

The Futenma United States Marine Corps Base and Japan's Foreign Policy

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Abstract

First of all, this paper discusses the problem of the relocation of the Futenma United States Marine Corps base from the viewpoint of a Chinese threat and the United States national interests. In 2010, Prime Minister Hatoyama was not able to keep his promise of moving the Futenma Marine Corps base out of Okinawa. As a result, he resigned giving in to the United States demands and an argument on deterrence advocated by the bureaucrats of the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs. However, I contend that maintaining status quo only benefits the United States and the Chinese threat is exaggerated. The paper also analyzes deterrence of the Marine Corps base in relation to the Senkaku Islands (Diayudao in China or the Pinnacle Islands). According to those who support the United States-Japan Security Treaty (hereafter referred to as the Security Treaty), if there were no Security Treaty, China would occupy the Senkaku Islands. In order for China to not do so, Japan maintains the Security Treaty and the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa. That is the essence of the Security Treaty, they argue. However, I propose that Japan cooperate with China and Taiwan to administer the Senkaku Islands to utilize ocean resources. China and Japan can keep peace by sharing ocean resources in the vicinities of the Senkaku Islands instead of Japan relying on the Security Treaty and the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa. I point out that today's Marine Corps troops can be sent anywhere in the world by air, so there is little reason why they should stay in Okinawa. The United States forces would stay in Japan for indefinitely although no town or city in Japan welcomed Marine Corps troops as Hatoyama proved. The reason why the United States forces would not leave Japan is very simple: generous Japan's host nation support. Therefore, I recommend that the Japanese Government immediately abolish the host nation support. In conclusion, I argue that Japan does not need the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa and United States forces should withdraw from Japan since they are not welcomed in Japan. Instead of relying on the Security Treaty and the Marine Corps troops, Japan should put emphasis on the diplomatic efforts that will enhance Japan's security.

Keywords: Futenma, Okinawa, the United States Marine Corps, the United States forces and bases in Japan, Japan's security, Deterrence

Introduction

In June 2010, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama resigned because he was not able to keep his promise of transferring the United States Marine Corps base in Futenma, Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture to another prefecture. In fact, Prime Minister Hatoyama did not have the political leadership or courage to say to the United States that he could not find another relocation place after all efforts of searching. Hatoyama never demanded that the United States close the Marine Corps base in Futenma and transfer it to Guam without condition. If he had ultimately kept his promise, the Japanese public would have supported him even though the relations between the United States and Japan would have deteriorated. This decision is another case in point of Japan's Prime Minister not having strong leadership, and bureaucrats still exercising strong influence over foreign and defense policies in Japan.

A major reason why the United States-Japan relations had been good for sixty-five years was because Japan has almost always followed the United States. In other words, Japan seldom said *No* to the United States. Now, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) came to power in September 2009. At first, Hatoyama tried to assert Japan's national interests, which would maintain Japan's security while reducing a burden of people in Okinawa. In the end, however, the DPJ acted like the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). It is natural that the United States-Japan relations would deteriorate if Japan emphasizes her national interests. Japan cannot resolve the United States military base issue if she fears that she might antagonize the United States. It is because maintaining the status quo is in the national interest of the United States. It is regrettable that the argument went unchallenged this time too, which following the United States national interests was also Japan's national interests, and therefore, keeping the Security Treaty was Japan's national interests.

Examining Marine Corps bases in Okinawa is important because the Marine Corps troops symbolize the Security Treaty, and the presence of the Marine Corps relates to the territorial issue between China and Japan, the Senkaku Islands. In the United States and Japan after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, an argument on the Chinese threat is increasing. A so-called deterrence caught attention of the policy makers in the Hatoyama Administration and the general public in Japan in 2010. Prime Minister Hatoyama cited the importance of the deterrence as a major reason why the Marine Corps troops would stay in Okinawa.

In this paper, first of all, I will examine the problem of the relocation of the Futenma United States Marine Corps base from the viewpoint of a potential Chinese threat and from the United States national interests. How these factors are intertwined will be discussed. Secondly, this paper analyzes the deterrence of the Marine Corps base and the Senkaku Islands. Whether the Marine Corps bases should stay in Okinawa will be discussed. In conclusion, I will argue that Japan does not need the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa and diplomatic efforts will enhance Japan's security.

The Futenma United States Marine Corps Base, the Potential Chinese Threat, and United States National Interests

First of all, concerning the issue of the relocation of the Futenma United States Marine Corps base in Okinawa, pressure from the United States was strong. The United States intentions strongly influenced the result.¹ The United States consistently supported an existing plan which meant the construction of an alternative military base. Giving in to the pressure, Hatoyama was not able to maintain his belief that he would take the Marine Corps base in Futenma out of Okinawa. During the election campaign in 2009, he promised that he would at least move the military base out of Okinawa. However, the ultimate result was that the base stayed in Okinawa. The people in Okinawa were very disappointed and angered at Hatoyama's decision. The Social Democratic Party of Japan (SDP) protested against his decision and left the coalition government, which weakened his cabinet and became one of the reasons for his resignation.

Prime Minister Hatoyama said that the United States was very firm in insisting on building a new base in Henoko in Nago City, Okinawa, and admitted that coming to a resolution within half a year was optimistic.² He also stated that the United States strongly opposed Tokunoshima, Kagoshima Prefecture, arguing that if a part of the Marine Corps troops moved far away, deterrence or troop function would deteriorate. Since the Marine Corps needs to make all the troops function as one organization, it would be very difficult to move only a part of the troops. The United States insisted on all or nothing, which meant all the Marine Corps troops would stay in Okinawa or leave Okinawa, said Hatoyama. In the end, he was not able to refute how to operate the Marine Corps.³ In this way, Hatoyama was not able to keep his promise since he was dragged into technical arguments of how to operate the Marine Corps troops and deterrence arguments. Besides, he did not have political or bureaucratic support in both his own party and government to implement his idea.

Moreover, the international situation in North East Asia in the early 2010, such as heightened relations with North Korea over the sinking incident of the South Korean naval vessel and growing Chinese military power in addition to North Korean nuclear problem, all justify keeping *peace by force*, and a concept of deterrence gains momentum of its own. As a result, the United States national interests took precedence over Japan's national interests this time, too, and the opinions of the people in Okinawa were ignored. This decision is the same pattern as we have seen many times under LDP administrations. The LDP had always given priority to the demands of the United States and ignored the opinions of the people in Okinawa since 1972 with regard to the United States military base issues.

Secondly, Prime Minister Hatoyama did not seriously negotiate with the United States Government concerning the relocation of the Marine Corps base in Futenma.⁴ His administration looked for an alternative place for the military base inside and outside of Okinawa, but was not able to find a suitable place. Consequently, Hatoyama should have told the United States Government that there was no relocation place inside of Japan except for Guam. In other words, the Prime Minister should have negotiated with the United States Government forthrightly to defend Japan's national interests. If he had done so, most Japanese people, including the majority of the Okinawan people, would have supported him. Even though the relations between the

United States and Japan might have temporarily deteriorated, the Futenma issue would not lead to the abrogation of the Security Treaty or withdrawal of all the United States troops from Japan.

Moreover, in today's world, which is rapidly globalizing, it is unthinkable that the United States would bring about protectionism in the United States-Japan trade relations. Both countries would gain nothing in restricting free trade since the two countries are the largest and the third largest economic powers. The United States fully recognizes the importance of her military bases in Japan in terms of the United States military strategy. She also fully understands that Japan as host nation carries the burden of keeping United States troops in Japan paying up to 75% of the maintenance cost. Therefore, from the viewpoint of the United States national interests, it is inconceivable that she wishes to close and withdraw all the United States bases and troops from Japan. Keeping the United States forces in Japan is much less expensive than in the United States. That is why the United States continues to keep troops and bases in Japan in spite of the fact that no town or city in Japan wishes to host Marine Corps troops.

Thirdly, the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense exercised very strong influence. Prime Minister Hatoyama stated that neither the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nor the Ministry of Defense, in addition to the United States, cooperated with him.⁵ His remarks deserve attention. The DPJ emphasized politician-led politics, but the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who put emphasis on good relations with the United States and the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Defense, who stressed a threat of China and North Korea, influenced Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa in the relocation issue. As a result, Okada and Kitazawa were not able to reflect the intention of Hatoyama on the policy in the end. Bureaucrats had maintained strong influence and control over the foreign and defense policies under the LDP administrations for many decades. The DPJ was not able to regain political control over this issue either.

In other words, the bureaucrats took the leadership and decided on the Futenma issue. This relocation issue indicates that even the Prime Minister was not able to impose his will or take the leadership. In the area of defense, the bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense are still very strong. However, both the LDP and the DPJ firmly support the Security Treaty, and in this respect both parties are the same in principle. DPJ politicians' attitudes toward the defense issue are the same as those of the bureaucrats in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. Therefore, Okada and Kitazawa were willing to cooperate with the bureaucrats. It is obvious that both Japanese bureaucrats and United States military officials who support the Security Treaty cooperated with each other and were able to persuade the politicians.

Fourthly, deterrence was emphasized. Foreign Minister Okada mentioned that China and North Korea were the targets of the deterrence at which Japan would aim making use of the Security Treaty. United States Ambassador John Roos repeatedly stressed the importance of deterrence.⁶ Bureaucrats in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense are the realists and have the same view toward deterrence. Hatoyama gave in to pressure of these realists as well as the United States and was not able to take the leadership to realize his idealism. This result indicates that the politicians and the bureaucrats in Tokyo are influenced by the security view, which was popular in the 19th and the 20th centuries: Peace through military might.

Both the United States and the Japanese Governments do not clearly mention deterrence

against whom or which country. However, it is obvious that China is in their minds. Those who support the Security Treaty cite a North Korean nuclear threat and the Chinese naval military buildup. If the United States troops in Japan are reduced, the Chinese threat would likely increase, they argue. If the Security Treaty were abrogated, China would put pressure on Japan and might show off her military forces over the territorial issue. In order for China to not do so, it is necessary for Japan to have the Security Treaty to deter China and to keep the Marine Corps in Okinawa.⁷ Deterrence against China is the main reason why Japan has to keep the Security Treaty even after the Soviet Union was abolished ending the Cold War. Those who support the Security Treaty argue that as soon as the United States troops in Japan left, China would threaten Japan and violate Japanese sovereignty over the islands near Okinawa.

If one accepts this argument, Japan needs to build a new military base for the Marine Corps in Okinawa. This policy indicates that the Marine Corps will almost indefinitely stay in Okinawa. The real problem concerning Futenma is that the Japanese Government does not seriously discuss why Okinawa needs so many bases and troops or whether there is an imminent threat to Japan. Instead of doing so, the Japanese Government inevitably accepts the Security Treaty and looks at the security issue from the viewpoint of the deterrence against China and North Korea. Since Japan faces a threat, according to the United States rationale, Japan needs to keep the Marine Corps in Okinawa, pay host nation support, and of course, bear the cost of transferring a part of the Marine Corps in Okinawa to Guam. It does not make sense that Japan has to pay for the cost not for the Japanese, but for the American soldiers and their families going home. Even more confusing to the Japanese people is the fact that Japan has to pay for the construction of their housing and bases in Guam, which is not a Japanese territory.

Today in the 21st century, China is Japan's largest trading partner. In 2009, the Sino-Japanese trade was US\$232.1 billion, Japan's exports to China were US\$109.6 billion and imports from China were US\$122.5 billion.⁸ As compared with the Sino-Japanese trade, the United States-China trade in 2009 was US\$366 billion, which was 2.5 times larger than the amount of the United States-Japan trade, US\$147.1 billion. China's exports to the United States were worth US \$296.4, which was more than three times the amount of Japan's exports to the United States, US \$95.9 billion.⁹ Today, Japan's largest trading partner is no longer the United States, but is China. Japan continues to maintain the Security Treaty, keep the Marine Corps in Okinawa, and impose a burden on the people in Okinawa in order to deter China, which is Japan's largest trading partner. This policy does not make sense. It is not a rational choice or based on Japan's national interests since it is common that a country tries to maintain good relations with their largest trading partner.

Dealing with the growing power of China with military forces is in line with the United States national interests, but not with Japan's. Japan does not have to side with the United States in this respect. Antagonizing China is not in Japan's best interests. In fact, the United States also wishes to keep good relations with China. During the Futenma issue, on 21 May 2010, United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stopped by Japan for a very short period of time on her way to China and emphasized the existing position of the United States on the relocation issue. It is reported that Japan greatly conceded in negotiations with the United States.¹⁰ While Prime Minister Hatoyama was saying that Japan needed the Marine Corps in Okinawa for the purpose

of deterrence, G2 (Group 2), which was the United States and China, was carrying out strategic talks about economy and security. It is very ironic that the United States had a strategic dialogue with the target of deterrence which the Security Treaty aimed at. The Japanese people must wonder why the United States continues to have strategic dialogues with China and ask themselves whether the United States would be really willing to deter China to militarily defend Japan. If so, why does the United States continue to have strategic talks? If a Chinese threat is emphasized, why is the United States-China trade progressing so rapidly? Why do the high ranking officials in the United States and China regularly meet and discuss economy and security? Do these factors indicate that the United States does not wish to confront China militarily? If so, why does Japan need to keep the Marine Corps in Okinawa to deter China?

Jitsuro Terashima points out that while 700,000 Americans visited Japan in 2009, 1.71 million Americans went to China. He continues to insist that the idea of Japan coping with the Chinese threat by keeping the Security Treaty is ignorant of today's United States-China relations.¹¹ The flow of trade, money, and people in the United States-China relations is rapidly increasing exceeding that of the relations between the United States and Japan. It is difficult to imagine that when more than 1.7 million Americans visit China every year, ordinary Americans feel hostility toward China. Under such circumstances, it is important for the Japanese people to wonder if there is a real Chinese threat to Japan. The Japanese people must also ask why the trade relations between the United States and China are growing faster than the relations between the United States and Japan when Japan bears huge amount of a host nation support for the United States forces in Japan.

The same can be said of the North Korean threat. Why did the United States decide on reducing her troops in South Korea by 12,000 if a North Korean threat was emphasized? China, South Korea, and Japan all do not wish North Korea to collapse now. If so, pressure on North Korea will not lead to a solution. A military solution is almost impossible since neighboring countries would lose much more than they gain. Unless China cooperates, sanctions against North Korea do not work. Neither the United States nor Japan needless to say South Korea can persuade China to put pressure on North Korea. After all, diplomacy is the only way to resolve the North Korean issue. Japan must cooperate with China so that North Korea can make a soft landing. She should not take a tough policy toward North Korea such as showing off military muscle together with the United States.

In summary, Japan does not face an imminent threat from either China or North Korea. However, for those who support the Security Treaty in Japan and the United States, there should be a potential enemy. After the Soviet Union dissolved, China emerged as their potential enemy. In order to deter China, Japan needs the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa and has to continue to pay up to 75% of the host nation support. Since keeping the United States troops in Japan including the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa is less expensive than in the United States mainland, the United States has no intention to withdraw her troops from Japan. Moreover, she insists on building a new Marine Corps base in Henoko, Okinawa, in exchange for relocation of a part of the Marine Corps to Guam. Of course, Japan must pay for the construction costs of a new base in Henoko and bear about 60% of the relocation costs to Guam. While the United States can keep her troops in Japan with generous Japanese host nation support, Japan pays the cost for a

new base and the relocation. These policies all coincide with the United States national interests.

Deterrence of the Marine Corps Bases in Okinawa and the Senkaku Islands

China has been rapidly expanding her economy over the last thirty years and increasing naval power in recent years. As a result, the argument on the Chinese threat is increasing in Japan. The major reason why Prime Minister Hatoyama gave in to the bureaucrats in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense as well as the United States is an idea of deterrence against China. In order to counter the growing naval and economic power of China, Japan must maintain the Security Treaty with the United States, they concluded.

Yukio Okamoto, a former diplomat in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a former advisor to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, argues that if the United States Marine Corps withdrew from Okinawa, China would move into the Senkaku Islands. In the past, China occupied the Paracel Spratly Islands when the United States troops withdrew from Vietnam, the Johnson Reef in the Spratly Islands when Russia withdrew her troops from Danang in Vietnam, and the Mischief Reef when the United States did from the Philippines, Okamoto says. According to him, Japan would lose the Senkaku Islands to China because China would first send fishing boats, then observatory ships, and finally naval vessels. In such a case, Japan would lose her interests in fishing and marine resources, and a boundary line with China would come closer to Okinawa. He further contends that the Marine Corps in Okinawa is not there to directly defend Okinawa. The overall presence of the United States armed forces in Japan including the Marine Corps and strong will of the United States to defend Japan constitute a strong deterrence against the Chinese territorial ambition. Okamoto concludes that if China moved into the Senkaku Islands under the present strong Security Treaty, the Sino-United States relations would certainly deteriorate and China must avoid this kind of situation for now. In Okamoto's view, the constant presence of the United States forces in Japan brings about a strong deterrence, and that is the essence of the Security Treaty.¹²

However, others bring forward a counterargument. Dustin Wright contends that it is ridiculous to imagine a military clash between the United States and China since there are close economic relations between the two countries. Cheap Chinese imports support American consumers' life and Chinese money invested in the United States sustains the American economy.¹³ In fact, the United States depends on China. Such a United States will think twice whether it is a wise policy to use military means when a territorial issue arises between Japan and China to defend Japan's interests. Therefore, Japan cannot rely on the United States to deal with this issue. Then, why does Japan keep the United States forces in Japan to deter China if she cannot depend on the United States? There is a way that Japan can resolve the territorial issue without relying on the deterrence of the Marine Corps in Okinawa.

As for who owns the Senkaku Islands, the countries concerned have different interpretations. On the one hand, the Japanese Government contends that Japan has sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands since 1895, and consequently, the Senkaku Islands belong to Okinawa Prefecture. In 1895, Japan investigated whether any country possessed the Senkaku Islands, but no country did

so. Then, Japan incorporated the Senkaku Islands into Okinawa. Japan's sovereignty had been recognized internationally before 1945, and the Senkaku Islands were returned to Japan as a part of Okinawa in 1972. China and Taiwan, on the other hand, argue that they have sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands that were a part of Taiwan, but ceded to Japan under the Shimonoseki Treaty in 1895. According to China and Taiwan, the Shimonoseki Treaty was concluded as a result of Japan's aggressive war, so they assert that the Senkaku Islands belong to Taiwan. Moreover, they insist that the Senkaku Islands were on the Chinese maps that the Chinese people had used since ancient times. However, no country had ever claimed its possession over Japan before 1971.¹⁴

The position of the Obama Administration on the Senkaku Islands issue is that the Senkaku Islands are under the Japanese administrative rights and the Security Treaty applies to the areas under the Japanese administrative rights. This was an indirect remark, which was different from the statement of the previous Bush Administration saying that the Security Treaty applied to the Senkaku Islands. The United States Government states that the United States is not in the position to decide who has sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands and hopes that the countries concerned peacefully resolve the problem. So, the United States recognizes Japan's administrative rights, but does not accept Japan's sovereignty. The United States maintains a neutral position.¹⁵ This is an important point since Japan's only friend, the United States, does not clearly support Japan over this territorial issue. It is indicative that an international society might not be necessarily supportive of Japan's claim over the Senkaku Islands.

If China occupied the Senkaku Islands as Okamoto argued, the United States would not intervene in this issue since occupation would not constitute an attack against the Japanese territory. Moreover, the United States does not even admit Japan's sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands, and the United States needs Chinese support in economic areas. Therefore, there is little possibility that the United States takes on China on behalf of Japan over the Senkaku Islands. Japan cannot count on United States help either militarily or diplomatically once China occupies the Senkaku Islands. Of course, the United States intervention into this territorial issue is still a gray area and no one truly knows whether the United States would intervene or not. However, it would be difficult for Japan to argue that China invaded Japan by simply occupying the Senkaku Islands where no one lives. Nevertheless, Japan could contend that China violated the Japanese sovereignty and administrative rights. Since neither China nor Taiwan have recognized Japan's sovereignty as well as United States' neutral position on this matter, whether the international society would support Japan's position is uncertain.

Japan has to peacefully resolve this territorial issue through diplomatic channels in case China occupies the Senkaku Islands. Due to Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, Japan cannot resolve international problems such as the territorial issue by military means. Consequently, Japan must deal with the Senkaku Islands issue bilaterally or internationally through peaceful means. Japan can take the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) if the bilateral negotiation fails. From the viewpoint of international law, the countries concerned can resolve the issue. Even though China and Japan cannot resolve the issue through the ICJ, Japan should not rely on the Security Treaty to deal with this problem. Japan cannot benefit from antagonizing China. It is more important for Japan to maintain overall good relations with China than monopolizing ocean resources in the vicinities of the Senkaku Islands and making an enemy of

China.

It is believed that China and Taiwan began to assert that the Senkaku Islands belonged to them because the ocean investigation made by the United Nations in 1969 and 1970 reported that there might be a possibility of estimated 109.5 billion barrels of oil in the vicinity.¹⁶ If the Senkaku Islands issue does not resolve bilaterally or through the ICJ, China, Taiwan, and Japan can cooperate with each other to administer the oil reserves instead of one country monopolizing all the oil reserves. It is important to consider the oil reserves and ocean resources near the Senkaku Islands from the viewpoint of the East Asian Community. Moreover, in the 21st century, trade in East Asia is rapidly growing. Many countries in the region sign free trade agreements to further promote trade relations, but Japan is behind in this respect.

Concerning the territorial issue, Okamoto states that Japan is the only country in the world that has a territorial problem with all the neighboring countries, China, Russia, North Korea, and South Korea, surrounding Japan. Even though Japan is surrounded by such a unstable environment, Article 9 of the Constitution prohibits Japan from having an attack capability, which means the capability executing a war by herself, Okamoto says.¹⁷ The notion of defending one country's territory or natural resources by military means comes from the idea of the 19th and the 20th centuries. It is more important for neighboring countries to cooperate with each other in order to make good use of ocean resources in East Asia. China needs peaceful environment to further develop her economy. Consequently, there is little possibility that China would cause a problem with Japan over the Senkaku Islands. Japan can gain more benefits than the status quo, which relies on the Security Treaty to defend the Senkaku Islands and sacrifice the people in Okinawa, if she can cooperate with neighboring countries in utilizing marine resources in the vicinity.

Kazuhisa Ogawa discusses that the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa play the role of deterrence in preventing a conflict in both the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. The Marine Corps troops in Okinawa are in a geopolitical location and could quickly intervene in the conflict area. Once a conflict on the Korean Peninsula begins, the Marine Corps troops would be sent to Okinawa or air bases in South Korea from the United States mainland by air or combat areas by Australian high-speed ships from Okinawa. He also points out the importance of the strategic location of the Japanese archipelago, by which deterrence works against the military threat to Japan. That is the essence of the Security Treaty, says Ogawa. Concerning the Taiwan Strait, he continues that the presence of the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa is of importance to the defense of Taiwan. Ogawa asserts that although there is little chance that China could invade and occupy Taiwan now, given the fact that the Chinese military do not have such a capability, there might be a slight possibility that a quick occupation of Taipei by the Chinese military forces after Chinese missiles attacked vital Taiwanese government facilities could still occur. In order to prevent such an attack, it is significant to show China that the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa could be quickly sent to Taiwan to prevent such a scenario, Ogawa concludes.¹⁸

Noboru Yamaguchi also asserts that the presence of the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa has a significant meaning. If the Marine Corps troops are already stationed in Okinawa in case of an emergency, a bridgehead is already provided so that reinforcements will easily arrive there. He also cites remarks made by United States Marine Corps Pacific Fleet Commander Keith Stalder. The commander emphasized that it would take one to two days to reach the Japanese mainland

from Okinawa by ship, two days to South Korea, three days to South China Sea, and five days to the Malacca Strait. However, it would take at least three weeks to reach Japan from the west coast of the United States. So, the commander stressed the importance of the forward deployment forces in a strategic point by the Marine Corps troops.¹⁹

The abovementioned remarks are typical among those who support geopolitics. It is true that Okinawa is located at the center of a strategic location. From Okinawa, one can easily reach Siberia in Russia, North and South Korea, Beijing and Shanghai in China, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Therefore, Okinawa is indispensable to the United States forces and the United States does not want to withdraw her troops from there. In addition to strategic importance, a generous Japanese host nation support can keep the United States forces in Japan forever. However, the recent trend shows that the Marine Corps troops are sent to combat areas by air rather than by sea. In other words, the strategy has changed. Instead of sending the Marine Corps troops by ships to enemy shores, today's Marine Corps troops are sent to combat areas by air.

As for the Chinese threat to Japan, Hajime Takano argues that it is inconceivable that China would attack Japan with nuclear weapons or invade Japan with massive military forces since there is no rational reason for China to do so. He also contends that it is almost unthinkable that Taiwan would declare her independence since many people in Taiwan think that Taiwan is already independent.²⁰ So, it is unthinkable that China would attack Taiwan. Then, why does Japan need the Marine Corps in Okinawa to deter China? If Japan keeps the Security Treaty and the Marine Corps in Okinawa for a purpose of China not occupying the Senkaku Islands, Japan loses more than she gets through the Security Treaty because it is not certain whether China would do so. Japan can diplomatically resolve the Senkaku Islands issue.

Both arguments of Ogawa and Yamaguchi mentioned above are based on geopolitics, which stresses the importance of the strategic location of the Japanese archipelago. However, between 1953 and 1956 the Marine Corps troops were stationed in Gifu and Yamanashi Prefectures, not in Okinawa. Their main task was to provide support to the United States forces in South Korea. It is not known why the Marine Corps troops were stationed in Gifu and Yamanashi, but at that time, there were already large United States Army and Air Force bases in Okinawa. So, there was little room for the Marine Corps to move in Okinawa.²¹ Keeping the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa for the support of the United States troops in South Korea benefits the United States national interests, but not Japan's national interests. Japan's national interests in this respect are to keep a neutral position, which means not to intervene in a conflict between North Korea and South Korea. Japan has no obligation to defend South Korea since there is no defense treaty between Japan and South Korea. Currently, however, under the Security Treaty, Japan has no choice, but to follow the United States.

In any case, it is obvious that there is no necessity for the Marine Corps to stay in Okinawa. Given the recent trend that revolution in military technology which is rapidly progressing enables the Marine Corps troops to be sent anywhere in the world, they could be sent to combat areas from the United States mainland by air. So, keeping the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa is not the best option for the United States, given the fact that the majority of the people in Okinawa oppose the United States military bases. It is the United States policy that if local people do not

want United States forces, the United States will withdraw her troops. In the process of finding a relocation area for the Marine Corps troops in Futenma, no town or city in Japan welcomed United States troops. So, the United States should withdraw Marine Corps troops in Futenma to Guam without condition.

In case of an emergency, if a bridgehead is necessary as Yamaguchi contended, it should be built in South Korea so that reinforcements will be able to easily arrive near the combat area, instead of Okinawa. The Marine Corps can be always sent to combat areas from the United States mainland by air. If the forward deployment forces are that important as Stalder asserted, why did the United States decide on withdrawing 12,000 combat troops from South Korea? It is because the United States does not think that North Korea would attack South Korea. Otherwise, it does not make sense. In terms of a North Korean threat, South Korea faces more threat than Japan does. So, the United States should keep the status quo or reinforce her troops in South Korea. However, she decreased her troops there.

As for the North Korean threat, Takano presents four scenarios that North Korea would pose a threat to Japan. The first scenario involves a North Korean nuclear attack. Unless Kim Jong-il completely goes mad, this scenario would be almost one hundred percent unthinkable since there are no diplomatically, politically, or economically rational reasons, says Takano. The second scenario is of a North Korean direct invasion of Japan. However, North Korea has no ships to send her troops to Japan. So, the former would not be able to invade the latter. He continues that the third one is of a Second Korean War, which would bring about North Korean attack against United States forces and bases in Japan. This scenario is not realistic since the South Korean and the United States forces would easily defeat the North Korean armed forces. Moreover, in the second and third scenarios, he says, there is no rational reason to launch an attack. The fourth scenario involves the problem of refugees. However, millions of refugees from North Korea would walk into China, instead of coming to an enemy, Japan by sea. As for the role of the Marine Corps, Takano asserts that in the first scenario, the Marine Corps would not be able to defend Japan against missile attack and in the second one, it is almost impossible to imagine a North Korean invasion of Japan. Under these scenarios, there is no necessity for the Marine Corps to be stationed in Okinawa, and the third scenario has no direct relations to Japan, he concludes.²²

Chalmers Johnson also asserts that the United States should move the Marine Corps in Futenma to a base in the United States such as Camp Pendleton, California and thank the people in Okinawa for their endurance over the last sixty five years.²³ Given the fact that the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa in many cases hurt local people rather than protect them, the United States Government should consider Johnson's suggestion. Keeping the Marine Corps troops in a place that is not welcomed is not the United States policy. In the long run, building a new base in Henoko will fail since the local people do not support the presence of the Marine Corps troops. There are some Americans such as Wright and Johnson who insist that the United States should decrease the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa. Since there is no inevitable reason why the Marine Corps should be stationed in Okinawa, people in Okinawa should continue to fight against the presence of the Marine Corps troops and the construction of the new base.

According to the *Mainichi Shimbun*, in February 2010, Stalder stated that in fact, removing North Korean nuclear weapons once the Kim Jong-il regime collapsed was the utmost important

task to the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa.²⁴ If that is the case, the Marine Corps should be placed in South Korea, not in Okinawa. As Stalder himself stated, it would take two days to South Korea from Okinawa by ship. The Marine Corps troops in South Korea would certainly carry out their job quicker than the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa. His remarks indicate that there is no rational reason why the Marine Corps troops should continue to stay in Okinawa. They could stay anywhere including Camp Pendleton, or even Gifu or Yamanashi as they were stationed before. In this respect, the only reason why the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa is stationed there is the host nation support that the Japanese Government has been paying since 1978.

Since there is almost impossible to imagine a conflict between China and Taiwan, it is not necessary for the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa to stay there. Even in such a case, the Marine Corps troops could be always sent to the Taiwan Strait from the United States by air or Japan can always provide them with bases, if necessary. In other words, there is no need for the United States forces to permanently stay in Japan. The United States should realize that the majority of the Japanese people do not want the United States forces to permanently stay in Japan. United States troops and bases have been here in Japan over the last sixty five years since 1945. Just because the people in Japan supported the LDP or the DPJ does not mean that the Japanese people wished the United States forces to stay in their hometowns. Hatoyama's failure to find an alternative place clearly proved this point. No town or city in Japan was willing to host the Marine Corps troops. In other words, the United States forces are not welcomed in Japan.

Conclusion

This paper examined the deterrence of the Marine Corps bases in Okinawa, particularly the Futenma Marine Corps base. It is obvious that there is no significant reason why the Marine Corps troops must stay in Okinawa. It is inconceivable that China would invade Japan since a peaceful environment is indispensable to China to further promote trade and economic development. Japan is an important trading partner for China, and China still needs Japanese technology for her economic development. Neither country would benefit from a conflict.

In both Japan and the United States, Chinese and North Korean threats are exaggerated. It is difficult to find a rational reason why China threatens Japan when both countries have close trade relations. Japan should discuss how to use the ocean resources including oil in the vicinities of the Senkaku Islands instead of relying on the Security Treaty and confronting China with military means. In other words, Japan should be ready to put the Senkaku Islands under an international administration.

Diplomatic and economic efforts will increase Japan's security. After Japan abrogated the Security Treaty or the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa withdrew, no one knows whether China would occupy the Senkaku Islands. If Japan can maintain good relations with China, she will be able to deal with the Senkaku Islands issue even though there is no Security Treaty or no presence of the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa. If Japan and China (and Taiwan) can cooperate with each other on the Senkaku Islands issue, all the countries will benefit from joint development in ocean resources in the vicinities of the Senkaku Islands. The people of Okinawa would be released from the burden if there were no Marine Corps troops in their hometowns. The Japanese people, in

particular the people in Okinawa, would be happier and get more benefit from ocean resources in the vicinities of the Senkaku Islands under the international administration than keeping the Marine Corps troops that cause a lot of troubles including crime, airplane crashes and car accidents, and air, water, soil, and noise pollution in Okinawa. If the main task of the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa is to deter China, Japan should ask the United States to withdraw the Marine Corps there even though such a policy would lead to the abrogation of the Security Treaty.

If China, Taiwan, and Japan have stakes in the joint development, there will be no conflict over the Senkaku Islands. These three countries can learn from the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which was an international organization to keep peace among Western European nations, in particular between France and Germany (then West Germany). France and Germany often went to war in the 19th and the 20th centuries. Therefore, in order to prevent the two countries from waging war, France and Germany, along with other Western European countries, decided on pooling coal and steel that were important resources for starting war at that time. If China, Taiwan, and Japan can pool ocean resources including oil and share fishing rights, there would be no conflict among these countries.

In such a case, Japan would not need Marine Corps troops in Okinawa or the Security Treaty. As a result, Japan would also not have to pay host nation support. Now is the time for the people in Japan to get rid of the strategy based on the notion in the 19th and the 20th centuries: Peace through military might. Now is the time for the Japanese Government to consider the interests of the Japanese people, not those of the Americans. Keeping the status quo only benefits the United States.

Notes

- 1 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), 29 May 2010.
- 2 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), 12 June 2010.
- 3 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), 18 June 2010.
- 4 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), 21 May 2010.
- 5 *Asahi Shimbun*, 12 June 2010. Jitsuro Terashima asserts that the bureaucrats in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense take the United States intentions into consideration. Jitsuro Terashima, "Nichibei Domei wa Shinka Saseneba Naranai - Futenma Meiso no Sokatsu to Kongo" (We must develop the Security Treaty - Summary and future of wandering Futenma), *Sekai*, August 2010, 103. Concerning the interests and influence of the bureaucrats both in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, see Takao Sebata, *Japan's Defense Policy and Bureaucratic Politics, 1976-2007*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010.
- 6 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), 23 May 2010; and Masahide Ota and Masaru Sato, "Taidan: Okinawa wa Mirai o Do Ikiru ka?" (A Talk: How will Okinawa live the future?) *Sekai*, August 2010, 70.
- 7 Yukio Okamoto, "Nejireta Hoteishiki Futenma Henkan o Subete Toku" (I will resolve all the problems of a twisted equation, the return of Futenma), *Sekai*, May 2010, 170.

- 8 <http://www.jetro.go.jp/news/releases/20100216144-news>; Internet; accessed 10 June 2010.
- 9 <http://www.uschina.org/statistics/tradetable.html>; Internet; accessed 18 August 2010; and <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5880.html>; Internet; accessed 10 June 2010.
- 10 *Asahi Shimbun* (Tokyo), 22 May 2010.
- 11 Terashima, “Nichibei Domei wa Shinka Saseneba Naranai,” 109.
- 12 Okamoto, “Nejireta Hoteishiki Futenma Henkan o Subete Toku,” 169-70.
- 13 Dustin Wright, “Futenma no Fukurokoji wa Washinton de Tsukurareteiru” (Washington brought about a dead end in Futenma), *Sekai*, February 2010, 172-3.
- 14 <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/>; Internet; accessed 24 August 2010.
- 15 <http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/s/article/2010081701000375.html>; Internet; accessed 24 August 2010; <http://www.tokyo-np.co.jp/s/article/2010081601000585.html>; Internet; accessed 24 August 2010; and <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/>; Internet; accessed 24 August 2010.
- 16 <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/>; Internet; accessed 24 August 2010.
- 17 Okamoto, “Nejireta Hoteishiki Futenma Henkan o Subete Toku,” 171.
- 18 Kazuhisa Ogawa, “Futenma Mondai wa Koyatte Kecchaku Surushika nai” (Only my proposal can resolve a Futenma issue), *Chuokoron*, May 2010, 126-7.
- 19 Noboru Yamaguchi, “Okinawa ni Kaiheita ga Hitsuyo na Itsutsu no Riyu” (Five reasons why the Marine Corps troops in Okinawa are needed), *Chuokoron*, May 2010, 134-5.
- 20 <http://opinion.infoseek.co.jp/article/823>; Internet; accessed 25 August 2010.
- 21 Tomohiro Yara, *Sajo no Domei* (The alliance on the sand) (Okinawa: Okinawa Taimusu, 2009), 83-4.
- 22 <http://opinion.infoseek.co.jp/article/823>; Internet; accessed 25 August 2010.
- 23 *Los Angeles Times*, 6 May 2010.
- 24 *Mainichi Shimbun*, 1 April 2010.