

Recommendations toward Reducing the Burden of Military Bases  
on Okinawa in the New Security Environment

March 2021

*Bankoku Shinryō* Council on U.S. Military Base Issues

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## Introduction

The Bankoku Shinryo Council on US Military Base Issues submitted its “Proposals concerning Consolidation and Reduction of US Military Bases in Okinawa” to Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki in March 2020. Concerned that leaving Okinawa burdened excessively with the US military presence may undermine the stability of the alliance between Japan and the United States, the Council made three recommendations as follows:

1. The project to construct a Futenma replacement facility in Henoko has become technologically and financially infeasible because of the significant increase in the estimated construction period and costs required to deal with the soft seabed discovered at the construction site. The project should be cancelled immediately, and the operation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma should be suspended urgently in order to achieve the original objective of the project, which is the elimination of dangers from the air station.
2. Recognizing that it is losing its military predominance over China and that its bases on Okinawa have become vulnerable, the United States has begun to review the posture of US Armed Forces including the Marine Corps. US forces on Okinawa should be dispersed to other locations of Japan and the Asia-Pacific region in order to reduce the burden on Okinawa.
3. Easing tensions and building confidence are essential, alongside military deterrence, for the security of the Asia-Pacific region. Taking advantage of its geographical conditions and historical background, Okinawa should be a network hub of regional cooperation,.

Since the last twelve months have seen new developments and there were a few issues left unaddressed in the March 2020 report, the Council’s “Recommendations toward Reducing the Burden of Military Bases on Okinawa in the New Security Environment” recommends the following:

First, the technological and financial impediments of the Henoko project remain the same even after the Ministry of Defense changed the design of the land reclamation work to reinforce the weak section of the sea floor and the Okinawa Defense Bureau filed the modified plan with the Okinawa Prefectural Government in April 2020 for approval. The validity of the project is even more questionable today with the Japanese government's fiscal distress due to the coronavirus pandemic. The project should be cancelled immediately because it is the "most unfeasible option," not the "only solution," either technologically or financially.

Further, the increase in the operation at Futenma and training all over Okinawa in recent years has had serious negative effects on local communities. It should be remembered that the original objective of building a replacement facility in Henoko is to remove dangers from Futenma. The Japanese government should urgently prepare and implement specific measures, through consultations with the United States and the Okinawa Prefectural Government, to scale down and eventually suspend the operation at Futenma, irrespective of decisions that may be made regarding Henoko.

Second, the political and military rivalry between the United States and China is intensifying. Tensions over Taiwan may inadvertently trigger an armed clash between them. Political leaders of Japan, the United States and China must exercise restraint. The new Biden administration of the United States is emphasizing cooperation with its allies, and an opportunity has emerged for Japan to voice its concerns. Japan and Okinawa should not be reluctant to convey to the United States the need for reducing tensions with China and the burden that Okinawa bears for hosting US military bases.

Third, new US military operational concepts are taking shape. While maintaining Okinawa as an important forward position, the US military will move more of its forces away from Okinawa, which is vulnerable to Chinese missile strikes, to dispersed locations throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The Okinawa Prefectural Government should step up its effort, by holding track-two meetings of experts, to have their views for burden

reduction be taken into account in the process of ongoing reviews of US global military posture. Even if military installations on Okinawa are fortified, this could heighten the risk of being targeted by missile attacks in a military contingency.

Fourth, Japan's national security policy has been increasingly reliant on the alliance with the United States in recent years in the context of the growing perception of China as a threat, and a mental block has set in that has led to a refusal to look for ways to lessen the burden on Okinawa. The presence of the United States could instead be supported by the whole of Asia and the Pacific through a network of middle power partnerships in the region. Such partnerships would contribute to relaxing tensions between the United States and China.

Fifth, as the prolonged US-China rivalry has added to the urgency of confidence building in the Asia-Pacific region, Okinawa could serve as a hub of a network of regional confidence-building efforts. The Okinawa Prefectural Government should seek coordination with Hiroshima and Nagasaki and create as soon as possible opportunities for regional initiatives to meet and interact with each other, by making the most of the symbolism that Okinawa carries.

Sixth, with the transfer of some of the US military training from Okinawa to other parts of Japan, local communities around the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) bases and training grounds have been reporting increasing noise and low-altitude flights. While revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) remains urgent, local governments hosting SDF facilities need to speak out about the conduct of the US forces in order to protect the livelihood of their residents. Agreements between local governments and regional defense bureaus of the Ministry of Defense concerning US military training at SDF bases would provide local governments with an effective tool to ensure the safety of the public. Such local-level agreements should be effectively implemented through continuous reviews and close communication among relevant local governments and their populations.

Based on these positions, the following chapters present a vision for Japan's diplomacy against the backdrop of current US-China relations and paths that could lead to a reduced burden on Okinawa by taking the opportunity that has emerged from new US military operational concepts intended to deter China.

The Council hopes that these recommendations will assist the many Japanese living in localities that host military bases as well as Tokyo and Washington to think about Japan's security and the question of Okinawa.

## **Chapter 1 Reconsidering the Henoko New Base Project and Eliminating the Dangers from Futenma Air Station**

This chapter examines the current status of the plan to build a new base in Henoko, Nago City in Okinawa Prefecture and the operational status of US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan City, also in Okinawa. The chapter argues again that the Japanese government policy of the return of the land of Futenma in exchange for a replacement facility in Henoko does not stand to reason.

MCAS Futenma is completely surrounded by urbanized areas, and noise and dangers from it make its coexistence with local communities impossible. An air field should really not exist at such a location. Henoko is unfit as a location of a publicly funded construction project because a large expanse of the sea with complex topological features and extremely soft seabed in the Oura Bay needs to be filled to reclaim land.

The infeasible replacement project is used as an excuse to justify the continued operation of the impermissible air field, and has caused a dispute between the Japanese government and the Okinawa Prefectural Government and a division among the people of Okinawa. This is a tragedy for all concerned and signifies the futility of the failed policy regarding a Futenma Replacement Facility.

### **1 . The Henoko Base Construction Should Be Halted and Cancelled Immediately**

The Japanese government insists on developing a new base in Henoko as “the only solution” to the problems Futenma causes its neighboring communities, and has been pressing ahead with the construction. The Council recommended last year that: “With the revelation of the existence of the soft seabed and other factors, it is becoming increasingly apparent that construction plan for the new base in Henoko is difficult to complete from both a technical and financial standpoint. The Japanese government and Okinawa Prefecture should formulate as soon as possible a concrete policy



to realize the original goal of eliminating the dangers and suspending the operations of Futenma Air Station.” It has become more evident since then that the project defies rational logic for the following reasons.

First, the problems of cost overruns and the extended construction period remain unsolved due to the unexpected work necessary to stabilize the soft sea floor in the Oura Bay on which about half of the new base is to be built. In December 2019, the Japanese government released an estimate that it would take about 12 years and 930 billion yen to complete the construction and administrative procedures for handing over the base to the US Armed Forces if additional engineering work is done to improve the conditions of the sea floor. Experts say that this estimate is based on the most optimistic assumption, and that it will likely to cost more and take a longer period of time. Even if the new facility is completed, the reclaimed land is likely to continue to settle unevenly (differential settlement) for as long as 70 years according to the data released by the Okinawa Defense Bureau of the Ministry of Defense, requiring a large expense for repairs for a prolonged period of time.

The Ministry of Defense changed the design of the land reclamation work to reinforce the unstable section of the ground; and, in April 2020, the Okinawa Defense Bureau submitted the modified plan to the Okinawa Prefectural Government for approval. But the document does not specify the area and depth of the soft sea floor that needs to be stabilized or the number of sand piles to be installed into the seabed. Little information has been available necessary to choose engineering methods or to estimate the time and costs required for completion.

Second, the construction has been delayed. The Okinawa Prefectural Government estimates, based on the data from the Okinawa Defense Bureau, that of the total 206.2 million cubic meters of soil to be put into the sea for reclamation, only 892 thousand cubic meters have been deposited as of January 2021. This accounts for about 4.3 percent progress of the construction. The Oura Bay section where the soft sea bed exists has remained intact.

By carrying on the construction, the Japanese government expects the people of Okinawa to think that the project has made so much progress that it is too late for it to be cancelled, and that it is futile to continue their protest. In fact, the construction has made little progress. It is unlikely to be completed even though Okinawans resign themselves to hosting another military installation in Henoko. The people of Okinawa have been adamant in opposing the Henoko project. In the prefectural referendum on February 24, 2019, 434,273 voters were against reclaiming land from the sea for a base in Henoko, representing 72.15 percent of the total valid votes cast. This high number will go down in history as an indicator of the firm will of Okinawans to reject the base.

The document showing the changed design filed by the Okinawa Defense Bureau indicates Itoman City and Yaese Town in the southern part of the main Okinawa island among the sites where soil for the reclamation is extracted. In these areas there are still unrecovered remains of those perished in the Battle of Okinawa waged in the final days of the Second World War. The soil including the remains of the war dead may be extracted and used for the land reclamation. That would never be tolerated by the people of Okinawa, given the immense sacrifice imposed on them during the war.

Third, the project is not immune from the impact of the new coronavirus pandemic. A series of economic stimulus and relief programs of the Japanese government has added to the public debt that had already reached an alarming level. The Proposals last year suggested that “Taking the large sum of money that would be spent on constructing the new base in Henoko and redirecting it towards other uses would be far more beneficial for Japan from a political, economic and security perspective.” This suggestion should sound more compelling today as Japan is struggling to respond to the critical situation unleashed by the pandemic.

The construction of a replacement facility in Henoko is, therefore, the most infeasible option, not “the only solution,” because it is against reason to invest a prohibitive amount of tax money in a project on an unsuitable site while dangers from Futenma would be left unrelieved for at least 12 years

until the completion of the construction. The Japanese government's insistence on Henoko has also become a political issue over local autonomy as it stands in the way of dialogue between the officials of the national government and the Okinawa Prefectural Government.

Henoko has also been brought into question in the United States. In June 2020, the Subcommittee on Readiness of the US House Armed Services Committee called attention to the growing risk of earthquakes and geological instability in the Oura Bay during the deliberations of the National Defense Authorization Act and adopted a provision requiring the Department of Defense to submit a report with further assessment. This provision was subsequently eliminated by the Committee, but it is worth noting that the United States Congress raised doubt about Henoko. A report issued in November 2020 authored by an expert of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a leading American think tank, also says that "This project continues to have difficulties, ... and the price skyrocketing. It appears unlikely that this will ever be completed."<sup>1</sup>

The construction in Henoko is beset with too many problems in addition to technological and financial complications. The Japanese government should cancel the project immediately and begin sincere consultations with the Okinawa Prefectural Government.

According to media reports, the Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force is planning to station the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade in Henoko.<sup>2</sup> The primary objective of Henoko is to substitute Futenma and remove dangers from it. Stationing Self-Defense Forces units in Henoko would be a material change of that objective. It should be remembered that if such plans were to move forward, leaving the local governments and communities uninformed, the rift between the national government and Okinawa and mistrust of the government's military base policy as a whole would deepen.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark F. Cancian, *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2021: Marine Corps*, Nov 16, 2020, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-military-forces-fy-2021-marine-corps>

<sup>2</sup> *Okinawa Times*, January 25, 2020; *Kyodo*, January 25, 2020.

## 2 . Operations at Futenma Have Been on the Rise

With the construction of Henoko having been seriously delayed, efforts need to be stepped up urgently to eliminate the dangers from Futenma. But the neighboring communities have been facing more, not less, burden from the air station.

The number of military aircraft takeoffs and landings at Futenma increased from 13,581 in fiscal year 2017 beginning April 1<sup>st</sup> to 16,332 in 2018, 16,848 in 2019 and to 13,050 between April and December in fiscal 2020. Of them, aircraft flying in from other bases numbered 415 in fiscal year 2017, 1,756 in 2018, 2,776 in 2019, and 1,908 in fiscal 2020 as of December. Fixed-wing aircraft from other bases recorded 2,678 takeoffs and landings in fiscal 2019, an increase of 1.8 times from the previous year.

The Japanese government did take steps aimed at improving safety for the local communities. The transfer of the KC-130 tanker squadron from Futenma to Marine Air Station Iwakuni on Japan's mainland began in July 2014 and completed in August of that year; and as a result, the average number of KC-130 takeoffs and landings at Futenma decreased from 141 to 30 a month in fiscal 2017.<sup>3</sup> Two to four of the Ospreys stationed at Futenma have been flying out of Okinawa for training two to three times a year since the September 2016 agreement on training relocation.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these steps, the burden on Futenma's surrounding neighborhoods has grown, not decreased. Though the 15 KC130s transferred to Iwakuni, the number of aircraft stationed at Futenma increased from 52 in 2009 to 56 in 2013 and 58 in 2018 as MV-22 Ospreys and CH53E helicopters were added to its fleet. And a 2017 report of the United States General Accounting Office states that "There are no training locations near Iwakuni that are sufficient for relocated Marine Corps units' training needs, resulting in the units returning to Okinawa for training and spending

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<sup>3</sup> Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture, "Ginowan City and Military Bases," March 2017, p.89.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Defense/ Japanese Self-Defense Forces, " Training Relocations of Ospreys and Other Aircraft (Osprey nadono kunren iten)," [https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zaibeigun/saihen/iten\\_osprey.html](https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zaibeigun/saihen/iten_osprey.html)

additional money for fuel and equipment maintenance.”<sup>5</sup> Training relocation of Ospreys and other aircraft out of Okinawa has not proven so effective in reducing the burden on Okinawa as the Japanese government claims.

Thus, aircraft operations and noise have increased, not decreased, at Futenma due to the growth of its fleet and the increase of visiting aircraft. The US Air Force’s new strategic concept “Agile Combat Employment,” as explained later, has also contributed to the rise in the frequency of landings of visiting aircraft, particularly fighters flying in from Kadena Air Base in Okinawa.

Unless there is a tangible reduction of the burden of hosting Futenma, the commitment of the Japanese government to removing its dangers is in doubt. As long as the Japanese government remains a bystander to dangers from US military operations, Okinawa’s mistrust of the government will not be dispelled. The government should end putting the US military’s interests above the long-held wishes of Okinawa and seriously talk with the United States to find and implement ways to minimize operations at Futenma.

### **3 . US Marine Corps New Operational Concept and the Need for Overall Rethinking**

As explained in the “Proposals” last year, under its new “Expeditionary Advanced Base Operation” concept, the US Marine Corps has been shifting to operating in smaller units stationed at distributed locations less dependent on large-scale installations. In fact, the entire US Armed Forces are focusing on rotational deployment under their new operational concepts formulated last year, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. These operational shifts should enable the aviation component of Futenma to relocate its home base, in addition to its training, outside of Okinawa.

A long term rotational deployment of the aviation component separated

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<sup>5</sup> United States General Accounting Office, *Marine Corps Asia Pacific Realignment: DOD Should Resolve Capability Deficiencies and Infrastructure Risks and Revise Cost Estimates*, April 2017, p. 19.

from the command, ground and support components has been believed to be impossible since these four elements are organized as a Marine Air Ground Task Force. Their integrated operations have been the major rationale for building a Futenma replacement facility within Okinawa. The Marine Corps' new operational concept enables distributed rotational deployment of the aviation and ground components and, thus, the mitigation of the excessive burden from all the US military bases on Okinawa. The Japanese government should not miss this opportunity to initiate new talks with the United States aimed at significantly reducing the burden on Okinawa while maintaining deterrence by the US military.

At the same time, it should be remembered that an air facility like Futenma should not exist in the current location. The air station is endangering the lives and livelihoods of the local communities. This is the top priority issue to be addressed no matter how the issue of Henoko is settled.

## **Chapter 2 US-China Strategic Competition and Implications for Okinawa**

Rivalry between the United States and China will have a profound effect on the international environment surrounding Japan, especially Okinawa. Managing this rivalry to avoid a costly and dangerous arms race and to prevent a military crisis and war will require much prudence, courage, and wisdom on the part of Japanese leaders as well as those from the United States and China. The intensifying U.S.-China competition encompasses a multiplicity of dimensions.

### **1 . Multiple Dimensions of U.S.-China Strategic Competition**

First, U.S.-China rivalry reflects a structural shift in the balance of power and its deep psychological consequences. History has demonstrated that power transitions pose immense challenges to international peace and stability because of the fear that a dominant power can have regarding a rising power and the dissatisfaction that a rising power may have with the existing international order and the efforts by the dominant power to impede its rise. As many American commentators have noted, the 20th century was America's century during which the United States played a critical role in winning two World Wars and the Cold War with the Soviet Union. America's story is that of a steady expansion of its economic, technological, and military power capabilities and its global influence. The triumphs of the 20th century have engrained in America's body politic a sense of national mission and moral responsibility to establish, defend, and promote what many Americans see as a "liberal international order" inspired by its liberal democratic ideals and values. The psychological impact of China's rise on Americans is enormous because the United States since its founding has always been a rising power and has never faced a challenger like China. For China, the psychological effect of this power transition is just as profound. After a century of national humiliation, Chinese leaders are now promoting the notion of a "China dream" whereby the entire population will be uplifted from poverty, the national unity of China will be restored, and China will assume its rightful place in the international order. Although the United States initially encouraged and

facilitated China's economic development, China is now irritated the United States is moving away from that policy of engagement and towards a strategy of containment.

Second, the United States and China are now locked in a military competition in the Asia-Pacific region. Because of Chinese military modernization since the 1990s, the United States is losing its military predominance in the Western Pacific, and its forces are increasingly vulnerable to Chinese military capabilities in geographic areas near China's maritime periphery. This shift in the military balance of power has provoked an intense debate within the United States about how to respond. Some argue that the United States should harness its technological advantages and strengthen security alliances and partnerships to compete with China and to regain and maintain a military edge against China in the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>6</sup> Others insist that such a response would be too costly and unrealistic and would provoke a dangerous arms race. Therefore, rather than strive for military superiority, they advocate a stable military balance based on mutual denial between the United States and China.<sup>7</sup> China on the other hand sees its military buildup as part of an "active defense" strategy to protect its territorial sovereignty and maritime security interests. With its large and growing economy, China has both the will and capacity to match potential U.S. technological and numerical upgrades in military capabilities. China will use its advantage of geographic proximity to enhance what U.S. defense planners call an "anti-access, area denial" (A2/AD) capability to complicate and prevent U.S. military intervention along China's maritime periphery and in military contingencies that involve China's core interests like Taiwan.

Third, whereas many analysts had heretofore believed that increasing economic interdependence would promote stability and cooperation between the United States and China, the economic dimension is now reinforcing the competitive dynamics of bilateral relations. Although some U.S.

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<sup>6</sup> Michèle A. Flournoy, "How to Prevent a War in Asia: The Erosion of American Deterrence Raises the Risk of Chinese Miscalculation," *Foreign Affairs*, June 18, 2020.  
<sup>7</sup> Michael D. Swaine, Jessica J. Lee, and Rachel Esplin Odell, *Toward an Inclusive and Balanced Regional Order: A New U.S. Strategy in East Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, January 2021).



policymakers had thought that a policy of economic engagement and incorporating China into the World Trade Organization would encourage China to become a “responsible stakeholder” and even to liberalize its domestic political system, many have become disappointed that China is enhancing the role of the state in the economy, impeding fair access into the Chinese market and undermining intellectual property rights, and even exporting its authoritarian model of development abroad. U.S. leaders increasingly see economic relations with China as having negative security consequences by allowing China to absorb U.S. scientific and technological advances and apply them to the military sphere. They fear that Chinese digital technology, products, and networks will undermine U.S. national security; and they favor an “economic decoupling” by restricting Chinese access to U.S. research institutions, by regulating trade and investment in high technology fields, and by diversifying supply chains away from China. China in turn sees growing U.S. economic hostility as part of a concerted effort to contain China’s economic rise. In addition to retaliating against the U.S. imposition of tariffs, China has begun to engage in its own version of “economic decoupling” by emphasizing trade and investments and digital partnerships with non-Western economies and by strengthening indigenous efforts in science and technology.

Fourth, ideological competition is becoming a more prominent aspect of U.S.-China relations.<sup>8</sup> Developments in Xinjiang and Hong Kong have heightened American criticisms of Chinese political repression, have led some in the U.S. policy community to question the political legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party, and have increased American support of Taiwan. The United States is also concerned by Chinese overseas activities to influence foreign countries, including U.S. allies, to cultivate more favorable views of China. U.S. critics of China are alarmed that China is seeking to expand its illiberal sphere of influence both regionally and globally. In response, China has accused the United States of interfering in China’s domestic affairs and has underscored the hypocrisy of U.S. values-based foreign policy, especially in the context of the domestic political turmoil

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<sup>8</sup> Zack Cooper and Laura Rosenberger, “Democratic Values Area a Competitive Advantage: The Contest with Authoritarianism Requires the United States to Understand Its Strengths,” *Foreign Affairs*, December 22, 2020.

engulfing the United States.

Fifth, U.S.-China rivalry involves a competition about international order and global governance. For the United States, China is challenging the U.S.-led liberal international order by undermining the rule of international law, by reneging on various international agreements, by seeking to weaken the U.S. alliance system, and by using economic pressures and military coercion against states that do not bend to Chinese preferences. From the Chinese perspective, China has been a responsible and active contributor to the United Nations order and is simply seeking an international voice and status commensurate with its growing power and influence. In rebuffing American criticisms of Chinese international behavior, Chinese analysts allude to how often the United States has refused to ratify or walked away from international agreements. China accuses the United States of clinging to outdated “cold war” thinking by focusing on military alliances.

## **2 . U.S.-China Relations during the Biden Administration**

While shifting away from the Trump Administration’s erratic foreign policy style and “America first” rhetoric, the Biden Administration has signaled its intention to continue its predecessor’s tough approach to China. In his first foreign policy address after assuming office, President Joseph Biden referred to China as America’s “most serious competitor” and vowed to “confront China’s economic abuses; counter its aggressive, coercive action; to push back on China’s attack on human rights, intellectual property, and global governance.”<sup>9</sup> During his Senate confirmation hearings, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken declared that China poses “the most significant challenge of any nation-state” to U.S. national security, and he agreed with the Trump Administration’s use of the term “genocide” in characterizing China’s repression of the Uyghur population in Xinjiang.<sup>10</sup> In various interactions with the press after assuming office, Secretary Blinken has

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<sup>9</sup> “Remarks by President Biden on America’s Place in the World,” February 4, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/02/04/remarks-by-president-biden-on-americas-place-in-the-world/>.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, “Full Committee Hearing on Nomination,” January 19, 2021, <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/hearings/nominations-011921>.

insisted that the United States must “engage China from a position of strength” in all aspects of the relationship: the adversarial, the competitive, and the cooperative. And he has stated his intention to “put human rights and democracy back at the center of our foreign policy,” including with China.

During his Senate confirmation hearings, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin echoed this tough stance toward China. While emphasizing China’s threat to U.S. national security and interests, he insisted that the United States still maintains a “qualitative edge” and “competitive edge” over China,” but the gap between the U.S. and China is diminishing. He declared that the U.S. goal is to “expand this gap” in order “to present a credible threat, a credible deterrent ...to China in the future.” By referring to “the use of quantum computing, the use of AI, the advent of connected battlefields, space-based platforms,” Austin argued that the United States would be able to have the capabilities “to hold large pieces of Chinese military inventory at risk.”<sup>11</sup> The appointment of Kurt Campbell, who served in both the Clinton and Obama Administrations, to be the “Indo-Pacific Coordinator” in the National Security Council suggests that the Biden Administration will build upon the Trump Administration’s legacy of seeing the vast expanse of the Indo-Pacific as the geographic space for U.S.-China strategic competition and of emphasizing the so-called “Quad” process of security dialogue and cooperation among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India.

There will also be some factors that might mitigate competition and conflict with China. Much more than the Trump Administration, the Biden Administration will be interested in exploring ways that the U.S. and China can cooperate to address the challenges of global climate change and to deal with North Korea’s nuclearization. Biden will be more steadfast and less confrontational in relating to Chinese leaders, and he will seek to avoid risky behavior that will heighten the danger of U.S.-China military conflict. At the same time, an interest in reassuring allies, especially Japan, as well

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<sup>11</sup> “SECDEF Nominee Austin Affirms Threat from China, Will ‘Update’ National Defense Strategy,” USNI News, January 19, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/01/19/secdef-nominee-austin-affirms-threat-from-china-will-update-national-defense-strategy>.

as U.S. domestic political pressures will complicate the Biden team's diplomacy to reduce tensions with China.

As a consequence, the United States and China will continue to move towards a "cold war" dynamic, but this will be a "new type of cold war" relationship. U.S.-China rivalry may indeed become more difficult to manage than the U.S.-Soviet Cold War. After the grave Berlin and Cuban missile crises, the United States and Soviet Union sought to stabilize their rivalry through various diplomatic initiatives, including strategic arms control. Each side generally accepted the dominance of the other in their respective international camps, and this two-camp divide was stabilized through a balance of military power and a clear face-off between two alliance systems. Neither side attempted seriously to undercut the other side's primary sphere of influence. To the extent there was political-military conflict, this tended to take place in geographic areas of secondary interest and involve proxy wars without a direct conflict between U.S. and Soviet military forces. The limited economic interaction between the U.S. and Soviet-led camps also simplified bipolar competition.

By contrast, U.S.-China competition is likely to be more complex and therefore much more fraught with the danger of miscalculation. In the U.S.-China rivalry, there are no clear lines of demarcation and mutual recognition of each other's spheres of influence. From the Chinese perspective, the United States is undermining China's core interests and national integrity through its policies and statements regarding Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang. From the American perspective, China is seeking to weaken the U.S. alliance system in the Asia-Pacific region and ultimately to reduce U.S. influence in the most economically dynamic region in the world. Because of the deepening commercial ties among the Asia-Pacific economies, the competition for influence between the U.S. and China presents difficult strategic dilemmas for all states in the region. This situation incentivizes the United States and China to intensify the competition rather than accepting some pre-determined status quo. Although the U.S.-China rivalry may not manifest the ideological fervor of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, the divergence in political systems is increasingly adding an ideological overlay to the geopolitical competition. Moreover, the

continuing trajectory of China's rise relative to the United States coupled with America's geographic distance from East Asia make much more challenging the establishment of a stable balance of military power.

Although both the United States and China want to avoid a military conflict, both sides are preparing for war as a means to prevent war while investing little in diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions and stabilize bilateral relations. As the sense of rivalry intensifies, relatively minor incidents could trigger an interactive escalation that makes it harder for either side to back down. Conflicts in the East China and South China seas that might be intrinsically minor in the broad scheme of things will become tests of will and credibility.

### **3 . Implications for the U.S.-Japan Alliance and Okinawa**

Despite the general continuity between the Trump and Biden Administrations regarding China policy, a key difference will be the more consistent and energetic emphasis that President Biden will place on U.S. alliances and partnerships. The strategic challenge posed by China requires the United States to harness the support and contributions of existing treaty allies and expand security partnerships beyond traditional alliances.<sup>12</sup> As a first step in this policy centered around allies and partners, Biden officials have worked to reassure Asian countries about U.S. security commitments and its intention to be economically, diplomatically, and militarily engaged in the Indo-Pacific region. Their tough statements about China have countered fears in some Asian countries, especially Japan, that the Biden Administration might be too "soft" on China. To reassure Japan, in his phone call with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga after assuming the presidency, Biden affirmed the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance "as the cornerstone of peace and prosperity in a free and open Indo-Pacific" and "his commitment to provide extended deterrence to Japan." President Biden also acknowledged the inclusion of the Senkaku Islands as part of the U.S. "unwavering commitment" to Japan's defense under Article 5 of the bilateral

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<sup>12</sup> President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

security treaty.<sup>13</sup>

While reassuring allies of U.S. security commitments, the Biden Administration will also expect more defense contributions from allies to counter a rising and assertive China. Whereas the Trump Administration focused on pressuring Japan to increase its host-nation support for U.S. forces based in Japan and the purchase of U.S. defense systems, the Biden Administration will emphasize ways that Japan can contribute more to common defense and deterrence goals.<sup>14</sup> One priority will be the coordination of military operations between U.S. and Japanese defense forces by stressing “deterrence by denial” (i.e., preventing China from achieving its objectives) more than “deterrence by punishment.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to the Pacific Deterrence Initiative mandated by the U.S. Congress in 2020, a general framework for determining the roles and missions that the United States and Japan would assume for regional security is likely to emerge from the recently announced Global Posture Review (GPR). According to Secretary of Defense Austin, the GPR will review the “U.S. military footprint, resources, strategy and mission” and will entail consultations with allies and partners.<sup>16</sup> During his visit to the Pentagon in early February, President Biden followed up by launching a new review of how the U.S. military is postured to deter China in the Pacific region. The President stated that this review “will require a whole of government efforts, bipartisan cooperation in Congress and strong alliances and partners.” A special team of around 15 civilian officials and military officers will conduct this China-centered posture review and plans to deliver the

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<sup>13</sup> “Readout of President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. Call with Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga of Japan,” January 27, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/01/27/readout-of-president-joseph-r-biden-jr-call-with-prime-minister-yoshihide-suga-of-japan/>.

<sup>14</sup> Abraham Denmark, *U.S. Strategy in the Asian Century: Empowering Allies and Partners* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 192-194; and Jeffrey W. Hornung, *Japan's Potential Contributions in an East China Sea Contingency* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2020), 103-117.

<sup>15</sup> Ely Ratner, *et.al.*, *Rising to the China Challenge: Renewing American Competitive in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington, D.C. Center for a New American Security, December 2019), 15.

<sup>16</sup> “Statement by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on the Initiation of a Global Force Posture Review,” February 4, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2494189/statement-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-the-initiation-of-a-glo/>.

results to Secretary of Defense Austin by summer 2021.

Although the details of this posture review have not been made public, various considerations are likely to shape the process. One is the vulnerability of U.S. military bases and assets in the Western Pacific to Chinese A2/AD capabilities like ballistic and cruise missiles, air defense systems, and submarines. This factor will steer the United States away from relying primarily on a few number of vulnerable military facilities and move towards a dispersal of defense forces throughout the region, including Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.<sup>17</sup> A policy of force dispersal, however, does not necessarily mean that the United States will abandon existing facilities. Rather the United States will seek ways to enhance the survivability of existing bases through physical hardening of base infrastructures and upgrading of air and missile defense. A second consideration will be the development of a widely distributed logistics network and rapid mobility of agile military units. Toward this objective, the United States will not only seek new security partners, but also promote security cooperation among treaty allies. A third factor will be the development of asymmetric capabilities that utilize U.S. technological advantages to counter Chinese military forces. Such capabilities include high-speed strike weapons, unmanned weapon systems, and long-range ballistic and cruise missiles.

China's A2/AD capabilities might arguably encourage the United States to reduce the concentration of American bases and forces on Okinawa. If defense assets on Okinawa are becoming increasingly vulnerable to Chinese missile attacks, one option might be to reduce the military presence on Okinawa and redistribute these assets to other parts of Japan and the region. From the perspective of U.S. defense planning, however, there will also be strong incentives to maintain or even enhance the military presence along the island chain of Okinawa Prefecture. First, China's A2/AD capabilities will make it difficult for the United States to deploy military forces inside the first-island chain from outside the theater after a military contingency begins. Therefore, the United States will want to maintain a

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<sup>17</sup> Kurt Campbell and Rush Doshi, "How America Can Shore Up Asian Order: A Strategy for Restoring Balance and Legitimacy," *Foreign Affairs*, January 12, 2021.

robust military presence on Okinawa despite the vulnerability and to strengthen the survivability and resilience of U.S. assets through hardening, missile defense, and rapid mobility. Second, U.S. forces in Okinawa as well as elsewhere in Japan would help to respond quickly to possible Chinese aggression by providing intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets needed to support U.S. stand-off counter-attack capabilities located in less vulnerable areas and by providing air and maritime defense along the first-island chain to complicate Chinese military plans. Third, having effective forces present along the first-island chain would facilitate crisis management and reduce escalation risks by making more credible “deterrence by denial” rather than relying on “deterrence by punishment.”

An American emphasis on allies and partners will entail both greater security reassurances and higher expectations of allied defense contributions, but this approach will also give critical allies like Japan more opportunities to influence U.S. strategic thinking and defense policy. Given the changing power balance in the region, the United States is unable to effectively counter China without the active support of allies like Japan. Although some Japanese policymakers worried about potential U.S. security abandonment after the end of the Cold War, such apprehension is now far-fetched. The rise of China now makes Japan an even more essential security ally of the United States than during the U.S.-Soviet Cold War era. Therefore, Japan should not be reluctant to voice its concerns about the intensification of U.S.-China strategic rivalry and to suggest ways to reduce tensions, exercise restraint, and promote regional stability. In fact, American promoters of liberal internationalism have noted how the U.S.-led international order “provides channels and networks for reciprocal communication and influence” or “liberal voice opportunities.”<sup>18</sup> There are indeed many in the U.S. foreign policy community that will be receptive to Japanese concerns about U.S.-China strategic competition and willing to listen to Japanese voices and ideas. Therefore, Japan can and should proactively utilize such “voice opportunities” to restructure the U.S.-Japan alliance and to enhance the political sustainability of the U.S. military

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<sup>18</sup> G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 72-73.



presence in Japan. And by marshalling arguments based on defense effectiveness, economic efficiency, and technical feasibility, Okinawa can and should vigorously convey to both the Japanese and U.S. governments the importance of reducing the unfair burden that Okinawa still bears for hosting U.S. military bases and forces.

## Chapter 3 New Operational Concepts of the US Military and Their Implications for US Bases in Okinawa

This chapter offers an overview of new operational concepts of U.S. Armed Forces, analyses implications of these concepts for Okinawa, and discusses the possibility of a sizable reduction of the burden that Okinawa bears for hosting US military installations.

### 1 . New Operational Concepts of US Armed Forces

According to a 2020 report of the US Department of Defense on China's military build-up, the United States is losing its military predominance over China in the western Pacific as the country has exceeded the United States in the number of naval ships and acquired more than 1,250 land-based ballistic and cruise missiles.<sup>19</sup> The US strategy paper says that against these developments, the United States aims to deny China sustained air and sea dominance inside the first island chain stretching from the Japanese archipelago including Okinawa to Taiwan and the Philippines in a conflict and dominate all domains including the surface areas, underwater, space, and cyber outside the first island chain.<sup>20</sup>

The United States has been developing new operational concepts to counter China. The National Defense Authorization Act, which passed the US Congress in December 2020, includes funding for the "Pacific Deterrence Initiative" (PDI), which aims to enhance the capabilities of the Indo-Pacific Command to counter the Chinese military. The March 2020 report of the Indo-Pacific Command, which informed the decision to launch the PDI, calls for an integrated air defense capability to defend Guam and a precision strike capability installed along the first island chain including Japan.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments involving The People's Republic of China 2020*.

<sup>20</sup> "US Strategic Framework for Indo Pacific," <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/IPS-Final-Declass.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) section 1253 Assessment, "Regain the Advantage: US Indo-Pacific command's investment Plan for Implementing the National Defense Strategy."

The Marine Corps has been developing its own new operational concept called “Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations” (EABO) and is reorganizing itself to be prepared for “Great Power Competition” with China and Russia. During EABOs, small units deployed on distributed locations seize important remote islands and build temporary missile and aircraft stations to contribute to denying an adversary’s advance offshore and to gaining and establishing sea control.

The Marine Corps “Force Design 2030,” released in March 2020, includes a total reduction of 12,000 Marines, the elimination of all tank battalions, and investment in long-range missiles and unmanned weapon systems. A noteworthy initiative is the formation of three Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR) that will execute EABOs. The first of the MLRs will be deployed in Hawaii, followed by the other two regiments in Guam and Okinawa.<sup>22</sup> An MLR consists of 1,800 to 2,000 troops but is grouped into units of 50 to 100 during deployment.<sup>23</sup>

The US Air Force has been expanding its new operational concept of “Agile Combat Employment,” which uses temporary bases with a minimum level of personnel and equipment to perform quick supply and repair/maintenance in a contested strategic environment.

There are, however, several doubts about these concepts from a military point of view. First, no matter how the US military improves its operations, the Chinese military has an overwhelming geographic advantage in supply and reinforcement in the waters near China. It will not be easy for US forces to defeat the Chinese military in an armed conflict in the vicinity of China. Second, in a contingency regarding the independence of Taiwan, because the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party and the People’s Liberation Army would be at stake, China’s will be resolute. Therefore, even if it faces a slight disadvantage in military capabilities, China will be difficult to deter.

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<sup>22</sup> *Force Design 2030*, March, 2020; Congressional Research Service, *New US Marine Corps Force Design Initiative*, October 8, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IN/IN1128>

<sup>23</sup> Congressional Research Service, *New US Marine Corps Force Design Initiative*; “Marines Plan to Retool to Meet China Threat”, *Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 2020.

Third, the key to the success of these concepts is the ability to field a number of platforms in the periphery of China immediately before an armed conflict begins. Delivering these platforms and getting them ready at the right timing which is neither too early nor too late would be nearly impossible. Fourth, assuming these concepts are effective, China would launch attacks on US frontlines including Okinawa before the arrival of the US combat units. These frontlines would remain vulnerable to Chinese missiles.

Given the vulnerability of its fixed and concentrated bases to the more capable Chinese missiles, the United States is reviewing its military presence with a view to promoting dispersed and rotational troop deployments. The Indo-Pacific Command's report to the US Congress mentioned above stresses the need for distributed deployment, noting that "It is not strategically prudent, nor operationally viable to physically concentrate on large, close-in bases that are highly vulnerable to a potential adversary's strike capability."<sup>24</sup>

Kurt Campbell, who has been appointed the Indo-Pacific Coordinator in the Biden administration, states in a recent article that "... Washington ... needs to work with other states to disperse U.S. forces across Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. This would reduce American reliance on a small number of vulnerable facilities in East Asia."<sup>25</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley, in his comment in November 2020, questioned the large-scale, permanent stationing of the US forces and suggested the need for rotational deployment.<sup>26</sup> These views are echoed by the newly confirmed Secretary of Defense, Lloyd Austin, who stated at the US Senate Committee on Armed Services in January that the United States needed a more distributed force posture in the Indo-Pacific in response to China's counter-intervention capabilities, and that he would review the US posture in the Pacific from all

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<sup>24</sup> National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) section 1253 Assessment, "Regain the Advantage: US Indo-Pacific command's investment Plan for Implementing the National Defense Strategy."

<sup>25</sup> Kurt M. Campbell and Rush Doshi, "How America Can Shore Up Asian Order: A Strategy for Restoring Balance and Legitimacy," *Foreign Affairs*, January 2020.

<sup>26</sup> "Joint Chiefs chairman says permanent basing overseas needs reconsideration," *Military Times*, Dec 3, 2020.

aspects including presence.<sup>27</sup>

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the new US president, Joseph Biden, announced a Global Posture Review of the US military. The review is expected to be completed in the first half of this year and the US administration will engage in close consultations with its allies. Although it is not clear what will come out of this posture review, it is highly likely that distributed rotational basing will be part of its focus.

## **2 . Implications of New US Military Concepts for Okinawa**

The new US military concepts would use Okinawa and other islands along the first island chain as frontlines. In peacetime the US forces may increase training on Okinawa, further threatening the living of the local communities. In contingencies Okinawa may face a heightened risk of becoming a target of attack.

The III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF), whose home is Okinawa, is given the most important role in the Marine Corps' reorganization plans because of Okinawa's proximity to China. The III MEF has been repeating large-scale training for EABOs including parachute drops from Ospreys, seizure and occupation of an airfield, and the installment of refueling spots and rocket launchers on the island of Iejima, which lies just to the west of the northern part of the main Okinawa island.<sup>28</sup>

The Air Force fighters of Kadena Air Base have been flying to Futenma for ACE training,<sup>29</sup> adding to the number of takeoffs and landings at the air station. The Air Force's MC130 special mission aircraft have been practicing low-altitude flights over the Kerama Islands, off the southwestern coast of Okinawa and over Cape Hedo, the northernmost point on Okinawa Island,

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<sup>27</sup> "Austin To Scrub US Pacific Posture; More Bases, Troops Likely," *Breaking Defense*, January 21, 2020.

<sup>28</sup> "Expeditionary advanced basing capabilities on display during Exercise Noble Fury," October 8, 2020, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/380618/expeditionary-advanced-basing-capabilities-display-during-exercise-noble-fury>

<sup>29</sup> "MCAS Futenma Agile Combat Employment exercise," Feb 22, 2020, <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/363687/mcas-futenma-agile-combat-employment-exercise>

inducing anxiety among the local populations.

As can be seen from these examples, under these new US military operational concepts, there is concern that training will be expanded qualitatively, quantitatively, and geographically in various training sites that have been created. If this training is expanded little by little without any explanation to the localities themselves, then the fear and opposition of local residents toward the US military are likely to increase.

Since the new US military concepts can impose more burden on Okinawa, the prefectural government should closely follow US military activities and make the Japanese and US governments aware of the dangers from the training and its impact on local residents.

Furthermore, as noted above, a new Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) will be deployed to Okinawa in 2027. Marine Corps Commandant David Berger remarked that “The mobile Marine units would not increase the number of troops hosted by Japan.”<sup>30</sup> The 12th Marine Regiment, currently stationed in Camp Hansen and whose command element will relocate to Hawaii under the US military realignment plans, seems that it will be reorganized into a MLR and stationed in Okinawa.<sup>31</sup> The Japanese government should ask the United States to clarify whether there will be changes in the realignment plans and to the Japanese funding for the development of Marine Corps facilities in Guam in support of these plans. Any information obtained from the United States should be shared with the Okinawa Prefectural Government.

The deployment of an MLR in Okinawa may affect Henoko. Henoko is meant to be the relocation site for the aircraft group of the 31<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit currently located at Futenma. If an MLR in Okinawa were to use Henoko, its design may need further changes.

Reflecting the views of host local communities in training plans and troop

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<sup>30</sup> “Marines aim to send mobile anti-ship units to Japan with eye on defending against China,” *Stars and Stripes*, July 23, 2020.

<sup>31</sup> Congressional Research Service, *New US Marine Corps Force Design Initiative*.

allocations should matter to the US military while it is implementing the new operational concepts that emphasize dispersals and rotations to reduce reliance on large, fixed installations. The Okinawa Prefectural Government should not miss this opportunity and make its position known unequivocally that the concentrated US basing on Okinawa is militarily vulnerable, increases local discontent, and is therefore detrimental to the stability and sustainability of the US presence.

### **3 . Burden of Hosting Bases in Contingencies Should Not Be Ignored**

The new US military concepts assume operating troops and installations on Okinawa to counter China despite the fact that they are within the range of Chinese missiles. This contradiction can give rise to the security dilemma. With tensions between the United States and China ramping up, troop deployment and operations on frontlines may raise the risk of an unintentional armed clash. In the event that the United States and China begin fighting, Okinawa on a frontline would be put at a heightened risk of becoming a priority target of attack. This is the burden of hosting bases in contingencies that are far more onerous than the burden in peacetime such as noise, crimes, and environmental pollution. Neither the Japanese government nor the Okinawa Prefectural Government has taken any measures to ensure the safety of their population in contingencies.

The core of deterrence is the ability to win a war while surviving damage inflicted during the war. The aim of having that ability is to discourage the opponent to fight a war. But having this ability does not guarantee that war would not occur. As stated in Chapter 3 of the “Proposals” report from last year (March 2020), reassurance and confidence building through diplomacy are essential for stable, effective deterrence.

The Japanese government should spare no diplomatic effort for mediation and confidence building, as argued in Chapters 2 and 5, so that the people of Okinawa and Japan will not suffer from war. The operation of increasing number of the Self-Defense Forces units deployed in Okinawa should be exclusively defensive in order not to provoke potential adversaries, and right messages should be delivered to Japan’s neighboring countries.

The Senkaku Islands deserve mention because the Japanese public including the people of Okinawa are highly interested in the issues regarding the islands.

The Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) has been enhancing its presence in the waters of the Senkaku and increasing incursions into Japanese territorial seas. Last year saw a sharp increase in the number of chases of Okinawan fishing boats by CCG vessels. The Japan Coast Guard has been responding to CCG's pursuits but has been stretched to the limit by the larger and more powerful CCG fleet. China is likely to continue these one-sided actions.

If the situation develops beyond the capacity of the JCG, the Self-Defense Forces may take over. But the SDF maritime security operation does not allow enforcement actions on foreign government vessels. The mobilization of SDF units could prompt China to send its Navy, which would raise the risk of escalation. The National Defense Program Guidelines approved by the cabinet in 2018 declares that should a remote island be occupied, "the SDF will retake it by employing all necessary measures."<sup>32</sup> But if China takes the island again, Japan would be drawn into a prolonged war of attrition over it and the situation might get out control. If the US military joins the combat, the situation could escalate into an all-out war between the United States and China, and all of Okinawa could be targeted by Chinese missile strikes. If one soberly considers this possibility, rather than carelessly sending SDF or US troops, the first priority clearly should be to pursue a political resolution.

A simple belief that the US military presence on Okinawa would deter any attempt for the control over the Senkaku Islands will prevent flexible responses to a crisis and make it difficult to quickly settle the situation.

#### **4. For Reducing the Burden of Military Bases on Okinawa with the US Military's Rethinking of Its Strategy**

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<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Defense, "National Defense Program Guidelines for FY2019 and beyond," December 18, 2018.



The concentrated basing on Okinawa is an unfair security burden imposed on the people of Okinawa and politically unstable and unsustainable, as stated in the Proposals last year. This chapter underscored that the US military's new operational concepts can deepen the contradiction between the heavy US presence on Okinawa and its unsustainability. These concepts would also view the entire first-island chain including Okinawa and the rest of the Japanese archipelago as the frontline in the event of missile warfare with China. The burden of hosting US military bases both in peacetime and war would spread across Japan.

The burden that Okinawa carries must be reduced under any circumstances. By making relocated training and rotational deployment as part of the new normal for the US military, the new operational concepts are generating conditions conducive to reducing this burden. On the other hand, these concepts assume that the troops stationed in Japan on the frontline of a contingency against China are kept on high mobility and trained for combat. Their combat-oriented mobility and training in peacetime across Japan means qualitative and quantitative increase in the burden that Japan bears as a host nation of the US military presence. This is the consequence of the US military's effort to implement its new operational concepts, not the result of any attempt to mitigate the burden on Okinawa. In this sense, finding ways to accommodate the operational needs of the US military under the new concepts in the context of US-China rivalry is a critical issue for sustaining the Japan-US alliance that is pertinent to all Japanese, not limited those living in Okinawa.

The US military should be pressed to continue force dispersals away from Okinawa as it needs to reduce force concentration. For example, the relocation and rotational deployment of the US forces including the Marine Corps, from Okinawa to SDF bases on mainland Japan through joint use can be an option, provided that views from host local governments and residents near these bases are fully taken into account. Moving out of Japan to other locations in Asia should also be considered. At the same time, Okinawa should not be regarded as a prerogative of the US military. Its operations at Futenma and expanded training on Iejima visibly increased the burden of the US military presence. To lessen the burden, these military

activities need to be scaled back.

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> year since the 1996 Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) agreement and the 15<sup>th</sup> year since the 2006 agreement on the realignment of US forces in Japan. Over these years, the strategic environment has changed considerably. But about 69% of all the land area exclusively used by the US forces in Japan would still be concentrated on Okinawa even if all the land of the bases south of Kadena is returned as specified in the realignment plan because most of the units and installations in these bases will transfer to other locations within Okinawa.

In addition, 2022 will be the 50<sup>th</sup> year since Okinawa's reversion to Japan. The Japanese government should collaborate with the Okinawa Prefectural Government to evaluate the results of the consolidation, integration, and reduction of the US military installations implemented so far. The Okinawa Prefectural Government, for its part, should collaborate with the National Governors' Association to keep track of US military training and deployment distributed nationwide under the new US operational concepts, and develop a plan that charts a phased reduction of bases on Okinawa beyond the SACO agreement.

The Japanese and US governments and the Okinawa Prefectural Government need to have close dialogue over the present situation and future of US bases on Okinawa. At the same time, the Okinawa Prefectural Government should initiate such actions as holding track-two meetings of experts from Japan, the United States, and Okinawa and promote communications and public relations with experts from Japan and the United States, as suggested in the Proposals last year. Such meetings of experts should be held as early as possible as the United States has started the process of a global posture review and consultations with its allies.

The Japanese government should clearly voice its position at these consultations. Whether the government is ready to raise the issue of burden reduction for Okinawa on these occasions will test the government's commitment to work on behalf of the interests of Okinawa.

## Chapter 4 Indo-Pacific Diplomacy and Okinawa

The preceding chapters explain that the United States has been rethinking the strategic posture of its Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific region in recent years, that the new Biden Administration will seriously begin consultations with its allies to rebuild cooperation with them, and that these developments in the United States will have profound implications for the US military presence on Okinawa. The chapters also underscore that, as the US-China rivalry is intensifying, it is extremely unreasonable militarily, economically and politically to maintain the present US military installations on Okinawa and to continue the construction of a Futenma replacement facility in Henoko while keeping the air station open.

These developments should have compelled Japanese policy makers to move out of the inertia they are in and begin to overhaul Japan's security policy. But there is no sign that the Japanese government is willing to do so. The only national security policy that the government and the ruling coalition parties have been stressing is that of reinforcing deterrence reliant on the alliance with the United States. A mental block has set in in discourses of national security policy, and the pains that Okinawa has been suffering from bearing disproportionately a heavy burden for hosting military bases has been neglected.

As a first step to find a way out, this chapter discusses the "mental block" that refuses to consider any other alternatives than the reliance on deterrence, and explore ways to alleviate the undue burden on Okinawa by engaging in diplomacy with a broader outlook. Such diplomacy should be conducted on the premise of maintaining the alliance with the United States but could free Japan from the "security dilemma."

### 1 . Simplistic Theory of Deterrence

- The Agreement to Return Futenma and the Loss of Relevance of the Agreement

On April 12, 1996, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and United States Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale made a surprise announcement that they had agreed to return the land of US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma within five to seven years. The Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) was tasked to examine Futenma's replacement options and recommended the construction of a sea-based facility which can be removed when no longer necessary, and the Security Consultative Committee (SCC) approved the recommendation in December that year.<sup>33</sup>

The agreement by the governments of Japan and the United States to return Futenma was prompted by the September 1995 rape of an Okinawan school girl by three US service members including Marines stationed in Okinawa and demonstrated that both governments were standing by Okinawa. The SACO and SCC not only considered the return of Futenma but also comprehensively looked for other possible ways to reduce the burden that the US military bases placed on Okinawa. Returning Futenma, which borders local population centers, was also meant to remove dangers from it to the surrounding communities. The decision to develop a removable replacement facility suggested that the policymakers were committed to the cause of lessening the burden on Okinawa.

After the twists and turns that followed since then, as described last year in the Proposals, the recommended removable facility has ended up being the plan to build a new fixed replacement facility in Henoko. Despite the fact that the completion of a new base in Henoko looks more unlikely than ever, the Japanese government persists that it is the only solution to the problems arising from Futenma. The intransigence of the government has rendered the agreement to return Futenma virtually meaningless. Beneath this lies a growing conservatism in Japan that is closely linked to the perception that China is a threat.

- Rising Conservatism and Okinawa

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<sup>33</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The SACO Final Report," December 2, 1996. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/96saco1.html>

In the final stage of its history leading up to 1945, Japan ended up fighting simultaneously China, the United States, the then Soviet Union and several European countries in a war whose recklessness is unprecedented in the history of humanity, and lost it. The consequences of the war have become the yoke of history on Japan since then. As the country made a new beginning after the surrender, it accepted a new constitution which was in effect drafted by the United States, and placed the Japan-US Security Treaty at the center of its diplomacy with the knowledge that the treaty would restrict its independence.

Thus, Japanese diplomacy was to be guided by the postwar constitution and its Article 9, in particular, and the bilateral security treaty, and was inherently inseparable from the remorse for the war. Successive governments of the Liberal Democratic Party publicly declared and kept allegiance to this postwar diplomacy guided by Article 9 of the constitution and the security treaty after the 1960 revision of the treaty by the administration of Nobusuke Kishi until the 1990's. Many Japanese believed that this position brought them a postwar success story: the country having developed into a major economic power and been accepted into the international community.

After a period of transition in the 1990's and as the 21st century began, however, narratives and political statements and actions started to emerge that appeared to deny the postwar success story as if the yoke of history had been thrown off. They now hold a dominating sway over Japanese politics and society in general. Beneath the growing conservatism lies the nationalism which adheres to national unity and historical continuity or unquestioning trust in them. As Benedict Anderson analyzed, these "Imagined Communities" have "self-sacrificing love" and a utopian bent.<sup>34</sup>

The voice from Okinawa, which experienced the cruel ground battle where civilians were caught in the crossfire in the final days of the Second World War, was an integral part of the foundation of Japan's postwar diplomacy. But as the voice of conservatives who wish to think that the war was not the

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<sup>34</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London • New York: Verso, 1983, revised in 1991)

result of Japan's mistaken national policies has grown, the voice of Okinawa has gradually been marginalized in Japanese politics and society.

- Harm of the China Threat Perception

Equally important is the spread of conservatism that has been associated with a change in views about China. Since the mid-1990's, Japanese opinion on China has gradually worsened due to complicating factors such as history issues, the Senkaku Islands, Taiwan, and China's maritime activities. Negative views of China have prevailed in Japanese politics and society as China has become more powerful and assertive.

As the China threat perception has risen, the discourse on security in Japan has become simplistic. In loudly proclaiming the importance of deterrence, a simplistic strategy of exclusively emphasizing the importance of the US-Japan alliance has come to be recited as if it were a theorem. As a consequence, a "mental block" has set in regarding Okinawa's base burden and the issues regarding the new base at Henoko.

Simply put, Japan cannot break with the alliance with the United States because Japan's postwar diplomacy has been, in effect, "middle power diplomacy." The major difference from the diplomacy before the end of the war is that Japan has renounced unilateralism; and in that sense, it is no wonder that the alliance guides its diplomacy and security policy. But the strategic value of middle power diplomacy is determined by multilateral networks that can be built on the bedrock of the alliance. Obsession with the perceived threat of China narrows Japan's perspectives into deterrence reliant on the alliance with the United States and blinds Japan to strategic thinking befitting itself.

The next section discusses mid- to long term strategic benefits that can be expected from partnerships among middle powers which share the challenge of balancing their relations with the United States with relations with China. Partnerships among these nations would enable Japan to map out the way to reducing the burden on Okinawa.

## 2 . Paths to Multilateralized Partnerships among Middle Powers

- An Outlook under the Biden Administration

US administrations tended to see a sign of deliberate distancing in any Japanese attempt to explore regional partnerships that do not include the United States. But, as the previous chapters point out, the Biden administration is seeking to restructure US foreign and security policies toward the Indo-Pacific region by restoring cooperation with its allies and friends. This opens a new horizon of a strategy for Japan, free from the one-dimensional belief in deterrence and the Japan-US alliance.

It is, therefore, important to note the following statement by Kurt Campbell, who has been appointed as newly established Indo-Pacific Coordinator in the National Security Council, in a *Foreign Affairs* article in January 2021: “Although Washington should maintain its forward presence, it also needs to work with other states to disperse U.S. forces across Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. This would reduce American reliance on a small number of vulnerable facilities in East Asia. Finally, the United States should encourage new military and intelligence partnerships between regional states.”<sup>35</sup>

Campbell expresses the determination that “... the United States plays a major role—placing a ‘tire’ on the familiar regional alliance system with a U.S. hub and allied spokes.” What is noticeable is that the promotion of security cooperation among Asia and Pacific nations is explicitly stated as a policy objective.

Japan should seize this opportunity and set forth a comprehensive foreign and security strategy of its own, which encompasses the alliance with the US and Japan’s Indo-Pacific diplomacy. The strategy should place a focus on fostering partnerships among middle powers in the Indo-Pacific region. These middle powers could share the burden of US regional presence and

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<sup>35</sup> Kurt M. Campbell and Rush Doshi, “How America Can Shore Up Asian Order: A Strategy for Restoring Balance and Legitimacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, (January, 2021).

work together for confidence building. It would then be realistic to envision a reduced burden on Okinawa.

- Indo-Pacific Diplomacy as an Effort to Build Partnerships among Middle Powers

Close scrutiny reveals that Japan's vigorous diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific region has the traits of middle power diplomacy. An example is the Japan-Australia-India-US Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Quad), held in New York in September 2019 and in Tokyo in October 2020, and set to be regularized. The ministers agreed on "practical cooperation in various areas such as quality infrastructure, maritime security, counter-terrorism, cyber security, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief, education and human resource development" in addition to the responses to the COVID-19, and reaffirmed the "inclusiveness" of the Indo-Pacific region and ASEAN's centrality as a fundamental principle.<sup>36</sup> They restrained themselves from calling for cooperation motivated by the perception of China as a threat and, instead, emphasized a practical agenda that would give substance to regional cooperation.

Originally, partnerships among middle powers, i.e., four rounds of consultations of Japan, Australia and India,<sup>37</sup> were instrumental in addressing such a practical agenda that became the precursor of the Quad foreign ministerial meeting. Then, the working-level Japan-Australia-India-US Consultation was held six times between November 2017 and December 2020 on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings and serves now as the Senior Officials Meeting for the Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

- A Strategic Outlook Arising from Partnerships among Middle Powers

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<sup>36</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, Press Releases, "The Second Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting," October 6, 2020. [https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press6e\\_000244.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press6e_000244.html).

<sup>37</sup> Japan, Australia and India held their first Trilateral Dialogue of Senior Officials in New Delhi in June 2015, followed by the second dialogue in Tokyo in February 2016, the third in Canberra in April 2017, and the fourth in New Delhi in December 2018.



While being engaged in these diplomatic activities in the Indo-Pacific region, the Japanese government has been persistent in using the phrase ‘free and open’ on every occasion, a phrase that implies Japan’s rivalry with China, and in gaining the endorsement of the United States to the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)” concept. This stance is not necessarily aligned to the Quad’s agreed position for an inclusive Indo-Pacific and ASEAN’s centrality. Many Japanese politicians, experts and the most of the general public, however, understand the FOIP and QUAD as part of a Japan-US alliance strategy to counter China.

Prior to these diplomatic initiatives, Japan had pursued security cooperation that amounted to building partnerships among middle powers. The results were the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation of March 13, 2007 and the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India of October 22, 2008. More importantly, these declarations inspired the Republic of Korea, Australia, and India to sign the Joint Statement on Enhanced Global and Security Cooperation between Australia and the Republic of Korea issued in March 5, 2009 and the India-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in November 12, 2009.<sup>38</sup>

These four declarations commonly demonstrate that although the parties share concerns over China, they avoid full and direct confrontation against it and commit themselves to moving ahead with practical bilateral security cooperation in areas where feasible. Partnerships among middle powers could be promoted strategically, and these bilateral security arrangements could be upgraded to cooperation among three or even four of the nations if there is political will to do so. Security cooperation between Japan and the Republic of Korea would open the door to a Japan-Australia-Republic of Korea partnership. India could be invited to join to make it a multilateral architecture. And if the four countries institutionalize their cooperation with ASEAN, there would be an Indo-Pacific middle power partnership. Such a

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<sup>38</sup> "Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation," March 13, 2007, "Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India," October 22, 2008, "Joint Statement on Enhanced Global and Security Cooperation between Australia and the Republic of Korea," March 5, 2009, and "India-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation," November 12, 2009.

partnership, which does not include either the United States or China, would be a valuable infrastructure to sustain a regional order.

The more adversarial Japan and the US become against China, the more likely Australia and India will shy away, not to mention ASEAN and the Republic of Korea. But promoting Indo-Pacific diplomacy primarily aimed at developing partnerships among middle powers, without reducing the importance of the United States, would offer Japan a new outlook.

### **3 . Concluding Remarks**

Given China's gross domestic product and military expenditure having surpassed those of all the Indo-Pacific countries combined, including Japan, India, and the Republic of Korea, partnerships among these middle powers would be irrelevant without the US presence as the mainstay of the region. This should lead to the idea of jointly supporting the presence of the United States in the region through partnerships among middle powers. The strategic concept of shared support for the US presence would require certain confidence-building measures among the middle powers and between these middle powers and China.

As seen above, Japan's Indo-Pacific diplomacy virtually points in this direction. But the Japanese government has shown no willingness to articulate it as a strategy. The simplistic belief in deterrence relying on the Japan-US alliance to counter the perceived threat of China prevents broader strategic thinking. The result is the hollow promise of reducing the burden on Okinawa. Partnerships among Indo-Pacific middle powers should be so conceptualized as to be instrumental to defuse tensions between the United States and China and to jointly support the US regional presence. That would open a new outlook on the US military base issues on Okinawa and the future of the Japan-US alliance.

## **Chapter 5 Reducing Tensions in the Asia-Pacific Region and Okinawa**

### **1 . The International Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region and Okinawa**

The Council recommended in its Proposals last year that “Okinawa is not only a prominent tourist destination of the region, but also a unique contemplative place to think about the past and future of the Asia-Pacific and about peace and security given its experiences ranging from the Great Trading Era during which a vast area of Asia was connected through trade to the fierce Battle of Okinawa. Okinawa Prefecture should capitalize on these special characteristics and strive to become a hub for a regional cooperation network in the Asia Pacific.”

As noted in the preceding chapters, the last twelve months have seen the political and military rivalry between the United States and China deepening. An unintended armed clash between the two nations would no doubt devastate the economy of the Asia-Pacific region and the world connected by global supply chains.

It is, therefore, urgent to ease tensions and foster dialogue and confidence building in the region. An armed conflict between the United States and China would heighten the risk of Okinawa, being on the frontline, becoming a priority target of attack. Promoting tension reduction in the Asia-Pacific region is a matter of urgency, not a nominal slogan, for Okinawa.

Okinawa Prefecture, being a host to about 70 percent of the land area exclusively used by the US Forces in Japan, is also the islands located at the midpoint between the rest of Japan and the Asian continent. With these characteristics, the Okinawa Prefectural Government has been active in external relations. One major example is its public relations in the United States. Successive governors have paid visits to the United States, and prefectural officials work at the Washington D.C. Office to make Okinawa's positions known and collect information on military bases. Another important effort is to build closer economic ties with Asia. Okinawa Prefecture Asian Economic Strategy Initiative aims to bring the vigor of

growing Asian economies into Okinawa. The Council recommends that the Okinawa Prefectural Government make regional tension reduction a “third pillar” of its international activities.

This recommendation should come as no surprise because it shares a common thread with the Okinawa Prefectural Government’s Okinawa’s 21st Century Vision, which states that “Rather than security in a military sense, Okinawa should assume an active role of promoting exchanges across a wide range of areas between Japan and the Asia-Pacific region and building relationships bases on trust.” The Vision lists the environment, health care, human rights and other human security issues, and disaster reduction as areas where Okinawa can make contributions, and expresses its willingness to host international organizations.<sup>39</sup>

The Okinawa Peace Prize of the prefectural government had its 10<sup>th</sup> award giving ceremony last year. It is awarded to individuals and groups for distinctive contributions to building and keeping peace in Asia and the Pacific, and it represents a successful example of making the most of the symbolism that Okinawa carries. With tensions rising in the region and the potential weight of Okinawa’s messages and its symbolism, Okinawa can and should do more for peace and confidence building.

## **2 . Examples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**

The Proposals suggested last year that the Okinawa Prefectural Government should regularly organize international meetings and cooperate with institutions in Japan and abroad to help Okinawa establish itself as a hub of the Asia-Pacific region. Okinawa’s 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vision also declares that Okinawa will serve as a focal point of international environmental, health care and disaster reduction cooperation.

These objectives should be pursued continuously. To realize these objectives, the Japanese government needs to get involved. The Japanese government should regard the unique traits of Okinawa as an attractive asset of the

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<sup>39</sup> "Okinawa’s 21st Century Vision," Okinawa Prefecture, 2010.

country to show to the world. Okinawa's symbolism would greatly contribute to broadening the interest with which the world sees Japan and to promoting a more diverse and multi-layered regional cooperation.

But the effort by the Okinawa Prefectural Government should not be limited to petitioning the national government in Tokyo.

The prefectural government is understandably preoccupied with dealing with pressing concerns over military bases, with the 70 percent of the land area exclusively used by the US Forces in Japan concentrating in Okinawa and the dispute with the national government over the Henoko base construction project. That said, the prefectural government could afford to exercise the potential of Okinawa and play a more prominent role to relax regional tensions.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki serve as a valuable example of local governments with powerful communication activities. The two cities were attacked with atomic bombs on August 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, respectively, in 1945 in the final days of the Second World War, making Japan the only nation in the world to have suffered from the use of nuclear arms in war. Fear of nuclear warfare induced by the Cold War confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union drew the attention of the world to the strong messages from Hiroshima and Nagasaki for the prevention of nuclear war and for lasting peace.

With this historical background, Hiroshima City established the Hiroshima Peace Institute in Hiroshima City University in 1998. The Institute organizes graduate programs, issues academic journals, holds international symposiums and courses for the general public, and engages in international networking through academic agreements with universities in the Republic of Korea, China, and other Asian countries and Europe.

The Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation began as an internal department of the Hiroshima city government in 1967. The Foundation issued a call to 72 cities in 23 countries to join the Program to Promote Solidarity of Cities toward the Total Abolition of Nuclear Weapons in 1983, co-organized with

Nagasaki the 1<sup>st</sup> World Conference of Mayors for Peace through Inter-city Solidarity in 1985, and in the following year, held the 1986 Peace Summit in Hiroshima. Mayors for Peace has since held the International Symposium in Hiroshima and Nagasaki alternately. Since 2006, the Foundation has been managing and operating the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the International Conference Center Hiroshima on behalf of the city authority.

The Hiroshima Prefectural Government announced the Hiroshima for Global Peace Plan in 2011 encompassing both the abolition of nuclear weapons and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding, and has worked with the Japan International Cooperation Agency to support reconstruction programs in Cambodia and the training of candidates for local administration in Mindanao of the Philippines.

Nagasaki City opened the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum in 1996, replacing the Atomic Bomb Information Center of Nagasaki International Culture Hall, which in 1955 succeeded the 1949 Nagasaki Atomic Bomb museum. Nagasaki University, a national institution, formed the Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (RECNA) in 2012. RECNA has launched the “Nagasaki Process” for a nuclear-weapon free Northeast Asia and continues research and advocacy for a security framework not relying on nuclear deterrence.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with their own symbolism of the cities having been attacked with atomic bombs, not only commemorate and document the tragedies of the atomic bombings and their memories but also promote advocacy and networking to address international political agenda.

### **3 . Programs of the Okinawa Prefectural Government and Potentials**

The Okinawa Prefectural Government has emphasized contributions to peace through such programs as the conservation of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Army’s underground headquarters, the Peace Learning Archive in Okinawa, Okinawa Prefecture’s Peace and Anti-Nuclear Weapons Declaration, the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, the Cornerstone of Peace,

Umamachu Peaceful Action, and the Okinawa Peace Prize.<sup>40</sup>

During the Second World War, a fierce ground battle was waged on Okinawa, which caught civilians in the crossfire and killed one in four Okinawans. Because of this experience, the people of Okinawa strongly wish that the memories of the cruel war will not be lost and will be passed on to younger generations. The focus of the prefectural government's peace programs reflects the popular aspirations.

When the Treaty of San Francisco restored sovereignty to Japan, Okinawa was separated from the Japanese administration primarily to ensure that the United States would enjoy unrestricted use of its military bases on Okinawa. Even after the 1972 reversion of Okinawa, there has not been a substantial reduction in the US military bases. Okinawa still hosts more than 70 percent of the land area of the US military installations in Japan.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki have been extending to the world the powerful messages of "No more Hiroshima," "No more Nagasaki," and a "Nuclear-weapon free world," arising from the atrocity of the first atomic bombings in human history, and engaged in active international programs.

Some survivors of the ground battle of Okinawa recall that the battlefield was so bloody as if all the hells had appeared in Okinawa at once. With the number of the survivors of the war dwindling, Okinawa's peace education focusing on keeping record of witness accounts of the war and handing them down to future generations has a universal value in raising awareness of the reality of war and will remain a priority in the prefectural administration.

The unfair burden of hosting US military bases has been, on the other hand, a difficult issue for a public campaign. Okinawa faces the argument which justifies the burden on Okinawa on the ground of the need to support the Japan-US Security Treaty. NIMBYism (not in my backyard) is another obstacle to moving the bases out of Okinawa. And because they know the pains of being the host, the people of Okinawa do not wish to make people of

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<sup>40</sup> Okinawa Prefecture, <https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/kyoiku/kids/index.html>

other parts of Japan suffer the way they have from the bases. It has not been easy to find the right message or the right way to send out Okinawa's voice.

Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki has been calling on the Japanese to think about base issues not as a problem that matters only to Okinawans but as a problem of their own, since the purpose of the security treaty and the US military bases supporting it are not to defend Okinawa but all of Japan. The governor's "Talk Caravan," an awareness raising program across Japan, is communicating a right message and should continue.

In recent years, rising regional tensions due to the US-China rivalry and the situations of North Korea have been posing risks not only to Okinawa but to Japan as a whole. Regional dialogue and confidence building are necessary not only for Okinawa but for all of Japan. Okinawa and the rest of Japan should work together for tension reduction in the Asia-Pacific region and that is a "third pillar" of the international activities that this chapter recommends to the Okinawa Prefectural Government.

The third pillar would be efforts to cultivate a climate for dialogue and tension reduction and to develop networks in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to international networking, coordination with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with shared themes of regional tension reduction and confidence building, would be a worthwhile effort, given the strong presence these two cities have in the international community.

Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki have a unique appeal, They have each made their initiatives that could become more dynamic and make a stronger impact on Japan and the world through coordination among them.: (1) Okinawa's 21st Century Vision, which states that "Rather than security in a military sense, Okinawa should assume an active role of promoting exchanges across a wide range of areas between Japan and the Asia-Pacific region and building relationships based on trust"; (2) the Hiroshima for Global Peace plan for nuclear weapons abolition and post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding; and (3) the Nagasaki Process for a nuclear-weapon free Northeast Asia.



National security including military bases is often regarded as an area over which the national government has exclusive authority. While leaving their negative effects concentrated in Okinawa, the Japanese outside of Okinawa tend to think of the voice of Okinawa as a voice of opposition to the national government in Tokyo and see Okinawa as being isolated. The suggestions by the National Governors' Association concerning the revision of the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), is therefore highly meaningful and shows the importance of efforts by local governments.

Japan's foreign policy in recent years has been emphasizing the military dimension such as enhancing deterrent capabilities. With few voices from political leaders and commentators calling for tension reduction and dialogue, narrow-minded thinking has prevailed in politics and diplomacy. Coordinated local government initiatives of Okinawa, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki for regional dialogue and tension reduction would help broaden the perspectives of Japan's diplomacy at the national level. Such initiatives would also work as public diplomacy of Okinawa to the rest of Japan because the military base issues in Okinawa would be understood from a broad perspective of regional tensions that should matter to all Japanese.

#### **4 . Need for Counterparts in Okinawa**

If these initiatives are to be pursued, Okinawa needs to have counterparts for Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the prefectural government, the base issues are dealt with by the Military Base Affairs Division of the Executive Office of the Governor and peace programs are managed by the Women's Empowerment and Peace Promotion Division of the Department of Child Care and Social Welfare.

In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, particularly in Hiroshima, research institutes founded by the local government such as Hiroshima Peace Institute of Hiroshima City University play a leading role. Public universities and research institutions are better positioned than the local government officials for advocacy and networking with domestic and overseas institutions and non-governmental organizations through free and open

exchange of opinions.

As the financial and human resources of the prefectural government are limited, instead of establishing a new institution, existing affiliated organizations such as the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum and the Okinawa Prefectural Archives could be tasked with research, advocacy, and networking.

The Prefectural Ordinance concerning the Establishment and Management of the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum provides that the purpose of the museum is to contribute to lasting peace of the world, and its mandates include research on the Battle of Okinawa and other programs deemed necessary to achieve the purpose of the establishment of the Museum. In Hiroshima, the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, operator of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, has the Peace and International Solidarity Promotion Division and the International Relations and Cooperation Division. The Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum could be given additional mandates to conduct research and perform as counterparts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum has already been building networks with Japanese and overseas organizations. It has established contact with the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum through the membership of the Association of Japanese Museums for Peace, which was formed in 1994. "The Hope (Umui) for Peace" Promotion, Exchange, and Passing Down Project is a program of the Okinawa Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum, operated by a commissioned local organization, where students from Okinawa and Asian countries gather and discuss wars, regional conflicts and peace. Facilitating regional tension reduction is a natural extension of promoting peace through learning past wars, and would be meaningful in the current security environment.

In tasking its affiliated organizations with research and networking, the prefectural government should ensure that they invite researchers to Okinawa by offering such positions as visiting fellows, in addition to

developing close coordination with universities and other organizations in Okinawa. As the Council stressed in its Proposals last year, Okinawa has powerful symbolism for the past and future, peace and regional order of Asia and the Pacific. Positions and opportunities offered as suggested above would draw not a few researchers and practitioners from Japan and other countries who are interested in contemplating peace in Okinawa and engaging in research, advocacy and networking. That would directly help Okinawa make its positions known in the world and augment Okinawa's soft power.

This chapter concludes by reiterating that Okinawa stands a good chance of playing an effective role in cultivating a climate for urgently needed tension reduction and confidence building and of raising its presence, by strategically taking advantage of its potential, without mobilizing large financial resources.

## Chapter 6 The Status of Forces Agreement and Local Governments

### 1 . The Purpose of This Chapter

As argued in Chapter 3, the US military has been shifting to distributed and rotational troop deployments because of the vulnerability of large permanent bases to Chinese missile attacks. During the Trump Administration, the US Marine Corps developed the concept of “Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations” (EABO) and the US Air Force the concept of “Agile Combat Employment,” which entail the rapid deployment of smaller tactical forces and combat capabilities, including numerous missile platforms, along the maritime periphery of China shortly before the start of an armed conflict. The Biden Administration is expected to continue these concepts.

With this shift in military strategy, US military training is being dispersed from Okinawa to the main islands of Japan. In particular, US training and Japan-US joint exercises are taking place in the Kyushu region, which has many islands that are geographically close to China. As a result, emergency landings of US aircraft on Japanese Self-Defense Force bases and civilian airports and low-altitude flights over urban areas, coastal regions, and mountain sides where there are no US or Japanese military installations nearby have increased, causing anxiety and resentment in affected local communities. The increase of US training at SDF facilities has also provoked anger and strong protests. At the Hijudai Maneuver Area of the Ground Self-Defense Force in Oita Prefecture, US military units have conducted nighttime training despite opposition from local authorities and the public. Some US service members participating in training at the Nyutabaru Air Base of the Air Self-Defense Force in Miyazaki Prefecture have stayed at hotels and frequented restaurants in downtown areas despite the risk of spreading the coronavirus.

The US military’s disregard of the safety and security of Japanese local communities is rooted in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). SOFA, for example, does not have provisions concerning aircraft training. Details such

as flight paths, flight hours, and low-altitude flights and other dangerous operations over both land and sea are not regulated. US military aircraft are allowed priority access to civilian airports and seaports in emergency without fees. When the US military uses SDF facilities, it is exempt from relevant Japanese laws and regulations, ministerial orders, and non-binding restrictions that are applied to Japanese forces. The relocation of training, particularly in Kyushu, has revealed these problems of SOFA.

To address how not only Okinawa Prefecture but also local governments throughout Japan should protect the safety and security of residents as US military training is dispersed to the main Japanese islands, this chapter will examine the current situation regarding the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement.

## **2 . Okinawa and Problems Regarding the Status of Forces Agreement**

Discussing Okinawa's burden concerning military bases is impossible without looking at incidents, accidents, and crimes stemming from the existence of US military bases. Given that about 70 percent of the land area exclusively used by US forces in Japan is located on Okinawa, the high number of incidents, accidents and crimes committed by US service members is inevitable. Unlike the rest of Japan, Okinawa was under the US military's direct rule from the end of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945 until the 1972 reversion. During the US military occupation period, the incidents, accidents, and brutal crimes caused by US military personnel were covered up and never brought to justice. This history intensifies the anger of Okinawans against the incidents, accidents, and crimes that occur today.

The 1995 rape of an elementary school student in Okinawa by three US service members provided an opportunity to discuss the problems with SOFA as the underlying source behind the incidents, accidents and crimes caused by the US military. Because of SOFA provisions, the Okinawa Prefectural Police Department was unable to detain the three individuals as suspects before indictment. The police questioning started only after the US Embassy in Tokyo, requested by the Japanese government, advised the military to cooperate with the investigation. Then Okinawa Governor

Masahide Ota subsequently submitted to the Japanese and US governments a ten-point request for the revision of SOFA. Although both governments agreed to accommodate most of the requests by “improving the operation” of SOFA, the US military in Japan has not observed these requested measures because it only has an obligation to make an effort.

A case in point is the “Aircraft Noise Abatement Countermeasures at Kadena Air Base and Futenma Air Station,”<sup>41</sup> which was agreed to at SOFA’s Joint Committee meeting in March 1996. This agreement states that at Futenma, “Airfield traffic pattern configurations, including entry and exit routes, should be designed to avoid over flight of densely populated areas, including schools and hospitals, as much as possible.” But in August 2004, a helicopter from Futenma crashed on the campus of Okinawa International University and burst into flames on the side of the university’s administration building which housed the university’s president’s office.

In August 2007, the Japanese and the US governments reaffirmed that the flight paths around Futenma would avoid the airspace over schools including Okinawa International University and Futenma Daini Elementary School. But the agreement was not honored. In December 2017, parts fell off from another helicopter from Futenma on Midorigaoka Nursery and Futenma Daini Elementary School. The US military has yet to admit that a part from a US helicopter had fallen on the nursery.

“Improving the operation” of SOFA promised by the Japanese and US governments has not yielded any reduction of incidents, accidents, and crimes of US forces in Japan.

The two governments concluded the Environmental Supplementary Agreement in September 2015 and Supplementary Agreement regarding the Civilian Component of US Armed Forces in Japan in January 2017, but these agreements do not entail moving beyond the notion of “improving the operation” of SOFA. The environmental agreement limits access by the

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<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Aircraft Noise Abatement Countermeasures at Kadena Air Base and Futenma Air Station,” [https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/usa/sfa/pdfs/souon\\_kisei\\_e.pdf](https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/usa/sfa/pdfs/souon_kisei_e.pdf)

Japanese and local government officials to US military bases for investigations to only two occasions.. The US military today denies access by the Ministry of the Environment and the Okinawa prefectural government for an environmental survey that had been performed annually before the agreement.

### **3 . Local Government Efforts Concerning SOFA**

- Requests for Revision

Following Governor Ota, Governors Keiichi Inamine and Takeshi Onaga of Okinawa asked the Japanese and US governments to reconsider SOFA. In September 2017, Governor Onaga submitted the "Request concerning Revision of SOFA"<sup>42</sup> to the Ministries of the Foreign Affairs and Defense and the US Embassy to Japan. This request detailed Okinawa's own revision proposals regarding 11 items and involved a strong demand for the involvement of local governments in the operation of SOFA.

One of the chief complaints of Okinawa prefecture is that the Japanese and US governments share information on incidents, accidents and crimes of the US military between them but do not release that information fully and promptly to officials of local governments that host military bases. Another complaint is that the process of concluding and implementing agreements between the Japanese and US governments regarding US military bases takes place unilaterally without respecting the will of local governments. The Japanese government burdens host local governments and populations with incidents, accidents, crimes, and constant noise, but it does not do much more to improve the situation than the ineffective policy of "improving the operation" of SOFA. Given the notion that "the national government has exclusive authority over national security," the current reality is that the will of local governments does not get reflected.

In July 2018, the National Governors' Association unanimously adopted a resolution entitled "Proposals concerning the Burden of United States

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<sup>42</sup> Okinawa Prefecture, "Request concerning Revision of SOFA," submitted on September 11, 2017, *Okinawa Prefecture Status of Force Agreement Portal Site*.

Military Bases.”<sup>43</sup> Based on the results of a two-year survey requested by then Governor Onaga, these proposals included a thorough review of SOFA and the application of the Civil Aeronautics Law and other relevant Japanese laws and regulations to US Forces in Japan in order to curb incidents, accidents, and crimes.

According to a survey of all 47 prefectural governors conducted and published by Mainichi Newspaper on June 23, 2020 on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> year since the current bilateral security treaty entered into force, 39 governors favored revising SOFA in order to curtail incidents, accidents and crimes by the US military including those of Aomori and Kanagawa Prefectures both of which host US military bases.<sup>44</sup>

But the Japanese government adheres to its position of “improving the operations” of SOFA and has not even considered Okinawa’s Request or the Proposals of the National Governors’ Association.

- Local-level Agreements

As SOFA only protects the status and rights of US Forces in Japan and as long as the Japanese and US governments simply repeat the ineffective policy of “improving the operation” of SOFA and resist demands of the governors for a revision of the agreement, the second best option that local governments can take to protect their populations is an agreement with the regional defense bureaus of the Ministry of Defense.

This kind of agreement provides for principles governing US military training conducted at SDF facilities on Japanese territory outside of Okinawa and is signed by the host local governments and the regional defense bureau in charge of the location concerned. Seikai City in Nagasaki Prefecture has an agreement with the bureau with regard to US training conducted at US installations. None of the local governments that host large

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<sup>43</sup> “Beigun kichi futan ni kansuru teigen (Proposals concerning the Burden from the US Military Bases),” the National Governors’ Association, submitted on August 14th, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> “The Status of Forces Agreement; results of the survey of governors,” *Mainichi Newspaper*, June 23, 2020



US military bases such as Okinawa Prefecture, Aomori Prefecture (Misawa air base), Kanagawa Prefecture (Yokosuka naval base and Atsugi naval air facility) or Yamaguchi Prefecture (Iwakuni Marine Corps air station) has concluded a training agreement presumably because officials of these governments have a direct channel of communication with commanding officers of these large US installations.

Training agreements at the local level increased rapidly following the increasing dispersal of US military training from Okinawa since the 1996 SACO (Special Action Committee on Okinawa) Agreement, 2006 US military realignment agreement, and the subsequent burden relief measures taken in Okinawa. Partial relocation and distribution of US military training out of Okinawa raised the need for such agreements in other areas of Japan.

Because it is unlikely today that the Japanese and US governments will consider the revision of SOFA and the “improving the operation” of SOFA remains ineffective, agreements with the regional defense bureaus are virtually the only means local governments can use to keep their populations safe. But the local-level training agreement does not have either a legal or a moral effect on the US military because the United States is not a party to it. There have been many reports of violations. Training not allowed by the agreement has often been carried out. Local opposition on mainland Japan has prevented some training transfer plans from being implemented, and training relocation has created problems because of the expansion and strengthening of training.

The next section examines some of the local-level training agreements and discusses issues to be addressed and ways to enhance the effectiveness of these agreements.

#### **4 . Examples of Local-level Agreements**

- The Agreement on Training at the Hijudai Maneuver Area in Yufu City, Kuju Town, and Kusu Town in Oita Prefecture

In March 1997, the Japanese and US governments agreed to disperse the

Marine Corps live-fire artillery practice over Prefectural Road 104 in Okinawa to five sites in other parts of Japan. One of these sites is the Hijudai Maneuver Area of the Ground Self-Defense Force in Oita Prefecture in the Kyushu region.

Toward the end of the month, the Oita Prefectural Government set up the Hijudai Maneuver Area Issues Council with one city and two towns across which the training ground extends. The council is chaired by the vice-governor so that it can talk directly with the central government in Tokyo. The prefectural government recognizes the exclusive authority of the national government over the training of the US military, but maintains that ensuring the safety and relieving the anxiety of the local population is a top priority issue of the local government. The local level's effort in Oita Prefecture stands out in that the prefectural government plays the leading role.

The local governments demanded the following in exchange for accepting relocated training: (1) the total number of days of artillery shooting by the SDF and US forces combined per year would not exceed the annual total days of firing that had been allowed for the SDF, (2) the US forces would not station its units permanently, and (3) the training of the US forces would be reduced in duration and scale in the future. In October 1997, the governor, the mayors, and the director of the Kyushu Defense Bureau signed the "Agreement concerning the Use of the Hijudai Maneuver Area by the US Armed Forces."

The agreement comprises 11 articles. Article 4 sets limits on the number of days of training and scale by stating that live-fire training shall not be conducted more than once a year and during the training period live artillery firing shall not be conducted more than ten days, and that the participating personnel and equipment used shall not exceed 300 troops, 12 howitzers, and 60 vehicles. The agreement is valid for five years and is renewable upon expiration.

The Japanese government, however, demanded that local officials accept training not mentioned in the agreement. In addition to the live artillery

firing that had been relocated from Okinawa, the US military started joint training with Japanese troops in 1998 and small arms live-fire training in 2006. The local governments accepted the additional training on the condition that the Japanese government would ensure that the limits on the days of live firing, personnel, and vehicles provided for by Article 4 would not be exceeded, and that measures be taken to scale back training in the future. A note of confirmation “Kakuninsho” was concluded with regard to the small arms live-fire training. But in 2018, the Marine Corps MV-22 transport aircraft flew in for a joint exercise with the SDF, and the local governments lodged a protest against the expansion of training.

Nighttime training of the US military at Hijudai attracted media attention in 2011 when the US increased artillery shootings at night during the winter, and people in Yufuin, a well-known hot spring resort in Yufu City, expressed concerns about the negative effects on tourism.

The local governments asked the Kyushu Defense Bureau to shorten the hours of training for both the SDF and US units which had been set from 7 am to 9 pm. They requested that the training should not begin before 8 am on Sundays and national holidays and should end before 8 pm between the Autumnal Equinox Day and Vernal Equinox Day. As the SDF agreed, the host governments requested in 2012 to revise the US training agreement upon its renewal to incorporate these shorter training hours.

Because the Kyushu Defense Bureau insisted that the agreement provided for only basic rules, the parties to the agreement signed a memorandum on the details of the shortened firing hours. But the US military conducted a live-fire practice after 8 pm in 2014 and 2016, and the local officials asked again for the revision of the agreement to include the shortened hours. Though this request was refused by the bureau, the memorandum was upgraded to a note of confirmation (“*kakuninsho*”) which also included articles mandating the bureau to notify the local governments of training schedules in advance in addition to the limitation on the hours of training.

But in February 2020, the US military practiced live firing after 8 pm for five days and exceeded the total scheduled days of training notified in

advance. In March, Governor Katsusada Hirose of Oita Prefecture asked the Minister of Defense in person to prevent a recurrence, citing the agreement and the note of confirmation (*kakuninsho*). The minister responded by promising to bring up the issue at the Joint Committee of SOFA. In March 2021, Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi informed Governor Hirose that the United States had turned down the request of the prefecture at the Joint Committee by citing the need to maintain the readiness of the US military.<sup>45</sup>

But the Marine Corps in Okinawa decided not to practice live firing at Hijudai in the fiscal year 2020 beginning April 1<sup>st</sup> and has made the same decision for fiscal 2021.

- Comparison with Other Local Governments

The US military also conducted training not allowed in the local-level agreement at Chitose Air Base of the Japan Air Self-Defense Force in Hokkaido, the northernmost island and prefecture. Chitose City, the local government hosting the base, signed the “Agreement Concerning the Relocation of Training to Chitose Air Base under the US Forces Realignment Program” with the Hokkaido Defense Bureau in 2007 before the US military began to transfer flight training from Kadena, Misawa, and Iwakuni to Chitose in the following year.

But in 2019 Japan and Australia carried out joint training in Chitose, which was outside the purview of the agreement. Chitose city officials asked the defense bureau to conclude another agreement to cover training of military units of countries other than the United States, but the bureau refused, saying that a Visiting Forces Agreement with Australia, which was under negotiation, would address the local concerns.

As the US military is not a party to any of these local-level agreements and is therefore not bound by them, compliance is elusive. For example, Seikai

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<sup>45</sup> “Defense Minister Kono apologizes and promises to raise the US military drills in Oita at the Joint Committee,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, March 2, 2020. “The US refuses to refrain from night firing drills at Hijudai, and Oita urges compliance with agreements,” *Mainichi Newspaper*, March 19, 2021.

City in Nagasaki Prefecture reached an agreement with the Kyushu Defense Bureau in 2000 that stipulates that the bureau shall make the necessary coordination with the US military to ensure that the Yokose Landing Craft Air Cushion (LCAC) Facility of the US Sasebo Naval Base shall not be used for LCAC training at night or in the early morning. But the US Navy has regularized night LCAC training in violation of the agreement since 2017. Every time the training takes place at night, city officials have lodged a protest with the bureau.<sup>46</sup>

What distinguishes Hijudai from Chitose and Yokose is that at Hijudai, the Oita prefectural government is a party to the agreement. The prefectural government is able to directly make submissions not only to the Kyushu Defense Bureau but also to the Ministry of Defense and the Minister of Defense, and local concerns stand a higher chance of being discussed at government-to-government talks. Regarding Chitose and Yokose, the prefectural government is party to neither of the agreements, and the local city governments have few means to convey their views to the national government. Their bargaining power is relatively small against the regional defense bureaus. For Hijudai, a note of confirmation (*kakuninsho*) was concluded to address the additional training that the agreement did not cover. In Chitose, no local arrangement was made for the use of the air base by the Australian units in their joint exercises with the SDF in spite of the request from Chitose City.

At Yokose, Sasebo City, another local government hosting Sasebo Naval Base, accepts the nighttime training of LCAC, which makes it difficult for Seikai City to seek cooperation from other host local authorities.<sup>47</sup>

Kanoya City in Kagoshima Prefecture signed an agreement with the Kyushu Defense Bureau with regard to the training of KC130 aerial refueling aircraft from Iwakuni at Kanoya Air Base of the Maritime Self-Defense Force. The agreement does not involve the prefectural government,

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<sup>46</sup> "US military causes noise at night in Sasebo Bay," *The Asahi Shimbun Digital*, May 19, 2018.

<sup>47</sup> "Kichi Dokuhon (Details of Military Bases in Sasebo), 2020," last updated October 13, 2020.

and the city officials have been unable to confirm with the bureau whether the city's protests and requests have been forwarded to the US Marine Corps and the headquarters of US Forces Japan. Moreover, the agreement in Kanoya sets limits on training, but the arrangement differs from that of the Hijudai training area because of the absence of explicit provisions based on a note of confirmation (*kakuninsho*) with the local governments. At Kanoya, city officials need to make oral requests to the Kyushu Defense Bureau regarding training information, and there are instances in which training limitations are not followed.<sup>48</sup>

Between the above cases of Hijudai and Kanoya is the middle example of agreements involving Fukuoka and Miyazaki prefectures. In the "Agreement concerning the Relocation of Training to Tsuiki Air Base under the US Forces Realignment Program" and the "Agreement concerning the Relocation of Training to Nyutabaru Air Base under the US Forces Realignment Program," Fukuoka and Miyazaki prefectures have the status of being "witnesses" to these respective agreements. But unlike the Oita prefectural government where a cross-departmental liaison committee and dedicated staff for base issues have been established for close communications with the relevant local officials, neither the Fukuoka nor Miyazaki prefectural government seems to have taken a systematic approach to supporting host cities and towns.

Therefore, when a problem arose at Tsuiki Air Base of the Air Self-Defense Force, Chikujo Town, one of the parties to the agreement, responded on its own. The town officials lodged a protest to US forces stationed at the Atsugi Naval Air Facility via the ASDF in Tsuiki, and the town mayor travelled all the way to Tokyo to meet defense ministry officials to protest in person. No coordinated action was taken with other host authorities.

The agreements on the use of the Tsuiki and Nyutabaru bases do not have provisions on the term of validity or amendments and have not been renewed since they were signed in 2007. The host local governments of Nyutabaru understood that the safety measures in the agreement included

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<sup>48</sup> "Kanoya City worries more US training but cannot talk with the US military," *Minamippon Shimbun*, October 27, 2020.

that the US service members participating in training would be quartered inside the base, but this understanding has not been reconfirmed regularly. When the Kyushu Defense Bureau notified that troops from Kadena Air Base on Okinawa would stay at private hotels outside of the Nyutabaru base in October 2020 despite the soaring COVID-19 cases at Kadena at the time, the local governments were unable to request the defense bureau to ensure that the US troops stay inside Nyutabaru base. This underlines the importance of periodic reviews and renewals of the agreement, as the host governments of Hijudai have been doing since the signing of their agreement.

## **5 . Recommendations**

### **• Parties to the Agreement and Its Operation**

Since revision of SOFA by the Japanese and US governments is unlikely today and “improving the operation” of SOFA has had little real effect, agreements with the regional defense bureaus are probably the only means that local governments have to ensure the safety of their residents. Although these local-level agreements are not binding on US forces because the United States does not acknowledge them, they can still give local governments a rationale for conveying their concerns to the Japanese government in the context of Joint Committee meetings and other bilateral occasions.

Since local government requests to regional defense bureaus rarely make their way to bilateral discussions, however, the prefectural government should sign and be a party to the agreement to make it a more effective tool for municipal officials. Prefectural governments are in a better position to submit local requests not only to regional defense bureaus but also to the Defense Ministry and Defense Minister, and the requests are more likely to be considered at bilateral meetings.

When asking the regional defense bureaus for revisions of the agreement or for additional agreements regarding expanded training, municipal officials can gain negotiating leverage if prefectural governments are parties to the

agreements. The defense bureaus need cooperation of prefectural governments in recruiting SDF members and finding civilian positions for retired members.

But the prefectural governments should not be a token signatory or get involved with negotiations with the regional defense bureaus or the government in Tokyo only when a problem has occurred. The prefectural officials should establish a mechanism of regular consultations with relevant municipal officials to implement the agreement so that the concerns of local residents are taken into account. Given the ongoing dispersal and intensification of US military training across Japan, these agreements should be reviewed periodically based on the exchange of information and views between local governments and residents, and the task of considering revisions of the agreements and the conclusion of additional agreements should not be neglected.

- Provisions of the Agreement

Most new agreements between local governments and regional defense bureaus were modeled after the ones drafted and signed in other host areas. The defense bureaus favor an agreement of general principles with minimum specifics whereas local governments want an agreement with a wide scope and as much detailed stipulations as possible. As a compromise, drafters often refer to precedents. As indicated in the agreement and the note of confirmation for Hijudai, there are essential items that should be included in the agreement so that local governments can protect the safety and security of their residents:

- US military's total number of days of training in a year
- US military's hours of training
- Size of US military's training
- Prior notification of training information
- Defense Bureau's contact and confirmation system and safety measures with respect to the locality during the training period
- Term of validity of the agreement
- Revision of the agreement



Below is a Model Agreement:

### Agreement Concerning the Use of xxx Base by the US Armed Forces

The Director of xxx Defense Bureau and (xxx local governments) agree on the use of xxx Base by the United States Armed Forces for the purpose of xxx training as follows:

#### Article 1. Forms of training of the United States Armed Forces

- 1 . The US Armed Forces shall be allowed to conduct xxx training.
- 2 . Each training period shall not exceed xxx days and the total number of days of training per year shall not exceed xxx.
- 3 . The hours of training of the day shall be same as those of the Self-Defense Forces at xxx base.
- 4 . The maximum number of personnel and equipment shall be xxx service members, xxx vehicles, xxx aircraft and xxx cannons.

#### Article 2. Prior notification

- 1 . Xxx Defense Bureau shall notify in advance the relevant local government authorities and their populations of training schedules as early as possible.
- 2 . Xxx Defense Bureau shall provide information on emergency use of xxx base by the US Armed Forces to the relevant local authorities and their populations as soon as the bureau has learned the situation requiring the emergency use.

#### Article 3. Security, safety and noise mitigation

- 1 . The parties to the agreement shall ensure that the US Armed Forces take all necessary safety measures during the training at xxx Base.
- 2 . Training of the US Armed Forces shall be conducted with the cooperation of the xxx Self-Defense Force, which manages xxx Base.
- 3 . The Director of xxx Defense Bureau shall assign staff members of the Bureau to xxx Base during the entire period of training as on-site contacts with the US military, local authorities and communities for coordination and communication. The staff members shall ensure that

the agreement is respected and accompany US service members when they go out of xxx Base.

- 4 . The Director of xxx Defense Bureau shall take such necessary measures regarding the noise arising from training as measuring noise, taking into account requests from and impact on the living of the local communities.
- 5 . The Director of xxx Defense Bureau shall ask the US military to cease the training or take other appropriate measures, as the responsibility of the national government, when an accident occurs and it is deemed to carry the risk of imposing danger on the local communities.

#### Article 4. Local Development

The Director of xxx Defense Bureau shall make maximum effort, based on specific needs of the local communities, for the local governments to receive financial support from the national government for the development of the local communities.

#### Article 5. Term of validity

The agreement shall be valid for five years after it enters into force. Upon the expiration of the effect, the agreement shall be extended for another five years if no party objects.

#### Article 6. Revision

Revision of the agreement and conclusion of another agreement shall be subject to consultations among all parties.

#### Supplementary provisions

1. The agreement shall enter into force (date).
2. Parties shall respect the spirit of the agreement and fulfill its provisions in good faith. In witness thereof, the agreement has been prepared in duplicates, and after they are signed and seals have been affixed thereto, each party shall retain a copy.

(signed)

## Conclusion

It will have been half a century in 2022 since Okinawa was reverted to Japan. But 70.3 percent of the land area exclusively used by the US Forces in Japan is still concentrated on Okinawa, which accounts for only 0.6 percent of the country's land territory. As time passed, the generations with firsthand knowledge of the Battle of Okinawa and the subsequent US military occupation have dwindled in number; and for most of the people in Okinawa today, military bases have been part of their lives since they were born. Being surrounded by so many military bases, however, is not a normal life.

Okinawa's future depends on whether the generations who will carry the future give up hope or keep it alive. The future belongs not to those who look for reasons why goals are unreachable, but to those who keep taking steps toward these goals however distant they may appear.

*Bankoku Shinryō* Council on U.S. Military Base Issues

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