

## How the 'Deterrence' Narrative Makes the US Marines in Okinawa 'Indispensable'

Perhaps the most famous statistic about Okinawa is that it hosts the majority of the land area of US military bases in Japan despite comprising only a fraction of a percent of the total land area of the state. The central government in Tokyo has refused to countenance substantial revision of the status quo in the face of increasing local opposition, including mass protests and the election of anti-base politicians at the local, prefectural, and national level. The relocation of the controversial US Marine base at Futenma, in urban Ginowan City, to Henoko, in the north of the island, has become the locus of opposition in recent years. Activists, local and progressive national media, and local and progressive national politicians call for it to be relocated outside of Okinawa to reduce the burden on the prefecture, while the central government, the conservative national media, and the United States (US) maintain that the current relocation plan must be implemented. Pro-Henoko actors insist that to do otherwise would undermine 'deterrence' (*yokushiryoku*), stating that the base is 'indispensable' (*fukaketsu*), linking the US Marines presence to the 'China threat', the nearby Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, and the very existence of the Japan-US alliance. Furthermore, the current relocation plan is narrated as the 'only' (*yuitsu*) solution to alleviate the burden on Okinawa, and to block or alter it puts the lives of the residents of Ginowan City at risk. This strategic narrative of deterrence became the common sense understanding of the issue, however, its persuasive power is waning. The unintended consequences of the narrative may ironically include a negative impact on the deterrence Japan enjoys courtesy of the US.

This article analyses the deployment of the deterrence strategic narrative in the Japanese media, focusing in particular on Japan's best-selling daily, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*. The first section outlines the concept of strategic narratives and places them in the context of the Japanese media ecology, identifying the actors behind the narrative and their discursive power. The narrative invokes deterrence as a sacred cow and draws on the voices of analysts, military officials, and other authority/expert figures; thus, the subsequent section clarifies the concept of deterrence as conceptualised in the literature. The main section of the article then traces the development of the narrative from the late 1990s, illustrating how it emphasizes the ostensible role of the Marines in a hypothetical conflict with China over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Island dispute and how it discursively links the Marines' presence with China's improved maritime capabilities and its 'aggressive' behavior in the East China Sea (ECS). This section also shows how actors who disagree with the deterrence narrative are rendered as naive, even 'reckless' (*ranbo*), with the warning that questioning the move risks undermining the Japan-US alliance, and thus the security of all of Japan. The article concludes that, given the increasing opposition to the relocation the continued propagation of the deterrence narrative may ironically actually reduce deterrence in two ways: firstly, given the psychological nature of deterrence, the narrative actually produces the Marines' presence as a deterrent, meaning that if the Japanese government is eventually forced to back down, the perception of deterrence may actually be reduced. Secondly, the narrative's lack of persuasive power on Okinawa risks transforming opinion from anti-Henoko to anti-base in general, perhaps even to pro-Okinawan

independence. This is a much greater threat to the future of US deployment on Okinawa, and thus to what is perceived as the basis of (extended) deterrence and indeed the alliance.

*Mini-Literature review needs completing . . . include work on narratives as well as Okinawa?* The politics of the Henoko base issue and more broadly the politics of the US bases in Okinawa are too complex, and the history too long, for detailed treatment here. Rather, see Williams (2013, 2015)<sup>1</sup> for studies of the subnational and local politics, Hook et al (2015) for analysis of the impact of the bases on everyday life in Okinawa, Son and Mason (XXXX), X and X, for analyses of the bases in a regional strategic context, and Inoue<sup>2</sup> (2004?), X and X, for studies of the anti-base movement. This article confines itself to tracing the development of the strategic narrative of deterrence from its origins in the late 1990s to the current impasse, drawing on the concepts of strategic narratives and discursive power to detail the instrumental manner in which the narrative has been deployed to render the base relocation move inevitable and to discursively disenfranchise those who oppose the move. Although the counter-narrative(s), and some of the proponents, are referred to where relevant, the focus of the article is the strategic narrative of deterrence.

### **Strategic Narratives**

The central claim of this article is that the Japanese government and conservative media domestically deploy a strategic narrative of deterrence in which the US Marines are rendered as indispensable and the base relocation to Henoko is produced as the only possible solution to alleviating the burden on Okinawa. This section defines the concept of a strategic narrative and outlines how their use is dependent on the deployment of discursive power. It further identifies the actors involved in the narrative, and details the media environment in which they operate.

A narrative is a sequence of selected events, tied together by causality and consequence. A given narrative will have actors, whose actions or conflict takes place in particular setting. Narratives create meaning by structuring otherwise apparently random events and creating a context for understanding the past, the present, and the future. In creating order, a narrative thus ‘sets constraints on the imaginable and actionable, and shapes perceived interests’ (Roselle et al 2014: 76 article). A narrative becomes a strategic narrative when it is ‘used strategically to sway target audiences’ (Roselle et al). Roselle et al (2014a, 2014b) have developed the concept of strategic narratives as tools in understanding international politics. They break the strategic narrative down to its component parts: the actors, the setting, the conflict, and the resolution. The actors presented in a narrative are attributed with ‘characteristics, interests, and behaviours’ (Roselle et al article 75), which shape and constrain their actions. The setting is international system – or more precisely, the nature of the international

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<sup>1</sup> <http://as.ucpress.edu/content/53/5/958>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/379632>

system. In a strategic narrative, the international system can be depicted as an anarchic place where hard power rules, or a world of good and evil, or of cooperation and peace. The characteristics of the setting and of the actors mutually constitutive: an anarchic world will consist of rival great powers whereas a globalized, interconnected world will include MNCs, international institutions, and so on. The action/conflict between these actors in the specific setting determines the resolution or possible resolutions. In this way, the strategic narrative makes certain policy outcomes necessary or inevitable and rule out others infeasible or even unthinkable. As we shall see, the strategic narrative of deterrence takes place in an anarchic world, where a rising, revisionist China is depicted as waiting for its opportunity to seize Japanese territory. Meanwhile, the US Marines in Okinawa are cast as a crucial deterrent, due to their own military capabilities as well as the symbolic status of their presence. Therefore, the narrative concludes the only way for Japan to stay safe is for the Marines to stay. This narrative seeks to dominate and silence other narratives, for example one in which the Marines presence makes Okinawa a 'magnet' for Chinese missiles, or in which Okinawa's particular history could see it develop not a base location but as a bridge between Japan and China (cite these two).

How does this or other narratives come to dominate a given discourse? It is not enough for the narrative to maintain internal coherency, or that the narrative appears plausible to the target audience, though obviously these are important elements. In the contestation over narratives, some voices carry more weight than others (*is this a quote?*). In order to become dominant, the story-teller must wield discursive power. Discursive power accrues to those 'subjects authorized to speak and to act (e.g. foreign policy officials, defence intellectuals, development experts)' (Milliken 1999, 229, emphasis and parentheses in original). The study of the projection of strategic narratives, as well as their reception by target audiences, necessitates identifying those actors with the discursive resources to narrate a compelling, persuasive story which convinces the audiences of its prescribed resolution.

A key argument of Roselle et al is that the changing communications environment has had a fundamental impact on politics and the efficacy of strategic narratives. The new media ecology is said to increased transparency and empowered new actors (Roselle et al 2014 book p. 10-11). This article does not seek to dispute these points. Rather, one contribution this article makes is the recognition that these changes are not universally uniform. Even within the group of highly industrialised countries, the Japanese environment stands out. In some ways the Japanese communications environment does mirror developments elsewhere. Newspaper sales are in decline. There is a growing skepticism of conventional media outlets, epitomized by the term *masugomi*, a play on the word *masukomi* (mass media) in which the media part (*komi*) is exchanged out for the word for garbage (*gomi*). Bulletin boards such as *Ni-Channeru* enable like-minded people to critically discuss politics anonymously, often expressing opinions unacceptable in daily conversation. The government's mishandling of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and the failure of both the state and the mainstream media to provide reliable information during the crisis have undermined their credibility.

Having said this, newspaper sales remain at levels unimaginable in the rest of the world – the conservative *Yomiuri Shimbun* is comfortably the world’s best-selling newspaper, the *Asahi Shimbun* and *Mainichi Shimbun* take second and third place, while the *Nikkei Shimbun* remains the world’s best-selling financial newspaper.<sup>3</sup> In the West, and especially in the US, the proliferation of online media outlets has created a media environment notorious for ‘fake news’ stories. Indeed, the president of the US has gone as far as to describe CNN, a (formerly?) prestigious media outlet, as ‘fake news media’ (cite). Another neologism, ‘alternative facts’, risks reducing media credibility to uncharted lows. The main Japanese newspapers (and their associated TV stations) still enjoy a relatively high degree of editorial credibility (McCargo 2010 **is a quote?**).<sup>4</sup> The ability of new media outlets to gain access to information remains restricted by the *kisha club* (reporters club) system, which continues to reproduce the dependent relationship between the mainstream media and the state. Furthermore, the use of the internet in elections was prohibited until 2013. Thus, TV and newspaper still dominate elections, unlike in for example the US, where social media has been critical to presidential campaigns since 2008.

For various cultural and societal reasons, social media usage, at least in public and semi-public fora, is largely relatively apolitical (Takeshita et al 2014). Indeed, it is striking that, despite the very high use of blogging, plus increasing penetration of Twitter and Facebook, social media is neither a major source of news nor a forum of debate in the way it is in the West. To be clear, sharing of political stories, critic and ridicule of politicians and parties does take place, but largely in closed groups with friends.<sup>5</sup> Finally, although public broadcaster NHK remains a highly credible outlet, it has complex and close relationship with the government, as illustrated by former NHK Director General Momoi Katsuto’s statement that ‘we cannot turn left when the government says right’, as well as the Abe administration’s interference in NHK’s programming output (Tessa Morris Suzuki). All of this is to say that, relative to other highly industrialised countries, the Japanese media environment empowers traditional actors such as the national newspapers and government officials. It is precisely these actors who have, with no small degree of success, deployed the deterrence strategic narrative to convince the Japanese public of the necessity of the US Marines in Okinawa. As we have seen, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* is the world’s best-selling, it is also conservative, the (obviously) the biggest newspaper in Japan. A broadsheet that supports and has close ties with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and thus which follows the government’s lead on the Henoko

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<sup>3</sup> There are reasons related to sales and subscriptions which partly account for this, none-the-less, the newspaper remains more powerful than in any other highly industrialised country.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that ‘fake news’ phenomenon has not reached Japan, but that its impact has been much *milder*, e.g. [https://www.buzzfeed.com/kotahatachi/fake-in-japan?utm\\_term=.pmny1yaZY#.eiY292nNX](https://www.buzzfeed.com/kotahatachi/fake-in-japan?utm_term=.pmny1yaZY#.eiY292nNX)

<sup>5</sup> A recent ‘troubleshooter’ column from the *Yomiuri Shimbun* nicely illustrates mainstream views on public political debate on social media: a university student wrote in to ask for advice after engaging in an online argument on Twitter, which ended in the wider dissemination of their tweets and broader online critique and harassment. The first line of the response, from best-selling science fiction author Saisho Hazuki – not a classically conservative figure – runs as follows: ‘Are you aware that when you are tweeting it’s the same as being naked and crying aloud in front of people in a public place?’. Saisho continues to reprimand the student, and warn them to be more careful and considerate with their tweets in future to avoid provocations. <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0002616063>

relocation, it is the obvious source for the deterrence narrative. Aside from its editorial content, this article examines the news output, illustrating how certain voices, for example Japanese and US defense officials and pro-relocation academics, are cited and praised, while anti-relocation voices are silenced or ridiculed, and how the Marines are discursively linked to threats from China and North Korea.

## **Deterrence**

In the deterrence narrative, despite the reliance on the concept, supported by quotes from IR experts such as military officials, scholars, and analysts – from both Japan and the US – the mechanics of deterrence and how the Marines are fundamental to it, are not explained. Instead, vague statements referring to the interoperability of the Marines and Japanese forces, or to opposition to the relocation as threatening to undermine the alliance. This section clarifies the concept of deterrence, providing context for understanding the deterrence narrative. At its most basic, deterrence involves A persuading B, through implicit or explicit threats (verbal or physical), not to act against A's interests. Of course, A's interests may involve more than the protection of A itself, which leads us to the division between central and extended deterrence. Central deterrence refers to deterring an attack on a state's home territory, while extended deterrence refers to the state extending deterrence to include this to include third party states. Deterrence, whether central or extended, involves either the threat of massive retaliation, up to and including nuclear weapons, and/or denial, i.e. the threat that A would simply prevent B from succeeding in its actions, therefore B should not take the actions in the first place. Whether denial or massive retaliation, central or extended, effective deterrence requires (a) that A has sufficient military capabilities to enforce the threat and (b) credibility, that is, instilling the belief in the opponent that A will follow up on the threat. Finally, deterrence obviously requires communication, effective signaling of what actions B should not embark upon, and what consequences are threatened should B follow through. Thus, deterrence is psychological: though it relies on physical capabilities, it is achieved through credibility and communication.(cite Schelling?)

Technically Japan enjoys extended deterrence via the US, which is the foundation of Japan's security strategy – although increasingly Japan is engaging in central deterrence, and is the world's seventh largest military spender (SIPRI 2017). Of all US allies, Japan enjoys more or less as much credibility as is possible under extended deterrence.<sup>6</sup> Most obviously, the world's longest established Security Treaty pledges the US to defend Japan should it come under attack, including shelter under the US's nuclear umbrella. According to a report commissioned for the US government and written by three top US security analysts – precisely the kind of people cited by the deterrence narrative – such treaties are 'viewed as foundational, contractual documents', and failing to oblige by treaty commitments would undermine confidence in the US not only in East Asia but globally, leading

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<sup>6</sup> Even the current US president, who went as far as to call NATO obsolete, refrained from doing more than calling for Japan to increase its payments to the US.

to the unravelling of US-authored security architecture around the globe (Anderson et al 2013).<sup>7</sup> Beyond the treaty, another key element of credibility is political military support. In the case of Japan, this includes US military sales and of course the overseas deployment of troops. According to the same US analysts, such deployments are 'viewed as highly credible and reliable' and are 'assumed to represent a 'trip wire' initiating a much larger US response' (Anderson et al 2013). Indeed, the analysts go as far as to describe 'permanent bases' the 'highest form of assurance the US can provide' (is direct quote or not?). The US Marines at Futenma are a fractional component of the US forces deployed in Japan, ranging from the 7<sup>th</sup> fleet Carrier Group George Washington at Yokosuka and the Airforce bases at Kadena and Yokota, to name but a few of the major installations. Joint exercises, with troops standing shoulder-to-shoulder, are undertaken to increase joint capabilities and interoperability, but are perhaps more important as a demonstration of power and signal of intent, and are 'closely observed by all parties in the region' (Anderson et al 2013). Japan and the US frequently engage in joint exercises together and with other regional states. In more basic signaling terms, it is 'difficult to overemphasize the degree to which US senior leadership statements are pored over by government officials and members of the media in foreign capitals': consecutive US presidents have stated, among other things, that the disputed islands in the ECS are included under article five of the alliance.<sup>8</sup> Finally, despite the distances from the US mainland and the development of Chinese missile technology, the joint Japan-US capabilities are unrivalled in the region, by a long distance, in both denial and massive retaliation terms.

The point here is not to offer an in-depth analysis of the role of the US Marines in deterrence, instead it is to put the deterrence narrative, which draws upon the talismanic potency of the term 'deterrence', as well as the discursive power of security experts to support this story, into context. The 3,000 Marines at Futenma are not obviously key to Japan's extended deterrence, conventionally conceived. In the broader context of deterrence, they are insignificant.<sup>9</sup> However, as noted above, 'foreign capitals' place much weight on signaling. As we shall see in the conclusion, by insisting that the base at Henoko *is* fundamental to deterrence, in order to delegitimize domestic opposition, the narrative may actually have created a situation where the base issue does threaten to undermine deterrence.

### **The Deterrence Narrative**

Since the late 1990s, when opposition to the newly announced relocation to Henoko began to emerge, the presence of the Marines has consistently been framed as being indispensable to deterrence. As early as 1997, the Futenma relocation was described in a *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial as necessary to preserve the 'indispensable deterrence of the US military' (22 Dec 1997). This line of argument was repeated in various other subsequent

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<sup>7</sup> Explain the report, why you use it, etc...

<sup>8</sup> Though the actual US contribution in the event of a conflict has been debated (give the e.g.s)

<sup>9</sup> Takahashi Sugio and grey areas. Give a brief explanation of Sasebo transportation, the offensive nature of marines and their purpose in the region.

editorials (e.g. 9 Feb 1998, also 11 Dec 1997), including one which specified that reducing the number of bases in Okinawa would 'reduce deterrence' (*yokushiryoku genjiru*)' (19 Nov 1999) and such a move 'must be avoided'. (19 Nov 1999). The issue went quiet for some years as various committees were set up to iron out the details of the new base and consultation proceeded with local residents in Nago (municipality of Henoko), resurfacing in 2005 in advance of the 2006 US-Japan Roadmap for Realignment Implementation. Meanwhile in 2004 a helicopter from the Futenma base crashed into a building at Okinawa International University, leading to massive anti-base demonstrations and fuelling anti-base opposition on the island. The roadmap detailed the relocation plan, including the controversial V-shaped runways which would require massive land reclamation over the coral bay at Henoko. As opposition mounted, the importance of the Marines in Okinawa in terms of the overall US deterrent was restated in multiple editorials and articles, often contextualised using both the North Korean missile threat and China's military modernization (e.g. 6th July 2005; editorial 19 of October 2005) as well as the importance of not weakening the alliance with the US.

An editorial published on 6th of July 2005, entitled 'The Futenma Relocation is going off course: Don't expose the Japan-US alliance relationship to a crisis', is illustrative. In a rare move, it criticised the LDP government itself for not 'moving aggressively to solve the problem', instead allowing local opposition and environmental issues to delay the move. As with other similar articles, it went on to cite the North Korean and China's improved maritime capabilities and incursions into Japanese maritime space, as context for the final point: 'decreasing the US deterrent would have a major impact on Japan's security situation'.

### **DPJ Years**

But it was from 2009 that the US Marines and deterrence became truly inseparable. The period after the publication of the roadmap saw three LDP leaders come and go in as many years. Meanwhile the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won control of first the Upper House, followed the historic 2009 landslide Lower House victory under Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio (2009-10). The Roadmap (and move to Henoko) had been forced through the Diet in the final days of LDP rule, despite Upper House opposition. Thus, Hatoyama pledged to find an alternative '*kengai*' (outside of Okinawa prefecture) solution. However, his plans came up against resistance from both his own government and the US. The bureaucracy secretly conspired with US officials to prevent any change in the roadmap, while US officials told their new DPJ counterparts that attempting to change the roadmap would lead to losing 'all realignment plans' and that our 'alliance will be seriously damaged' (O'Shea 2014, Undersec of Defence Flournoy speaking to Okada).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Change quote to Gates Flournoy pretending to be open to renegotiation but actually only open to renegotiation the positioning of e.g. electricity pylons. Include also mention of US 'allowing' another location within Japan (but not outside) and note how it was obvious also then that no other community wants the Marines, that's precisely why they are in Okinawa!

His inability to reopen the discussions with the US or find an alternative location in Japan, together with a media narrative that villified him on the premise that his actions were fundamentally undermining the alliance, led to a massive drop in his approval ratings (from 71% to 21% in just over six months), and finally his resignation in June of 2010. Shortly before resignation, on announcing that he would renege on his pledge and return to the original Henoko relocation plan, he apologised to the Okinawan people and stated that he had 'come to realise' the 'interoperability' of the Marines in terms of the overall US forces in Okinawa, and the relocation was 'the only way to maintain deterrence' (Satoko). Only a few months later Hatoyama admitted in an interview that 'deterrence' was simply a 'pretext' and that in truth, it was a political decision based on the aforementioned facts that the US refused to re-open negotiations and that, perhaps unsurprisingly, no region in Japan was willing to accept a large-scale Marine base. The revealing interview also provided insight into Hatoyama's relationship with Obama and the attempt to find an alternative location in Japan. This startling revelation that deterrence was not part of the calculation made front pages of the local Okinawa newspapers, but was relegated to the middle pages of the national press, receiving little coverage. As we shall see, while Hatoyama's original deterrence utterance was incorporated into the narrative and its history, the admission that it was a pretext was conveniently forgotten.

#### Discursively Delegitimising the Opposition

There was little movement on the issue until 2013 when Governor Nakaima reversed his previous anti-Henoko position and approved the central government's land reclamation petition, enabling commencement of runway construction.<sup>11</sup> Less than a year later, he lost his re-election campaign against Onaga Takeshi, who opposed the relocation to Henoko, and who subsequently withdrew the land reclamation permission, halting construction of the runways and beginning a complex legal battle that continues at time of writing. It is perhaps ironic that Onaga has the legal rights to do this thanks to the US authored constitution, which sought to reduce the central power of the Japanese government in the aftermath of WWII by empowering local and regional governments.

Since then, the deterrence narrative has been further reinforced. Illustrative of the current discourse is a Special Feature (*tokushu*) in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* from 2016 (12 April). The feature tells the story of the base relocation issue, beginning with the infamous rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl in 1996(5?), and on to Hatoyama's failed pledge and resignation. Interestingly, the lengthy and detailed article includes Hatoyama's resignation and his statement that the Marines were crucial to deterrence. Yet there is no mention of Hatoyama's retraction and admission that 'deterrence' was simply a pretext for an entirely political decision. This is all the more surprising since the feature does linger on the question of Hatoyama's role in the whole issue, criticising him for 'inviting the confusion that has had a lasting effect' on Okinawa, and blaming him for the subsequent victories of anti-base politicians in Nago and even Onaga's victory in the gubernatorial election. It goes on to cite former vice-

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<sup>11</sup> It has been pointed out that this took place in the same year as Abe increased the Okinawa economic development budget by 15%  
<http://uk.mobile.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUKBRE9BQ0AE20131227?i=1>



minister for Defence Akiyama Masahiro who states that 'we almost reached an agreement with locals people on the relocation issue' before Hatoyama's pledge changed everything. It is true that Hatoyama's pledge deepened Okinawans distrust of the central government, but assigning this level of blame to Hatoyama ignores the long standing and vocal opposition to the relocation on the island (opposition hardened in 2005 after the helicopter crash), as well as discounting the fact that 13 years after the first announcement of the move to Henoko there had been almost no progress.

Indeed, critique of anti-relocation politicians is an important element of the deterrence strategic narrative. After Hatoyama announced that he would implement the Henoko plan after all, Fukushima Mizuho, leader of his coalition partners, the Social Democrat Party, and cabinet minister stated that she would refuse to sign off on the plan. Hatoyama forced her hand, and she further stated that she would resign rather than accept the move, with the result that she was fired from the cabinet. She was immediately criticised in a *Yomiuri Shimbun* editorial for 'ignoring deterrence and the rapid response capabilities of the US military', especially in the context of how Japan and the US should deal with China's military modernization' (and the North Korean nuclear threat). Today, the narrative is the same but the characters have changed: instead of criticising Hatoyama or Fukushima, ire is reserved for Onaga, the anti-relocation Governor of Okinawa. In various articles Onaga has been criticised for making political gain out of Okinawa's difficult situation (24 June 2016), for preventing the reduction of the burden on Okinawa (14 Oct 2015), and that he fails to understand deterrence (15 Sept 2016). Indeed, when Okinawa prefectural government published a white paper questioning the logic the US Marines in deterrence, *Yomiuri* responded with an editorial criticising the report, describing Onaga's actions as reckless (*ranbo*, the same word used to describe Hatoyama five years before), and citing China's increased activity in the ECS and its military build-up as increasing the importance of the Marines mobility and station in Okinawa.

#### China and Senkaku/Diaoyu Dispute

China's increased activity in the ECS and its military modernization is another fundamental element of the deterrence narrative. Most articles on the Futenma relocation state contextualise the need for the US Marines to remain on Okinawa in terms of China. As illustrated above, this is usually involves discursively linking the two with a statement noting that China is increasing its military capabilities, or has increased incursions into Japanese waters. Illustrative is an opinion piece in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* by Tetsuo Kotani (6 Nov 2015), a researcher at the Japan Institute for International Affairs, which argues that the Marines location in Okinawa is important due to the fact that Okinawa is in the Western Pacific, thus increasing the reliability of deterrence. China's maritime advancement is mentioned later in the context of defending Japan's Southwestern Islands (of which both Okinawa and the disputed islands are a part), and for good measure the article concludes by mentioning Governor Onaga's cooperation with the Japan Communist Party, though the relevance of this is left to reader. Sometimes this China element is developed further. For example, in an article explaining deterrence in the context of collective self-defence, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* cited the example of how the US naval withdrawal from

Subic Bay in the Philippines – at the request of the Filipino government – led to a vacuum which reduced deterrence in the South China Sea, and thus encouraged China to increase its activities act more aggressively against its opponents in that maritime dispute. While the ECS issue is often alluded to, direct references are not unusual: a 2016 article, 'Base Relocation Delay, Will Affect the American Security Guarantee', (8 March) cites an Ministry of Defence official who states that the Marines are a 'big deterrent', and play 'an important role in the defence of (Japan's) Southwestern Islands, including the Senkakus'. Another special feature on the relocation issue cites unnamed US government officials as expressing their fears of reduced deterrence following Onaga's revocation of land reclamation permission at Henoko (15 September 2015). The feature then goes on to cite Defence Minister Nakatani Gen, who emphasized that having the Marines in Okinawa was 'extremely important' in 'deterring unforeseen circumstances'. Despite the discursive linkage with China, the deterrence narrative correlates more with events related to the Henoko relocation, in particular opposition to it, and less to actual events in the ECS (*is a graph necessary here?*).

### The US-Japan Alliance

As outlined above, a key element of deterrence is credibility, for which the state of the Japan-US relationship, and especially the security guarantee, is often used as a litmus test. The fear that delays in the move to Henoko will have a 'negative effect' (*akaekkyo*) on the alliance is frequently raised as causing harm to deterrence. An early example of this is the aforementioned criticism of the government for delaying the move to Henoko, warning that 'decreasing the US deterrent would have a major impact on Japan's security situation' (6 July 2005). This was mild in comparison to the vilification of Hatoyama due to his attempts to find an alternative. The *Yomiuri's* New Year editorial referred to Hatoyama's 'indecisiveness', emphasised that the Japan-US alliance had been the foundation of Japan's peace and prosperity since 1955, and described Hatoyama's 'intention' to 'separate Japan from the US' as 'extremely dangerous' (1 January 2010 direct Q from AP). Even the more liberal *Asahi Shimbun* blamed him for making Washington 'distrustful' of Tokyo.

Similar arguments are found regarding deterrence today. The publication of the 2014 US Quadrennial Defense Review, which called for cuts in defense spending and increased burden sharing with allies such as Japan and South Korea, served to heighten the fears related to the maintenance of deterrence and the US presence in the region. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* published several articles on the important of Japan doing more to ensure the US presence, for example pushing through collective self-defence and implementing the move from Futenma to Henoko. A 2015 opinion piece in the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, by Kawakami Takashi of Takushoku University, makes the specific argument that while Okinawa must shoulder a heavy burden, further delays will damage relations with the US, and the security of Japan takes precedence over local Okinawan issues. Several of the preceding examples have included quotes from US government and military officials, and the importance of *beiatu* (US pressure) cannot be underestimated. The *Yomiuri Shimbun* regularly cites named and unnamed US officials and scholars, almost always in the context of how the delay is damaging the alliance and how important the Marines in

Okinawa are to deterrence. Apart from the above examples, in a featured interview published in 2016 former US Secretary of Defence William Perry states that the opposition to the Henoko move is myopic and irrational, given the current security situation. Also in 2016 the *Yomiru Shimbun* published an opinion piece authored by Kevin Maher, who lost his job as Head of Japan Affairs in the State Department after giving a lecture to a group of American students in which he described Okinawans as 'lazy' and 'manipulative' (cite). Despite his highly controversial status, Maher's piece was published, and in it, he touches on the usual themes: the Marines in Okinawa maintain the US deterrent in Japan, and provide security not only for Japan but for the Far East region as a whole. They must remain in Okinawa in order to train, since this is where their training camp is, and if they are moved somewhere else, they will lose their deterrent value. Interestingly, he also states that China is watching, and if misinterprets the ongoing base relocation issue as causing cracks in the alliance, this will encourage them to be even more proactive (Maher 2016).

## Conclusion

This article has demonstrated how the conservative media, following the government's lead, have domestically deployed a strategic narrative of deterrence in which the US Marines are rendered as indispensable and the base relocation to Henoko is produced as the only possible solution to alleviating the burden on Okinawa. Focusing on the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, the article traced the deployment of the narrative, which correlates with the emergence of opposition to the proposed relocation plan in the late 1990s. We saw how the base relocation was linked to China's 'maritime expansion' in the ECS, and to how those who oppose the relocation are rendered as 'naïve' and 'reckless' in an attempt to discursively disempower them. We further saw how the narrative warns that opposition to the relocation is depicted as threatening the Japan-US alliance, and thus the security of all of Japan. However, as noted, the narrative faces counter-narratives, and its persuasive power appears to be on the wane. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the state of public opinion on the issue varies on which poll you consult – the progressive *Asahi Shimbun* national poll offers 55% against the move with 25% in favour (21/04/2015), while the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, using slightly more complex (and potentially leading) questioning, generally gives a majority in favour, with 69% for and 19% against in 2016 (07/03/2016) – the highest in recent years.<sup>12</sup> On Okinawa, since public opinion hardened in the mid-2000s there has not been substantial change, with a consistent 60%+ majority against the plan (*Asahi Shimbun* 17/06/2015; 15/11/2005). Aside from polls, the results of gubernatorial and national elections in Okinawa indicate strong anti-relocation sentiment. That the *Yomiuri* finds a majority in favour of the relocation does not mean respondents necessarily accept the deterrence narrative, though the correlation points in that direction. On Okinawa, it is clear that the narrative has been rejected, and this leads us to some final ironies involving the deterrence narrative.

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<sup>12</sup> The 13/01/2014 poll was 59% for 28% against, while the 07/12/2015 poll was actually tied with both at 41%. However, as mentioned, the *Yomiuri* question is rather more complex, relating the issue to support for the government's policy of the relocation at that moment. For example, the 2016 poll asked about support for the relocation, despite Okinawan calls for renegotiation, given that the government had agreed to take the issue to court and won the case.

As we have seen, deterrence is psychological, involving not simply capabilities but also credibility and communication. The deterrence narrative is aimed at a domestic audience, but Japan's neighbours have been observing the base issue with more than a passing interest – the 'poring over' of political statements in 'foreign capitals'. By making the issue fundamental to deterrence and by justifying it based on its importance to deterrence, the narrative is actually making the ultimate outcome of the base relocation relevant in terms of deterrence and credibility. Simply put, the public and vocal insistence by conservative media and politicians that failure to relocate to Henoko would seriously undermine deterrence is creating a situation where failure to relocate to Henoko could actually undermine deterrence. Top officials in both states, together with a slew of experts, have stated that deterrence would be undermined, that the alliance would be damaged, and Japan's security put at risk, if the plan does not go ahead. This is difficult to unsay, and, since local opposition appears implacable, has put the government into a bind.

The second irony of this narrative develops out of the first, and relates to broader Okinawan opinion on the question of US bases in Okinawa more broadly. Currently, Okinawan public opinion is not fundamentally anti-base, rather it is anti-Henoko relocation, and pro-burden relief. Much of the islanders' ire is aimed at Tokyo, based on a developing national identity which draws on the victimised history of the prefecture, emphasising the assimilation policies of the post-annexation era, the sacrifice and near total destruction in 1945, the US military occupation until 1972, and the continuing and apparently indefinite militarisation. From this perspective, the Henoko issue is emblematic of the treatment of Okinawa going back to the Meiji Era. The deterrence narrative clearly lacks traction in Okinawa: aside for the anti-relocation opposition, opinion polls show a significant gap between both threat perceptions on the island and on the mainland, and of the role of the Marines in providing for Japan's security (Asahi?). By disregarding local opinion and forcing the relocation, justified by a narrative that clearly lacks persuasive power, the Japanese government risks further enflaming Okinawan opinion. This runs the risk of transforming anti-relocation sentiment into anti-base sentiment, and further fuelling nascent pro-independence sentiment, both of which are much greater threats to the future of US deployment on Okinawa, and therefore to what both the government and conservative media describe as the basis of the deterrence – and the alliance.

References with Author