Article

Activist Disconnect: Social Movements, Public Opinion, and U.S. Military Bases in East Asia

Claudia J. Kim[1] [ORCID] and Taylor C. Boas[1]

Abstract

Do activists seeking to challenge the U.S. military presence overseas succeed in persuading the local population? While the comparative literature on base contestation often makes implicit causal claims about public opinion and behavior, these claims have never been tested empirically using individual-level data. Based on an online survey, experiment with residents of communities hosting U.S. military bases in Korea and Japan, we demonstrate a disconnect between anti-base movements and local residents. Local public opinion is most responsive to pragmatic framing of opposition by social movements and tangible information about the consequences of base expansion. Other common activist tactics have little effect and may even backfire. Our findings fill an important gap in the growing literature on the politics of U.S. military bases abroad.

Keywords

U.S. military, civil–military relations, public opinion, social movement

[1]Department of Political Science, Boston University, Boston, MA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Claudia J. Kim, Program on U.S.-Japan Relations, Harvard University, 61 Kirkland Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA.
Email: cldk@bu.edu

Do activists seeking to challenge the U.S. military presence overseas succeed in persuading the local population? While the comparative literature on base contestation often makes implicit causal claims about factors that influence local public opinion, these claims have not been tested empirically using individual-level data. The burgeoning literature on anti-U.S. base movements, which often draws a picture of the beleaguered U.S. presence and tense civil–military relations (Calder, 2007; Cooley, 2008; Holmes, 2014; Yeo, 2011), has yet to test whether activists are actually effective in influencing public opinion.

Research has shown that anti-base activists, like any other type of activists, make conscious efforts to optimize movement strategies for greater public resonance of their causes (Yeo, 2006). Given the common movement goal of influencing policy (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010), and the proven ability of stable opinion majorities to shape policy decisions (Page & Shapiro, 1983), it is puzzling that little attention has been given to whether anti-base movements' strategies succeed in shifting public opinion in their favor. We fill this gap by offering the first empirical evidence from survey experiments examining what factors shape local communities' sentiment toward U.S. bases they host, and whether they align with commonly employed activist strategies. Theoretically, we bridge the literatures on base politics, social movements, and public opinion, testing a number of implicit causal claims made by prior studies.

To assess the effect of common anti-base social movement strategies on local public opinion, we combine evidence from online survey experiments and interviews with anti-base activists in Korea and Japan. We first draw on interviews to describe common movement strategies and advance hypotheses regarding their effects on public opinion. We then test these hypotheses via online survey experiments targeting residents of key host communities. Treatment conditions varied the information that respondents were provided about U.S. bases in their community, in line with different strategies that movements themselves have employed. Our results show that anti-base movements are sometimes misguided, or even self-defeating, in their efforts to shift attitudes against U.S. bases. Local public opinion is responsive to pragmatic framing of opposition to U.S. military bases and tangible information about how bases affect everyday lives. A different, frequently employed approach— drawing attention to high-profile crimes committed by U.S. service members—has small and mostly insignificant effects. Other common strategies, such as making ideological or nationalistic appeals or drawing attention to the anti-base stance of local governments, either have no effect on local attitudes or may actually boost support for U.S. bases. On the whole, our research demonstrates a disconnect between some of the common activist strategies and local attitudes.

U.S. Bases, Movements, and Public Opinion

Political elites routinely overestimate the resonance of ideological appeals among the mass public, a strategy that often falls flat and sometimes clearly backfires

(Broockman & Skovron, 2018; Klesner, 2005, p. 135). This elite–mass disconnect is also typical of the relationship between social movement leaders and the public. Movement organizers tend to be better informed and politically savvier than the broader public. Their ideological commitments rank high among the most common motivations for movement participation (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 120), and their ideological beliefs shape not only their strategic choices but also their assumption of the effectiveness of such strategies (Polletta, 2009, p. 54). Some scholars, for these reasons, view social movements as "ideologically structured action" (Zald, 2000). On the other hand, the broader public, whose sympathy can decisively shape the fate of social movements, tends to be less politically and ideologically oriented. Activists cannot simply brush aside the attitudes of the masses; rather, influencing public opinion is a common movement goal (Amenta et al., 2010), as activists can attain policy goals indirectly by changing public preferences to support their causes (Burstein, 1999).

Like their counterparts pushing other causes, social movements opposing U.S. military bases around the world routinely seek to gain sympathy among the mass public (Yeo, 2006). Yet evidence suggests that activists often find themselves out of sync with local attitudes. In Korea and Japan, U.S. military bases have endured for decades despite vigorous anti-base movements and a common perception that their presence is deeply unpopular. Tacit support for the bases or indifference among the local public might explain this apparent paradox. Host communities ranging from Daegu to Iwakuni, for example, have traditionally elected conservative politicians favoring the status quo in base politics. Even in Okinawa, where bases are heavily contested, there is a discrepancy between the supposedly strong local anti-base sentiments and the "pro-base voting record" (Kagotani & Yanai, 2014, p. 111). This discrepancy was demonstrated in 2018, in the city of Nago, which elected a pro-base mayor despite its high-profile anti-base movement. Economic benefits and state compensations associated with bases (Calder, 2007; Cooley & Marten, 2006), as well as the negative image of activists as anti-American agitators (C. J. Kim, 2017), have been identified as potential explanations for the apparent disconnect.

The potential disconnect raises the important question of how movement strategies influence public opinion. Yet the comparative literature on U.S. military bases has remained focused on the mobilization of activists and on movements' policy outcomes (Calder, 2007; Cooley, 2008; Yeo, 2011). By largely bypassing public opinion, this literature risks misattributing policy changes, or lack thereof, to the direct influence of movements. As Burstein (1998) warns, the impact of protests on policy outcomes is likely to be reduced once public opinion is accounted for.

At the same time, some arguments in the literature suggest the potential fruitfulness of linking anti-base movements to public opinion. Calder (2007), for example, argues that high-profile crimes committed by U.S. servicemen "attract the attention—and often the resentment—of people who normally would not be conscious of base issues" (p. 87). Holmes (2014) also makes implicit references to public

opinion, noting that anti-base sentiments arise when host populations begin to perceive the U.S. presence as a source of threat to sovereignty, environment, and human security. Likewise, Lutz (2009, p. 32) implicitly invokes public opinion by arguing that established bases are "unremarkable, inevitable, and legitimate" and "may disappear into a normalized background," whereas newer bases command more attention and, potentially, animosity. Testing these implicit assumptions against empirical data thus advances our understanding of both social movement strategies and base politics.

Our analysis focuses on Korea and Japan, which are an appropriate set of cases for several reasons. First, relations between host communities and U.S. bases are often contentious in Korea and Japan, especially in comparison to Germany and Italy, where there is much less cultural conflict with the U.S. military despite the comparably sizable U.S. presence (Calder, 2007, p. 95; Rassbach, 2010, p. 127). Yet host communities are not uniformly opposed to the U.S. presence, allowing us to examine variation in attitudes as they relate to movement strategies. Second, the democratic nature of the two regimes ensures that public opinion can meaningfully influence policy makers' decisions, unlike many hosts to U.S. forces in the Middle East. Third, given the institutionalized nature of the U.S. alliances with Seoul and Tokyo (Yeo, 2011), attitudes toward the U.S. military are much less subject to whims of national-level politicians, unlike in Central Asia, where alliances are often manipulated by authoritarian leaders (Cooley, 2008, pp. 217–248), or Ecuador, where elites are ambivalent about the value of the partnership (Yeo, 2011, pp. 87–100). Rather, they are more likely to respond to the local-level variables that we examine in this article.

To be sure, there are also important cross-national differences between Korea and Japan. In Korea, anti-base activism is rooted in nationalistic student activism of the 1980s, which saw the U.S. presence as a hindrance to unification. In Japan, anti-base movements are part of the broader post–World War II pacifist ideological tradition, which also includes, for example, antinuclear movements. Despite these differences, we show that anti-base actors nonetheless use similar strategies, to which local public opinion responds in a similar manner.

Movement Strategies and Their Hypothesized Effects

Anti-base activists in Korea and Japan largely coincide in terms of their strategies for contesting the U.S. military presence. Below, we describe four common approaches and develop corresponding theoretical expectations of their effects on local public opinion toward U.S. bases. The survey experiment then tests our preregistered hypotheses regarding the effects of these common movement strategies.

Trigger events. High-profile GI crimes and accidents, which we call trigger events, often become an immediate rallying point for anti-base activists (Marten, 2005, p. 159). Activists believe that crimes and accidents, however unfortunate, are how

anti-base agendas get publicized to the otherwise indifferent public. In line with the view that grievances can be "created" and even "manipulated" by social movement actors (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1215), some activists argue that the effectiveness in publicizing events, rather than their severity, determines the level of public attention (Interview with Bae Jong-jin, June 28, 2016). One such case in Korea concerns the initially underreported death in 2002 of two teenage girls run over by a U.S. military vehicle. The wide circulation of graphic pictures of the bloody scene (Calder, 2007, p. 5), which enflamed the public, was the result of a tactical decision by activists who understood the power of images over words in conveying the message of injustice (Interview with Kim Pan-tei, June 15, 2016).

The social movement literature offers theoretical expectations on the potential impact of publicizing trigger events. A traditional take on social movements posits that the existence and the perception of grievances, followed by the assessment on how to address them, give rise to movements (Gurr, 1970). The mere existence of grievances, however, fails to explain variation in the intensiveness of public senti-ments; although bases across different host communities produce negative extern-alities of similar nature (Yeo, 2011, p. 19), local sentiments still range from approval to apathy to indignation. Supposing that preexisting grievances can become part of everyday routine, there may be occasional triggers that serve as a sharp reminder to the public of their dormant grievances. Exposing the public to information on trigger events may therefore influence sentiments toward military bases. Despite the literature's emphasis on rational reasoning, emotions such as indignation and empathy, likely to be linked to trigger events, are actually con-ducive to mobilization (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2009). Once trigger events happen, the perceived absence of adequate punishment for perpetrators, often based on different cultural understandings of crimes and accidents, only adds to anti-base sentiments (Marten, 2005, pp. 178–181).

By priming trigger events, we are not testing the effect that these events had on public opinion when they first came to light. However, we can test whether remind-ing the public of these prior events, as anti-base movements often do, plays a role in shaping public opinion toward U.S. bases.

> **Hypothesis 1:** Informing about trigger events, which calls renewed attention to preexisting grievances, increases opposition to U.S. military bases.

Status quo disruption. Activists are quick to seize upon changes in the status of U.S. bases such as those introduced by U.S. force posture realignments. Activists see such changes as a crack in the system and an opportunity to promote the anti-base agenda. In Pyeongtaek, Korea, local civic groups in 2001 mobilized against a move to consolidate U.S. bases in the city, which already hosted two mega-sized bases. Residents of the affected towns, who stood to lose farmland from the base expan-sion, joined the movement (Interview with Kim Yong-han, July 3, 2016).

In Yokosuka, in 2001, anti-base activists began to protest an extension of a pier at the U.S. naval base, which they suspected was aimed at ultimately hosting a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (Montgomery, 2004). Their preemptive opposition, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, was vindicated in 2008 when USS George Washington became the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be permanently based in Japan.

Research from social movement scholars and political psychologists offers a theoretical ground for predicting the effects of status quo disruption on local public opinion. Communities facing sudden changes in circumstances can develop new collective political identity, which becomes a basis of mobilization (Klandermans, 2014). The sudden formation of group identity has been empirically demonstrated in the context of controversial construction projects (Mannarini, Roccato, Fedi, & Rovere, 2009). In a similar vein, we expect that major changes to the status quo of bases in host communities ought to disrupt any "normalized background" (Lutz, 2009, p. 32) into which they have disappeared, potentially affecting public opinion. Such disruption is an example of an unanticipated, externally imposed "shock" that political sociologists argue leads to collective action (McAdam & Boudet, 2012). Major changes include base expansion, relocation, and closure, and their expected effect on public opinion differs. Base expansion can lead to displacement of local population, sometimes directly threatening their livelihood; latent collective identity as a base community can then become salient and politicize a population in the process of seeking redress (Klandermans, 2014). Base relocation, reduction, and closure, meanwhile, often mean the removal or amelioration of a specific source of grievances, though some U.S. presence in the region is typically maintained.

> **Hypothesis 2a:** Informing about bases slated for expansion increases opposition to U.S. military bases.
>
> **Hypothesis 2b:** Informing about bases slated for relocation and closure decreases opposition to U.S. military bases.

Framing. In propagating anti-base messages, activists adopt framing strategies to "mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198). Following Calder (2007, p. 84), we categorize framing strategies as ideological, nationalistic, or pragmatic. A separate content analysis of anti-base rhetoric (see the Online Appendix) shows that all three strategies are salient features of anti-base activism. Activists often employ multiple framing strategies at the same protest events, but it is useful to conceptually separate them in order to test their efficacy.

Nationalistic framing involves appeals to notions of sovereignty and national pride. For example, civic groups opposing Yongsan Garrison in Seoul claimed in 2001 that the base "tramples on our nation's pride and sovereignty" and is "a place of humiliation" (Campaign for Return of Yongsan Base, 2001). Ideological framing, in the context of Korea and Japan, employs anti-militarist language critiquing

American imperialism or embracing pacifism. For example, U.S. nuclear-powered warships are portrayed as a "tool" to get Japan involved in "ugly wars" (*Kyodo News*, 2008), and their visits to Japanese ports are likened to a "militarized use of a port" (Umeda, 2014).

Activists also frequently adopt pragmatic framing to emphasize everyday grievances of noise, environmental contamination, crime, and underdevelopment. For example, when condemning the accidental shipment of live anthrax to Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek, in 2015, activists adopted a more restrained tone, emphasizing that "there has yet to be a thorough investigation into the unauthorized transfer of biological weapons, banned by both the domestic and international laws" (H. Kim, 2015). Okinawans' frequent evocation of human rights and structural discrimination can also be subsumed under the broad category of pragmatic framing. Claims of violations of rights often come down to grievances of safety concerns, pollution of various kinds, and other quality-of-life issues. The notion of discrimination, epitomized by the universal expression "base burden," indicates that the bases are too imposing to bear due to various negative externalities.

The literatures on social movements and public opinion offer insight as to the relative efficacy of different framing strategies. The frame alignment model in the social movement literature focuses on how movements frame social problems by defining, interpreting, and constructing them (Benford & Snow, 2000). Movements with similar levels of deprivation can achieve different outcomes due to different framing strategies employed (Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986). The political communication literature offers an individual-level mechanism for this finding: Framing potentially influences public opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007). We expect that any type of framing by anti-base activists will increase overall public opposition to U.S. bases, as it highlights negative aspects of the U.S. military presence and provides the public with information on why some people protest. Yet we also expect that some types of frames will be more influential than others. Generalizable theories have yet to emerge on the relative efficacy of different framing strategies (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 117). Still, in the realm of base politics, pragmatic protests may perform better than nationalistically and ideologically framed counterparts in terms of galvanizing local public opinion. Local base communities have diverse yet specific grievances they want to see addressed, whereas nationalistic and ideological grievances are more geared toward broader audiences. Framing strategies that appeal to people's direct, everyday experiences may have "greater potency" (Snow & Benford, 1992, p. 141).

> **Hypothesis 3a:** Any framing of anti-base protests, which highlights negative information on U.S. military bases, increases opposition to bases.
>
> **Hypothesis 3b:** Pragmatic framing of anti-base protests leads to greater public opposition to U.S. military bases than framing protests as ideological or nationalistic struggles.

Local government leaders. Activists commonly rally around and align with local political elites with anti-base views. Local governments sometimes strongly dissent against national policies toward U.S. military bases (Smith, 2000). In Iwakuni, activists rallied around mayor Ihara Katsusuke, who led a 2006 referendum against the transfer of aircraft to the local Marine Corps Air Station, and they backed another anti-base candidate after Ihara's election loss in 2008 (Interview with Ōkawa Kiyoshi, September 30, 2016). Protests in the mid-2000s against a proposed troop increase at Camp Zama featured the disgruntled mayors of its host cities, Sagamihara and Zama. A local civic group that holds regular sit-ins and marches in opposition to Camp Zama uses a quote from former Mayor Ogawa as its slogan: "If we keep quiet, we will still be a base town in 100 years" (Participant observation, June 17, 2017). In employing these strategies, movement actors are almost always acting in an effort to shift public opinion in their favor. U.S. military authorities routinely ignore their protests; it is only when these protests enjoy broad public support that the United States has made conciliatory gestures (Interview with Shin Soo-yun, June 8, 2016).

Various research traditions offer insight into the effect of anti-base movements highlighting local government defiance. Political leaders and protestors share mutual interests in working toward a common cause; the former get to act as true champions of the people, and the latter gain an elite ally (Tarrow, 2011, p. 168). In the presence of a sizable like-minded constituency, leaders are emboldened to press for their preferences in negotiations with counterparts of higher authority (Putnam, 1988; Schelling, 1960). Subnational governments similarly exert pressure on central governments with respect to international issues that concern them (Bechtel & Urpelainen, 2015). The dynamics can be extended to base politics, where local governments face the dual challenges of ensuring the well-being of local residents and complying with central government demands in managing the U.S. presence (Smith, 1999). Local governments are thus uniquely positioned to play an influential role in base politics, especially when they, along with their equally emboldened constituency, voice strong dissent (Smith, 2000, p. 20). Given that the central governments of Korea and Japan remain fundamentally in synch with the United States in terms of basing policy (Yeo, 2011), local dissent increases the saliency of base issues in host communities, in part by inviting the central government to "assert its predominance" over defiant localities (Mulgan, 2000, p. 161). Central–local government conflicts over basing policy are often viewed as a larger debate on local administrative and political autonomy, or even a test for democracy, which in turn can generate support from local populations interested in defending those values (Mulgan, 2000; Smith, 1999). Since region-specific decisions made by national authorities are filtered through local lenses (Hoekstra & Segal, 1996), locals may be inclined to favor policy decisions made by locally mandated actors rather than national authorities.

Hypothesis 4: Informing about local leaders challenging U.S. base policy increases public opposition to U.S. military bases.

Research Design

To test these hypotheses, we conducted online survey experiments in 2017 targeting adults living in four base host communities: Gyeonggi Province and Daegu Metropolitan City in Korea and Kanagawa Prefecture and Okinawa Prefecture in Japan. These four regions are comparable in multiple ways. They have similar administrative status, they have hosted multiple U.S. military bases for decades, and each is home to numerous social movements seeking to raise awareness on base issues. No other region comes close to their high concentration of U.S. installations, many of them of enduring strategic importance (Lostumbo et al., 2013). Additionally, they are largely urban settings with high population densities and constant needs for land, which explains intense local interest in retrieving and redeveloping base sites for commercial purposes (C. J. Kim, 2018). As discussed below, the four regions are also similar to one another in terms of attitudes toward U.S. military bases.

We recruited respondents via Facebook advertisements, a well-established, low-cost method for online survey experiments targeting non-Americans (Boas, Christensen, & Glick, 2018); the validity of this approach is discussed further in Online Appendix. Advertisements targeted respondents aged 18 and older in each of the four regions. The full sample consisted of 2,356 respondents, split approximately equally among Daegu ($N = 576$), Gyeonggi ($N = 582$), Kanagawa ($N = 600$), and Okinawa ($N = 598$). Our sample perfectly matched the target population in terms of gender (49% male) and was not drastically younger (a median age of 42 vs. 47 in the adult population). As shown in the Online Appendix, the sample is also fairly representative of the population in terms of ideology. The Korean sample leans somewhat to the left though this might be attributable to the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye and loss of support for her conservative party. Our sample is also more prone to civic activism—signing a petition, participating in a boycott, or joining a demonstration—than respondents from these regions in the 2010 World Values Survey. This is especially true in Korea, where millions participated in anti-Park protests in 2016–2017.

The Korea survey was run in April 2017, followed by the Japan survey in May. Facebook users in our target population were exposed to advertisements, offering a chance to win a cash prize (50,000 KRW or 5,000 JPY, each about $45) for taking a survey of their opinions on current affairs. Those who clicked on the advertisements were redirected to an external website, Qualtrics, which hosted the survey.

Given the tense regional security situation surrounding North Korea, there is a potential concern that treatment effects on attitudes toward U.S. bases might be attenuated. However, our surveys ran in April–May, 2017, before the international security situation rapidly deteriorated in the second half of the year, with

Pyongyang's intercontinental ballistic missile test in July and its nuclear test in September. Indeed, we find that attitudes toward the North Korean threat in our sample are quite similar to those from other, prior surveys. In our survey, 30% of Koreans and 54% of Japanese believed that a military conflict in East Asia is likely to happen in the next 10 years. A 2014 poll of opinion leaders in the two countries obtained very similar figures: 29% and 59%, respectively (Genron NPO, 2014). Likewise, when asked whether the United States should intervene in the event of a North Korean attack, 85% of Koreans and 78% of Japanese said yes—figures similar to those from nationally representative surveys in 2016, in which 91% of Koreans and 70% of Japanese favored intervention (Genron NPO, 2016). Our respondents were therefore not unusually concerned with the North Korean threat.

Subjects were randomly assigned with equal probability to one of the conditions listed in Table 1. As shown in the Online Appendix, the number of respondents per condition ranged from 270 to 314. Vignettes are based on real-life events that took place in each region. While this design choice introduces some asymmetry in treatment conditions, it significantly boosts external validity compared to fictional vignettes, which have been shown to generate unrealistically large treatment effects that cannot be replicated using real-world information (Boas, Hidalgo, & Melo, 2019). In designing these vignettes, we avoided using very recent events, which would be more likely to be widely known by the population, reducing the potential for treatment effects. For similar reasons, we also omitted well-known trigger events that resulted in national responses, such as the 2002 death of two Korean girls.

As is common practice with question wording survey experiments, ours included two control conditions—a pure control that conveyed no text prior to our first outcome measure and a regular control that included a generic statement about U.S. military bases providing both benefits and detriments for local communities. Although we find no significant difference in attitudes toward U.S. military bases between the two control conditions, we present treatment effects with respect to both groups, in line with our preanalysis plan and standard recommendations in the methodological literature (Gaines, Kuklinski, & Quirk, 2007; Tingley, 2014, p. 447). Our treatment conditions begin with the generic statement about benefits and detriments from the regular control, followed by additional information about U.S. bases. Thus, our research design ensures that respondents are exposed to some information on the positive aspects of hosting bases, although our treatments, in line with movement strategies, emphasize negative aspects.

We examine treatment effects on support or opposition to U.S. military bases. This outcome was measured immediately after the delivery of treatment information, using the following question: "Please indicate how much you support or oppose the presence of U.S. military bases in [Gyeonggi/Daegu/Okinawa/Kanagawa]: strongly support (1), somewhat support (2), neither support nor oppose (3), somewhat oppose (4), and strongly oppose (5)." In the Online Appendix, we examine treatment effects on a second, behavioral outcome, the decision to donate a portion of one's compensation to a specific Korean or Japanese organization opposing U.S. military bases in their

Table 1. Treatment Conditions.

Condition	Intro Text	Gyeonggi Text	Daegu Text	Okinawa Text	Kanagawa Text
Pure control					
Regular control	There are multiple U.S. military bases in [Gyeonggi/Daegu/Okinawa/Kanagawa], which have elicited mixed reaction from the locals over the years. On the one hand, U.S. troops contribute to frequent local business, and they contribute to national defense. On the other hand, bases have witnessed occasional protests from groups of citizens who argue that they do more harm than good.				
Trigger events		In September 2014, a 29-year-old American soldier in Gyeonggi Province strangled and beat a Korean taxi driver while riding his car. The taxi crashed into the curb, leaving the driver injured. The soldier immediately drove away, returning to his base.	In November 2013, a member of the U.S. military police based in Daegu crashed into two cars while driving under the influence. He and his colleagues immediately drove away and beat up a Korean man who chased them after the crash. The 23-year-old American officer's blood alcohol concentration level far exceeded the legal limit.	In November 2009, a 27-year-old American soldier in Okinawa Prefecture ran over a Japanese man who was taking a walk. The soldier left the scene, leaving behind the 66-year-old victim who eventually died of a broken neck.	In November 2006, a 54-year-old civilian employee at a U.S. military base in Kanagawa Prefecture assaulted a 70-year-old Japanese man at a bar. The victim fell to the ground, hitting his head on the sidewalk. Four days later, the Japanese man died of brain contusion.
Status quo disruption		In December 2004, the parliament approved a plan to triple the size of a U.S. military base in Gyeonggi Province and turn it into the largest U.S. base overseas, which required large-scale land appropriations from local farmers.	In October 2009, Korean and U.S. authorities agreed to return a portion of the land occupied by one of the U.S. military bases in Daegu. This move involves the removal of a heliport, which has caused noise pollution for residents near the base. The local government plans to turn the site into a park and build a public library.	In May 2006, the government announced that a new U.S. military base will be built in Okinawa Prefecture next to the already existing Marine base, which requires the construction of new runways in an area known for pristine nature.	Throughout the early-to-mid 2000s, there was a move at one of the U.S. military bases in Kanagawa Prefecture to expand the area where ships are docked, raising the possibility that the base would become a permanent home port for U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carriers.
Pragmatic framing		In particular, one group has been protesting polluted soil at the base sites after a probe found that the soil contamination level around the sites was up to 90 times higher than the national environmental standards.			
Ideological framing		In particular, one group has been protesting the presence of bases as they symbolize American military hegemony in the world; the group claims that the bases promote militarism and support U.S. imperialism.			
Nationalistic framing		In particular, one group has been protesting the alleged inequality and hierarchy between the U.S. and Korea/Japan, which they say is demonstrated by the legal status of U.S. personnel in Korea/Japan as specified in the Status of Forces Agreement. The group sees the U.S. bases as a challenge to Korea's/Japan's sovereignty.			
Local government leaders		Between 2014 and 2015, following the announcement that one of the U.S. military bases in Gyeonggi Province originally slated for relocation will not leave, city officials and locals held protests for 200 days in a row to condemn the unilateral decision by the central government and the U.S. military.	In October 2010, the Korean government, at the request of the U.S. forces, announced that it will designate two of the U.S. military bases in Daegu as military reservation areas. The local government strongly opposed the move, which they said will retard economic developments and violate property rights of the locals.	In October 2015, the Okinawa prefectural government revoked the approval of land reclamation work required for the relocation of a U.S. military base there. The move was seen as a direct challenge to the long-standing policy objective of the central government and the U.S. military.	In May 2005, local government officials delivered a petition signed by 60,000 locals living near one of the U.S. military bases in Kanagawa Prefecture to protest the move by the central government and the U.S. military to relocate an army unit from the U.S. to the local base and station more troops there.

country. As the behavioral outcome involves voluntary donation, it indicates costlier support than the attitudinal outcome. Results are consistent with those examined here.

Baseline attitudes toward the local U.S. military presence underscore that there is potential for treatment effects. In our two control groups, mean scores on the dependent variable point toward indifference or slight support for bases in each region: 3.09 in Gyeonggi, 3.06 in Okinawa, 2.8 in Daegu, and 2.46 in Kanagawa. The first three scores are statistically indistinguishable from one another; Kanagawa stands out as more supportive, though the difference is substantively small. On the whole, the middling values in each region indicate that respondents are not already so opposed to the U.S. military presence that it would be hard to move their opinions.

For each hypothesis, we calculate one estimate in which we control only for regional fixed effects and another in which we also control for a prespecified vector of pretreatment covariates. These include age, sex, education level, financial situation, attitude toward voting, political efficacy, various forms of political participation (signing petitions, participating in boycotts and demonstrations, and donating to organizations), ideology, attention to local and national news, expectations of a future conflict in the region, and the possibility of a U.S. intervention. The Online Appendix contains additional details regarding the regression specification. Because all of our preregistered hypotheses are directional in nature, we employ one-tailed tests, as specified in the preanalysis plan. "Don't know" options were not provided for any question, and skipping was not allowed, so nonresponse is not an issue.

Results

We graphically summarize average treatment effects compared with both pure and regular controls, with and without covariates, in Figure 1. The dependent variable is a 1–5 Likert-type scale indicating opposition to U.S. military bases. The lines in the plot show 90% two-sided confidence intervals, equivalent to statistical significance at the .95 level for our preregistered one-sided hypotheses tests (assuming effects are in the hypothesized direction). The valid N for each estimate is approximately 581, except for the base expansion and reduction estimates, which are about three quarters and one quarter as large, respectively. Tables of coefficients, standard errors, and valid Ns for each regression can be found in the Online Appendix.

Our results underscore that opposition to U.S. military bases is influenced by tangible information about how bases affect residents' lives and pragmatic framing of opposition by social movements. The hypothesis on base expansion (Hypothesis 2a) found strong support, with a statistically significant increase in opposition to U.S. bases in three of four specifications. Across the four specifications, the average point estimate was .20. Pragmatic framing of opposition to U.S. bases by social movements (Hypothesis 3a) had similar, albeit slightly more moderate effects: an average point estimate of .17, significant in two of four specifications. These effects are not particularly large compared to the distribution of the outcome variable, which has a standard deviation of 1.24, but they are detectable.

We found weaker support for the other hypotheses corresponding to tactics commonly used by anti-base movements. Reminding respondents of trigger events (Hypothesis 1) seems to have some small effect on opposition to U.S. bases—an average point estimate of .13—but it is significant in only one specification. We lack sufficient statistical power to distinguish between the magnitude of these effects and those corresponding to pragmatic framing or base expansion, but the point estimates for trigger events are always the smallest of the three. Our hypotheses regarding opposition by local leaders (Hypothesis 4) and nationalistic and ideological framing by social movements (Hypothesis 3a) were not supported in any specification. In fact, there is some evidence that ideological framing of opposition to U.S. bases may backfire, actually increasing support for the U.S. military presence. We should note, of course, that our preregistered hypothesis was that all forms of framing would increase opposition, so this particular interpretation is post hoc. Finally, there is no evidence that base reduction (Hypothesis 2b) has the opposite effect as base expansion. This estimate is noisy, however, as the hypothesis could be tested only in Daegu.

Given the contrast between the different framing effects, we found strongest support for our hypothesis that pragmatic framing would be most effective at boosting opposition to U.S. bases (Hypothesis 3b). Depending on the specification, differences between the "pragmatic" and "ideological" point estimates range from .29 to .37, significant at the .001 level. Pragmatic framing also generated larger effects than nationalistic framing (differences of .18–.20, significant at the .05 level or better for the prespecified one-tailed test).

Despite the contextual differences between Korea and Japan, we find that local public opinion reacts similarly to common movement strategies in each country. In the Online Appendix, we compare the combined effect of each treatment to separate estimates for Korea and Japan. In no case do the country-specific estimates differ significantly from the pooled estimate or from one another. If focusing only on a single country, one would tell a similar story about the efficacy of social movement strategies as when examining them both.

We argue that the weak and null findings for many common activist strategies are evidence of their limited efficacy and should not be attributed to the research design. In general, survey vignette experiments tend to overestimate rather than underestimate real-world treatment effects (Boas et al., 2019). The use of true information rather than fictional scenarios in our treatment conditions likely reduces this tendency. Yet other features of the experimental setup, such as measuring the outcome at the bottom of the same screen where the treatment information is provided, would still lead to an expectation of larger-than-usual effects. In real life, informational effects on public opinion should decay over time, so one would expect them to be smaller than those estimated here (Chong & Druckman, 2010). Moreover, the low-stakes nature of the outcome, self-declared support or opposition to U.S. military bases, ought to allow much larger treatment effects than we would obtain with alternative, costlier measures such as voting for an anti-base candidate or attending a protest.

Finally, it is possible that movement leaders do not actually seek to influence public opinion with all of their strategies. Rather, they might segment their appeals, mobilizing hard-core activists with certain messages while boosting broader public sympathy with others. To test for this possibility, we interact the treatment indicators for ideological and nationalistic framing with a 10-point ideological self-placement scale. Results, reported in the Online Appendix, show that ideological and nationalistic appeals never significantly boost opposition among left-wing respondents.
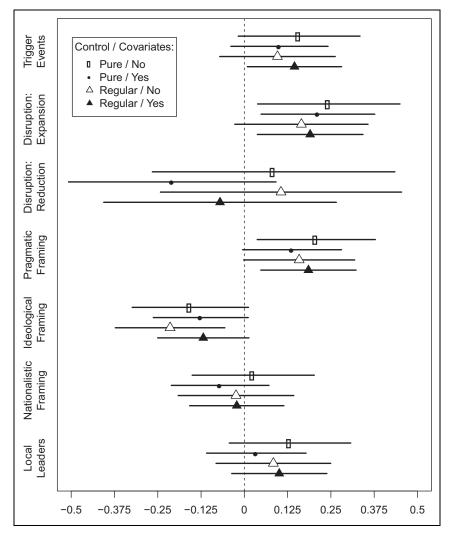

Figure 1. Treatment effects on opposition to U.S. bases. Dependent variable is a 1–5 Likert-type scale measuring opposition to U.S. military bases in the respondent's region. Icons give point estimates and lines give two-sided 90% confidence intervals.

Conclusion

Social movements, which emerge "from below" and aim to give voice to the masses against the indifference or outright antagonism of policy makers and elected officials, might seem well positioned to engage in strategies that resonate with the public. And yet, whether through instinct, miscalculation, or being overly attentive to the preferences of their core supporters, activists also risk using language and tactics that fail to resonate with, or even alienate, the more apathetic and less ideological public.

In this study, we argue that anti-U.S. base activists in Korea and Japan often employ strategies and craft messages that are out of touch with public opinion and, in the extreme, can lead to a backlash and loss of support. As we show, pragmatic messages from anti-base movements and tangible information about the impacts of base expansion do have some resonance with the public. Some anti-base activists recognize the value of such moderate discourse, strategically adopting pragmatic framing for their public messages even though they are motivated by nationalistic or ideological aims. Yet other activists persist in using more absolutist language, rallying around defiant local politicians, or emphasizing crimes and accidents committed by U.S. servicemen—factors that may motivate their own activism but do less to move public opinion in their favor. At worst, their rhetoric may even backfire and lead to a loss of public support.

The relative effectiveness of pragmatic framing and information about base expansion underscores that activists succeed in changing public opinion about U.S. military bases by linking them to broader concerns that are particularly salient including land appropriation, environmentalism, and nuclear energy. For the majority of the public, who are less likely to be motivated by abstract concepts such as militarism, hegemony, and national sovereignty, highlighting negative externalities provides a tangible basis for opposition. Our research thus adds to a growing body of literature arguing that the effect of information on public opinion and political behavior depends on the degree to which the information is salient for individual welfare (Adida, Gottlieb, Kramon, & McClendon, 2017; Boas & Hidalgo, 2019; Boas et al., 2019).

The limited effect of trigger events also speaks to the disconnect. Our findings do not necessarily mean that people fail to react to trigger events when they first happen—only that reminding them of these events several years after the fact has little effect on public opinion. Yet activists persist in using this strategy, despite their frustrations with the limited public response. For example, the explosive anger generated by the 2002 death of two girls in Korea has subsided over time; while leftist civic groups commemorate the anniversary of their death every year, recent events have been small in size and involved few local participants (Interview with two anonymous former activists, July 11, 2016). Likewise, to the frustration of some activists in Japan, the typical public response to trigger events is to treat them as

unfortunate one-time events rather than an inevitable by-product of the U.S. presence (Interview with Nīkura Yasuo, October 4, 2016).

More broadly, we extend the arguments about elite disconnect to the study of social movements. The disconnect, while well demonstrated in the study of elections (Broockman & Skovron, 2018; Rosenzweig, 2016), has yet to receive much attention not only in the otherwise growing literature of base politics but also in the broader social movement literature. If anything, the social movement literature suffers from a tendency to "exaggerat[e] the . . . causal significance of movements," given that most mobilization attempts are actually unsuccessful (McAdam & Boudet, 2012, p. 181). Failed movements may have many causes, but among them are strategies that lack resonance with the broader public—a lesson anti-base movement leaders with an ironclad devotion to their cause may have neglected to heed (Fitz-Henry, 2015, pp. 149–150).

Authors' Note

Acknowledgments

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

ORCID iD

Claudia J. Kim https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1382-3626

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online at http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0095327X19864127. Replication materials are available via the Harvard Dataverse Network (https://dataverse.harvard.edu).

References

Adida, C., Gottlieb, J., Kramon, E., & McClendon, G. (2017). *Breaking the clientelistic voting equilibrium: The joint importance of salience and coordination* (AidData Working Paper #48). Williamsburg, VA: AidData.

Amenta, E., Caren, N., Chiarello, E., & Su, Y. (2010). The political consequences of social movements. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *36*, 287–307.

Bechtel, M. M., & Urpelainen, J. (2015). All policies are Glocal: International environmental policy making with strategic subnational governments. *British Journal of Political Science*, *45*, 559–582.

Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *26*, 611–639.

Boas, T. C., Christensen, D. P., & Glick, D. M. (2018). Recruiting large online samples in the United States and India: Facebook, mechanical Turk and Qualtrics. *Political Science Research and Methods*. Published electronically at: doi:10.1017/psrm.2018.28

Boas, T. C., & Daniel Hidalgo, F. (2019). Electoral incentives to combat mosquito-borne illnesses: Experimental evidence from Brazil. *World Development*, *113*, 89–99.

Boas, T. C., Daniel Hidalgo, F., & André Melo, M. (2019). Norms versus action: Why voters fail to sanction malfeasance in Brazil. *American Journal of Political Science*, *63*, 385–400.

Broockman, D. E., & Skovron, C. (2018). Bias in perceptions of public opinion among political elites. *American Political Science Review*, *112*, 542–563.

Burstein, P. (1998). Bringing the public back in: should sociologists consider the impact of public opinion on public policy?. *Social Forces*, *77*, 27–62.

Burstein, P. (1999). Social movements and public policy. In M. Giugni, D. McAdam, & C. Tilly (Eds.), *How social movements matter* (pp. 3–21). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Calder, K. E. (2007). *Embattled garrisons: Comparative base politics and American globalism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Campaign for Return of Yongsan Base. (2001, November 23). *Yongsan Migungji Banhwan Undongbonbu Gyeolseong [Establishment of Campaign for Return of Yongsan Base]*. Available online at: http://energyjustice.kr/zbxe/36800

Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *10*, 103–126.

Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2010). Dynamic public opinion: Communication effects over time. *American Political Science Review*, *104*, 663–680.

Cooley, A. (2008). *Base politics: Democratic change and the U.S. military overseas*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cooley, A., & Marten, K. (2006). Base motives: The political economy of Okinawa's antimilitarism. *Armed Forces & Society*, *32*, 566–583.

Edwards, B., & McCarthy, J. D. (2004). Resources and social movement mobilization. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, & H. Kriesi (Eds.), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (pp. 116–152). Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Fitz-Henry, E. (2015). *US military bases and anti-military organizing: An ethnography of an air force base in Ecuador*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gaines, B. J., Kuklinski, J. H., & Quirk, P. J. (2007). The logic of the survey experiment reexamined. *Political Analysis*, *15*, 1–20.

Genron NPO. (2014, March 1). *Japan, China, South Korea multilateral questionnaire surveys: Prospects of new civil diplomacy*. Available online at: http://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion_polls/archives/5253.html

Genron NPO. (2016, November 2). *Nitchūkan Kyōdō Seronchōsa Kekka [Japan-China-Korea joint opinion survey results]*. Available online at: http://www.genron-npo.net/world/archives/6417.html

Goodwin, J., Jasper, J. M., & Polletta, F. (2009). *Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Gurr, T. R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hoekstra, V. J., & Segal, J. A. (1996). The shepherding of local public opinion: The Supreme Court and Lamb's Chapel. *The Journal of Politics*, *58*, 1079–1102.

Holmes, A. A. (2014). *Social unrest and American military bases in Turkey and Germany since 1945*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Kagotani, K., & Yanai, Y. (2014). External threats, US bases, and prudent voters in Okinawa. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *14*, 91–115.

Kim, C. J. (2017). War over framing: Base politics in South Korea. *The Pacific Review*, *30*, 309–327.

Kim, C. J. (2018). Bases that leave: Consequences of US base closures and realignments in South Korea. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *48*, 339–357.

Kim, H. (2015, July 8). Tanjeogyun Banipchaegimja Cheobeol Jinsang Gyumyeongeul [Those behind anthrax shipment should be held responsible]. *Incheon Ilbo*. Available online at: http://www.incheonilbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=602167

Klandermans, P. G. (2014). Identity politics and politicized identities: Identity processes and the dynamics of protest. *Political Psychology*, *35*, 1–22.

Klesner, J. L. (2005). Electoral competition and the new party system in Mexico. *Latin American Politics & Society*, *47*, 103–142.

Kyodo News. (2008, July 19). Rally held in Japan against deployment of US nuclear carrier. Available online at: http://lexisnexis.com

Lostumbo, M. J., McNerney, M. J., Peltz, E., Eaton, D., Frelinger, D. R., Greenfield, V. R., . . . Worman, S. M. (2013). *Overseas basing of U.S. military forces*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.

Lutz, C. (2009). Introduction: Bases, empire, and global response. In C. Lutz & C. Enloe (Eds.), *The bases of empire: The global struggle against U.S. military posts* (pp. 1–49). New York: New York University Press.

Mannarini, T., Roccato, M., Fedi, A., & Rovere, A. (2009). Six factors fostering protest: Predicting participation in locally unwanted land uses movements. *Political Psychology*, *30*, 895–920.

Marten, K. (2005). Bases for reflection: The history and politics of US military bases in South Korea. *IRI Review*, *10*, 155–200.

McAdam, D., & Boudet, H. (2012). *Putting social movements in their place: Explaining opposition to energy projects in the United States, 2000–2005*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

McCarthy, J. D., & Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, *82*, 1212–1241.

Montgomery, N. (2004, March 11). Yokosuka citizens' group urges close monitoring of piedmont pier work. *Stars and Stripes*. Available online at: https://www.stripes.com/news/yokosuka-citizens-group-urges-close-monitoring-of-piedmont-pier-work-1.17498#.WbnQbtFrw2w

Mulgan, A. G. (2000). Managing the US base issue in Okinawa: A test for Japanese democracy. *Japanese Studies*, *20*, 159–177.

Page, B. I., & Shapiro, R. Y. (1983). Effects of public opinion on policy. *The American Political Science Review*, *77*, 175–190. doi:10.2307/1956018

Polletta, F. (2009). *It was like a fever: Storytelling in protest and politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Putnam, R. D. (1988). Diplomacy and domestic politics: The logic of two-level games. *International Organization*, *42*, 427–460.

Rassbach, E. (2010). Protesting U.S. military bases in Germany. *Peace Review*, *22*, 121–127.

Rosenzweig, S. C. (2016). *Dangerous disconnect: Voter Backlash, elite misperception, and the costs of violence as an electoral tactic*. Working paper.

Schelling, T. C. (1960). *The strategy of conflict—Thomas C. Schelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Smith, S. A. (1999). *Do domestic politics matter? The case of U.S. military bases in Japan* (U.S.-Japan Project Working Paper Series, No. 7). Washington, DC: George Washington University.

Smith, S. A. (2000). Challenging national authority: Okinawa prefecture and the U.S. military base. In S. A. Smith (Ed.), *Local voices, national issues: The impact of local initiative on Japanese policy-making* (pp. 75–114). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. D. (1988). Ideology, frame resonance, and participant mobilization. *International Social Movement Research*, *1*, 197–217.

Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. D. (1992). Master frames and cycles of protest. In A. D. Morris & C. M. Mueller (Eds.), *Frontiers in social movement theory* (pp. 133–155). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Snow, D. A., Rochford, E. B., Worden, S. K., & Benford, R. D. (1986). Frame alignment processes, micromobilization, and movement participation. *American Sociological Review*, *51*, 464–481.

Tarrow, S. G. (2011). *Power in movement: Social movements and contentious politics* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Tingley, D. (2014). Survey research in international political economy: Motivations, designs, methods. *International Interactions*, *40*, 443–451.

Umeda, K. (2014, August 1). Genshiryoku Kūbo: Nagasaki Sasebo Ni, Sannen Yonkagetsu Buri [Nuclear-powered aircraft carrier visits Sasebo, Nagasaki for the first time in 3 years and 4 months]. *Mainichi Shimbun*. Available online at: https://global.factiva.com

Yeo, A. (2006). Local-national dynamics and framing in South Korean anti-base movements. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, *21*, 34–60.

Yeo, A. (2011). *Activists, alliances, and anti-U.S. base protests*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Zald, M. (2000). Ideologically structured action: An enlarged agenda for social movement research. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, *5*, 1–16.

Author Biographies

Claudia J. Kim is a postdoctoral fellow, Program on U.S.–Japan Relations, Harvard University.

Taylor C. Boas is an associate professor of political science at Boston University.