

A Study on the Actual Problems in Okinawa and Its Attitude Toward the United States in the Context of the Expansion of the Actual Power of the US Military Base in Japan

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Abstract: Against the backdrop of the post-World War II U.S.-Japan security agreement and the construction of U.S. military bases in Okinawa, this article discusses the reasons for the resistance of the Okinawan people to the U.S. military station. The geographical location of Okinawa Island is extremely special, and it is an important checkpoint in the Pacific Ocean. To the north of Okinawa is Japan's main island, and to the south of Okinawa is Taiwan Island, which is relatively close to the South China Sea and has an important strategic position. In the process of researching the causes, the article will study the influence of U.S. forces in Okinawa in three aspects. The method is to explore the adverse effects of the US military stationed in Okinawa and the reasons why Okinawans oppose the military based on the local environment and people's rights and interests in Okinawa. Okinawa's solution to the troop garrison problem should be to defend its homeland rights through protests and litigation, and reduce the expansion of U.S. bases in the long term.

Keywords: military base, women's rights, Okinawa residents' rights, base environmental issues

1. Introduction

There are many international studies on the Japan-U.S. alliance, but this article focuses on Okinawa's local realities and attitudes in the context of the expansion of the power of U.S. military bases in Japan. In 1945, Japan was defeated and surrendered, according to the division of the defeated country, Okinawa should be under the jurisdiction of China, Chiang Kai-shek's government refused twice, so the United States held Okinawa for 27 years, and finally decided to return its sovereignty, and Okinawa returned to Japan in 1972. Because of the nearly 30 years of U.S. occupation, 75 percent of the military bases in Japan were located in Okinawa. Okinawa, which borders Japan to the north and Taiwan to the south, is an important checkpoint in the first island chain and has a major strategic position, so the United States firmly grasps this place as a backstop for security systems and surveillance in East Asia, and is providing enough space for its military power stockpile. However, the construction of the US military base in Japan has had a huge impact on Okinawa, most notably the occupation of a large amount of land, followed by ecological and environmental issues, and finally the rights and interests of the local people. There are many such practical problems, and this article mainly examines the actual problems in Okinawa and its attitude towards the United States in the

context of the expansion of the actual power of the US military bases in Japan. This paper aims to infer the attitude of Okinawa and its people by analyzing the impact of U.S. military bases in Okinawa. This paper discusses the attitude of Okinawa and its masses towards the expansion of the actual power of the US military base stationed in Japan and the actual problems in Okinawa, and confirms the reasons for Okinawa's resistance to the US military and its bases in the future from the perspectives of the situation of Okinawa's early spring selling industry, the infringement of women's rights and interests, the pollution of the ecological environment by the garrison's construction, and the damage to the legitimate rights and interests of the masses by the construction behavior and the individual behavior of the garrison, and speculates about the attitude of the Okinawa region and its masses towards the US military garrison in the future.

2. Literature Review

Chinese scholar Ye Yuchen studied the lack of protection for women's rights and interests in the areas where the US military was stationed in Okinawa, and explained that the Okinawa government's "Selling Spring Prevention Law" was not well implemented when it was promulgated in 1970, and was well implemented and acted on in 1972 after returning to Japan, so that the issue and solution of women's rights and interests in Okinawa received effective attention.

Chinese scholar Hu Peng has studied and focused on the many causes of sexual violence crimes committed by U.S. forces stationed in Japan against Okinawan women, such as war, gender, ethnicity, human rights, and national factors.

Japanese scholar Honomi Kageyama studied how the law was implemented in 1972.

The Japanese scholar Hideto Kasumi has studied that two contradictions in this law, namely human dignity and sexual order, social order, and women's poverty and violence against women, have not been specifically addressed in the law.

Chinese scholar Huang Xiaoxin has studied the social and ecological impacts of highly militarized throughout the island, not limited by military base boundaries, polluting and destroying the ecosystems on which local residents and wildlife depend, and proposed landscape-mediated alternative reorganization strategies to address these challenges, in order to establish an ecological symbiotic relationship between nature, Okinawan indigenous peoples and U.S. military bases, and enhance the self-sustainability of militarized island landscapes.

Chinese scholar Gong Na has studied the solution, ultimate intention, and impact of the United States on the issue of rebirth of sovereignty under the security system.

Chinese scholar Gui Yongtao studied the changes in the strategic value of the Okinawa base, the transformation of the U.S.-Japan alliance, and the current situation in Okinawa in recent years against U.S. military garrisons.

Gavan, McCormack & Norimatsu, Satoko & Selden studied international trends in Okinawa and East Asia around 2011, citing the Japanese public's dissatisfaction with the government as the government's backtracks

Miyume Tanji, Studied the positive and negative impacts of the US military presence on the local area.

RY Kayatani, his paper looks at the demilitarization movements in Okinawa, and examines what kind of impact Japan's post 3.11 crisis have brought to the movements and how Okinawans have responded to it.

LI Angst, the author traces the political trajectory of Okinawa constituent groups and asks why this particular crime, among the long series of crimes committed by American personnel against Okinawans since 1995, resonates so strongly in both Okinawa and mainland Japan.

Masamichi Inoue, in this book, the author takes the 1995 rape case as a reference point and explores how Okinawans began to see themselves no longer as a group of poor and oppressed people,

but more as confident middle-class citizens. The author cleverly links local social issues with larger global strategies.

Emma Chanlett-Avery & Ian E. Rinehart, they conducted a comprehensive study on the background and impact of the expansion of the Putenma military base from the perspective of Japanese government policies.

Keke Wang, the author attempts to reveal the power structure of the United States over Okinawa, the United States over Japan, and Japan over Okinawa by studying the issue of the US military base in Okinawa. Through the study of the Okinawa base, we draw attention to the US military base worldwide and reveal the existence and essence of the US power structure on a global scale.

2.1. Selling Sex and Women's Rights and Interests Suffered

The U.S. victory in the Battle of Okinawa came at the cost of damaging the local economic production structure, and Okinawans had no other income, faced food shortages and housing problems [1]. Okinawa, which is directly occupied by the US military, clearly discriminates against women. For the US military, Okinawa is an occupation area that sacrifices a large number of American soldiers, so there are more frequent sexism and sexual violence here than in Japan's "mainland", which can be said to be a kind of retaliation and an important reason for Okinawa's strong resistance. Large numbers of women have lost their husbands and fathers and have had to sell their bodies for their own survival and their families' survival [1]. In 1949 (Showa 24), the U.S. military government announced the "Happy Street" plan to set up a centralized collection of prostitutes, which caused great controversy. The income of the people of Okinawa is very simple and meagre, especially women, and women's normal life is often insecure. Due to the exploitative management system, women who sell sex have no fixed salary, but selling sex is their only income, and women have no choice. The Selling Chun organization either pays them half of the money directly or divides it in the form of a share. The situation of some women is even more dismal, and organizations will use their debt as a justification to pay them only one-tenth to two-tenths of their income as their pocket money [1]. The sex selling industry was once not legally classified as coercive and could not be accused of being illegal, but it can be determined to be oppressive. In 1970, the Legislative Yuan of the Ryukyu government promulgated the Law on the Prevention of Selling Spring, and the law alone cannot completely prevent this behavior [1]. At least at this point, the illegality of selling sex can be made clear both morally and legally. Only then did the Okinawa masses resist the US military stationed in Japan and set up a place for selling spring to sell spring was strongly supported. The U.S. military government did not issue this decree based on understanding women's human rights, and the military government also issued a special notice No. 15 "Prohibition of flower willow disease", which stipulates that those who suffer from venereal diseases and can infect others must be isolated, that is, the aforementioned order is only to prohibit the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases to others. Circular No. 15 also stipulates that violators can be fined up to 10,000 yen and punished by up to 10 years. From another point of view, the government needs to issue a "special notice" that represents the increasing trade in flesh in Okinawa and the spread of venereal diseases among US military officers and soldiers. Indifference and inaction on women's rights in Okinawa inspired resistance to U.S. forces in Japan. At the time when Okinawa's administrative jurisdiction was about to be handed back to Japan, Japanese women's groups took the initiative to pay attention to the plight of women engaged in the sex selling industry in Okinawa, and then took a series of actions to change the situation of Okinawa women selling sex, including a request to the Japanese government, so that the "Sex Selling Prevention Law" was finally implemented in Okinawa after 1972 [1].

The above attention is paid to the behavior of the official organization of the US military base in Japan to sell sex, which is a "crime" that uses non-coercive means to let poor women into the sex selling industry under certain circumstances. Next, the article will discuss the personal actions of U.S.

troops stationed in Japan that infringe on the rights and interests of women in Okinawa, leading to growing calls for Okinawa to resist U.S. military bases. In September 1995, several U.S. military officers raped a young girl in Okinawa, and they refused to admit their mistake under the Status of Forces Agreement until they were charged. On the evening of February 10, 2008, a U.S. Marine at a U.S. military base in Okinawa was arrested by Okinawa prefectural police for raping a Japanese schoolgirl. The U.S. ambassador to Japan apologized, but later the governor of the prefecture, Mahiro Nakai, said that simply amending the treaty would not work, or that it should be fundamentally changed. In the aftermath of the rape of the twenty-first century, Okinawa City adopted a protest and recommendation regarding rape by U.S. troops. Okinawa citizen groups also organized citizens to protest near the US military base for several days and demanded that they withdraw from Okinawa [2]. In 1995, the relationship between the United States, Japan, and Okinawa underwent a transformation, with three American soldiers brutally gang raping a female student. Okinawa feminists called for public attention to the rape case, but soon the media and political leaders shifted their attention to concerns about Okinawa's colonial history and its post war occupation by the United States. The crisis of sovereignty has replaced the crisis of women and girls, which is gradually disappearing from people's perspectives, and the agenda of feminist activists is also the same [3]. This incident sparked a series of protests by women's groups, teachers' associations, trade unions, reformist political parties, and various grassroots organizations in Okinawa Prefecture. The various responses to crime ultimately led to a rally of approximately 85000 people, including business leaders and conservative politicians, even though they rarely strongly opposed US military actions. However, the Japanese government is also pressuring the Okinawans to support the continued existence of American actions [4]. Through the examination of sexual crime cases in Okinawa that span 10 years, it can be found that the requirements for the garrison in Okinawa are always different from those of the Japanese central government, and the attitude of the central government is dependent on US security, so it is mostly compromised, resulting in hatred and resistance to the US military stationed in Japan and an attitude of boredom and disappointment with the Japanese central government. The attitude of resistance to military bases stems not only from the excessive criminal acts of the US military, but also from the denial and inaction of the US military after the revision of the new law. The New Japan-U.S. Security Treaty is a new treaty signed in 1960 that ostensibly curbs some hegemonic behavior, but it cannot be ignored that its signing led to the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement, which is still a treaty that recognizes the privileges of the US military and suppresses the Okinawa people [2]. After the return of Okinawa, Okinawa still did not receive the same national treatment as its homeland, and its militarization positioning as a strategic frontier by the United States and Japan remained unchanged. Okinawa's military base was not only not reduced but further strengthened. Okinawa has not escaped the situation of being controlled by the US military, and the Japanese government essentially regards Okinawa as an important stronghold for maintaining Japan US relations. Therefore, the history of Okinawa being oppressed by Japan since modern times continues to this day [5].

2.2. Damage to the Ecological Environment and Damage to the Personal Rights and Interests of the Masses

The actions of the US military have actually had some negative impacts on local society, including violations of human rights [6]. There were frequent accidents in military exercises, and incidents such as the leakage of poisonous gas and the fall of military planes occurred from time to time [2]. According to the Japanese government, from 1952 to 2007, due to various reasons, at least 20,000 traffic accidents occurred at US military bases in Japan, resulting in more than 1,000 Japanese deaths [7]. In January 2001, a US sergeant set fire to a residential area in Okinawa one after another, causing damage to residents' property [2]. At the end of 1969, the US military used the warheads of a

dismissive nuclear gun in Okinawa to practice shooting, causing nuclear contamination in the local area. In 2004, a helicopter of the US military stationed in Japan crashed on the campus of the International University in Okinawa. In 2004, a U.S. military transport helicopter in Japan crashed on the campus of Okinawa International University, and the radioactive element strontium-90 was detected in aircraft parts. However, three days after the incident, the U.S. Marine Corps in Japan came forward to confirm that the crashed helicopter did contain radioactive parts, but they had been completely removed and would not cause harm to residents [7]. The confirmation from the U.S. military was not very acceptable and unconvincing among the Okinawan masses. Located in the Futenmagawa Air Base in the Okinawa Islands, there were 156 environmental pollution incidents in 2005~2016, resulting in fuel leakage of more than 14,000 liters; Camp Schwab on the main island of Okinawa had 43 pollution incidents in 2002~2016, the most serious of which occurred in 2002, with a total of 4,024 liters of oil-water mixture leaking [7]. The Okinawa Times reported on July 18 that a new investigation by the Okinawa Prefectural Government in Okinawa showed that perfluorinated and polyfluoroalkyl substances were detected in water bodies at 30 locations around the U.S. military base in Japan. The U.S. military stationed in Japan admitted that three leaks of extinguishing agents containing organic fluoride occurred at the Yokota base between January 2010 and November 2012, and organofluorine compounds posed a threat to human health. U.S. forces in Japan acknowledge that three leaks of extinguishing agents containing organic fluoride occurred at the Yokota base between January 2010 and November 2012, and that organofluorine compounds pose a threat to human health. In 2016, Japan's Okinawa prefectural government issued a notice saying that the tap water that local residents had been using for cooking came from a well near a U.S. military base, and that organofluoride, a health-threatening chemical, was found in the water. Knowing that the water source was contaminated with harmful chemicals, local people spontaneously organized blood tests on several occasions. In the fall of 2022, more than half of the 387 people tested had more than safe levels of organofluoride in their blood. In addition, serious groundwater contamination occurred near the Atsugi U.S. military base, Yokosuka base, Okinawa Futenma base, and Kadena base in Kanagawa Prefecture. A reservoir at the Kadena base of the prefectural U.S. Army in Japan stores a large amount of water contaminated with organic fluoride. The water totals about 76,000 liters, and the concentration of organic fluoride is 1,000 times the provisional safety standard of the Japanese state. Some Japanese experts pointed out that similar pollution problems exist around military bases in the United States, and the US Department of Defense has conducted soil pollution surveys on about 700 facilities in the United States. But when the same problem occurs in Japan, the attitude of the US military is very different. The US military stationed in Japan continues to go its own way and does not pay attention to it. It can be seen that the attitude and preventive measures of the US military stationed in Japan towards the environmental pollution solution of Okinawa and even Japan as a whole are extremely casual, but they are cautious about their own interests, and this obvious difference has caused great dissatisfaction among the masses and intensified the resistance mood. Even if there is a situation where the personal rights and interests of the Okinawa masses are violated by the US military, such as personal crimes, the official explanation is extremely arrogant and unreasonable, and relying on the US status while ignoring the rights and interests of the people is also an important reason why Okinawa has a resistance attitude towards the garrison.

At the end of 2013, the Governor of Okinawa Prefecture, Hirokazu Nakaima, disregarded expert opposition and predicted and effectively approved the construction of a new facility to replace the Futenma base. Although anti base protesters in Okinawa have vowed to use all means to obstruct the construction, according to the government's will, citizen resistance is unlikely to successfully prevent the construction of new facilities [8]. At the beginning, the United States and Japan also agreed to relocate the Futenma U.S. military base to the Biannoko area of Nago City, but in the face of strong opposition from the public, the Japanese government continued to promote the plan, and even ignored

the actual situation on the ground in order to achieve the goal, in 2015, the geological survey unit issued a special report, the southeast of the Henoko base construction area has a soft foundation, if reclaimed land, it is very likely that a collapse accident will occur, causing secondary disasters.

In early 2017, the U.S. military began reclaiming land in the Henoko area of Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture, to build a large, land, and air integrated base to replace Futenma Air Base in the center of Gino Bay, Okinawa Prefecture [2]. The Japanese government turned a blind eye to the investigation and forcibly reclaimed land in late 2018. In 2019, Okinawa Prefecture launched a vote on the issue of the U.S. military base in Heno, and in the end, more than 70% of voters objected, and the Okinawa people hoped that the US military would cancel the relocation plan, and called on the Japanese government to stop the plan. The Futenma base where the US military stationed in Japan is located belongs to a downtown area, and the noise and safety hazards generated every day make the local people miserable, but moving the base from Futenma to Henoko still cannot fundamentally solve the problem, but will also cause great damage to the Henoko area due to the relocation, such as the destruction of the marine ecological environment. In the process of opposition to the relocation plan by the people of Okinawa Prefecture, the slogan “Okinawa Prefecture does not need a US military base” resounded locally. At present, what Japan needs to adjust most is the issue of US troops. This is a signal from the United States, which means that it is difficult to reduce or even increase the deployment of military bases in Okinawa in the future, and it also shows that Okinawa is an important strategic deployment for the United States, so it is impossible to give up easily [2]. It can be seen that the US troops stationed in Japan will not be withdrawn in a short period of time, but will increase. The drills, relocation, construction and other activities of the base have undoubtedly brought great inconvenience to the Okinawa masses, and even seriously damaged the legitimate rights and interests of the local people. In Japan, pessimism is heightened by despair over the DPJ’s betrayal of its electoral promises. Hatoyama garnered extremely broad support, and he made a series of promises to society (including the construction of a military base in Okinawa), but under pressure from conservatives in the United States and Japan, these promises were ultimately not fulfilled. It was hoped that the Kan government would adopt some new regional or global foreign policy to ease the vicious circle of interregional confrontation, but in the end, it did not do so [9]. Since the first meeting in April 2004, the people of Okinawa have been fighting the Japanese central government for about 7,000 days. Okinawa has a long history in opposing American hegemony and denying Japan’s occupation of it; And they have been engaged in various forms of resistance to protect the land, dignity, and human rights passed down from their ancestors [10]. This attitude of resistance is very likely to continue in the form of appeals or collective protests, as it has done in the past 20 years, until the day when the US military actively resolves or reduces the garrison bases, the Japanese government Huang Myung Chia defends Okinawa’s rights and interests, or Okinawa has the ability to win higher international attention or even break away from the control of either side of the United States or Japan.

3. Discussion

This article examines some of the dangers of the U.S. military and the reasons for Okinawa’s opposition to U.S. troops. It is actually described from the perspective of a victim, and almost only mentions the official US military without much reference to the promotion and influence of the Japanese authorities. In terms of perspective and orientation, the focus is on human rights and geographical aspects, which this article does not explore in full. It is hoped that future scholars of the Okinawa military base issue will focus more on international politics, and the object of study can be zoomed in to the government (both the United States and Japan) level, rather than focusing on the military base or Okinawa prefecture at a small level.

4. Conclusions

Through this study, the article find that the reasons for the resistance of Okinawa and its people towards the United States are due on the one hand to the compromise of the Japanese government, and on the other hand, to the expansion of the US military base and the long-term violent behavior of the garrison. These problems have not actually improved in decades, and Okinawa under the U.S. security system may not be resolved quickly in the future (measured in decades). In the future, it is hoped that the rise of East Asia, especially Northeast Asia, will give Okinawa more options, reduce the expansion of US military bases in a few decades, and effectively curb certain acts of violence by the garrison, so that the Japanese government can manage Okinawa more effectively.

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