

The importance of the Dugong case: constructivist implications of US  
base relocations in Okinawa for the Asia-Pacific ‘security  
communities’

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## Introduction

At present, US bases and facilities are going through renewal, relocation and reorganization in Okinawa – a process that is unfolding with the changing US military strategy and deployment worldwide. Particularly controversial has been the planned relocation of the Marine Corps’ Futenma Air Station to the shore of the Henoko District in Nago City. This development will require a major land reclamation adjacent to the US marine’s Camp Schwab, in the ocean that provides a habitat to sea grass and the now famous dugongs. The planned closure of the Futenma airbase, as well as the transfer of some 8,000 marines to Guam, depends on the completion of the construction project in Henoko, which has been delayed by local protest and international public concern for the local environment.

This article asks what implications non-state actors have in terms of advancing security and peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Overall, it argues that the transnational advocacy and identity-making in overseas US military outposts in and beyond Okinawa have significant implications for realistic and already developing transnational social relations able to support new and better peace and security communities.

If discussed at all in the context of great power politics, Okinawa continues to be understood as an important hostage of Japan's security policy – maintaining a close but hierarchical security alliance as a junior partner of the US. The US base relocation in Okinawa and local citizens' protest movements against it is understood mainly as a potentially unstable element of the US-Japan security alliance, one of the most important in the US network of bilateral alliances in the Asia-Pacific region. In this context, Okinawans, as a people, are often considered as the unfortunate victims of the policies of the US empire and the bilateral alliance. That is to say, in international relations discussions, the base relocation issue tends to be represented simply as the heavy burden of the US military presence which is in turn a cost of alliance imposed on a minority group. The causal explanations and solution to the base problem in Okinawa, moreover, are mainly understood within the limited confines of domestic Japanese history, politics and economic development.

This article places the Okinawan US base question within a larger regional international security frame, and inquires into what might be gained. It focuses on the active role of local and transnational social movement actors by examining the 'dugong case': a legal action against the US Department of Defense, for breaching the National Historic Preservation Act, with its US Futenma replacement facility construction that neglects the protection of the endangered Okinawa dugong. This means seriously considering the possibility of change, which has been actually initiated by marginalized Okinawan social forces, in the current framework of Asia-Pacific security order. This security order is predicated on the Japan-US relationship that requires an unsustainable policy of imposing insecurity upon individuals within minority groups. The bilateral relationship has also been marked by double standards applied, presupposing inferior social and institutional standards for civil rights and

environmental protection in Japan. This article articulates the importance of the transnational (US-Japanese) social movements' actions in establishing norms and collective identity that actually contribute to changing bilateral institutional practices, in this case, those related to environmental assessment of the Futenma replacement facility construction. The concept of 'security community' is helpful here in signifying the impact of deepening social relations in the larger interstate security environment, in this case, in the Asia Pacific region.

The first section defines the geopolitical and historical scope of the Asia-Pacific as a region characterized by an extensive US military presence that often cohabitates with formally occupied or colonized (either by Japan or the US) local residents, and most sharply symbolized by Okinawa. The second section critically examines the rationales and assumptions regarding the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region in relation to mainstream perspectives within international relations that underpin the conventional understanding of the Okinawa base issue. The base relocation issue in Okinawa reveals a tension inherent in the US-Japanese imperial policy: 'human security' of a minority group compromised for 'state security'. Once again, however, the contradiction is not usually discussed as a problem of international security, and I argue that a shift of focus is required.

The third section draws on the concept of a 'security community' based on long-term trust and shared norms, values, institutions and collective identity and takes advantage of the critical approach to 'security' provided by Okinawan experiences.<sup>1</sup> In this regional context, the building of a security community in the Asia-Pacific that does not rely on US military presence is the ultimate challenge, if the apparently local

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<sup>1</sup> Emmanuel Adler and Micheal Barnett, eds., *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

insecurities associated with US military bases (and now their relocation) in Okinawa and the locals' resistance is taken seriously. Non-governmental organizations as social actors are relevant in the long-term project of building a security community based on norms, values and collective identity-making.

### **Okinawa, US Foreign Military Bases and the Scope of the 'Asia-Pacific Region'**

In discussing the 'Asia-Pacific', this article regards the region not so much as a geographical as a geopolitically defined entity: the idea of the region is more or less shaped the discussing party's interests.<sup>2</sup> The ideological fluidity of the Asia-Pacific region needs to be understood against the historical background giving rise to the concept.

Japan and the US were rivals in their pursuit to construct the region according to their ideas and interests in the second half of 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'but it was the US rather than Japan that dominated... World War II did not initiate but rather consolidated US dominance'.<sup>3</sup> Ever since it began its overseas expansion in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the US military has regarded the Pacific as crucial for the nation's economic interests and international security.<sup>4</sup> US military presence (if not permanent bases) has been maintained throughout the post-WWII period of de-colonisation and self-determination in places such as Guam, Hawaii, Pacific Islands, the Philippines, Okinawa and Japan, and the Korean Peninsula. Japan, in contrast, has pursued building a sphere of interest through economic aid and development in the region, according to US-devised rules. Japan and the US share this region as a 'capitalist

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<sup>2</sup> Arif Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea: Reality and Representation in the Invention of a Regional Structure', *Journal of World History* 3, no. 1 (1992): 57.

<sup>3</sup> Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea', 71.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Mcallister Linn, *Guardians of Empire* (Chapel Hill & London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

social formation', protected by the US forces placed on the colonial map drawn by the two countries since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup>

Not only the product of still continuing postwar US military occupation, US military presence on Okinawa Main Island is also reminiscent of modern Japanese colonialism since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Okinawa – a chain of islands stretching from Kyushu southwestward towards Taiwan – was incorporated as Japan's first and closest strategic colony of a new modern nation-state. It has always been the poorest, most economically vulnerable prefecture. From 1429 onwards, what is called Okinawa now was a separate entity called the Ryukyu Kingdom until it was annexed by Japan in 1879. Only since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, was the Okinawan population made to learn the Japanese language, and pressured to assimilate to become 'Japanese'.<sup>6</sup> All the more because of Okinawan differences, modern Japanese nationalism predicated on emperor-worshipping was most intensively institutionalized in Okinawa. Notably, compulsory displaying and saluting of the emperor's portraits on school grounds was introduced in Okinawa before other prefectures.<sup>7</sup> In preparation for World War II, at an important national ceremony, Okinawa was described as the 'front lines in the southern strategy' for the imperial advance into 'the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as the basis of a new world order'.<sup>8</sup> To contribute to this 'national strategy' of 'southern advance' was clearly defined as Okinawan people's 'duty' to Japan.

Okinawa's 'duty' to the country's security continues, though today, it contributes to the status quo of Japan's security alliance with the US, instead of

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<sup>5</sup> Dirlik, 'The Asia-Pacific Idea', 71.

<sup>6</sup> Miyume Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2006): 21-35.

<sup>7</sup> Steve Rabson, 'Okinawan Perspectives on Japan's Imperial Institution', *Japan Focus* 16 February(2008), [www.japanfocus.org/products/topdf/2667](http://www.japanfocus.org/products/topdf/2667) (accessed 27 March 2008)

<sup>8</sup> Masaaki et al. Aniya, *Okinawa to Tenno (Okinawa and the Emperor)* (Tokyo: Akebono Shuppan, 1987): 89, quoted in Rabson, 'Okinawan Perspectives on Japan's Imperial Institution'.

Japan's imperial 'southern advance'. The reason why a majority (75%) of the US forces in Japan is located in Okinawa (0.6% of Japanese territory) is never officially clear (see Figure 1). The best explanation, however, is the island having been the field of one of the bloodiest and only land battle during World War II, and subsequent subjection to direct US military rule: historical and ongoing US and Japanese colonialism and marginalization. In fact, Okinawa has been a base of the US Navy for coal supply since Commodore Perry arrived in 1853, and has lain well within the map of American sphere of influence in the Pacific, along with Hawaii, Guam, the Philippines, and Mariana and Marshall Islands.<sup>9</sup> After Okinawa lost about 120,000 residents (more than a quarter of its population) in the Battle of Okinawa, the US military took over, and exercised direct, authoritarian control of the islands, which continued for 20 years longer than the occupation of mainland Japan. Its reversion to Japan was achieved in 1972, via the US-Japanese 'reversion pact', a deal made between the two parties whose alliance was being revamped in the late 1960s. The US military secured free access to Okinawa, in return for the transfer of civil administration of Okinawa to the Japanese government.<sup>10</sup> Today, the 'choicest fifth'<sup>11</sup> of the Okinawa main island is still an American territory:

Okinawa is still essentially a military colony of the Pentagon's, a huge safe house where Green berets and the Defense Intelligence Agency, not to mention the air force and Marine Cops, can do things they would not dare do in the United States. It is used to protect American power throughout Asia in the service of a de facto US grand strategy to perpetuate or increase American hegemonic power in this crucial region. The US military is the author and prime beneficiary of this strategy, and it is in the driver's seat executing it.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Stanley B. Weeks and Charles A. Meconis, *The Armed Forces of the USA in the Asia-Pacific Region* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999): 7.

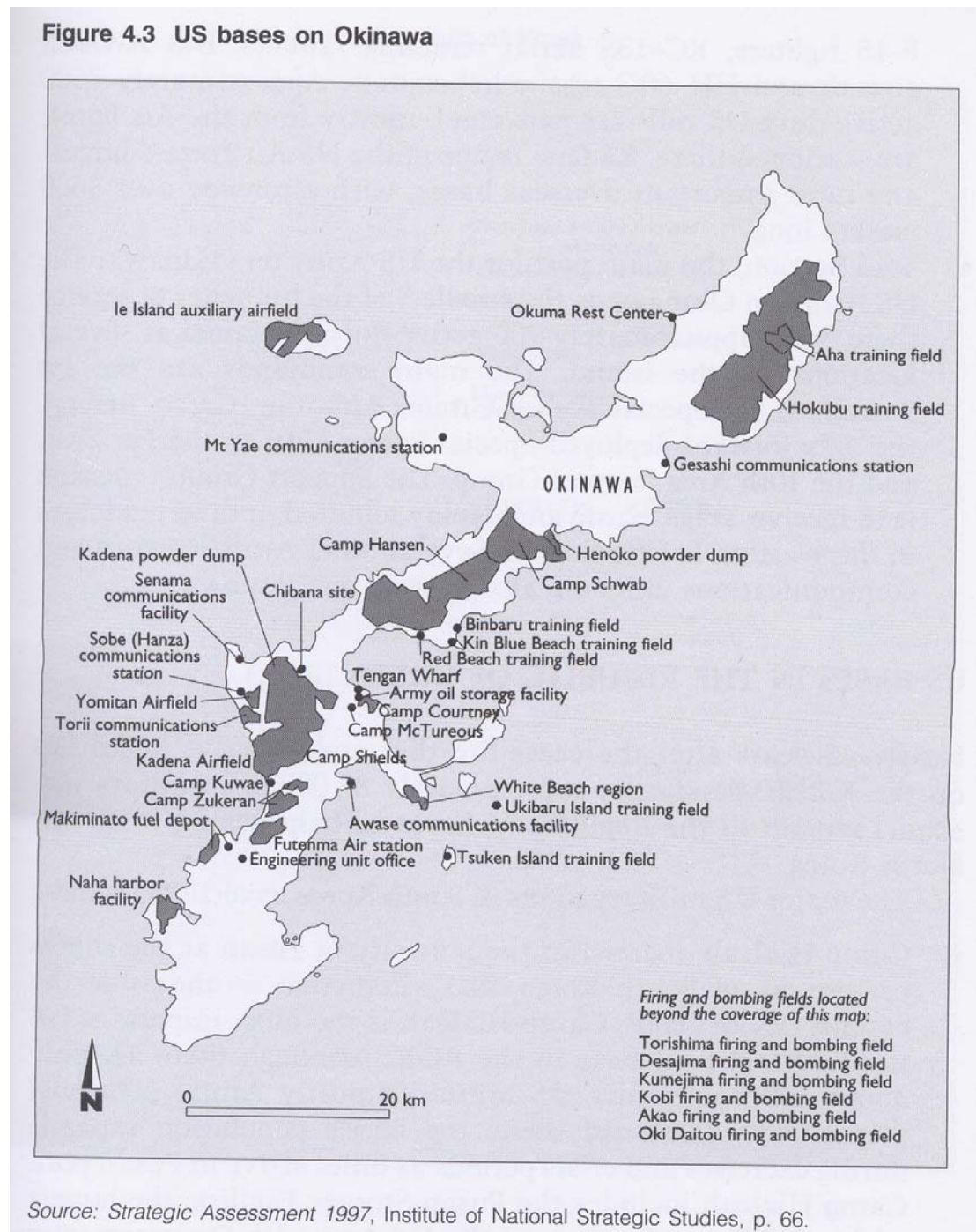
<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Yoko Kono, *Okinawa Henkan O Meguru Seiji to Gaiko (Politics and Diplomacy on Okinawa's Reversion)* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan Kai, 1994); Masaaki Gabe, *Okinawa Henkan to Wa Nandattanoka (Re-Questioning Okinawa's Reversion)* (Tokyo: NHK Books, 2000); Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa*, 90-91.

<sup>11</sup> Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Owl Books, 2000): 37.

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, *Blowback*, 64

Mostly unknown to the locals, the Americans in the military call Okinawa Main Island (where some 1.3 million local citizens live) ‘the Rock’. According to the local US Forces’ radio station, “‘The Rock’ is just one front of the global US war on terror’. Islanders, living on the other four-fifths of the island, must move and travel around the US and Japanese Self Defense Force bases that are located not all in one but across many places, and which are often surrounded by barbed wire and s-wire fences. They cannot enter these fenced areas without special passes (for base employees) or without military escort (required for local girlfriends). Ignoring these rules entails breaking the law and the risk of being shot.

**Figure 1**



In contrast, the members of the US military forces (about 50,000) are free to enter, drive, shop, play sports and roam anywhere on the whole island, without passes. Despite the language barrier, the Americans seem, superficially at least, to be accepted by the locals. Many locals make an effort to make the best of it, profiting from rent, base-related business, or even building relationships and families with the

members of the US forces.<sup>13</sup> Seriously damaging encounters with the locals also occur. For instance, in 2004 a combat helicopter crashed on the campus of Okinawa International University adjacent to Futenma Air Station. Furthermore, the rape of a 14-year-old girl in February 2008 garnered significant international attention. It is on occasions such as these that the locals feel vulnerable and abused. When US military personnel are alleged to have committed a crime or when accidents requiring investigation occur, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) exempts charged persons, suspects or other involved parties from detention by the local police, until formally prosecuted. This enables many offending US personnel to leave Okinawa before prosecution. This type of ‘extraterritorial’ special privilege is obviously problematic for the local population, when they are victims of crimes and accidents ranging from car crashes and arson to murder and rape. Many citizens realize the colonial status of Okinawa when they find themselves in these circumstances.

Special treatment of the US service members and what is socially perceived as disrespect or contempt for the rights of the local population are ultimately justified by the big security picture: the governments’ need to keep the US forces in Okinawa, to maintain order and security in the Asia-Pacific. The ‘Asia-Pacific’ concept, in this context, is usually defined so as to justify US influence and colonial power in many territories and nation-states in or adjacent to the Pacific Ocean.

In summary, and for the purposes of the present argument, the Asia-Pacific is defined geopolitically and conceptually as a region where US overseas military forces

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<sup>13</sup> Because most deployments are short-term, many American service members and local partners are left with difficulties, such as child support problems of lost-in-touch fathers and children who never get to meet estranged parents. See, for example, Elizabeth Holland. 'Man Tries to Help Japanese Women Find U.S. Fathers: Father's Mission Began When He Met Daughter 2 Years Ago'. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 3 2001. On ‘Amerasian’ children born to American and Okinawan parents who are known to encounter discriminations such as non-entitlement to US or Japanese citizenship as well as prejudices, an American lawyer who has practiced in Okinawa, dealing with such concrete issues describes this particular issue as ‘social, rather than military issues’ (‘Forces Pact Should Underscore Japanese Lack of Rights: Lawyer’. *The Japan Times*, July 15 2004).

are deployed in order to guard regional order. Okinawa is obviously a part of this order; it includes territories and peoples in or adjacent to the Pacific Ocean from north to south. 'East Asia' or 'Northeast Asia' is not appropriate, because such terms exclude non-Asian countries, primarily the US but also Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Russia. Indeed, the concept 'was promoted by countries such as the United States, Japan and Australia as a means of linking East Asia to the wider Pacific region in the 1960s and 1970s.'<sup>14</sup> However, not all of countries, territories and people are equally important. Rather, the relative importance of each country relates to the realization or potential threat to US interests. The argument below nevertheless asks, when seen from Okinawa today more closely, what else can be said about the Asia-Pacific region? Most basically, protection of US interests is a rationale that often comes before some citizens' safety and security.

### **Okinawa's critical approach to international relations of the Asia Pacific**

#### ***Okinawa, 1995: a rape and an international crisis***

The international security order in Asia-Pacific maintained by the US military presence and epitomized by Okinawa has not been free of perceived threats. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Ikenberry suggests that as the nature of US power in the world shifts towards unilateralism, its legitimacy is less self-evident and less effective in enforcing its hegemony upon allies.<sup>15</sup> Given the immediate post WWII origins of the US Japan security alliance, it is extraordinary that the United States and Japan have basically maintained the structure of this alliance for so long. However, maintaining the alliance has involved considerable effort on both sides, and there have been crises. One of them followed an earlier rape case in Okinawa in 1995.

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<sup>14</sup> Derek McDougall, *Asia Pacific in World Politics* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2007): 6.

<sup>15</sup>G. John Ikenberry, 'Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005)

This incident involved the kidnapping and gang rape of a 12-year-old girl by 3 US soldiers and temporarily brought the base issue international attention. The mass participation in protest by mostly pragmatic and politically uninvolved 85,000 Okinawan residents demonstrated the size of this crisis. A major decision to close the Futenma air base located in the middle of a crowded city followed (see Figure 2). In the following year, the US and Japanese governments agreed on a major overhaul of arrangements and a downsizing of US forces in Okinawa. In response to this temporary crisis, the US and Japan established SACO (Special Action Committee on Okinawa) carry out this work. The closure of the Futenma Air Base was the biggest item on SACO's agenda.

**Figure 2**



The timing of this ‘Okinawa crisis’, in the early post-Cold War years, coincided with a perception that the Japanese-US alliance was in danger of going ‘adrift’<sup>16</sup> – in large part because of the loss of its obvious common enemy, the Soviet Union. The rape incident also occurred at the time when the Japanese government was internally debating about redefining the rationale for the alliance with the US in the post-Cold War context. When, at the same time, the two parties failed to come to terms with each other in lengthy rounds of trade negotiations, the US Congress questioned the rationale for America’s alliance with Japan. The Okinawan crisis in 1995, indeed, coincided with the opportunity for sea-change in the Asia-Pacific security environment – change towards much decreased US military presence and more independent and assertive Japanese diplomacy. Notably, Japan was led, albeit briefly, at the time by a socialist prime minister, Tomichi Murayama, rather than someone from the long incumbent Liberal Democratic Party. All in all, an opportunity existed for Japan to drastically alter its relations with the US by making clear demands for a substantial reduction of its military presence in Okinawa, if not the whole of Japan. The closure of Futenma would have enormous significance as a symbolic turning point in the international relations of the Asia-Pacific region.

But that window of opportunity passed quickly. Yahuda argues, that after the scare of China’s attack on Taiwan, ‘the Okinawa issue had been diffused’ and the political climate returned to favor maintaining the US forces on the island.<sup>17</sup> It was almost certainly not a coincidence that following China’s display of gunboat diplomacy against Taiwan in April 1996, that the then Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was confident enough to announce the construction of a new US airbase

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<sup>16</sup> Funabashi Yoichi, *Domei Hyouryu (the Alliance Adrift)* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1997). Yoichi Funabashi, *Alliance Adrift* (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Michael Yahuda, *The International Politics of the Asia-Pacific* 2nd ed. (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004): 319.

somewhere in Okinawa to replace the Futenma Air Station. On 17 April, with US President Bill Clinton, Hashimoto issued a joint declaration on security, pledging Japan's renewed loyalty as an ally. US troops in Japan were to be kept at existing levels, and would be strengthened by integration with the Japanese Self Defense Forces.<sup>18</sup> Two days before this declaration, the SACO interim report was issued (on April 15 1996), stating that the Futenma Air Station was to be returned within five to seven years, at which point it would be replaced by the construction of an alternative facility:

In order to minimize the impact of the activities of US forces on Okinawa, the Governments of Japan and the United States will cooperate to implement the following: ...Return Futenma Air Station within the next five to seven years, after adequate replacement facilities are completed. The airfield's critical military functions and capabilities will be maintained through relocation of facilities. This will require construction of a heliport on other US facilities and areas in Okinawa...<sup>19</sup>

Despite the US and Japanese governments calling the plans for relocations under SACO a 'reduction' of the US military presence, local residents were not convinced. Futenma's relocation within Okinawa meant the construction of an additional major US base in Okinawa, something that had not happened since the construction of Camp Schwab in the 1950s. The 1996 US-Japan joint declaration on security and the construction of a series of new US base facilities in Okinawa (currently ongoing according to the SACO interim and final reports) should be understood as predicated upon each other.

The joint declaration undercut the opportunity for change, reinforcing US leadership and Japan's submissive co-operation in the Asia-Pacific security framework originally assembled in the late 1940s. The maintenance of US forces in

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<sup>18</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), *Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security - Alliance for the 21st Century* (1996) <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html> (accessed March 11 2008).

<sup>19</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), *The Japan-U.S. Special Action Committee (SACO) Interim Report* (1996) <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/seco.html> (accessed March 11 2008)

Okinawa, ensured by the SACO decisions, was essential to the closure of the short-lived opportunity.

*(Neo)realist perspective on US bases in Okinawa*

During the Cold War, the US managed to establish a relatively stable order based on a common enemy and economic interdependence both with Europe and East Asia. This framework was integrated with the Cold War international political and economic order, that is, the Bretton Woods system, trade regimes (GATT, then WTO), and US export markets opened to security allies against the Soviet Union. Instead of multilateral alliance based on the European model, in the Asia Pacific, the US opted for multiple bilateral ‘special relations’ with key states, such as Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia. These were described as ‘hub and spoke’ security ties.<sup>20</sup> The Japan-US alliance has been considered the most important spoke in the Asia-Pacific region, but it has, nevertheless, been a hierarchical relationship. The US has had greater bargaining power and Japan, has always had more to lose. This has meant that the US has obtained favors from its junior partner, including rights to station and use forward deployment forces in Okinawa and mainland Japan. As an important ally, Japan has also funded the costs of US deployment to a greater extent than other US allies. As recorded by the U.S. Defense Department’s *2004 Statistical Compendium to Report on Allied Contribution to the Common Defense*, Japan paid \$4.41 billion, ‘the largest among all U.S. allies and much larger than Germany’s (\$1.56 billion) or South Korea’s (\$842 million), the second and third largest, respectively.’<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ikenberry, 'Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition': 136.

<sup>21</sup> Cited in Tatsuro Yoda, 'Japan's Host Nation Support Program for the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Past and Prospects', *Asian Survey* 46, no. 6 (2006): 942.

Even though the nature of US power in the Asia Pacific region is changing again in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, US and Japanese policy-makers' views on the role of US military in Okinawa have not changed much from those of realist international relations perspectives dominant during the Cold War. The aim remains to maintain the balance of power, especially military power in Asia, 'favorable to the US allowing free economic access to the region and promoting American political, religious and other values'.<sup>22</sup> According to realists, alliances and war preparation are instruments for states to achieve order in a context that is otherwise inherently unstable. Neo-realists went a step further and assumed a state's behaviour to be structurally – and completely – determined by the anarchy in international system. The national interest, for all states, is ultimately to maximise their chance of survival at any cost. For this reason, international politics, according to an influential neo-realist theorist Kenneth Waltz, needs to be considered separately from domestic politics.<sup>23</sup> According to neo-realists, a state's internal affairs – the maintenance of social order and life, history and economic development, etc – unfold under different and even discontinuous structural constraints from those that obtain in the international system. The Hobbesian logic of 'be ready to kill or be killed' does not apply to national societies once the domestic state is in place. More so than classical realists, neo-realists seek to filter out as 'domestic affairs' matters that have no place in the consideration of international relations and politics. Neo-realist logic permits a much more rigid and exclusive focus on power and maximising a state's safety. This aim of the state is prominent, and should be unconstrained by complications arising from internal affairs. Domestic considerations – social order or justice, history, morality or culture, or economic

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<sup>22</sup> Robert G. Sutter, *China's Rise: Implications for U.S. Leadership in China*, *Policy Studies 21* (Washington D.C.: East-West Center Wahington, 2006): 2.

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Boston, Massachusetts: McGraw-Hill, 1979): 79-80.

development, again – are superseded by the demands of national security and survival in a hostile or anarchic international ‘society’.

When the role of US bases in Okinawa in the Asia-Pacific region is discussed publicly in official circles, these neo-realist assumptions still mostly apply. Since the US-Japan alliance was re-defined emphatically in terms of balance of power and alliance politics, the base relocation in Okinawa, has, both oddly, yet, on further investigation, quite unsurprisingly, been assigned the status of a domestic issue, a matter apart from questions of Japanese and international security alliance building.

Consistent with this framework, the media have often treated the social and environmental impacts of the bases in terms of domestic ‘inconveniences’ to be balanced against the benefits conferred by their presence. These ‘inconveniences’ have included sexual assaults and other crimes, pollution, excessive noise, hazards and accidents. In this picture, Okinawan local politicians are compelled to play a political game with a Japanese government whose interest is to construct a new military base on the east coast of Nago City (as an alternative airbase to Futenma Air Station) and to maintain its current security alliance with the US. For Okinawan local governments, the aim is to extract maximum compensation and subsidies necessary for the survival of its ‘base economy’, which is now so deeply dependent on the existence of US military bases across the Okinawa Main Island. The moral dilemma that accompanies this game is that it requires sacrificing some residents’ safety, security, health, amenities and the environment. Of course, the negotiations between the central and regional government take place in the context of the power and fiscal imbalance between Tokyo and Okinawa. They also take place against the background of citizen vulnerability. Thus, Okinawan citizens who might, for historical and moral reasons, be opposed to a continuing US presence, are often manipulated at election

time by economic insecurity. So, contrary to their convictions and feelings, a majority of them vote for pro-base candidates.<sup>24</sup>

### *A 'Critical Approach' from Okinawa*

But my key point here is a different one: although the risks and negative impacts associated with the bases are often profound security issues, these matters are often understood as though they were proper subjects for public horse trading. Their proper place is away from the main game of international relations with a little money and media manipulation to ease the way. This may create an illusion - as if the issue to do with US base relocations and reorganizations in Okinawa was not a concern for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. In fact, they do treat it as a national security issue. In 1996, implementation of Okinawan economic development, which had been the responsibility of the Okinawa Development Agency, was explicitly 'linked' to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as Japan's Defense Agency's security policy, by a private consultative body, a Committee for Discussion of Okinawan Municipalities Host to US Military Bases, run by a former Ministry of Foreign Affairs officer.<sup>25</sup> Through this consultative body, from 1996 on, local governments in Okinawa that are host to US military bases could directly negotiate with the Cabinet and the Defense Facility Bureau for public funding.<sup>26</sup>

The concentration of forces in Okinawa has the further effect of minimizing the offense that a foreign military presence generates within Japanese nationals outside Okinawa (out of sight, out of mind), thus shielding the alliance from wider

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<sup>24</sup> On in-depth anthropological accounts of this local dynamics, see Masamichi S. Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military: Identity Making in the Age of Globalization* (2007): 98-125; also, Hideki Yoshikawa, 'Internationalizing the Okinawan Struggle: Implications of the 2006 Elections in Okinawa and the US', *Japan Focus*, no. January 5 (2007), <http://japanfocus.org/products/topdf/2314> (accessed 22 April 2008)

<sup>25</sup> Julia Yonetani, 'Appropriation and Resistance in a "Globalised Village": Reconfiguring the Local/Global Dynamic from Okinawa', *Asian Studies Review* 28, no. December, (2004): 399-400.

<sup>26</sup> Yasuhiro Miyagi and Miyume Tanji, 'Okinawa and the Paradox of Public Opinion: Base Politics and Protest in Nago City, 1997-2007', *Japan Focus*, no. 3 August (2007) <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2490> (accessed March 18 2008).

mainland resentment. Okinawa has been managed separately and put in its place – mostly. Though not openly discussed as such, the safety, security, health and environmental rights of some people are forfeited for the ‘greater’ good: the bilateral alliance’s rationale to defend the security of the Asia- Pacific region. A comment by the Governor of Okinawa sums this sentiment up well: ‘Choosing between the security of the Asia Pacific region and safety of a girl is not possible’.<sup>27</sup> Yet local people too often disappear in the big picture of international relations. As Lawson argues, it is individual states that are ultimately responsible for defending the ‘human security’ of nationals.<sup>28</sup> Okinawa represents a case in which a state legitimately (via SOFA) has neglected its responsibility to protect individual citizens, for the sake of national and regional security. And realist international relations theory (especially the ‘neo’ version), since the Cold War, has provided important assistance. In this sense, the base issue in Okinawa potentially offers the opportunity for applying what McDougall calls a ‘critical approach’. Such an approach ‘discern[s] the values implicit in international politics’,<sup>29</sup> as put into practice by the US military bases’ forward deployment in the region. In other words, Okinawans are in a position to know that the idea of ‘security’ protected by military bases is primarily focused on that of the state.

What, then, is the question that is not asked in the domain of international politics that Okinawa reveals? If only for a brief moment, the 1995 Okinawa crisis

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<sup>27</sup> ‘Chiji Wa 'Sekando Reipu' Ken Gikai Ga Giin Hatsugen Meguri Kūten (Governor's 'Second Rape': Prefecture Parliament Discussion Goes Round in Circles)'. *Ryukyu Shimpō*, February 27 2008. By accusing the Governor Hirokazu Nakaima of ‘second rape’, a member of the parliament Higa Kyoko, criticised him for making a statement that further injured the rape victim. This criticism upset the leading party members. In the end, the chairperson ordered her to apologise and renounce the attack.

<sup>28</sup> Stephanie Lawson, 'Regional Integration, Development and Social Change in the Asia-Pacific: Implications for Human Society and State Responsibility', *Global Change, Peace & Security* 17, no. 2 (2005):121-22.

<sup>29</sup> Derek McDougall, *Asia Pacific in World Politics* (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2007): 4

was exceptional in that it provided a sense of urgency sufficient to prompt the two governments to review and at least plan to rectify the imbalance of the US presence in Okinawa and to demonstrate action to reduce the burden on the local residents. The rape that occurred in that year first directed international attention to the tension between the US military's presence and safety of local women from gendered military violence.<sup>30</sup> Not long after, the attention to women's rights was taken over by the focus on the wider 'Okinawan problem', that is, violation of landowners' rights and the colonial status of Japan and Okinawa.<sup>31</sup> The status and privileges given to the US forces were codified in the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), and had been the source of much unhappiness for the Okinawans. The 'extraterritoriality' allowed to the US forces by SOFA (still unchanged today) is reminiscent of the nineteenth century privileges given to the Europeans in East Asia.<sup>32</sup> And all of these issues pointed to a larger question: *Do overseas US foreign military bases threaten and undermine the security of the population rather than protect it?* This is indeed a question that calls state-centered conceptualization of international security into question, allowing us to ask about the extent to which state security can be purchased at the cost of the security of individual civilian population.

The question is an old one,<sup>33</sup> and, importantly, does not concern only Okinawans but many other communities living within the social, environmental and economic fall-out zone of US military outposts across the Asia-Pacific. Local opposition and protesters against foreign US military bases in Okinawa and other

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<sup>30</sup>Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 154-8.

<sup>31</sup>Linda Isako Angst, 'The Sacrifice of a Schoolgirl: The 1995 Rape Case, Discourses of Power, and Women's Lives in Okinawa', *Critical Asian Studies* 33, no. 2 (2001): 243 - 66.

<sup>32</sup>Chalmers Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006): 172. SOFA exempts US military personnel from domestic criminal jurisdiction as well as responsibility for environmental pollution.

<sup>33</sup>Barry Buzan, *People, State and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era* 2nd ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 1991): 35-56

places are all basically raising questions about the sustainability of state security maintained by marginalizing and sacrificing the safety and basic human rights of local minorities. Therefore, reflecting this particular view from Okinawa, the Asia-Pacific region can be defined as a region in which metropolitan security is purchased at the expense of the rights and the safety of colonised individuals and local communities at the periphery, regardless of their will to be conscripted to 'serve' in US wars.

### **A constructivist perspective on Futenma Air Base and Okinawa: implications for security and international relations of the Asia Pacific**

The previous section explained a critical perspective on international security, raised from Okinawa. Subsequently, this section discusses a case of political activism of Okinawan non-state actors and their transnational network that addresses this perspective. From a constructivist perspective, it focuses on the non-state actors' ability of questioning the norms, institutions and social principles under which the current US-Japan bilateral relationship operates. It also highlights the further implications for the Asia-Pacific inter-state security environment.

#### ***Okinawa in Chalmers Johnson's critical accounts on the US empire***

Among the growing number of works that focuses on Okinawa, the study of US Empire by Chalmers Johnson is exceptional. Unlike many scholars, Johnson considers the local impacts of living with US military outposts, as significant political, economic and moral international security issues.<sup>34</sup> His analysis can be interpreted as a critique of neo-realist understandings of international relations of the Asia-Pacific. Johnson argues that the idea that 'the forward deployment of American troops brings

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<sup>34</sup> For example, Chalmers Johnson, *Okinawa: Cold War Island* (Cardiff, CA: Japan Policy Research Institute, 1999), *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Owl Books, 2000), *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).

“stability” to East Asia is... a false syllogism’, or, as explained by a military strategist, like that of ‘the New Yorker who spreads elephant bane [poison used in Africa to kill them] around his apartment and then extols its benefits because he encounters no elephants’.<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, Johnson depicts Okinawa as a hotspot among other overseas US military outposts, where anti-American opposition might topple the stability of US alliances in the Asia-Pacific. In this picture, the current arrangements that privilege US military deployment in the region over local residents’ safety and rights can add to the legitimacy crisis of the ‘neo-imperial system of American rule’ maintained by ‘hub and spoke’ hierarchical bilateral alliances – alliances underpinned by the military presence in the region, that is ultimately ‘too costly, fraught with contradictions and premised on an inflated accounting of American power’.<sup>36</sup>

Johnson’s macro-focus directly addresses the legitimacy crisis that US imperial foreign policy faces globally. Any change would depend on the change of US foreign policy and strategic priorities. And in its absence, it is likely that Okinawa’s position as a collective victim, for example, will be reinforced, with its residents’ rights and security unitarily sacrificed for the alliance of two superpower allies. Beyond victimization and neglect, it must be asked, how Okinawa’s US base issue is relevant to the wider Asia-Pacific: how is Okinawa’s victimization and discontent converted into political action, and how does it contribute to the security of the wider region?

### ***Political activism and identity-making in Okinawa***

The political activism of the Okinawan people has a long history. However, organizationally and ideologically, there is no one ‘Okinawan struggle’: interpretation

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<sup>35</sup> Johnson, *Blowback*, 63.

<sup>36</sup> G. John Ikenberry, 'Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no. 2 (2005): 136.

of who 'Okinawans' are and the meaning of the 'Okinawan struggle' are contested issues within the community of protest.<sup>37</sup> Since the time of US military administration in the 1950s and 60s, progressive anti-base political activism, affiliated organizationally to workers' unions and socialist/communist political parties, have demanded equal constitutional and social rights for Okinawan citizens, including equal access to Japan's post-war peace and prosperity and freedom from the excessive burdens of US military presence.<sup>38</sup> After the 1972 reversion to Japan, more informally organized citizens' groups have engaged in a different type of political opposition to both US and Japanese military presence in the island. They have focused on safeguarding Okinawa's unique and unspoilt rural environment, and on protecting women's rights from gendered military violence. This 'new social movement' activism has gradually succeeded in helping to give the Okinawan anti-base opposition an international profile by linking it with transnational social movement groups, wildlife conservationist groups, international women's anti-military groups, and also, with anti-war and peace protesters in other US foreign military outposts such as Korea, Puerto Rico and more recently, Guam.

Importantly, local responses to the predicament in Okinawa not only entail political opposition, but also adaptation and co-optation. That is to say, some Okinawans actively accept the US military presence assigned to the islands by the Japanese state as a way of surviving in globalizing economic conditions.<sup>39</sup> As Japan's dominant ideology of governance has shifted from a centrally regulated economy to greater local 'autonomy' in the market-driven economy, central and local politicians are paradoxically motivated to tender for the government's financial stimulus

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<sup>37</sup> Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*.

<sup>38</sup> Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 106-126.

<sup>39</sup> Julia Yonetani, 'Appropriation and Resistance in a 'Globalised Village'', 391-406.

packages and subsidies given in exchange for the acceptance of new US military bases especially in and around Henoko (where the new Marine airbase that substitutes Futenma is planned to be constructed).

This phenomenon is explained by Inoue in the context of globalization: Okinawan identity is increasingly defined by economic pragmatism and desire for ‘happiness and a better life among financially insecure working-class residents’.<sup>40</sup> Especially in Henoko, ‘the anti-base ideal of peace, the environment, and women’s issues came to be challenged and undermined by the logic of difference, articulated by working-class Okinawans through their pro-base desires for development, happiness, and a better life’.<sup>41</sup> However, as a Henoko new base supporter recently told an anthropologist, ‘...if we had jobs, we would not invite the base...’: most pro-base locals’ ‘attitudes toward the offshore base were... fundamentally ambiguous and uncertain because of the qualms of conscience’.<sup>42</sup> Okinawa’s predicament – local complicity to the new US Marine Corps’ offshore airbase – is thus shaped not by a straightforward or democratic consensus building, but rather a precarious balancing of norms in the context of volatile national and global economic dynamics and troubled identity-making.

***Norms and identity-making in international relations: a constructive idea of ‘security communities’***

Similarly, it is necessary to examine how identity-making and local norms constitute the necessity of US overseas military presence in the Asia Pacific region, as well as alter and challenge them. This perspective is consistent with that of a constructivist theory of international relations that focuses on the processes in which meanings,

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<sup>40</sup> Inoue, Masamichi S. Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military: Identity Making in the Age of Globalization* (2007): 22, 213

<sup>41</sup> Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, 155

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 125

identities and norms play a part in constructing international practices. Constructivism challenges the realist tendency to see an international security order as determined by mainly material factors, human nature and most strongly, the anarchical international system.<sup>43</sup> The constructivist perspective provides understanding of the role of ideational factors in international relations, especially, norms: human rights, environmental protection and arms reduction, for example.<sup>44</sup>

Constructivist perspectives differ from one another; One of the more useful for examining the assumptions about the rationales for the US military presence in the Asia Pacific region in its foreign outposts represented by Okinawa is the concept of 'security community' developed by Karl Deutsch and adapted by Adler and Barnett. Deutsch challenged the realist idea that interstate relations are basically hostile by arguing for the possibility of a community of states in which threat of war and armed conflicts were absent.<sup>45</sup> Adler and Barnett define a 'security community' as 'a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change',<sup>46</sup> which includes much more than already established multinational institutions such as the European Union. In a 'nascent' phase, a security community is made of 'various diplomatic, bilateral, multilateral exchanges, something akin to "search" missions, that are designed to determine the level and extent of cooperation' in order to 'increase their mutual security; lower the transaction costs associated with their exchanges; and/or encourage further exchanges

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<sup>43</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Among others, Thomas Risse, Stephen C. Ropp, and Kathryn Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Audie Klotz, *Norms in International Relations: The Struggle against Apartheid* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Emmanuel Adler and Micheal Barnett, 'Security Communities in Theoretical Perspective', in *Security Communities*, eds. Emmanuel Adler and Micheal Barnett (Cambridge University Press, 1998): 8.

<sup>46</sup> Emmanuel Adler and Micheal Barnett, 'A Framework for the Study of Security Communities', in *Security Communities*, eds. Emmanuel Adler and Micheal Barnett (Cambridge University Press, 1998): 30.

and interactions'.<sup>47</sup> If developed into the 'ascendant' and 'mature' phases, a security community can make conflict and war among the composite states become less likely and, in the long term, redundant. Importantly, development of such interstate communities based on trust is only possible after a long-term accumulation of not only trade relations and communications, but also the intentional construction of shared collective identity and developing common norms and institutions.<sup>48</sup>

***Two possibilities of 'security community': US-Japan bilateral and Asia-Pacific multilateral***

Can the Japan-US bilateral relation be described as a 'security community'? Japan and the US have a shared post-war history in the area of security interests, have coordinated their militaries and, due mainly to mutual security threats (Soviet Union, North Korea, China), have not engaged in armed conflict. The two states are, in this sense, at least in a 'nascent' phase of a 'security community', as characterized by Adler and Barnett. However, the alliance is underdeveloped in terms of a common identity and trust in each others' social norms, values and institutions. For example, the US refers to the devious human rights practices of Japanese police in their treatment of suspects, which allegedly explain their high rate of confessions. Indeed, this is a convenient justification for extraterritorial rights given to US military personnel by SOFA,<sup>49</sup> identified by Johnson as a potential source of future 'blowback' against America. Seen differently, co-ordination in domestic institutions may be necessary for promoting change in inter-state relations: shared domestic

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>48</sup> The idea of 'security community' should be separated from the idea of 'international regime' based on liberal institutionalist perspective with an emphasis on interstate co-operation based on common pursuit of relative gains and interest maximization among rational actors.

<sup>49</sup> 'Forces Pact Should Underscore Japanese Lack of Rights: Lawyer'. *The Japan Times*, July 15 2004

institutions reflect common social norms and values, thus, contribute to a more advanced phase of a 'security community'.

A multinational Asia-Pacific 'security community' beyond the US-Japanese alliance is remarkably underdeveloped except for the processes among the ASEAN countries.<sup>50</sup> In particular, as Buzan emphasizes with regards to the East Asian region surrounding China and Japan, it is necessary that 'the US remains significantly engaged...as the holder of the ring....for better or worse, many of the East Asian states trust the US more than they trust each other'.<sup>51</sup> True or false, such comments are important for they underpin actual inter-state practices, in this case, continuing US military presence in the Asia-Pacific. Also, the US and Asian governments see sustained effort to expand multinational institutions conflicts with 'hubs and spokes' bilateral alliances centered on the US.<sup>52</sup> Highlighted here is the lack of mature, long-term security community among East Asian states. A lack of long-term trust and an ability to 'talk to each other' continues to characterize East Asian interstate relations. This international context is an important part of what justifies the need for updating, renewing and relocating US military bases in Okinawa at the moment. In other words, as long as maintaining the 'US presence' is explained as a necessary condition of the 'US involvement' for maintaining Asia Pacific security and order, the construction of a new offshore airbase in Henoko in lieu of Futenma, is also justified.

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<sup>50</sup> For example, Christopher W. Hughes and Akiko Fukushima, 'U.S.-Japan Bilateral Relations - Towards Bilateralism Plus?' in *Beyond Bilateralism: U.S.-Japan Relations in the New Asia-Pacific*, eds. Ellis Krauss and T.J. Pempel (Stanford University Press, 2003); G. John Ikenberry, 'America in East Asia: Power, Markets and Grand Strategy', in *Beyond Bilateralism: U.S.-Japan Relations in the New Asia-Pacific*, eds. Ellis Krauss and T.J. Pempel (Stanford University Press, 2003); Barry Buzan, 'Security Architecture in Asia: The Interplay of Regional and Global Levels', *The Pacific Review* 16, no. 2 (2003): 143-73. On Southeast Asian multinational institutionalism, Amitav Acharya, 'Collective Identity and Conflict Management in Southeast Asia', in *Security Communities*, eds. Emmanuel Adler and Micheal Barnett (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> Barry Buzan, 'Security Architecture in Asia', 165-66.

<sup>52</sup> Robert G. Sutter, *China's Rise: Implications for U.S. Leadership in China*, *Policy Studies* 21 (Washington D.C.: East-West Center Wahington, 2006): 5.

*Japan's 'schizophrenic' identity and implications for US bases in Okinawa and a multilateral Asia-Pacific 'security community'*

Taking a different perspective, the possibility for an autonomous East Asian 'security community' around the leadership of China and Japan, without 'US involvement' at the moment, is generally regarded as remote. In recent years, discussion of the Sino-Japanese relationship is never without reference to former Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine. An undemocratic, militaristic and 'emperor-fascist' pre-war Japan should be considered history.<sup>53</sup> However, it is still an image that affects Japan's diplomatic relations with its neighbours. Koizumi's Yasukuni visit, which has been widely interpreted as representing the rise of neo-nationalism in Japanese society, raised concerns that Japan might not be too far from once again taking this 'emperor-fascist' path. US congress's demand for an apology from Prime Minister Abe for his public denial of the state's responsibility for the Japanese military's sexual slavery practices during WWII demonstrates American concern that Japan might not remain subservient in their bilateral relationship, especially in military matters. Whilst American state elites express desire for the Constitutional change allowing for a greater Japanese role in sharing the US global military burden, question marks are placed on how autonomous the Japanese Self Defense Forces (SDF) are going to be. Buzan sums up the general interpretation of Japan's position: 'US presence enables Japan to remain a civilian power'; also,

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<sup>53</sup> Richard Tanter, 'With Eyes Wide Shut: Japan, Heisei Militarization, and the Bush Doctrine', in *Confronting the Bush Doctrine: Critical Views from the Asia-Pacific* Mel Gurtov and Peter Van Ness (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005): 163-4. Japan's 'Heisei militarisation', Tanter argues, should be understood as an 'endogenous' process of normalisation and further movement towards any other advanced economies – with a proportionate military capability.

Japan could in principle reshape the region, but seems so mired in structural and historical problems that its most likely role is to adhere to the status quo, not changing much unless severely pressured by external events.<sup>54</sup>

US military bases in Japan and Okinawa have been, and still are, considered important in preventing Japan from being too independent, ultra-nationalist and possibly even threatening neighbouring countries.

It also needs to be stressed here that, ‘adhering to the status quo’ requires action rather than inaction: the construction of a new Marine airbase in Okinawa should be seen as constitutive of the underdevelopment of ‘security community’ between Japan and surrounding states especially China, rather than as an unavoidable by-product of maintaining the status quo. In other words, the relocation scheme of Futenma airbase in Okinawa is currently part of the hierarchical and bilateral US-Japan security arrangement that is frustrating the development of more inclusive and multilateral Asia-Pacific security community.

The insurance provided by the US presence has arguably made Japan’s reconciliation with China, Korea, and also, Okinawa, on the issue of war responsibility, even less unlikely. The Japanese government has also ignored the history (the living memory of the Battle of Okinawa) that informs Okinawan base opposition, and refused to give considerations of this kind a place in foreign policy discussion. As a result, in September 2007, 110,000 Okinawan local residents participated in a protest rally against the state’s interference in rewriting textbook accounts of Japanese assaults on local residents during the Battle of Okinawa.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Buzan, ‘Security Architecture in Asia’: 167-8.

<sup>55</sup> In 2007, for example, ‘the education ministry ordered publishers of seven high-school textbooks to be introduced next April to remove references to the forced suicides’, to which a number of Okinawan municipal parliaments made official protests to the central government (McCurry 2007).

Where US bases in Okinawa are concerned, the Japanese government has been predominantly submissive and has fully accommodated the US military's convenience and preferences. In May 2007, the Japanese government even sent a Maritime Self Defense Forces minesweeper to the shore off Henoko to facilitate the environmental impact investigation of the ocean floor of Oura Bay - the coastal reclamation project had been inhibited by the continuous local non-violent marine protest action. This submissiveness contrasts starkly with Japan's aggressive nationalist behavior shown in relation to its refusal to admit state involvement in the wartime sexual slavery (the so-called 'comfort women'), Yasukuni Shrine visits, and arguably, whaling. This 'schizophrenic' combination of assertiveness and submissiveness in Japan's national identity, as described by McCormack,<sup>56</sup> manifests itself in the punishing policy of additional US base construction in Okinawa, and perpetuating Okinawa's dependence on state-sponsored base-tied subsidies paid by Tokyo.<sup>57</sup> The same point applies to the many damaging impacts of the bases on daily civilian life in Okinawa. Since the Reversion Pact in 1967 between the US and Japanese heads of state, the latter's Okinawa policy has been contingent on the security alliance with the US. In other words, Japanese government support given to US military presence in Okinawa has served to strengthen bilateral relations, and vice versa. On the other hand, as McCormack points out, simultaneous patriotic

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<sup>56</sup> Gavan McCormack, *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace* (London and New York: Verso, 2007): 191-204. McCormack explains, 'The link between militarization, service to the US, and patriotic and nationalist ideology has been plain at successive stages of Japan's postwar political evolution. During the occupation, it was the emperor himself who displayed the greatest enthusiasm for the US bases, while carefully setting about reconstructing his own centrality to the state' (McCormack, *Client State*: 201). Also, see Yasuhiro Miyagi and Miyume Tanji, 'Okinawa and the Paradox of Public Opinion: Base Politics and Protest in Nago City, 1997-2007', *Japan Focus*, no. 3 August (2007), <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2490> (accessed March 18 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Gavan McCormack, 'Abe and Okinawa: Collision Course?' *Japan Focus*, no. 3 September (2007), <http://www.japanfocus.org/products/details/2512> (accessed 14 March 2008); John Gittings, 'Contradictions of a Client State', *Guardian Unlimited*, September 12 (2007), [http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/john\\_gittings/2007/09/contradictions\\_of\\_a\\_client\\_sta.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/john_gittings/2007/09/contradictions_of_a_client_sta.html) (accessed 14 March 2008).

stubbornness and submissiveness to the US have inhibited 'Japan's attempts to relate to its neighbours, to come to terms with its twentieth-century history, and to cooperate in the construction of Asian commonwealth'.<sup>58</sup> A commonwealth that might sustain a security community and depend less on the American imperial presence also has a significantly damaging effect on the rationales of keeping US forces' military outposts – especially those run by the logic of colonialism and extraterritoriality, and with secondary status given to the security of individual local population.

Thus considered, far from being strictly a domestic political issue, the construction of a new offshore airbase and other US base relocations and upgrading in Okinawa have serious implications for Japan's international security outlook. The base relocation in Okinawa and the war responsibility issue are complementary to each other, contrary to popular portrayals.<sup>59</sup> Considering that the Futenma relocation will maintain the current course of Japan's dependence on the hierarchical bilateral alliance with the US, it also discourages the hope for multilateral 'security community' building based, in particular, on a China-Japan cooperation and joint leadership. Ambiguous Japanese nationalist identity and the hierarchical US-Japan security alliance are significantly at play – more feeding than opposing each other.

***The San Francisco connection: the importance of the Okinawa dugong case***

In the Asia-Pacific environment, importantly, local anti-base activists in Okinawa are also partaking in the process of collective identity making and spreading of norms and towards the building of a different kind of 'security community'. A more tightly-coupled security community (in the 'ascendant' and 'mature' phases in Adler and Barnett's term) requires not only increasingly densely engaged military coordination,

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<sup>58</sup> McCormack, *Client State*: 201

<sup>59</sup> Kakumi Kobayashi. 'Okinawa's U.S. Ire Remains Low-Profile: Unlike History Textbook Issue, Prefecturewide Movement Not Materializing'. *The Japan Times*, March 6 2008

institutions and networks, but also shared ‘collective identities that begin to encourage dependable expectations of peaceful change’.<sup>60</sup> A shared common identity is considered to exist when actors share ‘each others’ interpretations of society, politics, economic and culture...across national borders’, and ‘locate themselves within a shared or congruent storyline’, ‘from the past through the present and some imagined future’ that is, through common narratives.<sup>61</sup> Importantly, Adler and Bennett emphasize the learning processes in building such narratives at the social level, including those among activities of social movements and non-governmental organizations across borders.<sup>62</sup>

As a case that positively contributes to such processes, I will briefly discuss the case of transnational cooperation between individuals and non-government organizations from Okinawa, Japan and the US. The case involves the protection of an endangered species, the Okinawa dugong, for its own sake and as a significant strategy to obstruct the construction of an offshore base near Henoko. I argue that this particular transnational anti-base protest and environmental collective action contributes to shifting the loosely-coupled ‘nascent’ security community between the US and Japan to a more equal and tightly-coupled one, in which social and legal systems are increasingly shared. This leads to a shared collective identity that results from a commonly experienced narrative: a common track record of state-society negotiation between state security with shared social norms, in particular, individual security, human rights and environmental protection.

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<sup>60</sup> Adler and Barnett, 'A Framework for the Study of Security Communities', 53

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 53. On the role and importance of transnational civil society actors in influencing norms and identities, see, for example, Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights*; Ann Florini, *The Third Force: The Rise of Transnational Civil Society* (Tokyo and Washington D.C.: Japan Center for International Exchange and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000); Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003).

Dugongs have traditionally been harvested as highly-valued game meat by the people in the Ryukyu archipelago. According to UNEP's *Dugong: Status Report and Action Plans for Countries and Territories*, 'the Government of the Ryukyus, which was under US occupation at that time, listed Okinawa dugongs as a natural monument in 1955'.<sup>63</sup> According to the World Conservationist Union (commonly known as IUCN) standard, they have also been categorized as 'critically endangered' by the Japanese Society of Mammalogists. The precise information on where and how many of them lived had not existed. In November 1997, by coincidence, the Japanese government's preliminary coastal investigation for the construction of a new US Marine base off the shore of Henoko revealed that a dugong was sighted swimming in the coastal area just outside the investigation site.<sup>64</sup> In response, concerns were raised by local and internationally active environmentalist non-governmental organizations (such as WWF Japan) that the land reclamation required by the construction of the new airbase would destroy the habitat for the endangered dugong and the sea grass that it depends on. In 2001, 'the Ministry of Environment unofficially announced that they would list the dugong as an endangered species and look at the possibility of setting up a dugong sanctuary'.<sup>65</sup>

The anti-base protest momentum had hit the rock bottom in December 1997 when the Nago City referendum, which expressed a majority opposition to the new base construction, was nullified by the Mayor's executive decision to accept the new base - for the benefit of the Nago economy. However, since then, in order to halt the

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<sup>63</sup> Helene Marsh et al., *Dugong: Status Report and Action Plans for Countries and Territories*, UNEP, Early Warning and Assessment Report Series, 2002, <http://www.unep.org/dewa/Docs/DUGONG.pdf> (accessed April 22 2008): 43

<sup>64</sup> Shinichi Hanawa, 'Hokugen No Dugong O Mamoru Tameni (Protecting the Northernmost Dugong Habitat)', in *Dugong No Umi to Okinawa (Dugong, the Ocean and Okinawa)*, ed. Dugong Protection Campaign Center (Tokyo: Kobunken, 2002): 115.

<sup>65</sup> Marsh, et al. *Dugong*, 44.

construction of a new base, the local activists who led the anti-base referendum campaign and their supporters have resorted to a strategy of attracting international publicity and building support networks with relevant international civil society actors stressing the conservation of the marine environment, especially dugong protection. The activists lobbied powerful Japanese and US politicians, and extended their networking with influential non-governmental organizations and leading dugong specialists. Appealing to overseas environmentalists and participating in the expansion of global conservationist networks was a strategy of the more internationally well-known Shiraho struggle. This strategy was passed down to the dugong campaign, as was involving IUCN.<sup>66</sup> Local Okinawans, headed by the Dugong Protection Fund, attended and lobbied vigorously at the 2000 IUCN Congress in Anman, Jordan,<sup>67</sup> which resulted in another IUCN resolution commending the US and Japanese governments to take necessary protection policies to protect Okinawa Dugong. Although Japanese and US delegates to the IUCN abstained and refused to be bound by the resolution, ‘the IUCN resolution was still instrumental in securing local, national and international publicity, and in highlighting the environmental impact of the planned base’.

Significantly, it was also an effective ‘tool in lobbying Japan's Ministry of the Environment to conduct a full-scale environmental assessment of the area and the protection of dugong habitat.’<sup>68</sup> Japan’s environmental assessments are known for their lenient tendency towards industrial interests (often half-jokingly called

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<sup>66</sup> Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 140-143, 175. As in the 1980s environmentalist movement to protect the endangered blue coral colony from a new airport construction in Shiraho, off Ishigaki Island, the local activists attended and recruited cooperation from IUCN in the form of investigation activities and IUCN resolutions that recommended to cancel the airport construction in Shiraho to the local government (which eventually did move the construction site from Shiraho).

<sup>67</sup> Julia Yonetani, 'Appropriation and Resistance in a 'Globalised Village''. Yonetani was one of the delegates at IUCN Congress in Anman as a translator.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 398

‘environmental adjustment’). Nevertheless, in this specific assessment case, by attracting international and national public scrutiny, the dugong protection lobby put pressure on the government to go through a formal environmental assessment process.

In April 2004, the government started a drilling survey activity in Henoko Bay, without public notification and consultation processes required by the Environmental Assessment Law. The Henoko-based protesters have blocked the government’s intermittent survey activities by non-violent action using boats and canoes. Since then, the protesters’ marine actions have continued, involving dangerous clashes with the private government-contracted surveyors and once encountering a navy SDF maritime sweeper which escorted a dawn seabed inspection.

The marine action continues despite severe fatigue, lack of personnel and funds, and tension with the pro-base locals (the camp site in Henoko constantly maintains a few people on lookout permanently to ensure swift blockades against survey boats). In the meantime, the US and Japan Security Consultative Committee shifted the construction site slightly to the north: inside Camp Schwab, extending the length of runway (from 1.5 to 1.8 miles) towards the deeper area at Oura Bay. Governors of Okinawa (Inamine Keiichi and since 2007 Nakaima Hirokazu) and Mayors of Nago (Kishimoto Tateo and Shimabukuro Yoshikazu since 2002) both opposed the plan before reluctantly accepting (their initial reservations included noise and unsatisfactory economic returns). Formal geological and marine surveys for the environmental assessment did not commence until 15 March, 2008. These changes and ongoing civil disobedience, no doubt frustratingly to the US government and forces, have considerably delayed the construction of the Futenma replacement facility. At the negotiating table, the Japanese government uncharacteristically

insisted on shifting the construction site out of Henoko Bay, citing ‘minimization of adverse environmental impacts’, although in return, it agreed to extend the runway.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, in a San Francisco Federal Court, an important lawsuit was in process. With the Okinawa dugong listed as plaintiff, it was filed in September 2003 by three individual Okinawan citizens, six environmental non-governmental organizations from Okinawa, Japan and the US.<sup>70</sup> The defendant was the US Department of Defense (DoD), accused of violating the US National Historic Preservation Act (the Act). The plaintiffs demanded the cancellation of the construction of the Futenma replacement facility on the ground that it threatens the habitat of the Okinawa dugong, which is regarded ‘a natural monument’ on the Japanese Register of Cultural Properties. The Act requires US ‘federal agencies to consider how their actions impact culturally protected properties, including those in other countries’.<sup>71</sup> On 23 January 2008, a federal judge ruled that the Department of Defense (DoD) was in violation of the Act for failing to consider the impacts of a new airbase on the dugong in order to avoid or mitigate any harm. Overall, the judge

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<sup>69</sup> Makishi Yoshikazu, 'US Dream Come True? The New Henoko Sea Base and Okinawan Resistance', Japan Focus February 12(2006); U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee, *U.S.-Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future*, October 29, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/55886.pdf> (accessed April 22 2008): 11; David Allen and Chiyomi Sumida. 'U.S. Accepts Japanese Plan to Scrap Airport at Henoko'. *Stars and Stripes Pacific Edition*, October 28 2005.

<sup>70</sup> They include Save the Dugong Foundation, Dugong Network Okinawa and Committee Against Heliport Construction/Save Life Society (from Okinawa), Center for Biological Diversity, Turtle Island Restoration Network (from the US), and Japan Environmental Lawyers Foundation (from Japan). United States District Court Northern District of California, Okinawa Dugong V. Gates, et al, January 24, 2008, [http://www.earthjustice.org/library/legal\\_docs/dugong-decision-12408.pdf](http://www.earthjustice.org/library/legal_docs/dugong-decision-12408.pdf) (accessed April 22 2008)

<sup>71</sup> 'U.S. Military Must Consider Japan Base's Impact On "Sea Cow" Marine Mammal'. *International Herald Tribune*, January 25 2008, <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/01/25/america/NA-GEN-US-Japan-Military-Base.php> (accessed 17 April 2008).

‘sided with American and Japanese environmentalists who argued plans to relocate the Futenma Air Station’.<sup>72</sup>

This lawsuit is indicative of increasingly close transnational exchanges among civil society actors in Okinawa, the US and mainland Japan. It was groups from the US, such as the Center for Biological Diversity and a non-profit law firm, Earthjustice, (specialised in cases to do with the environment and conservation) who made the strategic decision to draw on this particular Act, and chose to bring the case to San Francisco Federal Court. This Court was known to be particularly liberal and sympathetic to conservationist and environmental claims. Also, they deliberately avoided relying on the Endangered Species Act, which they knew could more directly obstruct the construction plan to protect the dwindling Okinawa dugong, to avoid US government’s reaction that was, at the time of filing this case, showing a tendency to give preference to draconian anti-terrorist measures above the protection of civil rights in all areas.<sup>73</sup> The verdict also demonstrates adherence within the US legal system to stick to the principles of equal distribution of power between the juridical and executive branches and equality under law: it has consistently highlighted that the responsibility to protect the endangered species in Okinawa falls onto the US Department of Defense.<sup>74</sup>

The Okinawa dugong case is significant for obligating the US military bases in Okinawa to follow the same rigorous standard applied within US domestic

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid. The article reports, ‘The U.S. Department of Justice, which represented the Defense Department, was reviewing the decision and had not decided whether to appeal, said DOJ spokesman Andrew Ames.’

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Yoshikawa Hideki, a member of *Shimin Asesu Nago* (a Nago-based citizens’ conservationist group) who has been involved in this case as a translator, December 2007.

<sup>74</sup> Yoshikawa Hideki. ‘Jugon Soshou No Yukue: Chū (The Dugong Case: Where to from Here? Part 2)’. *Okinawa Taimusu*, 18 January 2008

regulations.<sup>75</sup> DoD is rendered responsible for the environmental assessment of the Futenma replacement facility. This means that the environmental assessment must be conducted according to the detailed and accurate information about the specifications and functions of the planned facility possessed by the US forces. This will put pressure on the Japanese government to drastically change its standard of environmental assessment, which has been loose and deceptive, too often conducted without crucial relevant information being made available to the public. In fact, during this case, as a result of the DoD being required by the court to submit detailed specifications of the Futenma replacement facility, crucial information about the facility hitherto unknown to the public has been revealed: the Japanese government had never mentioned in the methodology document for the environmental assessment that the aircraft would possibly conduct low-altitude flights, affecting the residents near the airbase. Furthermore, it had never indicated the military pier next to the offshore airbase, nor a missile loading area, which are all clarified in the DoD plan. If DoD takes responsibility for the accurate environmental assessment to protect the endangered dugong under the Act, it is highly unlikely that the new construction plan would be estimated to be safe for the dugong.<sup>76</sup> Crucially, this case creates an important precedent: US bases in Japan are now required to be constructed and operate with legal integrity and residents' consent, equivalent to what would be required in the US.

The Okinawa Dugong case should be interpreted as exemplary of the shifting nature of transnational social relations and particularly indicative of the evolution of the US-Japan bilateral security community. Importantly, we see how the respective

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<sup>75</sup> Yoshikawa Hideki. 'Jugon Soshou No Yukue: Jō (The Dugong Case: Where to from Here? Part 1)'. *Okinawa Taimusu*, 17 January 2008,

<sup>76</sup> Yoshikawa Hideki. 'Jugon Soshou No Yukue: Ge (the Dugong Case: Where to from Here?) Part 3'. *Okinawa Taimusu*, 21 January 2008

legal systems within the US and Japan are interlinked more closely in the process of deciding the manner in which the US-Japan bilateral community evolves. This process affects a range of areas, including issues pertaining to social justice, the environment and safety. Only through accumulation of such negotiations and adjustments, the bilateral relationship is more likely to be consolidated by trust, rather than hierarchy. What is most important here is that civil society actors are initiating such change, establishing an historical narrative of evolving social relations, one moreover, which is conducive to strengthening a common collective identity, a defining tenet of a more equal, mature security community.

### **Conclusion**

This article has considered implications of US military base relocation in Okinawa for understanding security and peace in the Asia-Pacific region. Placing Okinawa and its US forces at the centre of the region highlights specific characters that constitute an identity of this region: continuing relevance of US and Japanese colonialism, and the memory of collective suffering in World War II and post-war US military occupation in the marginal, highly-vulnerable places. This exercise benefits the study of international relations in the Asia-Pacific in three ways.

First, it questions the mainstream understanding of Okinawa as simply a victim that has to endure the ‘necessary cost’ of US-Japan security alliance for maintaining balance of power. The focus here is exclusively on the security of ‘states’, which overlooks historical and social aspects that relate to ‘human security’ within the local communities that live with the physical and other proximate impacts of the US forces.

Second, in order to bridge social/local relations and international relations, security and peace, this article has drawn on the concept of a ‘security community’.

What really is at stake in the base relocation issue in Okinawa is not simply domestic marginalization of a minority group, but also, the possibility of building a security community in the Asia-Pacific that is based on long-term trust building and the formation and consolidation of shared norms and collective identity. The article has stressed that the absence of this kind of ‘security community’ has created the necessity of prolonging the US military presence as an essential keystone for order, and vice versa: two approaches to security are mutually exclusive and at battle with one another.

Thirdly, this article discussed the relevance of transnational social movements in representing voices within the battle over security, emphasizing the roles social actors play in slowly moving things by influencing policy-making locally and at the state level. By arguing that the US military presence is socially as well as environmentally unsustainable at the local level, the aforementioned security community needs to be stressed as an alternative means for building order in the region. In this sense, the Okinawan activists may increasingly be in a position to promote paths for a state-based multilateral integration processes; international relations scholars and commentators need to make sense of the way in which such actions play roles in the behavior of states.