

Proposals concerning consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa

March 2020

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

Table of Contents

[Overview] Proposals from the " <i>Bankoku Shinryō</i> Council on the U.S. Military Base Issues"	· · · · i
Introduction	· · · · · 1
1. Construction plan for the new base in Henoko and eliminating the dangers and suspending operations of Futenma Air Station	
● Current state and background	· · · · · 2
● Points of discussion	
· The standpoint of Okinawa	· · · · · 3
· The Japanese government's standpoint	· · · · · 4
· Examining the main points of discussion	· · · · · 5
● Proposals	· · · · · 8
2. Towards a fundamental consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa	
● Current state and background	
· Current state of U.S. military bases in Okinawa	· · · · · 9
· Background regarding the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa	· · · · · 9
· Changes in the security environment and U.S. military strategy	· · · · · 11
● Points of discussion	
· Examining "the reduction of the base burden" in Okinawa	· · · · · 12
· Examining Okinawa's geographical advantage	· · · · · 13
· Examining the significance of having the Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa	· · · · 14
· The Marine Corps' new operating concept EABO	· · · · · 17
● Proposals	· · · · · 18
3. Making Okinawa a hub for the Asia-Pacific region	
● Current state and background	
· Asia from a security perspective	· · · · · 20
· Asia from an economic perspective	· · · · · 21
● Points of discussion	
· Examining Japan's national security policy	· · · · · 21
· The role of Okinawa	· · · · · 23
● Proposal	· · · · · 24
Conclusion	· · · · · 25

[Overview] Proposals from the "*Bankoku Shinryō* Council on the U.S. Military Base Issues"

[Summary of the proposals]

1. With the revelation of the existence of the soft seabed and other factors, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the construction plan for the new base in Henoko is difficult to complete from both a technical and financial standpoint. The Japanese government in consultation with the U.S. 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.
2. Recognizing that the United States has lost its military predominance over China in recent years and Okinawa has become militarily vulnerable, the U.S. military including the Marine Corps has been promoting a review of its strategy. In light of these changes in the strategic environment, both the U.S. and Japanese governments should accelerate the consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, while dispersing Okinawa-based U.S. military forces to mainland Japan and other locations throughout the Asia-Pacific region.
3. Insofar as a future challenge is tension reduction and confidence building within the Asia-Pacific region, Okinawa Prefecture should leverage its historical, cultural and geographical characteristics and strive towards becoming a hub of a regional cooperation network in the Asia-Pacific. To do this, it is important to set up a place that will facilitate exchanges with researchers and practitioners as well as local governments from the various relevant countries. When establishing such a place, it would also be desirable for Okinawa Prefecture to develop ties with both domestic and international think tanks, as well as relevant institutions within Okinawa.

[Overview of Each Section]

1. **Since the construction plan for the new base in Henoko is difficult to complete, a plan should be formulated as soon as possible to accomplish the original goal of an expeditious elimination of the dangers and suspension of the operations of Futenma Air Station.**
 - ① The construction plan for the new base in Henoko is difficult to complete due to factors such as the soft and unstable seabed that was discovered at the construction site. Even under the Japanese government's estimate, it will take more than 10 years to complete the construction, and the current construction cost of nearly 1 trillion yen [about \$9.3 billion] is expected to increase even further. After recognizing once again that the original goal is not constructing a new base, but rather expeditiously eliminating the dangers and suspending the operations of Futenma Air Station, the Japanese government should formulate as soon as possible a plan to enable this to happen. When formulating such a plan, the Japanese government should consider having more of the Marine Corps' aviation units train outside Okinawa or in other countries.
 - ② In order to formulate the aforementioned plan, we propose that a dialogue of experts be established with the involvement of the Japanese government, the U.S. government and Okinawa Prefecture. This dialogue should examine distributing the functions of Futenma Air Station to enable the expeditious elimination of the dangers and suspension of the operations of this base as well as the medium to long-term status of U.S. military bases in Okinawa as a whole.
 - ③ The Okinawa prefecture should appeal to the governments, experts and the general public of both the United States and Japan and raise public interest regarding the following. Not only is the plan for the new base in Henoko no longer the "sole solution" that will expeditiously eliminate the dangers of Futenma Air Station, but even its completion is difficult. The current plan, which involves "constructing a large and permanent new base," is not only detrimental

to democracy and the environment of Okinawa, but also not rational from a financial and security standpoint. Finding a new breakthrough solution would be beneficial for Japan as a whole as well as the U.S.-Japan alliance.

2. Efforts should be put towards consolidating and reducing U.S. military bases in Okinawa based on the recent security environment.

- ① Considering the recent changes in the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region such as the increased vulnerability of U.S. military bases because of China's improved missile capabilities, the Japanese and U.S. governments should flexibly re-examine the structure of U.S. military forces and accelerate the consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa. When doing so, even from the standpoint of stable management of the U.S.-Japan security arrangement, reflecting the opinions of Okinawa is important. One possibility is to examine these issues, including the return of Futenma Air Station, in the dialogue among experts (proposed in 1-② above).
- ② A review must be conducted regarding the deployment status of the Marine Corps which comprises the largest force in U.S. military bases on Okinawa. As for one possible policy, while shifting the Marines stationed in Okinawa toward distributed relocations and rotational deployments in Self-Defense Force bases on the Japanese mainland, promoting joint use of Self-Defense Force and U.S. bases could be considered. Furthermore, the U.S. and Japanese governments should also commence creative strategic dialogues for responding to the changing security environment, including promoting the distributed relocation and rotational deployments of the Marines in Okinawa to various locations in Asia.
- ③ Okinawa Prefecture should strengthen even more its information exchanges and cooperation with prefectures and municipalities in mainland Japan regarding issues related to U.S. military bases and the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement. By doing so, Okinawa should enhance the trend to view the military base burden and the Status of Forces Agreement as issues not only for Okinawa but for Japan as a whole.

3. Okinawa should strive to become the hub for easing tensions and building trust in the Asia-Pacific region.

- ① The Asia-Pacific region simultaneously has the two sides of tense relations in the security realm and tight-knit ties in the economic realm. In order to maintain the prosperity and stability of the region, it should be recognized that not only strengthening deterrence capabilities, but also reducing tensions and building trust within the Asia-Pacific will be important political challenges in the future.
- ② 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. Furthermore, Okinawa should convene regular conferences to promote dialogues within the region and consider establishing an institution that will serve as the base for these activities. When doing this, it would be preferable for Okinawa to cooperate actively with both domestic and international think tanks as well as the relevant institutions established within the prefecture.
- ③ In order to expand awareness of Okinawa as “a hub for regional cooperation networks in the Asia-Pacific” both inside and outside Japan, Okinawa Prefecture should actively promote its international exchanges with local governments and support building a regional cooperation network that takes a local government perspective.

Introduction

Although Okinawa only accounts for 0.6% of the total area of Japan, 70.3% of the area that is exclusively used for U.S. military facilities in Japan (as of January 2020) is concentrated in Okinawa. Having such a high concentration of U.S. military bases means that residents of Okinawa have been forced to bear a heavy burden for many years. Additionally, the Japanese government recently began to construct a new base in Henoko, and calls it the “sole solution” for relocating Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma. However, this construction has created a serious rift between the Japanese government and Okinawa, since the construction of the new base is not something that can be accepted by Okinawa.

Under such circumstances, the "*Bankoku Shinryō* Council on U.S. Military Base Issues" was established to examine the issue of the "consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa" and to make proposals to the governor of Okinawa. Based on deliberations of the Council during FY 2019, this report analyzes the international situation along with the state of U.S. military bases and makes proposals that are geared towards consolidating and reducing U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

When discussing the aforementioned topics, the document naturally touches on issues such as the U.S.-Japan alliance, the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as democracy and local autonomy within Japan. Furthermore, in considering issues related to U.S. military bases, the perspective of military rationality is important. This report emphasizes the importance of military rationality and seeks a path for consolidating and reducing U.S. military bases in Okinawa that is compatible with military rationality.

The state of U.S. military bases in Okinawa also relates to the vision for shaping the future of the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, an additional perspective highlighted in this document is the incorporation of Okinawa issues into a future vision of regional order. In the current Asia-Pacific, tensions over security coexist with tight-knit economic ties between countries. For this reason, this report includes ideas and suggestions on the role that Okinawa should play under such circumstances.

The proposals contained in this document are directed towards objectives in three different time frames: the urgent, the medium term, and the long term.

Concerning the urgent problems related to the new base in Henoko, it is becoming increasingly apparent that completing the construction will be both technically and financially difficult. A plan must be formulated immediately to accomplish the original goal of eliminating the dangers and suspending operations of Futenma Air station. In order to do this, the Japanese government should begin consultations with the U.S. government and Okinawa.

Regarding the medium-term objective of consolidating and reducing U.S. military bases in Okinawa, U.S. military forces in Okinawa should be dispersed to mainland Japan and other areas throughout the Asia-Pacific region. These measures should be taken in light of recent changes in the security situation, in which the improved missile capabilities of China have increased the vulnerability of U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

The long-term objective is to reduce tensions and build trust within the Asia-Pacific region, while envisioning a regional order that will allow U.S. military bases in Okinawa to be reduced even further. In order to achieve this objective, Okinawa should harness its unique historical, cultural, and geographical characteristics to develop measures that would make Okinawa into a hub of a regional cooperation network among Asia-Pacific countries.

In recent years, attention has focused on the pros and cons of constructing a new base in Henoko and the conflict between the Japanese government and Okinawa Prefecture. Given the clear impasse regarding the plan to build a new base in Henoko, however, this report situates Okinawa military base issues in a much broader context and within a vision for the future. Hopefully this report will restore vitality to the discussion of Okinawa military base issues and prospects for the future.

1. Construction plan for the new base in Henoko and eliminating the dangers and suspending operations of Futenma Air Station

● Current state and background

In recent years, the relocation of Futenma Air Station to Henoko has been the biggest issue concerning U.S. military bases in Okinawa. Futenma Air Station, which is located in the middle of Ginowan City in Okinawa, has been called “the most dangerous base in the world,” as it is in very close proximity to houses and schools that surround the area. Futenma Air Station occupies an area of 480.6 hectares and is the home base for Marine Aircraft Group 36, which belongs to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing of the III Marine Expeditionary Force. In addition, the air base is also home to 58 aircraft including the MV-22 Ospreys.¹

Ginowan Village was once situated on the land where Futenma Air Station is currently located. However, during the height of the Battle of Okinawa in March 1945, the U.S. military who landed in Okinawa destroyed Ginowan Village and built Futenma Air Station over it. In 1955, the Marine Corps began to move from mainland Japan to Okinawa. In 1960, Futenma Air Station was transformed from an Air Force base to a Marine Corps base. While the population of Ginowan grew, Futenma Air Station acquired more and more functions, such as the deployment of a helicopter unit. Under such circumstances, then governor of Okinawa, Junji Nishime, visited the United States in 1985 and 1988 to ask the U.S. government to return Futenma Air Station back to Okinawa.

In August 1995, a tragic case where a twelve-year-old girl was assaulted by three U.S. soldiers led the U.S. and Japanese governments to set up the “Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO)” in November 1995. Following this incident, the U.S. government agreed to fully return Futenma Air Station back to Japan in April 1996. However, since the return of Futenma Air Station was originally agreed to under the condition of having the base be “relocated” elsewhere, there has been no resolution to the problem for nearly a quarter of a century. The SACO final report that was released in December 1996 stated that both governments would look to build a removable offshore base on the east coast of the main island of Okinawa. After releasing this report, the relocation plan was changed. In May 2006, the U.S. and Japanese governments agreed on the current realignment plan of U.S. military forces in Japan. Under this plan, a new base with two 1800 meter runways that form a V-shape was scheduled to be constructed on the coast of Henoko in Nago City. This base was slated to serve as the replacement facility of Futenma Air Station.

The Japanese government, however, now faces strong Okinawan opposition against the current relocation plan to Henoko. In December 2013, then governor of Okinawa, Hirokazu Nakaima, gave the green light to conduct the land reclamation work that needed to be done for the relocation of Futenma Air Station. In doing so, he went back on his re-election promise of relocating Futenma Air Station outside of Okinawa, and virtually gave his approval to relocate the base to Henoko instead. At the time, Governor Nakaima requested the Japanese government to formulate a policy with four objectives that would reduce the military base burden on Okinawa, which included suspending the operation of Futenma Air Station within five years. It should be noted that the Japanese government indeed promised that it would make the “utmost efforts” to fulfill his request.

Governor Nakaima's renegeing on his promise to the public provoked a strong backlash from residents of Okinawa. Consequently, in the gubernatorial election held in November 2014, Nakaima was decisively defeated by Takeshi Onaga, who opposed the construction of the new base in Henoko. Similarly, in the gubernatorial election that was held in September 2018, after Governor

¹Military Base Affairs Division, Office of the Governor of Okinawa, *U.S. Military Bases in Okinawa*, December 2018, pp. 232-233.

Onaga suddenly passed away during his tenure, Denny Tamaki, who also opposed the new base, was elected. In February 2019, a prefectural referendum was conducted in Okinawa to see whether people were for or against the land reclamation work that was scheduled for the construction of the new base in Henoko. In this referendum, 434,273 Okinawans or 71.7% voted “against” the land reclamation work.

In December 2018, the Japanese government began filling the coast of Henoko with gravel and insisted that the current plan to construct a new base in Henoko was the "sole solution" to eliminate the dangers of Futenma Air Station. Although the Japanese government started the reclamation work by brushing aside the strong opposition from Okinawa residents, it was recently revealed that the soft and unstable seabed of Oura Bay where the new base is scheduled to be constructed is much more extensive than originally imagined. Despite this revelation, the Japanese government still insists on proceeding with the construction, even after it has been demonstrated time and time again how technically difficult it would be to complete such a plan.

- Points of discussion

- The standpoint of Okinawa

Okinawa seeks as soon as possible the suspension of operations and elimination of the dangers of Futenma Air Station, which has been called "the most dangerous base in the world." Okinawa also believes that the permanent use of Futenma Air Station should be avoided and that its relocation outside of Okinawa should be actively sought.²

Okinawa opposes the construction plan for the new base in Henoko due to the following reasons. First, although the prefecture encompasses only 0.6% of Japan's total land area, about 70% of the area that is exclusively used by U.S. military bases in Japan is located in Okinawa. Under such circumstances, constructing a new base would sustain indefinitely the enormous burden on Okinawa and further cement the disparity in burden between Okinawa and mainland Japan. Furthermore, many of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa, including Futenma Air Station, were originally built after villages and fields were destroyed both during and after World War II, while residents were isolated in camps under the U.S. military occupation of Okinawa. Given this background, it is difficult to accept a new base in Okinawa in order to relocate Futenma Air Station.

Second, in the area surrounding Henoko and Oura Bay where the new base is scheduled to be constructed exists a vast biodiversity of 5,300 confirmed species of marine life including 262 endangered species. Therefore, constructing a new base there could potentially destroy this precious biodiversity and threaten the lives of irreplaceable organisms that thrive there.

Third, Oura Bay where the new base is scheduled to be constructed contains an extensive area of soft and unstable seabed. According to the data provided by the Japanese government, it will take approximately 5 years to stabilize the seafloor, 5 years to complete the land reclamation work, 3 years to prepare the air base facilities after completing the land reclamation work. In other words, the full construction of the new base will take another 13 years. By pushing forward with the current plan, the Japanese government will be neglecting the dangers that affect the residents surrounding Futenma Air Station over the long term.

Additionally, due to the discovery of the soft seabed, the land reclamation costs will be much greater than originally planned. Prior to December 2019, the Japanese government never revealed the cost required to perform the land reclamation work or the total cost required to relocate to Henoko. After intensive discussions with the Japanese government in November 2018, the Okinawa Prefectural Government roughly estimated that the relocation to Henoko could cost up

²Ibid., p. 106; Okinawa, *What Okinawa Wishes to Say. A Story About U.S. Military Bases*. p.25.

to 2.55 trillion yen (about \$23.9 billion) based on the information provided by the Okinawa Defense Bureau at that time. Although the Japanese government announced on December 25, 2019 that constructing the new base will cost about 930 billion yen (\$8.7 billion) in total, it is still evident that a huge amount of tax revenue will need to be invested to improve and stabilize the seafloor.

Even after the seabed is improved, the land where the reclamation took place is likely to subside. Given the lack of uniformity in the seabed, this land subsidence could cause the surface to become uneven. Data from the Okinawa Defense Bureau's Review Board revealed that even if the ground quality is improved, land subsidence is expected to continue for approximately 70 years. Consequently, an enormous amount of money will be needed to address the problem of uneven subsidence over many years.

Moreover, U.S. military standards require that no grade change occurs less than 300 meters from the end of the runway. The revision plan proposed by the Okinawa Defense Bureau, however, goes against these standards and anticipates that land subsidence will occur every year. In addition, experts have pointed out that the large embankment may collapse since the soft ground is 90 meters deep in the area where it is situated.

- The Japanese government's standpoint

The Japanese government has declared that relocating to Henoko is reasonable because it helps to reduce the burden of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa.³ First, relocating to Henoko will distribute the functions of Futenma Air Station. Futenma Air Station serves three functions: (1) operations for aircraft such as the MV-22 Osprey, (2) operations for aerial refueling aircraft, and (3) capacity to accept transit aircraft in contingencies. Of the three functions, function (2) has already been shifted to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in Yamaguchi Prefecture with the deployment of fifteen KC-130 aerial refueling aircraft there. Function (3) will be transferred to the JSDF's bases in Tsuiki and Nyutabaru in Kyushu. Only function (1) will be transferred to Henoko.

Second, relocating to Henoko will reduce the area of the base. Futenma Air Station occupies an area of about 480 hectares. However, the area of the land that will be reclaimed as a result of the relocation to Henoko will be about 160 hectares, which is around one-third of the area of Futenma Air Station. The runway on Futenma Air Station is about 2740 meters long. However, including the overruns, the runways on the new base in Henoko will have a reduced length of 1800 meters.

Third, relocating to Henoko will reduce the noise and dangers of the base. Due to requests from local residents, two runways that form a V-shape will be constructed on the new base in Henoko. Therefore, takeoffs and landings will be performed towards and from the sea respectively. The flight routes that are routinely used for training and other purposes at Futenma Air Station involve flying over the city. However, once the base is relocated, the aircraft will only be flying above the sea, which will reduce the noise and dangers that are associated with the base. With completion of its environmental impact assessment, the Japanese government insists that it has fully considered the environmental implications of the new base.

In addition, the Japanese government has argued that Futenma Air Station must be relocated within Okinawa for security reasons. First, with the uncertain security situation in East Asia, the Marine Corps must be kept in Okinawa as it is a crucial location for the security of the region. In order to operate the Marine Corps, which is characterized by its mobility and readiness, it is essential for the command, ground, aviation, and logistic support units to interact with one another. A replacement facility of Futenma Air Station must also be constructed within Okinawa in order to allow aviation and land units to engage in daily activities for training, practice, and other purposes.

³ Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2019*, pp. 335-337.

The Japanese government has announced that, as of now, if the ground improvement work were performed on the soft seabed, construction of the new base in Henoko would be completed in about 12 years at a total cost of around 930 billion yen (December 25, 2019).

· Examining the main points of discussion

The views of Okinawa Prefecture and the Japanese government have been discussed briefly thus far. However, it is clear that there are various problems with the Japanese government's assertions. This section will evaluate the validity of the Japanese government's four reasons for supporting the plan to construct a new base in Henoko: (1) distribution of the functions of Futenma Air Station, (2) reduction of the base area, (3) reduction of noise and dangers, and 4) the security reasons.

As for the first government rationale, it is questionable that relocating to Henoko will actually distribute the functions of Futenma Air Station and reduce the burden that it places on Okinawa. Concerning the aerial refueling functions of Futenma Air Station, the KC-130 aerial refueling aircraft from Futenma Air Station were transferred to the Iwakuni base. However, a 2017 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office later revealed that the area around Iwakuni was insufficient for training, which consequently led the training to return to Okinawa.⁴ Therefore, the burden placed on Okinawa will not be alleviated since the U.S. military returns to Okinawa to conduct their training, despite having the KC-130 aircraft transferred to Iwakuni. The Japanese government is responsible for providing a training area and maintaining that area after transferring the KC-130 aircraft to Iwakuni. However, since this responsibility has not been adequately fulfilled as of yet, the Japanese government has failed to substantially reduce the burden on Okinawa.

Regarding the function of accepting aircraft to land during emergencies, the U.S. maintains that the runway scheduled to be built on the new base is not long enough and therefore cannot be used as an alternative runway to Futenma Air Station. For this reason, the U.S. asserts that the return of Futenma Air Station is conditional on the accessibility to a civilian Japanese airport with a sufficiently long runway that can be used during emergencies. However, since Japan has failed to secure a civilian airport that fulfills this condition, there is a possibility that in the worst-case scenario, the U.S. military will continue to use Futenma Air Station even after the new base is constructed in Henoko.

In the "Consolidation Plan" agreed upon by the U.S. and Japanese governments in 2013, a number of conditions were highlighted for returning Futenma Air Station back to Japan. One of the conditions listed involves implementation of necessary "facility improvements for contingency use" of the Tsuiki and Nyutabaru bases, which are both bases of the Self-Defense Forces in Kyushu. Another condition that was mentioned is the "improved contingency use of civilian facilities for long runway operations that cannot be replicated at the FRF [Futenma Replacement Facility]."⁵ The runway at the new base in Henoko will be 1200 meters long, with a 300 meter overrun on both ends. Although these overruns can essentially be used as a runway during takeoffs, they do not meet the requirements during an emergency situation.

Furthermore, insofar as the runway for the new base in Henoko will not be long enough to support emergency situations and a civilian airport to serve as an alternative has yet to be determined, the 2017 U.S. Government Accountability Office pointed out that it was the responsibility of the Japanese

⁴ United States Government Accountability Office, *Marine Corps Asia Pacific Realignment: DOD Should Resolve Capability Deficiencies and Infrastructure Risks and Revise Cost Estimates*, April 2017, p. 19.

⁵ *Consolidation Plan for U.S. Military Facilities and Areas in Okinawa*, April 2013, p. 19.

government to provide an alternative runway as part of the relocation of Futenma Air Station.⁶ It is imperative that the Japanese government provides the U.S. military with a civilian airport for emergency situations, since this is a condition that must be fulfilled in order to have Futenma Air Station returned to Japan. If this condition is not fulfilled, a big hole may be left in U.S. military strategy. In the worst-case scenario, the U.S. military may continue to use Futenma Air Station without returning it to Japan.

Dispersing the function of accepting aircraft to land during emergencies is primarily an issue during military contingencies. As a consequence, the bigger issue is that burden on the Okinawa people will not be reduced during peacetime because of training and other activities.

The next issue is the validity of the government's second argument about reducing the military base land area. The area of land that will be reclaimed in the process of constructing the new base in Henoko is certainly smaller than the area of Futenma Air Station. However, it should be pointed out that this comparison itself is inappropriate. Many of the U.S. military bases in Japan are concentrated on Okinawa. However, Futenma Air Station only accounts for about 2.6% of the total area that is occupied by U.S. military bases in Okinawa. To reclaim land in the sea and constructing a new base within Okinawa goes against the objective of reducing the excessive burden that is imposed on Okinawa by military bases. The strong opposition from residents of Okinawa, which was demonstrated in the recent gubernatorial election as well as the prefectural referendum, shows how the construction of a new base is unacceptable for Okinawa residents.

Additionally, the runway at the new base in Henoko will definitely be shorter than the runway at Futenma Air Station. However, as mentioned above, the U.S. sees this as a problem since the new runway cannot be used during emergencies.

Regarding the third argument of reducing the noise and dangers near military bases, this is a problem that should be addressed independently of efforts to relocate the functions of Futenma Air Station to Henoko. Although the two runways that form a V-shape at the new base in Henoko will be used separately for takeoffs and landings, according to government documents, "a second runway will be used when it is required for operational needs." This means that both runways may be used simultaneously depending on U.S. military operations. In December 2016, an MV-22 Osprey aircraft crashed into the shallow waters of Abu in Nago; and in October 2017, a CH-53E helicopter crashed and burned in the northern part of Okinawa in the Takae District of Higashison. These incidents demonstrate that no matter where the base is situated, there will always be dangers associated with it.

Concerning the government's fourth claim that relocation to Henoko is important for security reasons, only two points will be presented here. The next chapter will discuss in more detail the security situation and the role of the Marine Corps.

First, a distinctive feature of the Marine Corps is the integrated operations of command, ground, aviation, and logistic support units as reflected organizationally in the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Although command, ground, aviation, and logistic support units operate in an integrated manner during training and emergency situations, this does not necessarily mean that the four functional units must be regularly deployed in Okinawa, as claimed by the Japanese government.

The four units do not always train together as there are times when they train separately as well. In fact, Marine Corps personnel stationed in Okinawa often train outside Okinawa in mainland Japan or in other countries abroad.

In February 2016, a bilateral U.S.-Japan commission that included former Japanese and U.S. senior government officials such as Ryozo Kato (former Japanese Ambassador to the U.S.) and Richard Armitage (former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State), released a report that recommended

⁶ GAO, *Marine Corps Asia Pacific Realignment*, pp. 21-22

"rotational deployment of Okinawa-based aircraft such as the MV-22 to bases outside Okinawa," while giving the green light to proceed with the current plan of relocating Futenma Air Station.⁷ On March 26, 2019 in the House of Councilors Budget Committee, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga stated that when the construction of the new base in Henoko is in sight, they were thinking about transferring some of the Ospreys to other facilities in Japan over several years.

These statements contradict the Japanese government's explanation because they indicate that the aviation unit of the Marine Corps can operate aircraft such as the Osprey outside Okinawa. If this is the case, this means that relocating Futenma Air Station within Okinawa is no longer essential for the integrated operations of the Marine Corps and that a new base does not necessarily need to be built in Henoko.

Second, in order to respond to "great power competition" such as with China, the Marine Corps has been developing a new operating concept in recent years called Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO). In response to China's improved capabilities to launch precision guided missile attacks, the Marine Corps is aiming to use dispersed small combat units to establish temporary positions in critically located remote islands (see the next chapter for details).⁸ Under EABO, the necessity of large permanent military bases is declining due to their military vulnerability. From the perspective of this new operational concept, a new base in Henoko with an area of about 160 hectares and runways that are approximately 1800 meters in length may be too large for promoting dispersed operations and too small to serve as a support base during a military contingency. Therefore, the base construction plan is not the best option from a military point of view.

The biggest problem is having to deal with the soft seabed that was discovered at the construction site for the new base in Henoko. In the past, the Japanese government never once disclosed the total cost of relocating to Henoko. However, on December 25, 2019, it announced for the first time that the construction period will be 9 years and 3 months and the total construction cost will be about 930 billion yen.

In short, while more than six years have already passed since the land reclamation was first approved back in December 2013, it will take an additional 12 years to fully complete the relocation to Henoko after efforts to improve the ground quality have commenced. The Japanese government has in effect acknowledged that the relocation to Henoko does not expeditiously eliminate the dangers that are associated with Futenma Air Station. The Japanese government's statement about the construction period and total construction cost is based on an assessment of the current situation. Depending on subsequent assessments, the projected construction period and total cost could increase further. The Japanese government has also yet to provide a clear explanation as to how it will be addressing the problem of uneven subsidence after improving the ground quality of the seafloor. Unless this explanation is provided, the technical and financial feasibility of constructing the new base in Henoko will remain questionable. Whether or not to continue with the plan to construct a new base in Henoko is a problem not only for Okinawa, but also for Japan as a whole.

⁷ U.S.-Japan Commission on the Future of the Alliance, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance to 2030: Power and Principle*, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, p. 20.

⁸ 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Commandant's Planning Guidance*, 2019.

- Proposals

As examined above, there are doubts about the validity and feasibility of the plan to construct a new base in Henoko for the relocation of Futenma Air Station from the perspective of politics, military affairs, public finance, and the environment. It is evident that this plan is not the "sole solution" as the Japanese government claims. By continuing to promote the construction of the new base in Henoko, which cannot be used during emergencies and may suffer from land subsidence in the future, the Japanese government is degrading not only the environment but also democracy and local autonomy in Japan. The possibility is high that a huge sum of tax revenue will need to be invested at a time when public finance difficulties are becoming more severe.

Sticking to the current plan, which is difficult to fulfill completely, will not only intensify the conflict between the Japanese government and Okinawa Prefecture but also deepen the rift between mainland Japan and Okinawa. Such an outcome would be unfortunate for Japanese society as a whole. 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. The Japanese government should not continue the construction work for the new base in Henoko anymore.

Since it is becoming increasingly evident that completing the construction plan for the new base in Henoko is going to be difficult, a concrete policy must be formulated expeditiously to achieve the original goal of eliminating the dangers and suspending operations at Futenma Air Station. If the dangers of Futenma Air Station, which is situated in the urban area of Ginowan City, are neglected and a major accident were to occur, the U.S.-Japan alliance will suffer a severe shock. Since it is now evident that the new base in Henoko will take at least 12 years to construct, the notion of "relocating Futenma Air Station to Henoko to eliminate its dangers" is no longer valid. Coming up with a plan to eliminate the dangers and suspend operations of Futenma Air Station without having to relocate to Henoko would be much faster than following through with the plan to relocate to Henoko. This is possible even in terms of Marine Corps operations.

From the above perspective, we recommend the following:

- ① The Japanese government should reconsider the construction plan for the new base in Henoko and should focus its attention on formulating a policy to achieve the original goal of eliminating the dangers of Futenma Air Station as soon as possible and suspending its operations without the condition of relocation to Henoko. In doing so, the Japanese government should consider relocating even more the training of aviation units assigned to Futenma Air Station to locations outside of Okinawa and to other countries.
- ② The Japanese government, the U.S. government, and Okinawa Prefecture should engage in genuine discussions about expeditiously suspending operations and eliminating the dangers of Futenma Air Station while considering the medium to long term future of U.S. military bases in Okinawa as a whole. For this purpose, a "Track II" dialogue consisting of experts from Japan, the United States, and Okinawa should be established (this dialogue among experts will also address the issues examined in the next chapter).
- ③ The Okinawa Prefecture should appeal to the governments, experts and the general public of both the United States and Japan and raise public interest regarding the following. The plan for the new base in Henoko is not realistic for the purpose of expeditiously eliminating the dangers of Futenma Air Station. Instead of the current plan to construct a large and permanent new base, a new breakthrough solution should be sought which would be beneficial for Japan as a whole as well as the U.S.-Japan alliance.

2. Towards a fundamental consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa

● Current state and background

· Current state of U.S. military bases in Okinawa

In Okinawa, there are 25,843 U.S. military personnel and 33 U.S. military bases that occupy a total area of 18,709.9 hectares of land. Of the U.S.-military controlled bases in Japan that are exclusively used by U.S. forces, 70.3% of their total land area is located in Okinawa; and U.S. military personnel in Okinawa make up 70.4% of all U.S. military personnel in Japan. Although Okinawa accounts for only 0.6% of the total area of Japan, U.S. military bases cover 8.2% of the land in Okinawa Prefecture and 14.6% of the main island of Okinawa. Okinawa ranks first in Japan for having the highest percentage of land area that is occupied by U.S. military bases (including shared bases). The figure for Okinawa is overwhelmingly high when compared to Shizuoka Prefecture, which ranks second with 1.15%, and Yamanashi Prefecture, which ranks third with 1.03%.⁹

From the beginning, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, which serves as the foundation of the U.S.-Japan alliance, embodied a reciprocal yet imbalanced cooperative relationship whereby Japan provides the U.S. with military bases, while the U.S. defends Japan by stationing its troops within Japan. However, it must be said that the structure of the U.S.-Japan alliance is distorted since the U.S. military bases that are provided by Japan are heavily concentrated in Okinawa.

The largest U.S. military force in Okinawa is the Marine Corps, which is the home of the III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF). The Marine Corps in Okinawa has a total of 15,365 military personnel, which accounts for 57.2% of all U.S. military personnel in Okinawa. In addition, the Marine Corps in Okinawa occupies 13,050.1 hectares of land, which is 69.7% of the total area occupied by U.S. military bases in Okinawa. Okinawa is also home to Kadena Air Base, which is the largest air base in the Far East. Kadena Air Base is used by the U.S. Air Force's 18th Wing and is equipped with two 3,689 meter runways as well as around 100 military aircraft. Moreover, if White Beach used by the U.S. Navy and Torii Station used by the U.S. Army are included, Okinawa hosts all four services of the U.S. military: army, navy, air force, and marines.

Because large U.S. military bases are located in Okinawa, various problems caused by the U.S. military have emerged over the years, such as incidents, accidents, noise pollution, and environmental degradation. According to an opinion poll that was conducted by Okinawa in 2018, 66.2% of Okinawans found it "discriminatory" that around 70% of all U.S. military bases in Japan are located in Okinawa. The people of Okinawa have also expressed their desire to put more effort on first "returning bases to Japan" and then "revising the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement."¹⁰

· Background regarding the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa

Originally no military bases existed in Okinawa before the Pacific War. However, the Japanese army began to build bases in Okinawa just before the Pacific War broke out. During the Battle of Okinawa, the U.S. military built bases in Okinawa to be used for attacking mainland Japan. After losing the war, Japan was occupied by the Allied Powers. Although Japan returned to the international community under the San Francisco Peace Treaty signed in September 1951, Okinawa

⁹ Military Base Affairs Division, Office of the Governor of Okinawa, *Bases of the U.S. Military and the Self-Defense Forces in Okinawa (Collection of Statistics)*, August 2019, pp. 1-13. The area occupied by the military bases is as of March 2018, and the number of the military personnel is as of June 2011

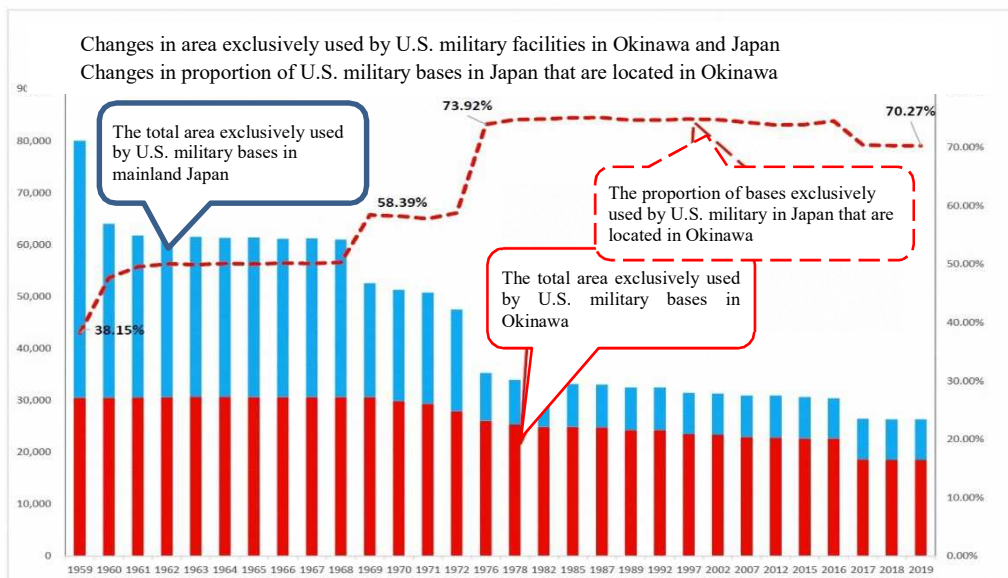
¹⁰ Department of Planning, Okinawa Prefectural Government *The 10th Okinawa Opinion Poll*, March 2019, pp. 12-13.

remained under the control of the United States. In the context of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union that began soon after the Pacific War ended, Okinawa became a strategic base to be used freely by the U.S. military, thereby separating Okinawa from the rest of Japan.

In 1952 immediately after the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was signed together with the San Francisco Peace Treaty, U.S. military bases on mainland Japan occupied 135,200 hectares of land, which was eight times the area that was occupied by U.S. military bases in Okinawa at the time. During the Korean War that broke out in 1950, the main bases that were used for operations such as the Battle of Incheon were bases that were located in mainland Japan. However, U.S. military bases on mainland Japan were significantly reduced in the 1950s due to the growing movement against U.S. military bases in Japan and the realignment of the U.S. military, which took place after an armistice concluded the Korean War.

Despite this, while Okinawa was under the control of the U.S. military, bases were expanded even further by the forced expropriation of land with the use of “bayonets and bulldozers.” From 1955, the Marine Corps were transferred to Okinawa from Gifu, Yamanashi, and Shizuoka prefectures. Additionally, from the end of 1954, nuclear weapons were also deployed in Okinawa. As a consequence, the area occupied by U.S. military bases on mainland Japan became the same as that on Okinawa during the 1950s. As this happened, the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa also increased.

In May 1972, Okinawa was finally returned to Japan after some adjustments were made in U.S.-Japan relations and after Okinawa saw a growing movement that pushed for this return. In this context, nuclear weapons were removed from Okinawa. However, a secret agreement was made that would allow nuclear weapons to be brought into Okinawa during emergencies. Also, even after Okinawa was returned to Japan, the number of U.S. military bases in Okinawa still remained the same for the most part. During this period, U.S. military bases in mainland Japan were actually reduced even further, while most of the U.S. military bases in Okinawa were kept intact. This ultimately resulted in a situation where Okinawa had two-thirds of all the U.S. military bases in Japan. Although there was a move in the U.S. government to re-examine the Marine Corps presence in Okinawa, the Japanese government called for retaining U.S. bases in Okinawa due to their concerns about reducing the U.S. military presence.



Source: Created by Military Base Affairs Division, Office of the Governor of Okinawa from materials released by Ministry of Defense

From this, it is evident that shortly after the war, there were many U.S. military bases in mainland Japan. However, due to public opposition against these bases in mainland Japan, the Japanese government gradually reduced the bases on the mainland to make them hardly visible. To compensate for this, a large proportion of the U.S. military bases came to be concentrated in Okinawa instead. Judging from this background, it is clear that the high concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa is a problem not only for Okinawa, but also for all Japanese people.

Furthermore, the structure of the postwar order in Asia relied heavily on Okinawa. After World War II, the U.S. developed the "hub-and-spokes" system of bilateral alliances with non-communist countries in Asia. Although relations between the Asian countries remained weak under this new international order, the non-communist countries in Asia came to rely on the U.S. military presence for security reasons. This in turn cemented the extremely crucial role that is played by U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

· Changes in the security environment and U.S. military strategy

Today in the 21st century after the momentous changes wrought by the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the security environment of Asia is becoming increasingly uncertain due to the changing power balance. A rising China is increasing its military capabilities as well as its maritime presence. China has also improved its capabilities for so-called anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) such as short-range missiles and cruise missiles. In the meantime, North Korea is also continuing to develop nuclear weapons and missiles despite the two U.S.-North Korea summits that were held.

The U.S. government sees China and Russia as "revisionist powers" that challenge the current world order, and has stated that the U.S. has entered a long-term conflict situation known as "great power competition." The U.S. government is also promoting the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy" for maintaining an order based on rules and laws.

Under these circumstances, the U.S. military is formulating a new operational concept against China. The "Air-Sea Battle" concept, which mainly revolved around the Air Force and Navy, was initially considered for the new operational concept. However, due to the rapid advancement in Chinese missile capabilities, the dangers of conflict escalation between China and the United States, and conflicts over leadership and budgeting within the U.S. military, land forces consisting of the Army and Marine Corps have also been emphasizing their roles in recent years.

The Army is developing the concept of "multi-domain operations," which will operate in all areas including land, sea, air, space and cyber. The Marine Corps is working with the Navy to pursue "Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations" (EABO) to accomplish sea control and sea denial by establishing temporary military bases in important locations such as remote islands.¹¹

Following the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper announced plans to deploy medium-range missiles in Asia. In recent years, American think tanks and experts are arguing that to counter China's missile capabilities, Marine Corps and Army land forces should be positioned along the first-island chain spanning from the Japanese archipelago to Taiwan and the Philippines and a large number of missiles be deployed, thereby deterring the Chinese military through denial.¹²

¹¹ The Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report: Preparedness, Partnership, and Promoting Networked Region*, June 2019.

¹² Thomas G. Mahnken, et.al, *Tightening the Chain: Implementing a Strategy of Maritime Pressure in the Western Pacific*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, 2019.

In this context, even the state of the U.S. military bases is undergoing review. A huge issue that the U.S. military faces is how the increasing A2/AD capabilities of China have made U.S. military bases in the Western Pacific, including Okinawa, increasingly vulnerable. Therefore, rather than having permanent bases, the U.S. military is emphasizing a more flexible presence by distributing forces and securing temporary access during contingencies and training.¹³ Under such circumstances, the idea of promoting joint and shared use of bases in Japan by Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. military has been also proposed as a way of enhancing alliance capabilities and political sustainability.¹⁴

- Points of discussion

- Examining “the reduction of the base burden” in Okinawa

Okinawa Prefecture understands the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty and believes that the treaty has helped to maintain peace and stability in Japan and East Asia. However, regarding the concentration of U.S. bases in the prefecture, Okinawa insists that the burden of maintaining security should be considered as a problem for the Japanese people as a whole.¹⁵

On the other hand, the Japanese government provides the following explanation regarding Okinawa whose location it considers to be “extremely important from the perspective of security”: “The stationing of the U.S. Forces in Okinawa, including the U.S. Marine Corps, which can deal with a wide range of missions with high mobility and readiness and is in charge of first response for a variety of contingencies ... ensures the effectiveness of the Japan-U.S. alliance, strengthens deterrence, and contributes greatly not only to the security of Japan but also to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.”¹⁶

Of course, the Japanese government has not turned a blind eye to the heavy concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa and has been trying to “reduce the burden” as well. Nevertheless, although the Japanese government refers to “reduction of the burden” on Okinawa, in reality this reduction is being pursued within the limits of the plan for “Realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan.” Under this plan, which was agreed upon in 2006 and 2012, Futenma Air Station will be relocated to Henoko, while U.S. military bases south of Kadena are to be returned to Japan.

In response, Okinawa has expressed its opposition to relocating Futenma Air Station to Henoko that involves constructing a new base. Given that “huge U.S. military bases would remain even after the large-scale return of bases is implemented according to the agreement reached in the U.S.-Japan security consultations on realignment of U.S. forces in Japan,” Okinawa seeks further consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases.¹⁷

¹³ Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, “Competition Without Catastrophe,” *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2019, p.104.

¹⁴ Richard A. Armitage et.al, *More Important than Ever: Renewing the US-Japan Alliance for the 21st Century*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019, p.7.

¹⁵Okinawa, *What Okinawa Wishes to Say. A Story About U.S. Military Bases*, p. 24.

¹⁶ *Defense of Japan 2019*, p. 333.

¹⁷ Okinawa, *Okinawa’s 21st Century Vision—Working Together to Create a Beautiful Future for Okinawa*, 2010, p. 31.

Even if U.S. military bases south of Kadena were returned to Japan, the "return" will most likely be done under the premise of relocating bases to different locations within Okinawa. This means that the current proportion of bases used exclusively by the U.S. military in Japan that are located in Okinawa will only be reduced by about 1%. Accordingly, a wide gap remains between the views of Okinawa Prefecture and the Japanese government regarding the consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases.

Although it may be true that the U.S. and Japanese governments have indeed been working to reduce the burden on Okinawa since the SACO was established in 1995, the fact remains that the plans geared towards this objective mainly entail relocating the bases to different locations within the prefecture, and are therefore considered inadequate in Okinawa. Furthermore, the security environment has changed significantly since the final SACO report of 1996, the 2006 plan to realign U.S. forces in Japan, and the 2012 review of this plan. Despite this, the current Japanese and U.S. governments have not provided an outlook for how U.S. military bases in Okinawa will be consolidated and reduced after the realignment of U.S. forces. Given the domestic and international situation in recent years, there needs to be a new vision that will fundamentally reduce the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

- Examining Okinawa's geographical advantage

The Japanese government emphasizes the geographical advantage of Okinawa in arguing the importance of having U.S. military bases in Okinawa. The Japanese government has made the following arguments regarding this matter. "In comparison to areas like the U.S. mainland, Hawaii and Guam, Okinawa is located closer to potential conflict areas that could affect Japan's peace and security, including the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait, but at the same time has the advantage of having a certain distance from these areas that would not heighten military tension there unnecessarily." In addition, the main island of Okinawa is situated around the center of the Nansei Islands, close to Japan's sea lanes. Okinawa's location is also important from a security perspective because it is a strategically important target for access from the continent to the Pacific and from the Pacific to the continent.¹⁸

However, the foundation for current and future security policy will be inadequate if "geographical advantage" and "geographical vulnerability" are not considered together as inextricably linked. In recent years, the improvement in China and North Korea's missile capabilities have made U.S. military bases in Okinawa extremely vulnerable from a military standpoint. According to a 2019 report by the U.S. Department of Defense, the Chinese military possessed 750-1500 short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) with a range of 300-1000 kilometers, 150-450 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) with a range of 1000-3000 kilometers, and 270- 540 land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs) with a range of over 1000 kilometers. U.S. military bases in Okinawa are within the range of all these missiles.¹⁹ Moreover, in addition to miniaturizing nuclear weapons and developing nuclear warheads, North Korea has hundreds of ballistic missiles with a range that covers the entire area of Japan.²⁰

A 2015 report by the RAND Corporation analyzed how missile attacks by China could shut down Kadena Air Base for 4-10 days in 2010 and for 16-43 days in 2017. Furthermore, regarding

¹⁸ *Defense of Japan 2019*, p. 333.

¹⁹ Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019*, pp. 47, 62.

²⁰ "Defense of Japan 2019," p. 93.

U.S. and Chinese capabilities to attack each other's bases, the report argued that for a Taiwan conflict U.S. and China were at relative parity in 2010, but by 2017 China had an advantage over the United States. Regarding a Spratly Islands conflict, U.S. overwhelming advantage ended in 2010, and China attained approximate parity in some domains with the United States in 2017.²¹

Therefore, if Okinawa's geographical advantage is defined by its proximity to potential areas of conflict, this means that while it is convenient to deploy U.S. troops from Okinawa to areas of conflict, there is also a possibility that such proximity will induce an adversary to strike first as well. At the time the agreement was made to return Futenma Air Station to Japan, China and North Korea's aviation capabilities were too limited to attack Okinawa. Therefore, insofar as Okinawa's geographical advantage was predicated on the U.S. military's advantage, the latter advantage is declining today, given Chinese and North Korean missile capabilities and advancements in China's air attack capabilities including electronic warfare.

Furthermore, since the notion of advantages is relative, it makes more sense to think that China has an advantage in deploying troops around Taiwan and the Spratly Islands due to its closer proximity to those areas. This reality is reflected in the two U.S. reports cited above. Under such circumstances, the rationale behind having a heavy concentration of troops in Okinawa is also losing its credibility.

In addition, "having a certain distance from these areas [of potential conflict] that would not heighten military tension there unnecessarily" is another questionable factor that defines Okinawa's geographic advantage. As previously mentioned, it is inherently contradictory how Okinawa is a convenient hub for sending troops into areas of conflict, yet deploying troops and taking military actions in Okinawa "does not heighten military tension there unnecessarily."

If the U.S. military were to reinforce its troops by installing bombers in Okinawa during a time when there are tensions over Taiwan, this would cause a strong reaction from China, and one cannot eliminate the concern that China might be induced to launch a preemptive missile attack. Given the current conflictual relationship between the U.S. and China, it must be said that Okinawa is located at a distance that could "heighten military tension unnecessarily."

Therefore, due to the advancements in the Chinese military's A2/AD capabilities, the U.S. military advantage in the Western Pacific region is being shaken, while Okinawa grows increasingly vulnerable from a military standpoint. In order to counter this situation, the U.S. military plans to distribute its forces and to secure access points. In the 2012 review of the plan to realign U.S. forces in Japan, arrangements were already underway to relocate 9,000 Okinawa-based Marines to Guam, Hawaii, and Australia. A U.S. think tank has also recommended that forces in Okinawa be shifted to "a more distributed posture on Japanese territory" since the heavy concentration of U.S. military bases makes Okinawa vulnerable to Chinese missiles.²²

The current concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa cannot be justified, even if the importance of Okinawa's geographic location can be recognized to a certain extent. If Okinawa is indeed important from a geographical standpoint, the understanding of the local people should be viewed as necessary.

- Examining the significance of having the Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa

The Marine Corps occupies the majority of U.S. military bases in Okinawa and accounts for most of the U.S. troops in Okinawa. Therefore, it is important to review the way in which the Marine Corps is stationed in Okinawa when pursuing a significant consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases. The Okinawa Prefectural Assembly in November 2017 unanimously passed an opinion statement calling for "the Marine Corps to be relocated outside Okinawa and Japan soon."

²¹ Eric Heginbotham et.al, *The U.S.-China Military Scoreboard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power 1996-2017*, Rand Corporation, 2015, pp. 330-337.

²² Thomas G. Mahnken, et.al, *Tightening the Chain*, p.42.

The Japanese government has given the following explanations concerning the significance of having the Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa. First, the Marine Corps has “high mobility and readiness for a wide variety of missions ranging from armed conflicts to natural disasters” and strengthens the deterrence capability of the Japan-U.S. alliance. In order to operate with readiness and mobility, the Marine Corps “consists of air, ground, logistics, and command elements,” and “the interaction of those elements is indispensable.” Therefore, “given the deep interdependence among the different units of the Marine Corps,” it is necessary to “maintain the unity of the Marine Corps by having the different units located in close proximity and by training together on a regular basis.”²³

Second, stationing the Marine Corps in Okinawa has a symbolic meaning. According to the Japanese government, because the Marine Corps is “the only U.S. force in Japan that has a ground combat unit,” it is an important factor for deterrence by being the symbol of the U.S. military presence. Therefore, withdrawing the Marine Corps from Okinawa “could mislead neighboring countries into thinking that the U.S. will defend Japan and to help uphold regional stability is weakening, thereby reducing the U.S. military presence in Japan and its ability to deter conflict.”²⁴

Third, the Marine Corps in Okinawa is significant by serving as “the foundation for arriving reinforcements.” By accepting reinforcements during emergencies, the Marine Corps is able to respond quickly to various situations, which is an important element of deterrence capability.²⁵

However, the Japanese government's explanations do not answer the following questions. First, the missions that the Marine Corps stationed in Okinawa can perform are limited due to their size. The III MEF stationed in Okinawa is a small force compared to other MEFs. The III MEF also requires assistance from the U.S. mainland during large-scale emergencies such as those that affect the Korean Peninsula. Additionally, after reviewing the plan to realign U.S. military forces in Japan, which was approved back in 2012, 9,000 Okinawa-based Marines, which included members of the 4th Marine Regiment (core ground unit), are to be relocated to Guam, Hawaii and Australia. After doing so, Okinawa will be left with only around 2,000 combat troops who all belong to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (31st MEU). With its 2,000 troops, the key missions to be performed by the 31st MEU include providing humanitarian aid and disaster relief as well as rescuing civilians during emergencies. However, these missions cannot be said to be a core element of deterrence capability.

The Marine Corps uses an organization called MAGTF (Marine Air-Ground Task Force), that involves integrated operations of command, ground, air, and logistic support units. Although all these units train together under regular circumstances, this does not mean that they must be in Okinawa at all times. The Marines stationed in Okinawa train outside Okinawa and Japan for much of the year. As the U.S. Government Accountability Office and even the Marine Corps have acknowledged, the training area in Okinawa is too small and too close to urban areas, which limits the amount of training that can be done by the Marines.²⁶ On the other hand, although some Marine Corps training was relocated from Okinawa to mainland Japan according to the 1996 final SACO

²³ *Defense of Japan 2019*, pp. 333, 337; *Response Given to Okinawa by the Ministry of Defense 2*, December 11, 2012, p. 16.

²⁴ Ministry of Defense, *The Significance and Role of the U.S. Military in Japan and the Marine Corps in Okinawa*, p. 14; *Response Given to Okinawa by the Ministry of Defense 2*, p. 23.

²⁵ *Response Given to Okinawa by the Ministry of Defense 2*, p. 22.

²⁶ United States General Accounting Office, *Military Training: Limitations Exist Overseas but Are Not Reflected in Readiness Reporting*, 2002, p.7; *Marine Corps Installations Pacific, 2025 Strategic Vision*, p.9.

report, this shift did not affect their operational capabilities nor their deployment plans.²⁷

Additionally, the role of the Marine Corps is limited even during contingencies that involve the Senkaku Islands, the Korean Peninsula, or the Taiwan Strait. The Navy and Air Force are responsible for securing sea and air superiority during military contingencies. Even if the Marines are indeed deployed, this will happen after securing sea and air superiority.

Regarding defense of the Senkaku Islands, according to the “Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation” revised in 2015, the Self-Defense Forces have primary responsibility, while the U.S. military, which includes the Marine Corps, is limited to a supportive and supplementary role. In recent years, the Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade of the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, which will carry out operations to retake remote islands, established a new base in Sasebo, Nagasaki. Additionally, since the United States takes a "neutral" stance on the territorial sovereignty issue over the Senkaku Islands, it is not at all clear that the U.S. will get involved in such a contingency by sending U.S. ground forces.

Also, as the Japanese government acknowledges, what needs to be heeded for the Senkaku Islands for the time being are grey-zone situations in which fishermen or militia who are disguised as fishermen land on the islands rather than a large-scale invasion by the Chinese military. Such situations require coordination between the policing capabilities of the Japan Coast Guard and the roles of the Self-Defense Forces, but ground forces and the Marine Corps hardly have a direct role to play.

For a Korean Peninsula contingency, large-scale reinforcements from the U.S. mainland will be sent to the Korean Peninsula by using Japan as a transit base. However, “most of the troops will actually go through mainland Japan rather than Okinawa.”²⁸ Furthermore, under the most recent operational plan OPLAN5015 that takes into account North Korea's recent developments in nuclear weapons and missiles, Special Forces of the U.S. and South Korean militaries will conduct a “decapitation operation” that targets the North Korean leaders and secure nuclear facilities, but the role of the U.S. Marine Corps is unclear.²⁹

Regarding a Taiwan contingency, it is easy to think that there is an advantage in conducting military operations from Okinawa because of geographical proximity. In terms of military scenarios involving an attack on Taiwan by the Chinese military, possibilities include missile strikes, naval blockades imposed by the Navy, “decapitation operations” that target Taiwanese leaders, and landing operations. However, in each of these scenarios, the vulnerability of U.S. military bases in Okinawa from China’s ballistic missiles and precision-guided munitions will greatly constrain U.S. military intervention.

The Marines in Okinawa could respond to Chinese “decapitation operations” that target Taiwanese leaders by rescuing U.S. civilians, and they could seek to deter the Chinese military by dispersing units and setting up bases in remote Nansei Islands under EABO (explained later). However, depending on the timing and political situation, there is a danger that conducting these operations will instead lead to crisis escalation.

²⁷ United States General Accounting Office, *Overseas Presence: Issues involved in Reducing the Impact of the US Military Presence in Okinawa*, March 1998, p.43.

²⁸ Statement from the Former Secretary of Defense William Perry, Symposium *Rethinking the Changing Security Situation in East Asia and the State of the U.S. Military in Okinawa, Japan*, March 13, 2018, Washington.

²⁹ OPLAN5015 [Operation Plans], Global Security.

Second, the symbolic significance of the Okinawa-based Marine Corps being "the only U.S. force in Japan that has ground combat units" is also debatable. Certainly as can be seen in the "tripwire" notion, the importance of having a ground force presence as a means to signal the intention to defend reflects the thinking of deterrence theory. However, it is unclear what the force size and roles should be to serve this deterrence function. Nowadays, the Marine Corps operates in a more expeditionary and distributed manner, and Marines in Okinawa spend much of the year outside Okinawa and Japan primarily engaging in joint training and humanitarian assistance activities. Consequently, the deterrence effect of Marines as "ground combat forces" is now becoming increasingly unclear.

Furthermore, what matters for deterrence is not the location of the Marine Corps, but the ability to deploy rapidly a large number of troops that are safe from an adversary's first strike. As long as forces composed primarily of the U.S. Navy and Air Force are stationed west of Hawaii, the U.S. military's operational capabilities and therefore its deterrence capabilities will not be compromised in the region.

Deterrence is realized when an adversary recognizes that the target of an attack has both the capability and will to counterattack and retaliate. This capability to retaliate is demonstrated by the U.S. military presence not only in Okinawa, but also throughout the Asia-Pacific region. The will to retaliate, on the other hand, is indicated by the training conducted on the premise of deploying forces during contingencies. Besides the Marine Corps, Okinawa is also home to Kadena Air Base, which is the largest air base in the Far East. In mainland Japan, the U.S. Navy has bases in Yokosuka and Sasebo. The Marine Corps in Okinawa is not necessary to demonstrate symbolically the capabilities and intentions of the United States.

Third, concerning the function of accepting reinforcements from the U.S. mainland, as previously mentioned, China's improved missile capabilities is having a negative impact. Chinese missile attacks during a crisis will make it difficult for U.S. military bases in Japan to accept reinforcements from the U.S. mainland, and this in turn may discourage U.S. military deployments in the region as well.³⁰ With the current concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, it will become increasingly difficult for U.S. military forces including U.S. reinforcements to carry out operations in the Western Pacific due to their vulnerability to Chinese missile attacks. Even from the perspective of Japan's security policy, it is desirable for Japan to enhance the survivability of U.S. military bases through greater geographic distribution in order to hold out against a Chinese attack until the arrival of U.S. reinforcements, which would help lead to superiority during a military conflict.³¹

· The Marine Corps' new operating concept EABO

Under the threat of missiles from countries such as China, the Marine Corps by linking up with the Navy has recently been aiming to take on the roles of securing sea control and performing sea denial operations. The Marine Corps has also been developing a new operating concept called EABO. Under this concept, important points in maritime areas would be occupied and turned into temporary bases for deploying missiles and sensors and for refueling fighter jets. While exploring this new operating concept, the Marine Corps emphasizes the Okinawa-based III MEF as the "main focus-of-effort."³²

³⁰ Evan B. Montgomery, "Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China's rise and the Future of US Power Projection," *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2014.

³¹ Eric Heginbotham and Richard J. Samuels, "Active Denial: Redesigning Japan's Response to China's Military Challenge," *International Security*, Vol. 42, No.4, Spring 2018.

³² 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Commandant's Planning Guidance*, 2019, p. 3.

What should be noted about the Marine Corps promoting EABO is that as “potential adversaries intend to target [U.S.] fixed and vulnerable bases,” the Marines seek to develop “a new expeditionary naval structure that is not dependent on concentrated, vulnerable, and expensive forward infrastructure.” In addition, while moving forward with EABO, the Marine Corps has also indicated that there is no need to adhere strictly to the organizational structure of the MAGTF, which involves integrated operations of command, ground, air, and logistic units.³³ Some also believe that under EABO, forces should be dispersed on a regular basis during peacetime as demonstrations against adversaries.³⁴ Therefore, the aforementioned points suggest that the Marine Corps will be seeking to operate with smaller units rather than relying on large, permanent bases.

Since EABO is still in the formulation process, numerous uncertainties exist. Additionally, there are criticisms about its feasibility and budget requirements. However, the fact that the Marine Corps is emphasizing forces that would be dispersed and entail smaller size units in their new operating concept presents an opportunity to reassess the concentration and permanence of forces in Okinawa from the perspective of military rationality. The future U.S. military strategy should be observed with great interest.

- Proposals

Given the growing instability and uncertainty in the Asian security environment in recent years, the U.S.-Japan alliance based on the shared universal values of freedom and democracy is important. However, the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa is becoming increasingly vulnerable in political terms due to the heightened opposition from the people of Okinawa and in military terms because of the improved missile capabilities of countries such as China. Even the U.S. military, which includes the Marine Corps, is distributing its forces in response to the Chinese missile threat. In order to maintain a stable alliance between Japan and the United States, the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa should be corrected, and the arrangements regarding the burden of security should be reassessed from the perspective of Japan as a whole and Asia as a whole.

From this standpoint, we recommend the following proposals:

- ① Both the U.S. and Japanese governments should flexibly re-examine the state of U.S. military forces and bases in light of the changes in the security environment in Asia and accelerate the substantial consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa. When doing so, from the perspective of stable management of the U.S.-Japan alliance, it is important to reflect the opinions of Okinawa Prefecture. Such issues including the return of Futenma Air Station should be actively discussed in the Track-II dialogue of experts from Japan, the United States, and Okinawa, as proposed in the previous section of this report.
- ② In order to consolidate and reduce U.S. military bases in Okinawa, a review must be conducted on the current state of the Marine Corps, which is the largest military force in Okinawa. Even if the existence of the Marines has a deterrence effect, what is important is the way the United States demonstrates its will, and it is possible to consider where Marines should be deployed from a different dimension.

As for one possible policy, while shifting the Marines stationed in Okinawa toward distributed relocations and rotational deployments in Self-Defense Force bases on the Japanese mainland, promoting joint use of Self-Defense Force and U.S. bases can be considered. Having the Japanese government assume responsibility for the operations of all the bases can reduce the burden

³³ Ibid, pp. 2, 11.

³⁴ Bryan Clark, Jesse Sloman, *Advancing Beyond the Beach: Amphibious Operations in an Era of Precision Weapons*, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2016, p. 18.

imposed on Okinawa by decreasing the negative impact that U.S. military operations have on the local community. Concurrently, this could improve the interoperability of the U.S.-Japan alliance as well. When considering the possibility of dispersing and deploying troops to mainland Japan on a rotational basis, it is desirable to review the U.S.- Japan Status of Forces Agreement from the standpoint of reducing the burden on local governments.

Furthermore, the U.S. and Japanese governments should commence creative strategic discussions, with a view to promoting distributed relocation and rotational deployments of Marines in Okinawa to various countries in the Asia-Pacific. Although the Marine Corps is already being deployed to Australia on a rotational basis, conceiving a way to expand this to other countries in the region would have significant implications for consolidating and reducing U.S. military bases in Okinawa. To do this, along with various diplomatic efforts, the Japanese government may also need to provide funding for the relocation of U.S. forces and assistance to countries that would accept these forces. Nevertheless, this cost would be much less than the huge financial burden incurred by activities such as dealing with the soft seabed of Oura Bay, and this would be a meaningful burden. While helping to keep the U.S. engaged in Asia, this approach would create a framework for supporting the U.S. military presence in not only Okinawa but also the region as a whole, and it would have the benefit of promoting regional cooperation in Asia.

- ③ Okinawa Prefecture should strengthen its cooperation with prefectures and municipalities in mainland Japan regarding the state of U.S. military bases and the revision and improvement of the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement, and the prefecture should enhance the momentum to discuss and reassess the situation regarding the base burden from the perspective of Japan as a whole.

3. Making Okinawa a hub for the Asia-Pacific region

- Current situation and background

Historically the state of international affairs in the Asia-Pacific region has been reflected in Okinawa on multiple occasions: during the Great Trading Era when various parts of Asia were widely connected through trade, during the intense Battle of Okinawa towards the end of the Pacific War, and following World War II when Okinawa remained under U.S. administration even after sovereignty was restored to Japan. Additionally, during the Cold War, Okinawa became an island with a large concentration of U.S. military bases by being the "keystone" to support the U.S. forward deployment strategy. Based on this historical background, Okinawa has always sought peace. After the end of the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, a worldwide discussion ensued about a "peace dividend" whereby the huge resources that had invested into the military during the Cold War would be redirected, but this ultimately did not lead to a significant reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa.

On the other hand, Asia, excluding Japan, that had been defined by poverty and stagnation achieved rapid economic growth after the 1970s; and in the 21st century, Asia is now recognized as the center of global economic growth and is expected to grow even further in the future.

In the regions of Northeast Asia that surround Japan, security issues are also a cause of concern, including North Korea's nuclear program that emerged after the Cold War, and China's rise and its expanding maritime presence. Despite this, economic integration in Asia is progressing remarkably with supply chains (a network of production and distribution systems that transcend national borders) throughout the Asia-Pacific region extending from parts of Northeast Asia such as Japan, China and South Korea to the ASEAN countries in Southeast Asia and to America as well. Given such circumstances, the two characteristics of tensions over security and of tight-knit economic ties coexist in the Asia-Pacific region.

This dynamic is prominently reflected in Okinawa as well. Regarding the former security tensions, it goes without saying that huge U.S. military bases exist, and the Senkaku Islands are inevitably where there is a face-off with China's growing maritime presence. Regarding the latter economic dimension, economic growth and rising incomes in Asian countries have led to a rise in tourism and prosperity in Okinawa, and this trend will grow even stronger.

A fundamental consolidation and reduction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa is closely connected with the future vision of the Asia-Pacific region. As previously mentioned, the security situation differs from the economic situation in the Asia-Pacific region. However, reducing tensions over security and strengthening vigorous economic growth will ultimately be the key for determining the future of the region.

- Asia from a security perspective

In recent years, there have been growing tensions and confrontations in Asia. First, great power competition exists because of changes in the power balance. After World War II, the United States formed bilateral alliances with non-communist countries in Asia, such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the Philippines; and it led to a "hub-and-spokes" system that enabled the stationing of U.S. military forces. However in recent years, China, India and other newly developing countries have been rising, and the United States and China are fiercely competing especially in regards to Asian hegemony.

Second, there are still "divisions" within Asia that were created during the Cold War era such as between North and South Korea and between China and Taiwan. North Korea has been developing nuclear weapons and missiles to secure the survival of its state and has become an element of instability in the region. Although Taiwan has established a democratic society, China still continues to pressure Taiwan in order to complete the unification of China.

Third, there are territorial disputes. A rising China has been expanding its maritime presence and has taken certain actions to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas. In this context, tensions between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands and tensions between China, Vietnam the Philippines and other countries over the South China Sea have been escalating.

Fourth, the mutual distrust between the Asian countries is deeply rooted in the history of war and colonial rule in the region. Despite the fact that they are both democratic countries, Japan and South Korea still have disputes over historical issues. Japan and China also have historical issues between them.

Therefore, as these disputes become intertwined with one another, tensions in Asia are increasing even further. Although the military expenditure of the Asia-Oceania region was \$134 billion in 1988, it increased to \$300 billion in 2008 and to \$494 billion in 2018, surpassing the military expenditure in Europe to become the region with the second highest military expenditure in the world. China's military expenditure has increased significantly in particular, but the military expenditure in India, South Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia has also seen a huge increase.³⁵

- Asia from an economic perspective

The recent economic situation in Asia is characterized by vigorous growth and greater integration within the region. Since the 1970s, Asia has been developing rapidly, despite being in a state of poverty and stagnation previously. In addition, the international division of labor has progressed in Asia since the 1980s, which led the trade value in East Asia to increase rapidly from about \$100 billion in 1984 to \$2.2 trillion in 2016. Under the international division of labor, Asia became the world's largest base for production.³⁶ Asia already occupies the largest share of the world economy at about 30%. However, it is forecasted that Asia will account for more than half of the world's economy by the 2050s, making the 21st century truly “Asia’s Century.”

Accounting for half the share of the Asian economy, China is the center of assembling final products based on the Asian supply chain and has become the world’s second largest economy. In recent years, the U.S. has strengthened its hardline stance against China. Not only have trade frictions between the two countries intensified, but also calls for decoupling from the Chinese economy for security reasons have been increasing within the United States. However, some have pointed out that the notion of decoupling is unrealistic because the economies of the two countries are already so deeply interdependent.

- Points of discussion

- Examining Japan's national security policy

The following will examine how Japan has responded to the aforementioned international situation in the Asia-Pacific region, but this discussion will focus on the aspect of deterrence often emphasized in Japan's security policy. In the context of a rising China and the conflict regarding the Senkaku Islands, Japan promoted its defense capabilities and the strengthening of the Japan-U.S. alliance. In 2014, the exercise of the right of collective self-defense was approved partially; and in 2015, security-related legislation was passed and the Japan-U.S. Guidelines for Defense Cooperation were revised, thereby furthering “seamless” defense cooperation. Defense spending has increased continuously over the past eight years, and Self-Defense Forces are being deployed to the Nansei Islands. It can be said that these actions are designed to strengthen deterrence capabilities against China.

³⁵ *Military expenditure by region in constant US dollars, 1988-2018*, SIPRI2019.

³⁶ *White Paper on International Economy and Trade 2019*, p. 281.

Be that as it may, it should not be forgotten that deterrence is only one aspect of an effective security policy. The deterrence refers to preventing an adversary's attack by demonstrating a posture to retaliate against that adversary's attack. In order to deter an adversary's attack, there needs to be both the intention and ability to retaliate, and both must be accurately conveyed to the adversary. Despite being used for defensive purposes, deterrence can be perceived as being offensive and could have a provocative effect that can escalate a given crisis. There is a phenomenon called the "security dilemma," which involves a situation in which actions taken by one country for security purposes are perceived as an offensive policy by the other country and provokes countermeasures against these actions. As a result, the risk of war increases and the security of both countries decreases. Deterrence has the potential to heighten the "security dilemma."

Therefore, what needs to be understood here is that rather than being the best policy available, "deterrence is actually the most effective when used as one of the various means of foreign policy."³⁷ In short, whether or not deterrence can discourage an adversary's attack depends on whether "various means of foreign policy" have been prepared in addition to deterrence.

What becomes necessary here is "reassurance." "Reassurance" is a policy where a given country dispels the unease of another country by properly conveying their intentions to that country, and promising that country that it will not demand any further concessions. When demands are made through intimidation while using deterrence strategy, the other country will have no incentive to accept such demands unless the given country makes a convincing promise of "not demanding any further concessions so long as certain requests are accepted."³⁸ Even during the Cold War, the U.S. and the Soviet Union began working together since the 1960s to establish channels of communication, so as to reduce the risk of accidental clashes that can escalate into nuclear warfare. However, there is currently no such mechanism between the U.S. and China.³⁹ Also, the mutual distrust in Asia is deeply rooted in the past history between countries. Therefore, in order to reduce the tensions in Asia, the "security dilemma" must be resolved by eliminating this mutual distrust and encouraging the building of trust.⁴⁰

If security policy revolves around the idea of deterrence, it must take into account the worst possible scenario of war. However, war is clearly an irrational option for Japan, given the geopolitical characteristics of Japan and the current state of Asia described below. The territory of Japan lacks geographical depth and is vulnerable to missile attacks. In addition, Japan is also incapable of supplying itself with the fuel needed to fight a continuous war. Therefore, Japan can be characterized as a country that has difficulties defending itself and enduring a war over an extended period of time. In addition, efforts to defend remote islands such as the Senkaku Islands is expected to result in an endless war of attrition where the countries involved are endlessly fighting over control of the islands. From an economic standpoint, a war would inevitably put a stop to the supply chains and other economic networks that are set up in Asia, making it impossible to avoid a drastic reduction of economic activity.

In order to avoid an escalation of conflicts, risks must be managed appropriately by finding common ground with other countries and persistently looking for ways of solving problems. The role of politics is critical here.

³⁷ Paul G. Gordon et al., "Military Power and Contemporary Diplomacy: Diplomatic Issues in Modern Times," Yuhikaku Publishing, 2009, p. 228-229.

³⁸ Hiroshi Nakanishi, Jun Ishida, Masayuki Tadokoro, *International Politics: Theories and Perspectives*, Yuhikaku Publishing, 2013, p. 156-157.

³⁹ Kurt M. Campbell and Jake Sullivan, "Competition Without Catastrophe," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October, 2019, p.102.

⁴⁰ Seiji Endo and Ken Endo, *What is Security?* Iwanami Shoten, 2014, Chapter 10.

In addition, dialogue platforms are also needed in order to prevent heightened conflict and crises caused by deterrence. In Europe, in addition to an alliance system called NATO, there exists a security dialogue platform called OSCE. It is hard to say that such a framework now exists in the Asia-Pacific. In the Asia-Pacific region, where tensions and confrontations are growing, providing a platform for dialogue is needed urgently in order to alleviate crises.⁴¹ Japan's foreign diplomacy should focus on not only the aspects of deterrence such as strengthening the U.S.- Japan alliance, but also the construction of a regional cooperation network for dialogue and tension reduction.

- The role of Okinawa

In the long term, effort needs to be put towards creating a security environment that will enable a reduction of Okinawa's military base burden. Okinawa Prefecture has already proposed a vision of making Okinawa, which has been heretofore regarded as the military "keystone of the Pacific," into a hub for peace and prosperity in Asia. "Okinawa's 21st Century Vision" formulated in 2010 emphasized the need for "persistent efforts to eliminate the excessive burdens on Okinawa." It argued that "rather than security in a military sense, Okinawa should assume an active role of promoting exchanges across a wide range of areas between our country [Japan] and the Asia-Pacific region and building relationships based on trust. In concrete terms, this document mentioned contributing to global issues such as "human security" that includes the environment, health care, and human rights, dealing with natural disasters, and attracting international organizations.⁴² Furthermore, the 2015 "Asian Economic Strategy Initiative" also states, "Okinawa was previously ravaged by war and has historic relations with China, Taiwan and the rest of Asia. Therefore, by leveraging its diversity and acting as a political buffer and mediator for international conflicts, Okinawa can contribute to security and economic development beyond the framework of nation-states."⁴³

The Japanese government should genuinely accept the proposals that Okinawa has made based on its own historical experiences. Regarding the future vision of Asian order, the Japanese government should position Okinawa not as a military hub, but rather as a hub of peace.

In recent years, with the expansion of globalization, there has been a growing interest in the role of cities and local governments regarding global issues such as climate change, contagions, and cyber security and in municipal networks that transcend national boundaries.⁴⁴ By tackling these non-traditional security issues, Okinawa can improve the security environment in Asia and reinforce networks for regional cooperation.

⁴¹ Takako Ueda, *The OSCE's Crisis Mitigation Measures and Dialog on Security: Essays and Documents Concerning the Applicability on the Systems and Current Situation in the Asia Pacific Region*, International Christian University, 2014.

⁴² Okinawa, *Okinawa's 21st Century Vision—Working Together to Create a Beautiful Future for Okinawa*, 2010, 1, p. 79.

⁴³ Committee for Okinawa Prefecture Asian Economic Strategy Initiative, *Okinawa Prefecture Asian Economic Strategy Initiative*, 2015, p. 61-62.

⁴⁴ Parag Khanna, *Connectography: Mapping the Future of Global Civilization*, Hara Shobo, 2017; Jay Wang and Sohaela Amiri, *Building a Robust capacity Framework for US City Diplomacy*, USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2019; Michele Acuto, et.al, *Toward City Diplomacy: Assessing capacity in select global cities*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2018.

- Proposals

In Asia in recent years, while conflicts and tensions have emerged in the security realm, mutual interdependence has deepened in the economic realm. Under this situation, the Japanese government's excessive insistence on the effectiveness of deterrence by strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance and increasing national defense capabilities tends to be one-sided and can lead to making U.S. military bases in Okinawa permanent.

Facing a full-scale decline in its population, Japan desperately needs to capitalize on the economic prosperity in Asia. A stable regional order is also an essential condition for vigorous economic activity within the Asian region. Instead of tilting excessively toward strengthening deterrence, the Japanese government should strive towards reducing mutual distrust and promoting confidence building.

Due to its geographic location, Okinawa is heavily influenced by both the security and economic situation in the Asia-Pacific. Although Okinawa is at the "front line" of the conflict between the United States and China and between Japan and China, it also has the potential to become the "bridge" or "window" between Japan and the rest of Asia. Based on this trait, Okinawa should contribute to confidence building and tension reduction in the Asia-Pacific region as a way of promoting the vision that Okinawa has already developed.

Based on this perspective, we recommend the following proposals.

- ① Given that tensions over security coexist with tight-knit economic ties in the Asia-Pacific region, it is important from now on not only to strengthen deterrence, but also to see tension reduction and confidence building in the region as important political challenges for maintaining further development and stability.
- ② 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.

In concrete terms, Okinawa should call on research institutes in the countries concerned and convene regular conferences to engage in dialogues with researchers and practitioners from different countries regarding regional security, disarmament, maritime issues, disaster relief, and "human security." Okinawa should consider creating a research institute to serve as a base for such activities. When doing so, Okinawa Prefecture should actively cooperate with domestic and foreign think tanks outside Okinawa and organizations within Okinawa such as JICA Okinawa, the Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (OIST) as well as the Okinawa Liaison Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- ③ In order to promote the idea of Okinawa being "the hub for regional cooperation networks in the Asia-Pacific region" within and outside the prefecture, Okinawa Prefecture should more actively develop its local government diplomacy. In addition, Okinawa Prefecture should promote exchanges with local governments in China, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, and Southeast Asia regarding economics, culture, education, climate change, health, and natural disaster policy and support building a regional cooperation network that takes a local government perspective.

Conclusion

The Okinawa people were forced to walk down a path of hardship on several occasions, such as during the fierce Battle of Okinawa, which killed one in four people in the prefecture, as well as during the 27 years of U.S. rule, which was imposed on Okinawa despite the fact that sovereignty was restored to mainland Japan through the San Francisco Peace Treaty. Currently, around 70% of U.S. military bases in Japan are located in the small island of Okinawa, which is also at the frontline of rising tensions with China over the Senkaku Islands.

Despite this, Okinawa is the region in Japan that has the highest potential in the future. The growth of the economies in Asia will boost tourism in Okinawa, which will in turn strengthen Okinawa's reputation as an international tourist destination. Having large U.S. military bases also means that there will be room for a variety of blueprints to be drawn after the military bases are returned.

The proposals in this document explored ways to reduce the excessive burden of U.S. military bases on Okinawa and to bring out the aforementioned potential of Okinawa even further. Although they involve a future vision for Okinawa, these proposals also contain elements that are tied to a vision for Japan's diplomacy and security policy and for the regional order of the Asia-Pacific. It is hoped that this report will serve as a stimulus for restoring imagination and dynamism to discussions about the Okinawa base issue, Japan's diplomacy and security policy, and the future vision of the Asia-Pacific region.

Bankoku Shinryō Council on U.S. Military Base Issues FY2019 Council Members

Committee Members	Affiliations	Notes
Yanagisawa, Kyouji	Former Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary	Chairperson
Nozoe, Fumiaki	Associate Professor, Okinawa International University	Vice Chairperson
Soeya, Yoshihide	Professor, Keio University	
Mochizuki, Mike	Associate Professor, George Washington University	
Magosaki, Ukeru	Former Director General of International Intelligence Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (temporary translation)	
Miyagi, Taizou	Professor, Sophia University,	
Yamamoto, Akiko	Assistant Professor, Ryukyu University	