducts influence campaigns on the Philippine public and local leaders to undermine the U.S.-Philippine alliance and curtail cooperative activities in the military realm. There are examples of local leaders who have fallen victim to elite capture by China and who then convince the government to oppose U.S. military activities in their provinces.[78] Interviewees spoke at length about China using money and investments to co-opt government officials at both the local and national levels.[79]

One expert we spoke with stated that China offers local officials money and investments "to make [the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)] not do things with the United States."[80] In 2022, for example, the Cayagan provincial government opposed live-fire military exercises for fear of angering China, a source of large economic investments in the region.[81] The exercise was one of five Balikatan exercises that year. Although they were not successful in stopping the exercise completely, the local Cayagan Provincial Peace and Order Council led by Cagayan Governor Manuel Mamba succeeded in preventing the U.S. and Philippine militaries from conducting the live-fire portion of the exercises.[82]

China has also used information campaigns to convince local communities of the danger U.S. forces would pose for them.[83] This is problematic because provincial leaders play an important role in granting access requests for military exercises taking place in their province. Whether they are bribed or pressured by their constituents, these provincial leaders have cause to oppose U.S. requests for access in their communities. Importantly, Manila tends to avoid pushing back against this opposition to force such exercises onto an unwilling provincial government and the public.[84] In turn, this enables local level influence to guide U.S.

[78] Jasmin Lorch, "Elite Capture, Civil Society and Democratic Backsliding in Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines," *Democratization*, Vol. 28, 2021. Many of these influence campaigns are conducted by the CCP's United Front Work Department, which is responsible for coordinating foreign influence operations. See Alexander Bowe, *China's Overseas United Front Work*, U.S. Security and Economic Review Commission, August 24, 2018.

[79] Every respondent for this research discussed this as a major concern.

[80] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022.

[81] Frances Mangosing, "Pro-China Governor Opposes PH-US Live-fire Drills," *Inquirer*, January 13, 2022.

[82] Liezle Basa Iñigo, "US-Balikatan Exercises Begin in Cagayan," *Manila Bulletin*, March 9, 2022; Mangosing, 2022. Our interviewees suggested that live-fire exercises were never on the table, however.

[83] Lorch, 2021; Mangosing, 2022.

[84] Several interviewees spoke about Manila's reluctance to force an exercise if it encounters resistance.

military access for certain activities.[85] The implication is that when the United States considers bringing forces into the Philippines for exercises or training, Philippine leadership will closely monitor provincial community sentiment. This, in turn, provides significant agency to local communities to disrupt U.S. military activities or posture initiatives. Consequently, this makes Manila more sensitive to U.S. military access requests. We turn next to the legal structures that frame these requests, to determine implications for U.S. access.

U.S.-Philippines Agreements and Effects on Access

In this section, we examine the current agreements that govern U.S. access in the Philippines and discuss the constraints or opportunities that those agreements present for access and basing. This provides a foundation for the following section, which provides insights on implications for U.S. access requests for specific capabilities in peacetime and in a contingency, based on discussions with experts and officials in the Philippines.

U.S. access in the Philippines is dictated by a series of formal legal agreements, the three most relevant of which are the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT), the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), and the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA). The key points from these agreements are described below.

Mutual Defense Treaty

The U.S.-Philippines alliance is based on the MDT signed in 1951.[86] The MDT covers a broad range of attacks that would trigger mutual action. For example, the treaty could be invoked for any attack in the "Pacific area" on either state. However, attacks in the Pacific region are further defined to include an "armed attack on the metropolitan territory of either of the Parties, or on the Island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific Ocean, or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific."[87] This language has served to create some ambiguity over what actions would trigger a U.S. response under the MDT.[88]

While U.S. officials have consistently reaffirmed the MDT, Manila has long sought clarification from the United States of whether this would cover their interests in the South China Sea even if they were not within Philippine territorial waters. It was only recently that the United States publicly committed to responding to attacks on Philippine forces outside Phil-

[85] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022; Lorch, 2021; Mangosing, 2022.

[86] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, "U.S. Security Cooperation with the Philippines," October 7, 2022.

[87] Governments of the Philippines and the United States, Mutual Defense Treaty Between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States, August 30, 1951, Art. IV–V.

[88] Felix K. Chang, "The U.S.-Philippines Mutual Defense Treaty and Philippine External Defense Forces," Foreign Policy Research Institute, August 3, 2021.

ippine territory.[89] In 2019, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated that "as the South China Sea is part of the Pacific, any armed attack on Philippine forces, aircraft, or public vessels in the South China Sea will trigger mutual defense obligations."[90] This statement has since been reiterated as official U.S. policy by both Defense Secretary Mark Esper and Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, and it was included in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy.[91]

The MDT's applicability is therefore clear on its connection to the defense of Philippine territory, as well as territory in the South China Sea claimed by the Philippines. According to interviews, should the MDT be invoked, the United States would have access throughout the Philippines "based on an operational assessment of Manila" of what kind of defensive operation is required.[92] This means not just AFP bases—including the EDCA bases—but any place that is deemed operationally necessary for defending the country. Problematically, both U.S. and Philippine interviewees we spoke with were unclear about how to invoke and implement the MDT.

The MDT itself is unclear in this regard. It requires each state to act in "accordance with its constitutional procedures."[93] The Philippine Constitution grants the President the role of Commander-in-Chief of all armed forces and allows the President to call out these forces to prevent invasion.[94] This means that the President will be the key figure for invoking the MDT. However, Philippine officials admit that the allies have "never gone to the level of how to invoke [the treaty] or whether the Philippines can use it to support the United States."[95] The Philippine Congress maintains the sole power to declare a state of war by a two-thirds vote, and it may grant the President temporary emergency powers during a war or emergency to carry out a declared national policy.[96] However, it is unclear whether invoking the MDT would require the same procedure.

Despite being a "mutual" defense treaty, like the U.S.-ROK MDT, it is not clear whether the Philippines would actually come to the U.S. assistance if its forces or territories are attacked

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89 J. Eduardo Malaya, "Constitutional Processes Requirement in the PH-US Mutual Defense Treaty," *Philippine Law Journal*, Vol. 85, No. 4, June 2011, p. 994.

90 Karen Lema and Neil Jerome Morales, "Pompeo Assures Philippines of U.S. Protection in Event of Sea Conflict," Reuters, March 1, 2009.

91 Bella Perez-Rubio, "US Reaffirms Commitment to Mutual Defense Treaty with Philippines," *PhilStar Global*, January 28, 2021; Ken Moriyasu, "US Vows to Defend Philippines, Including in South China Sea," *Nikkei Asia*, January 29, 2021; "Philippines, U.S. Joint Defense Statement," November 19, 2019; U.S. Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnerships, and Promoting a Networked Region*, June 1, 2019.

92 Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022; Bill Hayton, "Pompeo Draws a Line Against Beijing in the South China Sea," *Foreign Policy*, July 15, 2020..

93 Governments of the Philippines and the United States, 1951, Art. IV.

94 Government of the Philippines, 1987, Art. VII, Sec. 18.

95 Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

96 Government of the Philippines, 1987, Art. VI, Sec. 23.

outside the Philippines' territory, including territorial waters, or Philippine-claimed territory in the South China Sea.[97] For example, if U.S. forces are attacked somewhere in the Pacific theater or if Guam is attacked, it is unclear whether the United States invoking the MDT will persuade the Philippines to grant access rights to U.S. forces. Our interviews with Philippine experts and officials suggest that, at the very least, the process by which the MDT would be invoked for these situations remains untested and therefore ambiguous.

Finally, there are no Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) agreed upon between the allies for what would happen once the MDT is invoked. Several interviewees compared IRRs to the U.S.-Japan defense guidelines, noting that nothing similar exists in the case of the U.S.-Philippines relationship. Without an IRR, it is unclear what military actions the MDT would allow the United States to take in the Philippines in a conflict.

Visiting Forces Agreement

The Philippine Constitution prohibits any foreign military bases, troops, or facilities in the country except under a bilateral treaty or, at Congress's discretion, with approval by a national referendum.[98] However while the article prohibits a permanent military presence by foreign troops in the Philippines, it does not prohibit a rotational presence.[99]

U.S. military forces maintain a rotational presence in the Philippines through the 1998 VFA.[100] The VFA covers U.S. military forces and civilian personnel that enter the Philippines "temporarily . . . in connection with activities approved by the Philippine Government."[101] According to one interviewee, while the agreement allows for a rotational presence, what

[97] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

[98] The text reads as follows:

> After the expiration in 1991 of the Agreement between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America concerning Military Bases, foreign military bases, troops, or facilities shall not be allowed in the Philippines except under a treaty duly concurred in by the Senate and, when the Congress so requires, ratified by a majority of the votes cast by the people in a national referendum held for that purpose, and recognized as a treaty by the other contracting State. (Government of the Philippines, 1987, Art. XVIII, Sec. 25)

[99] Governments of the Philippines and the United States, Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines Regarding the Treatment of United States Armed Forces Visiting the Philippines (VFA), February 10, 1998, Art. I; Janvic Mateo, "Sea Militia Attacks Could Trigger US Obligations Under Defense Treaty," *PhilStar*, June 16, 2019.

[100] Following the 1991 withdrawal of U.S. permanent presence from the Philippines, the MDT was still in place. This fact demanded procedures for the presence of U.S. forces, but these procedures and rules had previously existed under the MBA. Typically, a SOFA contains the legal status and procedures governing U.S. forces stationed abroad, but because a permanent presence was prohibited, the allies needed to craft an instrument allowing for a visiting presence. As one U.S. negotiator described, a new agreement was needed to make clear that the allies were only considering a temporary presence, hence the use of *Visiting* in the title (VFA, 1998; Renato Acosta, "Abrogating the Visiting Forces Agreement: Effects on Philippine Security in Southeast Asia," video, East-West Center, December 12, 2022.

[101] VFA, 1998. Art. I.

constitutes "rotational" is not strictly defined; however, deliberate gaps of a few months are spaced in between rotational exercises.[102] The VFA provides rules of how visiting military personnel conduct themselves, outlining entry and departure requirements and the criminal jurisdiction applicable to personnel in-country (similar to a SOFA).[103] The agreement states that vehicles, vessels, and aircraft operated by the United States armed forces may enter the Philippines upon approval by the government and in accordance with any implementing agreements between the parties.[104] Under the VFA, U.S. troops can therefore enter, train, and exercise with AFP personnel anywhere in the Philippines.

Because of the VFA's role in providing the legal framework for U.S. military personnel to be in the Philippines, it is the key document that frames U.S. exercises and training with the AFP. The VFA does not cover U.S. military presence in a wartime situation.[105] Instead, it is solely for exercises and training. Because the United States cannot permanently base troops in the Philippines, these exercises and training rotations became the primary vehicle by which to sustain U.S. military presence throughout the Philippines—not limited to just EDCA bases. Importantly, except for nuclear weapons—which are banned by the constitution—there are "no limitations on what the U.S. can bring in" for these exercises, as it is based on "what we recommend is needed" for training purposes.[106]

The VFA also does not restrict the amount of time U.S. forces can be in the Philippines during their rotation, which provides flexibility for U.S. operations in the country. For example, U.S. forces can be rotationally deployed to the Philippines for long periods of time, through extending an exercise, lengthening the time involved in pulling capabilities out of country, or keeping the capability in-country for different exercises.[107] Numerous interviewees noted that the United States and the Philippines have done this during the Balikatan exercise to keep U.S. forces in-country for a longer period of time, resulting in a more regular U.S. military presence.

Interviewees agreed, however, that heel-to-toe rotations at the same location would not fall under Manila's interpretation of the VFA. As noted above, deliberate gaps of a few months are spaced in between rotational exercises to avoid having troops persistently at one location.

The process for extending U.S. troop presence in the Philippines through exercises involves both sides discussing their intentions during exercise planning and at the annual military board. It is at this meeting that the militaries make requests to train a specific capability. This is eventually agreed on by military leaders, the Philippine DND, and the U.S.

[102] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

[103] VFA, 1998. Art. III, V.

[104] VFA, 1998, Art. VIII.

[105] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[106] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022.

[107] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022.

Indo-Pacific Command Commander.[108] Under the VFA, prior to arrival, U.S. military forces request a three-month diplomatic clearance to enter the Philippines. The AFP, in turn, is responsible for coordinating with the local authorities who are host to the exercises. This is a critical because it provides local authorities with an opportunity to accept or deny U.S. military presence in their localities, as discussed above.[109]

These exercises—and the capabilities they introduce into the Philippines—provide a means by which to maintain a U.S. force presence throughout the year without violating the constitutional prohibition on a permanent foreign military presence. To reiterate, however, these are conducted during peacetime, which the VFA covers. Wartime is not covered by this. Nor are there any stipulations on whether the United States can access a capability in the country for an exercise should a conflict breakout. Interviewees noted that there is no certainty that the Philippine government will allow the United States to use capabilities already in-country for a conflict not involving the Philippines defense.[110] That decision is political and rests with the Philippine president.

Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement

Because of the elimination of a permanent U.S. presence in the early 1990s, combined with the constitutional prohibition on permanent foreign bases, the Philippines needed a permanent solution to securing a U.S. presence in the country. The solution was the EDCA, as it allows U.S. military personnel access to AFP bases, as well as to preposition assets, beyond the duration of a specific training mission or exercise.

Although the EDCA does not permit the United States to have a permanent base, it does authorize U.S. military activities at "Agreed Locations" on a temporary or rotational basis.[111] *Agreed Locations* refers to those AFP bases that the two governments select via implementing arrangements.[112] Initially, this included locations at five AFP bases in Palawan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Cagayan, and Mactan.[113] In February 2023, the two governments agreed to des-

[108] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022.

[109] If a provincial government opposes a request by the AFP to conduct an exercise with the U.S. military in their province—or even pass through a municipality in their province—Manila will look for a different location. This hesitancy to push back on local opposition gives provincial leaders tremendous veto power. When combined with the elite capture described above, the potential for U.S. access requests to be denied are high.

[110] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[111] Governments of the Philippines and the United States, Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the United States of America on Enhanced Defense Cooperation (EDCA), April 28, 2014, Art. I, Sec. 1-3.

[112] EDCA, 2014, Art. II.

[113] Jose Katigbak, "U.S., Philippines Agree on 5 Base Locations Under EDCA," *PhilStar Global*, March 19, 2016.

ignate four additional AFP locations in "strategic areas of the country."[114] These were eventually announced as Naval Base Camilo Osias in Santa Ana, Cagayan; Camp Melchor Dela Cruz in Gamu, Isabela; Balabac Island in Palawan; and Lal-lo Airport in Cagayan.[115]

In addition to stipulating where the United States has access rights, the EDCA also provides broad outlines on the United States' ability to preposition materials and maintain control over construction of facilities at any Agreed Locations, though such actions require consultation with the Philippine government. Specifically, the EDCA says that the United States can preposition materials at Agreed Locations *with advanced notification* to the Philippines of "quantities and delivery schedules of defense equipment, supplies, and materiel."[116] The EDCA does not specify the number of days required to access an Agreed Location. In fact, Article IV of the EDCA states that U.S. forces and U.S. contractors "shall have unimpeded access to Agreed Locations for all matters relating to the prepositioning and storage of defense equipment, supplies, and materiel, including delivery, management, inspection, use, maintenance, and removal of such equipment, supplies, and materiel.[117] In practice, the United States has been asked to provide a 30-day notice to the AFP of how it wants to use an EDCA site and for what purpose.[118] This takes place via two important bilateral coordination mechanisms that are referenced in the EDCA: the Security Engagement Board (SEB) and the Mutual Defense Board (MDB).[119] The two nations established the SEB by treaty in 2006 under the VFA.[120] The SEB facilitates liaison on nontraditional security matters, such as terrorism and maritime safety.[121] Together, the SEB and MDB form the main coordination mechanism for U.S.-Philippines military activities and therefore a central point of consideration for U.S. forces seeking requests to preposition or access EDCA bases. This bilateral coordination process culminates with an annual meeting led by the co-chairs of the SEB and MDB: the Philippines Armed Forces Chief of Staff and U.S. Commander of Indo-Pacific Command.[122] Other members of both boards include service branch commanders for the

[114] U.S. Department of Defense, 2023a.

[115] David Vergun, "New EDCA Sites Named in the Philippines," U.S. Department of Defense, April 3, 2023.

[116] EDCA, 2014, Art. III–IV.

[117] EDCA, 2014, Art. IV.

[118] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022. According to EDCA preamble, all United States access to and use of facilities and areas will be at the invitation of the Philippines and with full respect for the Philippine Constitution and Philippine laws.

[119] EDCA, Art. III, Sec. 4; MBD, Annex B. The MDB, established by treaty in 1958, facilitates joint consideration of military matters related to executing the MDT and establishing bases. It also places Philippine liaison officers at any military installation in use by U.S. forces.

[120] Governments of the Philippines and the United States, Agreement Establishing the Philippines–United States Security Engagement Board (SEB), April 12, 2006.

[121] SEB, 2006, Art II.

[122] U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, "Philippines and U.S. Hold Annual Mutual Defense and Security Engagement Boards," September 30, 2022; U.S. Embassy in Manila, "Philippines, U.S. Host Annual Mutual Defense

Philippines and U.S. U.S. Indo-Pacific Command component command general officers.[123] According to interviewees, anything requested outside of this formal process will be ad hoc and, importantly, it will be uncertain as to how long a decision will take.[124]

The EDCA emphasizes humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR). This focus has led some people in the Philippines to interpret the EDCA as restricting the United States to prepositioning only capabilities with strict HA/DR connections. Despite these views, the EDCA was not intended for that purpose. The agreement itself acknowledges that materials may also serve to enhance the parties' "individual and collective defense capabilities," meaning that the permitted prepositioned materials do not appear to be legally limited to HA/DR.[125] Throughout the negotiation that led to the EDCA, Philippine officials assured the public that the arrangement "addresses the current thrust of the AFP which is external defense."[126] Likewise, the Department of Foreign Affairs stated that the EDCA would "strengthen our capabilities for external and territorial defense," although they argued the agreement was not directed at any one country.[127] In 2018, Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said that the "EDCA also helps the AFP in performing its roles in maritime security, maritime domain awareness," and HA/DR.[128] Today, both sides see the EDCA as pertaining to security cooperation, not just HA/DR.[129] As multiple interviewees said, the EDCA "is more than HA/DR" and was always intended as such.[130]

The reason for this discrepancy, as revealed in interviews, is that while the EDCA was not negotiated to be limited to HA/DR, it was purposely marketed that way to help with public support.[131] In other words, it was for "political expediency" that the government framed it as limited to HA/DR.[132] Publicly talking about HA/DR was done to get the public onboard,

Board and Security Engagement Board," October 15, 2021.

[123] U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, 2022; U.S. Embassy in Manila, 2021.

[124] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

[125] The EDCA explicitly prohibits prepositioning nuclear weapons (EDCA, 2014, Art. III–IV).

[126] Department of Foreign Affairs (Philippines), "Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the Proposed Increased Rotational Presence (IRP) Framework Agreement," August 2013, No. 6.

[127] Department of Foreign Affairs (Philippines), 2013, No. 26. Of note, the Philippines also experienced Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, and the U.S. military's response to that disaster may have also played a role in securing support for EDCA. See Gregory Poling and Conor Cronin, "The Dangers of Allowing U.S.-Philippine Defense Cooperation to Languish," *War on the Rocks*, May 17, 2018.

[128] Priam Nepomuceno, "EDCA to Allow PH, US to Respond to Regional Security Challenges," Philippine News Agency, April 18, 2018.

[129] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[130] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

[131] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official (Philippines Interview 4), September 20, 2022.

[132] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

helping to "sell" it.[133] This was particular true for the opposition on the Left; the government wanted to make sure to craft the agreement in such a way that the Leftists could not oppose.[134] This public campaign was so successful that the focus on HA/DR essentially has become policy for many.[135] In part this was because of bureaucratic churn in the government and the AFP. Because planners and strategists keep changing, "they forget that HA/DR was just a cover activity."[136]

This mixed messaging on the purpose of EDCA matters, because there is a possibility that it could affect what the United States can preposition at these EDCA bases. As one interviewee stated, although there are not legal constraints or differences in opinions over the legal terms of EDCA, there does not appear to be an agreement between the allies about "how far" the United States can go in the capabilities it wants to preposition.[137] The allies have "never gone into details of what the U.S. can and cannot store" at EDCA bases, but there are also no reporting or oversight requirements for what U.S. forces may preposition, apart from the consultation requirement listed in the EDCA.[138] Some items, however, are off limits, such as nuclear weapons. A more important point is that there is no clarity on how quickly the United States could access its prepositioned materiel on AFP bases.[139] The EDCA states that the United States "shall have the unencumbered right to remove such prepositioned materiel at any time from the territory of the Philippines."[140] But because these are AFP bases, there would be procedures that need to be followed—but the details of how this would work in an emergency have not been worked out, which could both limit access and lengthen the time it would take U.S. troops to obtain prepositioned materials.

A final, critical point about prepositioning has to do with security. In addition to uncertainty over what exactly the United States can preposition, there is no regulation on who would provide security for any stocks or equipment left at an AFP-designated EDCA base. To date, the United States has not left any equipment behind after a bilateral exercise because of questions over who would manage it after U.S. forces depart.[141] Based on interviews, we believe that the United States cannot station permanent security personnel at EDCA bases. It

[133] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022; Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[134] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 4), September 20, 2022.

[135] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[136] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022.

[137] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[138] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022. This view was shared by a Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

[139] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

[140] EDCA, 2014, Art. IV.

[141] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

can, however, assign rotational military and civilian personnel in connection with activities approved by the Philippines in accordance with the VFA.[142] From our interviews, it appears that the United States has not done this. There are also questions about whether the AFP would have access to anything the United States prepositions. The EDCA states that U.S. forces "shall have control over the access to and disposition of such prepositioned materiel."[143] Here too, according to interviewees, people appeared less certain of whether the AFP is permitted to access such prepositioned materiel. If it is, then Manila can argue that such materiel help strengthen the capacity of the AFP. If it is not, then the Philippines simply "looks like it is just a staging ground for something else," making it less politically acceptable.[144]

Collectively, these three agreements highlight that, short of a few clear restrictions (e.g., no nuclear weapons and no permanent presence), the United States does not appear to be legally constrained in what it can bring into the Philippines.[145] However, it is not completely free to bring in whatever it wants for however long it wants. The Philippines and the United States have agreed to coordinate access requests to EDCA bases and any capabilities brought into the Philippines.[146] While exercising and training with the AFP provides a means by which the United States can access non-EDCA bases, local opposition has a role that could limit where and what U.S. forces can do. Collectively, this suggests the United States has a political obligation to coordinate any access requests well in advance with the Philippines.

Table 4.1 summarizes the agreements between the United States and the Philippines and their effects on U.S. military access to the Philippines.

Implications for U.S. Access in the Philippines

Considering the above, we can draw several implications for U.S. access in both a peacetime context and a contingency.

In peacetime, the United States has access to AFP bases but faces several constraints on what capabilities and equipment it can bring into the Philippines

Assuming that it has the support of the AFP, legally the United States can bring into the Philippines any capability it wants, with few exceptions. However, the challenge of local elites

[142] Clarifying information gained through email exchange with a Philippines expert that was not part of the original interviews, May 4, 2023.

[143] EDCA, 2014, Art. IV.

[144] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[145] Governments of the Philippines and the United States, 1951; EDCA, 2014; VFA, 1998.

[146] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022; EDCA, 2014; VFA, 1998.

TABLE 4.1
U.S.-Philippines Agreements and Effects on U.S. Military Access

Agreement	Key Features	Effects on Access
Mutual Defense Treaty	• Covers a range of attacks that would trigger mutual action. U.S. clarified that it covers attacks on Philippine forces in the South China Sea	• Invoking the MDT would allow U.S. access for the defense of the Philippines, but it is unclear whether that access extends to a regional conflict where the Philippines is not directly affected • Process for invoking MDT is unclear, particularly for conflict not involving the Philippines or where Guam is attacked • No IRR, which leaves ambiguity as to actions U.S. forces can take under the MDT
Visiting Forces Agreement	• Allows the U.S. military to maintain rotational forces in the Philippines for exercises and training	• Provides a way for rotational U.S. presence in the Philippines, but does not stipulate whether U.S. can access capabilities in-country for exercises if a conflict breaks out • What constitutes "rotational" is not strictly defined, providing some flexibility on location, timing, and length of rotations
Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement	• Authorizes U.S. military activities at agreed locations on a temporary basis • Also outlines U.S. ability to preposition materiel/equipment and maintain control over construction of facilities at agreed locations • Locations initially included five AFP bases; a February 2023 agreement designated four additional locations	• Allows the United States to preposition materiel and equipment in peacetime, with some interpreting it as only pertaining to HA/DR capabilities • Unclear access in conflict not involving the Philippines; unclear how rapid access would be granted once a conflict has begun

opposing U.S. military presence—whether because of opposition from their own communities or China's influence—can create political costs for Manila. Furthermore, according to interviewees, the Philippine government is concerned about "what China will say and how its actions affect us" in response to U.S. military activities in the Philippines.[147] Any U.S. military request for access that could elicit a strong Chinese response would therefore be challenging for Manila to accept. Because of these considerations, the Philippines' response to U.S. access requests will likely differ based on the capability the United States wants to bring into the country.

[147] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

Prepositioning nonkinetic capabilities in peacetime is likely to be acceptable to the Philippine leadership, within clear limits

Interviewees were unanimous that prepositioning non-kinetic capabilities would likely be acceptable to Manila if they are tied to exercises with the AFP or were for the defense of the Philippines. Obtaining access would be even easier would be if the capabilities fall under the EDCA definition of items needed for HA/DR, such as fuel, tents, or water. Even trucks, watercraft, and field hospitals would be included under this definition.[148] Parts for equipment or fuel bladders are also considered relatively easy, because these have been brought in for exercises.[149] Stationing nonkinetic units responsible for cyber- and ground-based ISR was also viewed by interviewees as not problematic, particularly because these units already operate in exercises and have a history of being stationed in the Philippines.[150]

While these nonkinetic capabilities are likely to be unproblematic, gaining approval to preposition capabilities that could be used in a conflict will prove more challenge, delineating clear limits in what the United States should expect. Interviewees noted that if the leadership views prepositioning as the United States preparing for a conflict, it is "much harder" for Manila to agree to access, even with nonkinetic capabilities.[151] For example, prepositioning parts and fuel for F-35s may be difficult because the AFP does not operate those aircraft, so the request would be perceived as strictly for the United States' interests and for a capability that would be used in conflict.[152] Interviewees also stated that while prepositioning long-range munitions is "tricky," small arms (e.g., grenades, artillery shells) and rockets with short ranges could be acceptable because these have been brought into the country for exercises.[153] However, longer-range munitions carry the optic that the United States could be prepositioning capabilities on the Philippines for a conflict not involving defense of the Philippines, such as a conflict over Taiwan. If, however, those munitions can also be used by the AFP for similar equipment or for training, then it is easier for Manila to agree to access requests because it can be more closely tied to improving AFP capabilities and strengthening the Philippines' defense.[154]

[148] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 4), September 20, 2022.

[149] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022; Retired Philippines official (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022.

[150] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022; Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[151] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[152] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

[153] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022; Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

[154] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 5), September 21, 2022; Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

Whether Manila would allow prepositioning of U.S. aerial ISR capabilities in peacetime is uncertain

There was not agreement among interviewees on whether U.S. overflight ISR capabilities would be permissible to Manila. Some interviewees stated that, because ISR flights are already undertaken during exercises and anti-terrorist operations, such as with U.S. P-3s and P-8s,[155] and because enhanced ISR directly benefits the Philippines' security (e.g., maritime domain awareness, counter-terrorism), this type of access would be approved. Others thought that there is a chance that Manila might reject ISR flights if they are focused on areas away from the Philippines and Philippines-claimed territories.[156] Also, because of the Philippines' strict adherence to rotational presence, there would likely be a clear time limit for how long such an ISR asset could deploy to and operate from the same EDCA base, if they were allowed.[157]

Prepositioning kinetic capabilities in peacetime could prove very challenging

Interviewees viewed U.S. access for kinetic capabilities as particularly challenging, depending on the capability. Interviewees noted that something that is clearly meant for the Philippines' defense—such as Patriot systems—would "be easier" for Manila to accept than an "offensive weapon" with a longer range.[158] One respondent explained that "it would be hard" for the leadership to grant U.S. access to deploy these latter kinds of weapons and would require "a lot of political will of the president" for it to be accepted.[159] Naval ships and fighter aircraft would also likely be refused access to Philippine bases and ports, because they appear to be "based," which would "raise red flags" and thus not be accepted.[160] However, it was acknowledged that if tensions were growing, the Philippines might grant access for these capabilities if the United States sought to bring them in for the Philippines' defense. Short of that, however, interviewees were skeptical that even a pro-U.S. administration in Manila could accept these without considerable difficulty.

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[155] For P3s, see Commander, Task Force 73 Public Affairs, "CARAT 2015 Exercise Series Begins in the Philippines," Commander, United States Pacific Fleet, June 22, 2015; Simone Orendain, "Philippines, US, Japan Hold Military Drills Near S. China Sea," *Voice of America*, June 22, 2015. For P8s, see Mohammad Issa, "Multilateral Exercise Sama-Sama Lumbas 2022 Concludes," U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, October 19, 2022; Ashley Guire, "U.S. Navy Builds on Philippine Partnership with VP-10." U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, January 30, 2023.

[156] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[157] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

[158] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[159] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022.

[160] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

Despite challenges, two provisions provide the United States with greater flexibility for prepositioning and access in peacetime

The first is the VFA's provision of legal framework for the U.S. forces to conduct rotational exercises. As mentioned above, through rotational exercising and training with the AFP, the United States can access non-EDCA bases. In these exercises, the United States and the AFP agree what capability they want to train for. This gives the militaries the power to decide what equipment they want to bring in temporarily anywhere in the country. Theoretically, this means that the United States could deploy any capability, as long as the capability helps train the AFP or strengthen the Philippines' defense. It also helps obtain persistent presence without violating the constitution's prohibition against a permanent foreign military presence. By spreading out training and exercises at different locations across the country with different capabilities, the alliance "can guarantee the U.S. has capabilities" in the Philippines throughout the year.[161]

A second provision of the VFA is to tie a desired capability to a specific training initiative with the AFP. If a capability is required for the successful completion of such a training effort, that capability can be stored in the Philippines for a longer period of time. For example, as long as U.S. combat aircraft or aerial ISR capability is tied to an exercise with the AFP, then the Philippine leadership is more likely to grant access for them. Furthermore, the more that prepositioned materiel or capabilities are said to "strengthen the capacity of the AFP," the easier it becomes for the leadership to grant access.[162] Framing a capability as something for joint use also makes the request easier for Manila to accept. Conversely, if the U.S. request is to preposition something that is not in the AFP arsenal or within its training regimen—such as munition for HIMARS—then the request may be more difficult to grant because it does not fall within the capabilities needed for the Philippines' defense.[163]

The majority of U.S. access requests are unlikely to be granted in a Taiwan contingency

As discussed throughout this chapter, questions regarding U.S. access in a contingency are much more challenging and will be heavily dependent on how much the Philippine government connects a crisis over Taiwan with the Philippines' direct security interests, such that it wishes to support the United States. Interviewees said that, regardless of whether the United States invokes the MDT in a Taiwan conflict, the Philippines will be reluctant to support U.S. forces because of fear of Chinese retaliation.[164] The political leadership's "foremost consider-

[161] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022.

[162] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 6), September 21, 2022.

[163] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022; Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 4), September 20, 2022.

[164] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

ation would be to stay out of the conflict."[165] Therefore, Manila is likely to reject the majority of U.S. access requests in conflict and restrict use of whatever U.S. forces are deployed in the country at the time that conflict breaks out. Interviewees noted that, given fear of Chinese retaliation, it is likely that only access to nonkinetic prepositioning of fuel and parts would be granted in a Taiwan contingency. Manila might also authorize activities that can be done in secret, without China finding out, including cyber activity or use of ground-based ISR operations.[166]

If, however, Manila views a crisis over Taiwan as a significant threat to the Philippines, then it becomes more likely that the leadership will agree to U.S. access requests, with one major caveat: U.S. access would need to clearly contribute to the Philippines' defense; the Philippines does not want the United States to treat it as just a forward operating base. If Manila thought that China would threaten the Philippines during a Taiwan conflict, it would turn to Washington to defend it. Doing so would require an invocation of the MDT. Once the MDT is invoked, interviewees noted, it would be much easier for the Philippines to accept U.S. requests for access across the Philippines at all AFP bases, as long as the access is intended for the defense of the Philippines, not for Taiwan or for U.S. forces fighting in the conflict.

In practice, this means that even if the MDT is invoked, there is no guarantee that the United States can access its bases for a conflict over Taiwan unless the United States could *convincingly* argue to Manila that access for U.S. forces defending Taiwan would also help defend the Philippines, and that a Chinese presence to the north is a threat to the Philippines. This argument, if convincing, could persuade Manila to agree to support more access and allow more direct U.S. military activity from the Philippines.[167] However, interviewees expected that, in this situation, approval for the MDT invocation will likely take a long time, made more difficult by there not being an IRR between the allies that could speed up the process.[168] The result would likely be that the United States would not be able to quickly access its equipment and materials on AFP bases in a contingency over Taiwan.

Summary

First, the United States cannot permanently deploy any forces on the Philippines. It can, however, deploy U.S. forces on a rotational basis. This can take two forms: (1) U.S. use of formal EDCA bases or (2) U.S. forces conducting rotational exercises with the AFP at non-EDCA locations anywhere in the country. There is no set definition of how long or short is considered "rotational," but there is an understanding that the United States will not conduct

[165] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022.

[166] Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 1), September 19, 2022.

[167] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 2), September 20, 2022; Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

[168] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 3), September 20, 2022.

heel-to-toe rotations at the same location. Importantly, the U.S. military cannot decide unilaterally what capabilities to deploy to the Philippines. Not only do these capabilities need to be agreed on by AFP counterparts, but they also need to fit with the alliance's strategic and operational needs to receive political buy-in. The more the United States can nest desired capabilities into exercises that serve the AFP's needs, the more success it will have in getting Manila to grant access.

Second, Philippine approval of any given U.S. request is largely a political decision. Everything depends on the calculations of the sitting President. This matters because, regardless of the political party in power, the leadership "is not willingly going to be part of a Taiwan contingency."[169] Importantly, the Philippines both fears China attacking the Philippines if the Philippines allows U.S. access and wants to maintain a close relationship with the United States for defense purposes.[170] Nevertheless, in peacetime, with Philippine government approval, U.S. forces can preposition equipment and supplies on AFP-designated EDCA bases. In a crisis, however, it is unclear both how Manila will respond to U.S. access requests and how quickly those responses will come.

Third, there are two constraining factors that limit what the U.S. military can preposition. The first is that, while rotational military and civilian U.S. personnel can be stationed for security purposes at EDCA sites, the United States cannot permanently station security forces at these AFP bases. This may make it undesirable for the United States to preposition high-value equipment and munitions in the Philippines, whereas such items as water and fuel may be useful to preposition, given their weight and that they are not sensitive capabilities or materiel. The second factor limitation is what the Philippines would politically agree to. While interviewees viewed nonkinetic capabilities as relatively uncontroversial, they emphasized that capabilities that were either not in the AFP arsenal or deemed better suited for a conflict far from Philippine shores would likely be difficult for Manila to accept. The role that local communities and provincial government leaders play in access will also prove critical, both in terms of what types of U.S. exercises are allowed and whether local officials pressure the Philippine leadership to reject U.S. requests for certain types of capabilities at AFP bases. The possibility of Manila granting access despite local opposition increases if the capability is compatible with the AFP arsenal or AFP operations, if the capability is joint, or if the AFP can draw from stock or use the equipment. If a capability appears to be strictly meant for U.S. use, Manila will be more likely to listen to local opposition and reject U.S. access requests.

Finally, U.S. ability to not just access, but operate from, the Philippines in a contingency appears limited. Regardless of whether the United States has forces in the Philippines during peacetime or a crisis, if a conflict breaks out in which the Philippines is not attacked, there would be strong opposition to allowing to the United States to access any of its in-country capabilities and operate them directly from the Philippines. And while there would be more

[169] Retired Philippines official, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 4), September 20, 2022.

[170] Philippines expert, interview with the authors (Philippines Interview 7), September 21, 2022.

flexibility if the Philippines is attacked, there would still a strong reluctance in the country to allow the United States to use the Philippines as a forward operating base from which to conduct combat operations that are not directly tied to the Philippines' defense.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

The previous chapters described in detail the political considerations, legal agreements, and interpretations of these agreements for U.S. basing and access in peacetime and in a Taiwan contingency for Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines when those countries are not attacked themselves. In this chapter, we provide conclusions and specific recommendations for each case study country, including highlighting areas of opportunity for the United States and the U.S. military to gain better access in each country.

While each treaty ally is unique when it comes to the basing and access agreements in place and strategic considerations facing political leadership, there are several broad conclusions that are prevalent across the three cases.

First, despite differences in the bilateral agreements between the United States and all three allies that result in variations in access and U.S. ability to deploy forces in peacetime, all of them are ambiguous on what those agreements mean for U.S. military access in a conflict if that country is not directly attacked. Importantly, despite differences in each ally's view of China and closeness with the United States, none of the allies feel comfortable with the United States conducting combat operations directly from their territory if they are not attacked.

Second, more than legal agreements, domestic political considerations are the most important factor that determines whether U.S. forces are granted access—both in peacetime and in a contingency. In all three countries, public opinion, and local politics in particular, matter in terms of whether certain capabilities would likely be acceptable to the national leadership, as well as what activities U.S. forces are likely to be able to undertake in different areas of a host country.

Third, there appear to be areas of discrepancies in interpretations of key bilateral agreements related to basing and access. These discrepancies, in turn, have the potential to lead to different expectations in terms of what types of capabilities or forces require consultation or consent, what U.S. military activities would be acceptable to the host country's leadership—both national and local—in different situations, and what U.S. forces can reasonably expect in terms of basing and access for various U.S. capabilities and activities.

The analysis also highlights notable differences among the three countries in terms of the likelihood of access in a contingency involving Taiwan. Japan is the most likely to grant access to U.S. forces for various types of operations, although the extent of access would depend on how the Japanese leadership defines the threat to Japan, a decision that could take consider-

able time and may not align with U.S. operational timelines. As discussed above, Japan also increasingly considers Taiwan as critical to its security and has made efforts to include the issue of Taiwan in foreign policy and security discussions. While challenges would still exist for access to certain types of capabilities and operations, and much would depend on the political leadership in power at the time, Japan is more likely to acquiesce to U.S. requests for basing at and access to facilities in Japan during a contingency than the other two countries. South Korea considers the issue of Taiwan to be too sensitive to discuss and does not appear to factor Taiwan into its foreign policy or defense planning. Rather, in addition to the strong desire to avoid antagonizing China into potentially engaging in economic coercion against the ROK, the prominent view in Seoul is that the main purpose of U.S. forces and capabilities on the Peninsula is to maintain the Armistice and defend South Korea against possible North Korean aggression. Taiwan also does not appear to factor heavily into Philippine decision-making on U.S. basing and access. Responses to U.S. basing and access requests in a Taiwan conflict would heavily depend on whether Philippine territory or interests are threatened, again making U.S. access in a conflict uncertain, particularly if Philippine territory is not struck.

Given these broad conclusions, below we provide specific recommendations for U.S. access challenges related to Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. The recommendations that flow from the findings of this report are applicable across the U.S. military and DoD. Given the sponsorship of this project, however, we will highlight recommendations for the U.S. Army, where relevant, followed by recommendations for other parts of the United States government that falls outside of the purview of the U.S. military.

One overarching recommendation for the U.S. military is that U.S. military leaders should plan for some amount of uncertainty related to access decisions in each of the three countries in a conflict. Our analysis highlights that even in Japan, where access is more likely than the other two countries, decision timelines could be slower than U.S. military plans call for, and Tokyo's decision to grant access for certain types of capabilities or activities might depend on how the leadership defines the threat to Japan. Similarly, the Philippines would also likely delay decision timelines as much as possible, absent a clear threat from China. For all three countries, military planners should take into account host nation sensitivities to certain types of capabilities and fears over the risk of Chinese retaliation. Country-specific recommendations and those most relevant for the U.S. Army are presented below.

Japan

Recommendation for the U.S. Military

Discuss regional and local differences with respect to access with Japanese counterparts to determine the most accessible locations for certain capabilities or forces. How Japan will respond to access notifications depends on the region or locality that will host the forces or capabilities. There was a unanimous view that deploying additional U.S. forces into the

Nansei Shotō would be difficult, for example, particularly if the United States is considering deploying kinetic capabilities. That said, variations exist among the different Nansei Shotō islands regarding sentiment toward the United States and U.S. forces, just as there were variations in how some of these island communities welcomed SDF forces and bases. Yonaguni, for example, may be more conducive to welcoming certain U.S. capabilities—particularly given how close it is to Taiwan—whereas other islands, such as Okinawa, Miyako, and Ishigaki, might be more challenging and therefore should be avoided or the focus of a longer-term diplomatic effort.

USARPAC could support this by consulting with Japanese counterparts early and often on the desire to introduce new capabilities, giving their counterparts in the SDF time to coordinate not just with local hosting communities, but also with the civilians in the MOD and broader government who will be leading the outreach effort, given its political nature. USARPAC conversations with its SDF counterparts are important, but these counterparts have very limited ability to negotiate and increase the likelihood of agreement with local communities.

Increase exercises and rotational training to normalize U.S. military presence and build relations in communities where the U.S. would like to increase posture. Because local populations, especially in some parts of Okinawa prefecture, are uncomfortable with the United States introducing new capabilities, holding frequent exercises or rotational training activities in specific localities could help to normalize U.S. military presence in communities that might be resistant to increased U.S. deployments. Exercising temporary deployment of kinetic capabilities to islands in the Nansei Shotō would also help to normalize this presence and could lead to a better access environment in the long term. These efforts will be difficult and take time. The key will be to not simply exercise and leave but to work at building relations with local communities to help them better understand the value of the U.S. military.

USARPAC could consider adding "liaison" personnel to exercise and training deployments in challenging parts of Japan to intentionally build local relations and interact with the local officials on Army-specific operations and capabilities. Additionally, housing liaison personnel in the GSDF facilities in the Nansei Shotō would help familiarize these local communities with having U.S. military personnel on their islands.

Focus on expanding deployment of nonkinetic capabilities, which are most likely to be agreed to by Japanese leadership. In general, we found that deploying new or expanding current access for nonkinetic capabilities would most likely present little challenge. In addition, nonkinetic capabilities, such as cyber, non-aerial ISR, and basic logistical support, that would largely be unnoticed by the public, would also generally be acceptable to Japan. These are all open doors through which more can and should be done. Of particular importance should be the focus on stockpiling critical munitions at existing U.S. military and SDF ammunition depots and the construction of new depots on U.S. or SDF bases where they do not yet exist.

USARPAC should focus on ensuring that it requests access for the critical nonkinetic capabilities that would be important for a Taiwan contingency, such as ISR. Housing cyber units at existing U.S. facilities, or SDF facilities, appears to be relatively easy as well. Given the permissive peacetime environment for deploying these capabilities, the likelihood of Japan agreeing to them is high.

Recommendations for the U.S. Government

The United States should discuss with Japan the need for rapid decisionmaking on access in a conflict. Japan's decisionmaking system, which requires political leadership to define an emerging situation as one of the four relevant categories to authorize SDF actions, is not expected to reach rapid decisions. As noted in Chapter 2, during a tabletop exercise on a Taiwan contingency held in Tokyo in 2022 among coalition lawmakers and former defense officials, defining the unfolding situation proved so difficult that it took two months to decide (in the course of the game).[1] Lack of a decision will preclude the United States from taking some actions directly from its bases in Japan. Yet, because a conflict over Taiwan can unfold quickly—to the detriment of Japan's long-term security interests—the United States needs to message clearly to Tokyo the critical need for its political timelines to synch with U.S. operational timelines, and the detrimental effects on deterrence and capabilities to prosecute the conflict if it does not. Toward this end, the United States should emphasize the need for a quick decision on access in a Taiwan contingency so that the United States can either begin operations or move its forces elsewhere. Helping Tokyo understand the importance of this could be done through high-level DoD engagement and U.S. military counterpart discussions, as well as hosting war games, simulation, and potentially even exercises to illustrate how delays in access decisions can be detrimental to U.S. force flows and operations in a conflict, and ultimately affect Japan's own security interests.

The United States should conduct more engagement with Japan to better understand what it is willing to do in a conflict. While the parameters of the SOFA are well understood, including the need for the United States to engage in prior consultation in certain scenarios, less understood is what Japan is willing to do in different phases of a crisis and in a contingency in which Japan itself is not attacked. This is largely a question of political will, but it is critical for the United States to understand, because Tokyo's decisions on what it authorizes the SDF to do will inherently affect what the United States can do. Engaging with Japan to gain a more realistic understanding of the limits of what Japan can do in different situations would enable the United States to plan its force posture and operational plans to better match reality.

[1] Takahashi, 2022.

The Republic of Korea

Recommendations for the U.S. Military

Increase the "floor" to flex options. The ROK places a heavy focus on maintaining a "floor" of 28,500 U.S. troops at all times. Acknowledging that the floor is no longer a congressional requirement, but a "sense of Congress," the DoD and the U.S. military should explore whether the ROK would agree to the United States having greater flexibility to use its forces on the Peninsula if it increases force levels above the current floor. In other words, seeking clarity from ROK counterparts as to whether the United States deploying troops over the 28,500 level could provide an opportunity to later draw on those forces if the Korean government agrees that this implements strategic flexibility in a responsible manner.

Given the U.S. Army's heavy presence on the Peninsula, USARPAC could facilitate conversations between the U.S. military and ROK counterparts on specific requirements for troop numbers to discuss flexibility in numbers and specific uses for ground forces that exceed the numerical requirement.

Frame access requests as meant for deterring North Korea when relevant. Because of the ROK's focus on the DPRK, capabilities that the United States seeks to preposition in the country should be framed as for deterring North Korea, when possible. Any capability that is not meant for this purpose will likely cause Seoul to signal its opposition to U.S. intentions. That said, many, if not all, the capabilities that the United States has historically brought onto the Peninsula can serve a purpose both in a Korean contingency and a Taiwan contingency. Several capabilities identified by interviewees as potentially being off-limits (e.g., PrSMs, long-range ISR) have significant operational value in a contingency involving the DPRK. Because of this, anything that the United States seeks to bring onto the Peninsula genuinely serves South Korea's security concerns and should be explicitly messaged as such.

USARPAC should ensure that all of its notifications and consultations for bringing in capabilities are framed as augmenting South Korean deterrence. Additionally, USARPAC should continue to message U.S. military intent to use these capabilities for South Korea's defense against the DPRK. At the same time, to better normalize U.S. strategic flexibility, USARPAC should message the important dual use some of these capabilities can play in broader regional conflicts, which nevertheless support the ROK's security.

Recommendations for the U.S. Government

Clarify the conditions under which the MDT applies. Because the ROK is a valuable U.S. ally, the United States should lead discussions to reach a common understanding of what the "mutual" means in the MDT. Seoul interprets the MDT as solely applicable for a North Korean attack on South Korea. This is understandable from a historical perspective, but nothing in the MDT limits the treaty to only the Peninsula and to the United States only supporting the

ROK in an attack by the DPRK. In addition to the question of whether the treaty applies to U.S. territories such as Guam, the United States should seek greater clarity on whether using U.S. forces in the region that are linked to OPCON would be considered a triggering event by ROK leaders. Relatedly, the United States should ensure that South Korean leaders understand that the United States has a sovereign right to redeploy from the Peninsula if forces are needed elsewhere, particularly for a large-scale contingency such as a Taiwan conflict.

Internationalize the alliance. The biggest hurdle to greater flexibility in using U.S. capabilities in South Korea has less to do with North Korea and more to do with China. The issue of access is inseparable from the politics of China in the ROK. There is no formula for ensuring that Korean policymakers broaden their perspective beyond the Peninsula, but the more that a mutual understanding can be reached on how the ROK's security is tied to the broader regional security, and how U.S. military capabilities on the Peninsula are tied to supporting the region's security and stability, the greater flexibility the United States could enjoy with basing and access in South Korea. Toward that end, the United States should pursue two lines of effort. First, USFK should regularize exercising off the Peninsula with other regional armed forces, particularly those of Japan and Australia. These types of multilateral exercises have occurred in the past, but they have been few in number.[2] Second, USFK should encourage the ROK military to exercise and train off the Peninsula with like-minded regional militaries. There are examples of such exercises, mostly multilateral in nature, such as Cobra Gold (Thailand), Deep Sabre (Singapore), Khaan Quest (Mongolia), and RIMPAC (United States). It is not apparent that the ROK is doing a lot bilaterally, particularly with other U.S. allies. The more the ROK can do so, the more "normal" it will be for these forces to comfortably leave the Peninsula and work with other countries on addressing shared threats. Through these activities, the ROK can also expand its influence in regional issues.

The Philippines

Recommendations for the U.S. Military

Use rotational access to maintain a persistent presence throughout the year, including exercises that bring in diverse capabilities at different locations throughout the country. Understanding the constitutional limitation on permanent presence, the United States has a legal framework to effectively maintain a persistent presence in the Philippines throughout the year by extending the timelines for rotational exercises throughout the country. Acknowl-

[2] For example, in 2011, approximately 500 soldiers from the 2nd Infantry Division went to the Philippines for Balikatan. In 2012, 150 USFK 8th Army soldiers participated in exercises in Japan. And in 2013, soldiers from the 1st ABCT (2nd ID) participated in Cobra Gold exercises (8th Army Public Affairs, "Eighth Army Unit to Deploy to Philippines for Exercise," Army.mil, March 22, 2011; "USFK to Become More 'Flexible,'" *Hankyoreh*, February 4, 2012; Walter T. Ham IV, "South Korea–Based Unit Participates in Cobra Gold," U.S. Army, February 21, 2013).

edging a strong possibility that Manila would reject requests to conduct combat operations directly from the Philippines in a Taiwan conflict, the United States should still seek to have a diverse set of capabilities in the country to maintain the possibility of using them as the conflict evolves and Manila possibly accepts. Even if Manila refuses, having additional capabilities in the Philippines could be advantageous should the United States want to deploy these in-theater capabilities elsewhere other than directly engaged in combat from the Philippines.

USARPAC could consider expanding its presence in the country by flexibly deploying units or capabilities through multiple exercises throughout the year in different parts of the country. Through these exercises, USARPAC can maintain a persistent presence with varied capabilities in strategic locations throughout the country. For example, to ensure that key U.S. Army capabilities are in-country, work to include ground-based fire units in at least one exercise at all times. Similarly, ensure that parts of the Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF) are always included in U.S. Army exercises.

Conduct a public messaging campaign to support broader strategic initiatives. Sometimes the issues constraining U.S. access in the Philippines have less to do with legal parameters and more to do with misunderstandings. The Philippines has given little thought to the importance of Taiwan for the Philippines' security, apart from the possible effect on OFWs. Yet, any attack on Taiwan—or the fall of Taiwan to the PRC—would have immediate adverse effects on the Philippines. The United States needs to promote the message that Taiwan matters for the Philippines' security and economy. Similarly, there is a lingering, incorrect message of the EDCA being limited to housing HA/DR capabilities. To make Philippine officials more comfortable with accepting a wider array of U.S. capabilities at EDCA bases, the United States needs to push back on the notion that the EDCA is strictly meant for HA/DR capabilities. Toward that end, U.S. military and civilian interlocuters should publicly reinforce the understanding that the EDCA applies not just for HA/DR but for the Philippines' broader security. The U.S. military can reinforce this by operationalizing its rights under the EDCA by prepositioning non-HA/DR capabilities.

USARPAC could support this public messaging effort though discussions with counterparts in the AFP, DND, and broader Philippines government. To demonstrate the wide applicability of the EDCA, USARPAC could work to preposition both nonkinetic and kinetic capabilities at the AFP's EDCA bases.

Ensure compatibility between U.S. access requests and AFP requirements. Bringing in kinetic capabilities becomes difficult if it appears as though the United States is looking to use the Philippines as a staging area or a forward operating base. The U.S. military should ensure that it packages its access requests as for the defense of the Philippines, so that it becomes easier politically for Manila to accept. To support this, exercises and capabilities should be those that the AFP already operates or that fall within its strategic and operational objectives. One possible solution could be to loan equipment or use Foreign Military Financing to ensure

that the AFP operates specific capabilities that the U.S. military would want to deploy to the Philippines. The more that the United States can argue that its activities serve the alliance and strengthen the AFP, either through improving capabilities or drawing on prepositioned stockpiles, the easier it becomes for political leadership to agree to the request.

USARPAC could hold discussions with its counterparts to determine specific ground-force capabilities that the AFP uses currently and is interested in operating in the future. Those capabilities that augment U.S. force requirements in peacetime should be the short-term focus so that those capabilities can be brought in (either via exercises or at EDCA bases) to ensure that they are in-country if a conflict occurs.

Let the AFP be the champion for U.S. access requests. Because the United States does not have a permanent presence in the Philippines, it has to work with the AFP to make requests for gaining access at AFP bases, either under the EDCA or for exercising purposes. The U.S. military should ensure that U.S. access requests match up with AFP strategic and operational goals, which will in turn increase the likelihood of the Philippine leadership granting access. This means ensuring that the AFP is involved in the access discussion from the very beginning, so that the AFP can coordinate with Philippine national defense counterparts and assist the with garnering political buy-in and also to help avoid any unnecessary local opposition that may result from a U.S. capability or exercise.

USARPAC should work with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command to ensure that AFP/DND counterparts are involved in the relevant access discussions and that these are connected to broader DoD efforts on security cooperation and access. For U.S. Army–specific capabilities, USARPAC could lead discussions with Philippines counterparts to determine how best to frame specific access requests for ground-force capabilities.

Recommendations for the U.S. Government

Countering Chinese efforts to influence local leadership should be a priority. Understanding that China frequently conducts activities aimed at influencing the local leadership and public, including through disinformation campaigns, the United States should help its ally by focusing more on countering these efforts. In particular, the United States should find creative counterincentives, coordinated across the U.S. government, to counter the misleading narratives spun by China about the intent or impact of U.S. military activities in the Philippines. To help make local communities more welcome to U.S. military presence, the United States needs to message the broader economic benefits of U.S. military presence and aid in their communities. One example could be to offer renewable energy for bases that could also be used for nearby communities.

Work to clarify details on important implementing agreements. There is no clarity on how to invoke the MDT. Nor are there details on how to implement it once it is invoked. Should

the United States have forces in the Philippines when a conflict starts, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and the AFP will need to know the details of how to transition from an exercise environment to an operation. To help them in this endeavor, the alliance should begin work on an IRR. Additionally, there needs to be thought given to command and control and integration of decisionmaking. Finally, and more fundamentally, the alliance needs to arrive at a mutual understanding of what circumstances would call for invoking the MDT, including attacks on U.S. forces in the region or an attack on Guam.

APPENDIX

Setting the Theater

To determine what types of capabilities and access the United States military would need in the Indo-Pacific region, and in particular in our case study countries of Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines in peacetime and in conflict, RAND held an internal workshop that included a group of U.S. military experts to discuss the types of capabilities and access the United States military would request in the region in two generic time periods: (1) peacetime and (2) conflict. We could have included a third category of "crisis," but we believe that many of the issues surrounding a conflict scenario will also be included in a crisis scenario. Therefore, we simplified our analysis to two generic time periods to assess what type of activities the United States would potentially wish to conduct in and from Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines. While there are numerous fictitious scenarios that we could choose from, we chose a hypothetical conflict involving China's invasion of Taiwan and a decision by the United States government to intervene on Taiwan's behalf. The decisions made in the peacetime scenario were also focused on how best to prepare for this possible Taiwan conflict scenario. The findings from this discussion served as a basis for the types of access we explored with country officials and experts. Below is a summary of the workshop discussion and insights.

There was widespread agreement among the workshop participants that for the United States to be successful in a Taiwan contingency, the U.S. military would have to ensure the prepositioning of critical capabilities in theater during peacetime. First and foremost, this means prepositioning munitions and fuel, two supplies that are bulky and hard to move in a crisis. It also means trying to place heavy equipment where possible, such as air defense radars, given the difficulty of moving these items once a crisis starts. Because of the nature of a Taiwan conflict, there is also a premium on ensuring a robust naval presence in the region with the forward deployment of major units. Of critical importance for this naval presence is having the capabilities at regional ports to enable rapid reload of vertical launching systems. Similarly, having medium-range jet fighters stationed in the region would also be desirable. Although the workshop participants did not definitely see the need for the U.S. Army to place kinetic capabilities in the region, if it did, they felt that finding hosts in the First Island Chain should be the priority. Finally, the workshop participants saw a necessity to place forward elements of selected headquarters in the region, such as those for MDTF air defense brigades, Army logistics brigades, and forward command elements. Beyond these general needs, the workshop participants looked at each of the three treaty allies and saw specific asks for each one.

In Japan, given the large number of forces already stationed in-country, the focus in peacetime was on making that presence more robust with an eye on prepositioning necessary logistics elements. For example, given the expected large force flow into theater, there would be a need for stockpiling adequate food, water and other supplies, including parts. And for the Air Force specifically, there was a need for stockpiling fuel and fuel bladders as well as munitions and expeditionary munition storage. Given the interest in placing kinetic capabilities in the First Island Chain, the Army would benefit if it could preposition ground-based missiles in the Nansei Shotō, as well as a robust stockpile of munitions for those capabilities. In terms of access, the workshop participants determined that the U.S Air Force would benefit from having access to as many air bases as possible (both SDF and civilian), given the need for alternative runways.

In a conflict scenario, the workshop participants saw Japan play a pivotal role, reflecting many of the public commentary and games on a Taiwan contingency. Specifically, U.S. operations would benefit from full access to all air bases (i.e., U.S., SDF, civilian), overflight of the Japanese archipelago, and being able to use Japan as a logistics hub to refuel, resupply, repair, and restock weapons. While the U.S. Air Force would look to flush their high-end capabilities from the bases prior to the onset of hostilities, they would want to fly fighter sorties from Japan given the proximity. And there was also a stated need to have the U.S. Army play a major role in Japan for RSOI activities for U.S. forces flowing into theater. Using Japan as a base from which to deploy ISR assets was also seen as critical to any U.S. operation.

In the Philippines, because there is no substantial number of U.S. forces stationed in-country, as in Japan, the operational focus in peacetime was on bringing in as many U.S. forces as possible. A big focus was on gaining access to AFP bases, particularly in the south of the country, to preposition key capabilities that would enable U.S. forces to operate from the country. Understanding that the United States would be prohibited from stationing permanent units, the workshop participants wanted to preposition large quantities of fuel, fuel bladders, and munitions. Because of the lack of dependable transport capabilities in-country, the workshop participants also felt it would be necessary to preposition trucks, cranes, and fuel haulers that will be able to help with movement of these goods. Additionally, the workshop participants felt the U.S. would benefit from prepositioning expeditionary shelters for U.S. aircraft, U.S. Army air defense systems (especially cruise missile defense), and critical repair capabilities, such as rapid damage repair capabilities and maintenance assets. As long as these types of capabilities are prepositioned, the United States would not need to station a large permanent presence in the Philippines, although having different units in-country for various heel-to-toe rotational exercises was seen as important to maintain a steady flow of U.S. troops on-island and immediately into the fight should China strike the Philippines. Additionally, the United States could help set itself up for success by deploying ground-based signals intelligence (SIGINT) capabilities, a small search-and-rescue unit, a medical facility near or on AFP bases, and rotational ISR platforms that can maintain situational awareness of the region, particularly reconnaissance to the north of the Philippines. Like Japan, given

the Philippines' location, it was also seen as desirable to place kinetic capabilities somewhere that keeps the Taiwan Strait within range, most likely brought in during rotational exercises.

As with Japan, in a conflict, the workshop participants saw U.S. operations benefit from being able to operate directly from the Philippines. This means having full access to all AFP air bases, overflight of the Philippines archipelago, and being able to use the Philippines as a logistics hub for U.S. Air Force and Navy assets to refuel, resupply, repair, and restock weapons. Similarly, the U.S. Air Force would want to fly sorties from these bases, given the proximity to the Taiwan Strait. Having U.S. ISR capabilities maintain operations throughout a conflict would also be critical to supporting U.S. operations. If the United States does have ground-based kinetic capabilities in-country at the time of a conflict, being able to use them against Chinese assets in the Strait would also benefit U.S. operations.

Despite its distance from Taiwan, the workshop participants saw similar capabilities needed in the Republic of Korea considering that a war over Taiwan could severely strain U.S. facilities in Japan and the Philippines. Toward that end, in peacetime, the workshop participants wanted to preposition fuel and munitions and the trucks needed to rapidly transport those supplies within country. There was also an interest in deploying ground-based SIGINT to the Peninsula to keep track of Chinese activities in the north, preparing medical facilities in case those in Japan and field units become overburdened, prepositioning naval reloading capabilities at Chinhae naval base, and increasing the number of fighter jets stationed in Osan under the U.S. Air Force's Agile Combat Employment concept. In a conflict, because of the distance, the options that the workshop participants sought for the ROK were more constrained relative to the Philippines and Japan. In fact, the workshop participants did not seek any basing or access to bases during the conflict over Taiwan, apart from possible naval reloading. Any equipment, supplies, or munitions that were prepositioned in the ROK during peacetime were largely sent to Japan. And the extra air units that were stationed in peacetime were flushed and sent to bases in Japan where they would be closer to the conflict.

To summarize, the broad categories of capabilities and access that the experts in the workshop determined the United States may most likely request of its allies include

- supplies/parts/fuel
- munitions
- nonkinetic forces, such as headquarters, cyber units, or ISR
- kinetic ground-based capabilities, such as PrSMs/HIMARS
- combat aircraft or naval ships.

We gained additional insights into each of these categories for the case study countries through interviews and examination of the literature and agreements for each host country. These insights are presented in Chapters 2–4 in this report.

Abbreviations

AAAS	Anticipated Armed Attack Situation
AAS	Armed Attack Situation
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
DMDC	Defense Manpower Data Center
DND	Department of National Defense (Philippines)
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
EDCA	Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FOIP	Free and Open Indo-Pacific
GSDF	Ground Self-Defense Force (Japan)
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
HIMARS	High Mobility Artillery Rocket System
IIS	Important Influence Situation
IRR	Implementing Rules and Regulations
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
MBA	Military Bases Agreement
MCAS	Marine Corps Air Station
MDT	Mutual Defense Treaty
MDTF	Multi-Domain Task Force
MOD	Ministry of Defense
NSS	National Security Strategy
OFWs	Overseas Filipino Workers
OPCON	operational control
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PrSM	precision strike missile
ROK	Republic of Korea
RSOI	reception, staging, onward movement, and integration
SDF	Self-Defense Forces (Japan)
SEB	Security Engagement Board
SIGINT	signals intelligence
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
STS	Survival Threatening Situation

THAAD	Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USARPAC	U.S. Army Pacific
USFK	U.S. Forces Korea
VFA	Visiting Forces Agreement

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Discussions about U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific often assume that the United States will have the ability to not only quickly access its military capabilities stationed in the region, but also to freely operate from bases in allied countries. The authors of this report explore this assumption, examining the opportunities and constraints that the U.S. military might face when operating from the territories of Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the Philippines. The authors examine the basing and access assumptions for the U.S. military should it wish to preposition supplies in, and operate from, these allies in peacetime and in a conflict over Taiwan when these allies themselves have not been attacked.

For this research, the authors conducted a comprehensive literature review of historical and current studies on access; held an internal RAND workshop with military experts to determine the types of capabilities and access requests the United States might make of Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines in a Taiwan contingency; conducted extensive discussions and interviews in the fall of 2022 with officials and experts in Japan, the ROK, and the Philippines and with U.S. government personnel and experts in the United States who work on issues related to these three allies; and examined important agreements the United States has with each treaty ally that are relevant for U.S. military access and basing.

The authors present their findings regarding access and basing for each ally and recommend ways to improve outcomes in both areas.

$35.75

ISBN-10 1-9774-1297-1
ISBN-13 978-1-9774-1297-3

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RR-A1985-1