

Okinawa and Security: 40 Years after Reversion

From a Survey of Okinawa Residents and a Nationwide Survey¹

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http://www.nhk.or.jp/bunken/summary/research/report/2012_07/20120701.pdf

Abstract

The 40 years since 1972 when Okinawa rejoined the Japanese mainland and became Okinawa prefecture have seen changes of many kinds. This article, reporting on surveys made in 2012, seeks to give solid reality and a long-term, multifaceted perspective to the attitudes and perceptions of the people of Okinawa by examining changes over time and looking at the attitudes of Okinawa residents in comparison with attitudes expressed throughout the nation as a whole.

On economic development, it was found, Okinawans wish to promote “tourism that takes advantage of the beautiful natural surroundings” of their islands. Asked about national policies to promote and support economic development in Okinawa, majorities both in Okinawa and nationwide responded that those policies are effective and it is necessary to continue them. But a nuanced difference in attitudes was evident; those who said that national development policies for Okinawa “are no longer necessary” were more numerous nationwide than in Okinawa.

Comparing the 2012 survey results with those of 2002, the numbers of Okinawa residents who said that “the emperor should be venerated,” “the constitution needs to be revised,” and “for the sake of the nation Japan should maintain its policy of collaboration with the United States” increased, but they were still lower than in the nationwide poll.

Regarding the issue of the American military bases, which remain in Okinawa all these decades after reversion, 56 percent of respondents in Okinawa said either that the bases “are necessary for Japan’s security” or they “are unavoidable.” This was the first time in 40 years that those answers constituted a majority response. However, those in favor of reducing the American military facilities in Okinawa (combining “complete withdrawal” and “as few bases as on the mainland”) were close to 80 percent, a response level that has not changed since this question was first posed 30 years ago. When Okinawans were asked to comment on the fact that 74 percent of all facilities used exclusively by the American military in Japan are concentrated in Okinawa, a majority 57 percent answered, “I think it’s wrong.” And regarding the issue of moving Futenma Marine Corps air base to the city of Nago, 72 percent of Okinawans said either “I’m opposed” or “I lean toward opposing it.” Either way, the Okinawa

numbers were higher than nationwide. In addition, a majority of Okinawa residents feel that there has been “no progress” in the realignment and reduction of the American bases in Okinawa.

The surveys reveal numerous differences between Okinawa and the nation as a whole in attitudes toward and perceptions of security and the military bases. Many more Okinawa residents have negative views regarding both compared with the whole nation. Moreover, a majority of Okinawa residents think that mainland Japanese “don’t understand the feelings of Okinawans” (includes “not very well + “not at all”).

Introduction

On May 15, 2012 the residents of Okinawa prefecture celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Ryukyu islands’ reversion to Japanese administration. In anticipation of this benchmark, between February 18 (Saturday) and March 4 (Sunday) 2012 NHK carried out an opinion poll by individually interviewing 1,800 residents of Okinawa prefecture aged 20 or older. The number of valid respondents was 1,123 people, which gave an effective response rate of 62.4 percent.

NHK’s Okinawa survey has been carried out continuously since 1970, starting before reversion, and if we include 2012, that is ten times.² This time a national survey was done at

²

Surveys made in Okinawa 1970-2002			
Survey period	Nov. 70*	May 72*	Apr. 73*
No. respondents	1,200	1,000	1,000
Valid responses	768	657	677
Valid response rate	64.0%	65.7%	67.7%

Survey period	Apr. 75*	Mar. 77	Feb. 82
No. respondents	900	750	900
Valid responses	552	537	650
Valid response rate	61.3%	71.6%	72.2%

Survey period	Feb. 87	Mar. 92	Mar. 02
No. respondents	900	900	900
Valid responses	618	706	587
Valid response rate	68.7%	78.4%	65.2%

Notes: In all cases the survey method was face-to-face interview. The asterisk indicates that respondents were eligible voters, and respondents in the surveys without the asterisk were people aged 20 or older.

Note: Okinawa residents were asked about “preferred directions for economic growth” in a face-to-face interview survey conducted at the time of the 1976 Okinawa gubernatorial election.

the same time to enable a view of the differences between Okinawan and national attitudes. The nationwide survey was carried out between February 18 (Saturday) and February 26 (Sunday) through individual, face-to-face interviews with 1,800 people aged 20 or over from all over Japan, and the valid response rate was 62.1 percent.³ A central feature of this latest Okinawa survey is that it reveals not only long-term changes but also enables us to make comparisons with the nation as a whole. Figure 1 lists Okinawa's main events from late in the Pacific War until the present. Since reversion in 1972, Okinawa has been actively involved in numerous undertakings—among others, it hosted the Ocean Expo of 1975, the National Athletic Meet of 1987, and the G-8 summit of 2000. On the other hand, a number of incidents have occurred in connection with the proximity of the Okinawan population to the American bases, such as American soldiers abusing Okinawan girls (e.g., 1995), an American helicopter crashing into Okinawa International University in 2004, among others.

This article covers the following topics:

1. Opinions regarding national policies promoting Okinawa's development 40 years after reversion.
2. Attitudes toward the emperor and the constitution.
3. Attitudes regarding security.
4. Opinions regarding American military bases in Okinawa.
5. Summary.

(1-3 by Kobayashi; 4-5 by Kono)

³ Some questions in the NHK nationwide surveys also are useful in making comparisons over time between Okinawa and the nation as a whole. This article uses them as the need arises.

Survey name	Previous nationwide surveys		
	Japanese people & constitution	Japanese people & constitution	Japan's security
Survey period	Mar. 92	Mar. 02	Dec. 03
Survey target	16 and over	16 and over	20 and over
No. respondents	3,600	3,600	1,800
Valid responses	2,522	2,336	1,094
Valid response rate	70.1%	64.9%	60.8%

*In all cases the survey method was individual interviews. Data from 92 and 02 surveys were retabulated to reflect responses from age 20 and over, to allow comparison with 2012 survey.

Figure 1. Okinawa's Major Events 1945-2012

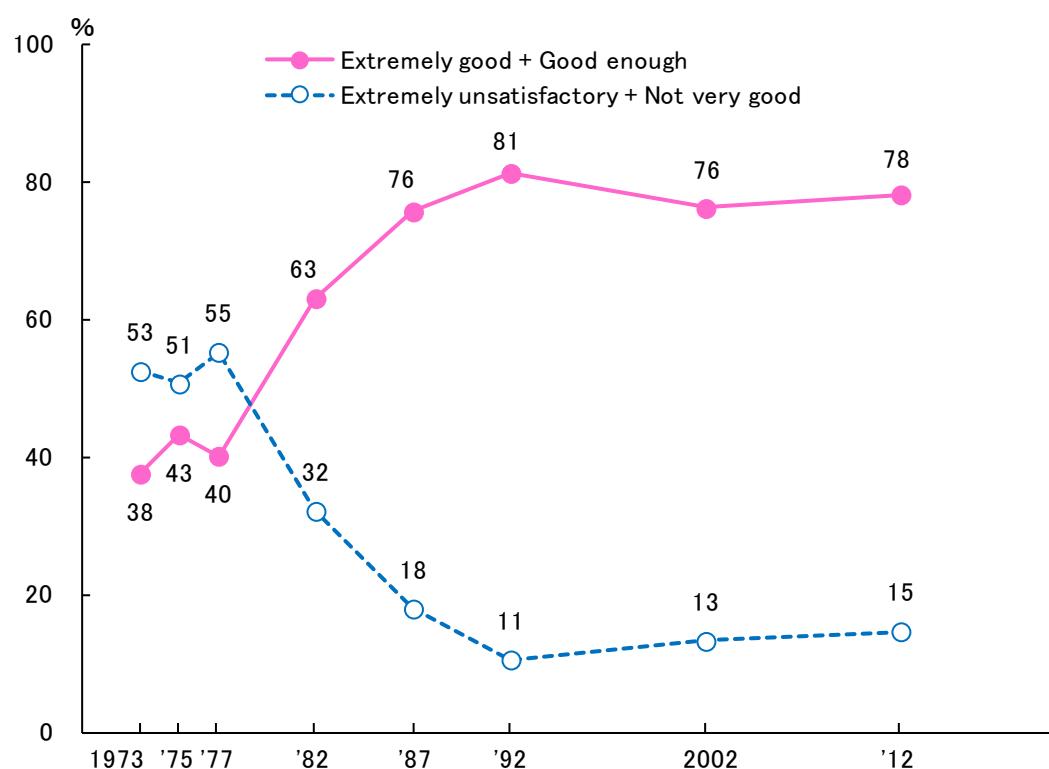
Year	no. yrs pre- and post- Reversion	
1945	-27	US military land on Okinawa, Battle of Okinawa.
1951	-21	Japan-US Security Treaty signed.
1952	-20	San Francisco Peace Treaty goes into effect; Ryukyu (incl.Okinawa) and Amami islands come under US administration.
1960	-12	Security Treaty renewed ("new" treaty).
1965	-7	US begins bombing North Vietnam.
1969	-3	Japan-US Okinawa reversion agreement signed.
1972	0	Okinawa reverts to Japanese administration.
1973	1	First oil shock.
1975	3	Okinawa International Ocean Expo opens; Vietnam war ends.
1978	6	Traffic rules change to Japanese left-hand driving system; first Conservative government in prefecture.
1987	15	Okinawa hosts Japan's 42nd National Athletic Meet (Kaiho Kokutai).
1989	17	Okinawa prefecture gives up plan for new Ishigaki airport to be built over Shiraho coral reef.
1990	18	Reformist party regains control in prefectoral government.
(1990)	(18)	Japan's economic bubble implodes.
1991	19	Gulf War.
1992	20	Restoration of Shuri Castle main hall in Naha.
1993	21	Emperor and empress make their first visit to Okinawa.
1995	23	Cornerstone of Peace WWII memorial erected; American servicemen rape Okinawan girl; Japan-US Special Action Committee (SACO) set up to handle Okinawa issues.
1996	24	Agreement reached on Futenma air base relocation.
1997	25	Majority of Nago residents in referendum oppose relocating Futenma base to their city.
1998	26	Conservative party regains control of prefectoral government.
2000	28	Okinawa hosts G8 Summit; Gusuku (castle) & Related Ryukyu Kingdom sites designated as UNESCO World Heritage sites.
2001	29	9/11 terrorist attacks in US.
2004	32	US helicopter crashes into Okinawa International University campus.
2008	36	World financial crisis ("Lehman shock").
2009	37	Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) takes power.
2010	38	Seizure of Chinese fishing boat incident near Senkaku Islands; North Korea artillery fire on Yeonpyeong island; Governor Nakaima Hirokazu, who shifted to "Move Futenma base outside Okinawa," gets reelected.
2011	39	Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami; value of the yen continues to rise; North Korea General Secretary Kim Jong Il dies.
2012	40	A new Okinawa development plan is launched.

1. Opinions Regarding National Policies Promoting Okinawa's Development 40 Years after Reversion

(1) High Approval Rate Continues Regarding Reversion

As Okinawa prefecture residents look back over the 40 years since rejoining the mainland, how do they feel about the reversion? When asked their general opinion, positive answers combining “It was an extremely good thing” and “Yes, it was good enough” came to 78 percent of the total (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Assessment of Reversion (Okinawa)



Comparing long-term data from the surveys done from 1973 to 2012, the positive answer trend shot up between 1977 and 1987, and after that it more or less leveled off at between 75 and 80 percent. The analysis of the 1987 survey results⁴ proposes that the increase in the positive attitude toward reversion was motivated by improvement in socioeconomic

⁴ Janamoto Keifuku, “Hondo fukki jugonen no Okinawa” [Okinawa Fifteen Years after Reversion], in *Hoso kenkyu to chosa*, June 1987.

conditions of life in the prefecture since 1972 and the residents' sense, after reversion, that now they were truly part of the Japanese nation.

Certainly, looking at survey results from 1973 to 1992 regarding their living conditions, the number of people who said either "We are worse off" than in the previous year or "We're a little worse off"⁵ grew smaller with each poll, which was linked to steady improvement in socioeconomic conditions. On the other hand, in 2002 and 2012 the answer "We are worse off" showed an increase, but at the same time, the assessment of the reversion did not go down. This indicates that positive feelings about reversion have stayed steady with no linkage to opinions about economic and living conditions.

Going by the survey results, feelings about reversion remain on the whole very positive 40 years later, but a closer look at the data reveals some noteworthy differences in thinking that crop up between groups categorized by age.

Breaking down the age groups of respondents who said that reversion "was an extremely good thing" (23 percent of Okinawans gave that answer), people in the 20s-40s age bracket, with either no memory or negligible memory of pre-reversion Okinawa, made up about 25 percent and those in the 50s-60s group, who knew pre-reversion Okinawa, were slightly under 20 percent (those 70 and over were 25 percent). Most of those in the 50s-60s age group held steady in their positive view of reversion, but, and this is noteworthy, the approval rate for that group, who knew pre-reversion Okinawa, was nonetheless lower than that of the 20s-40s group.

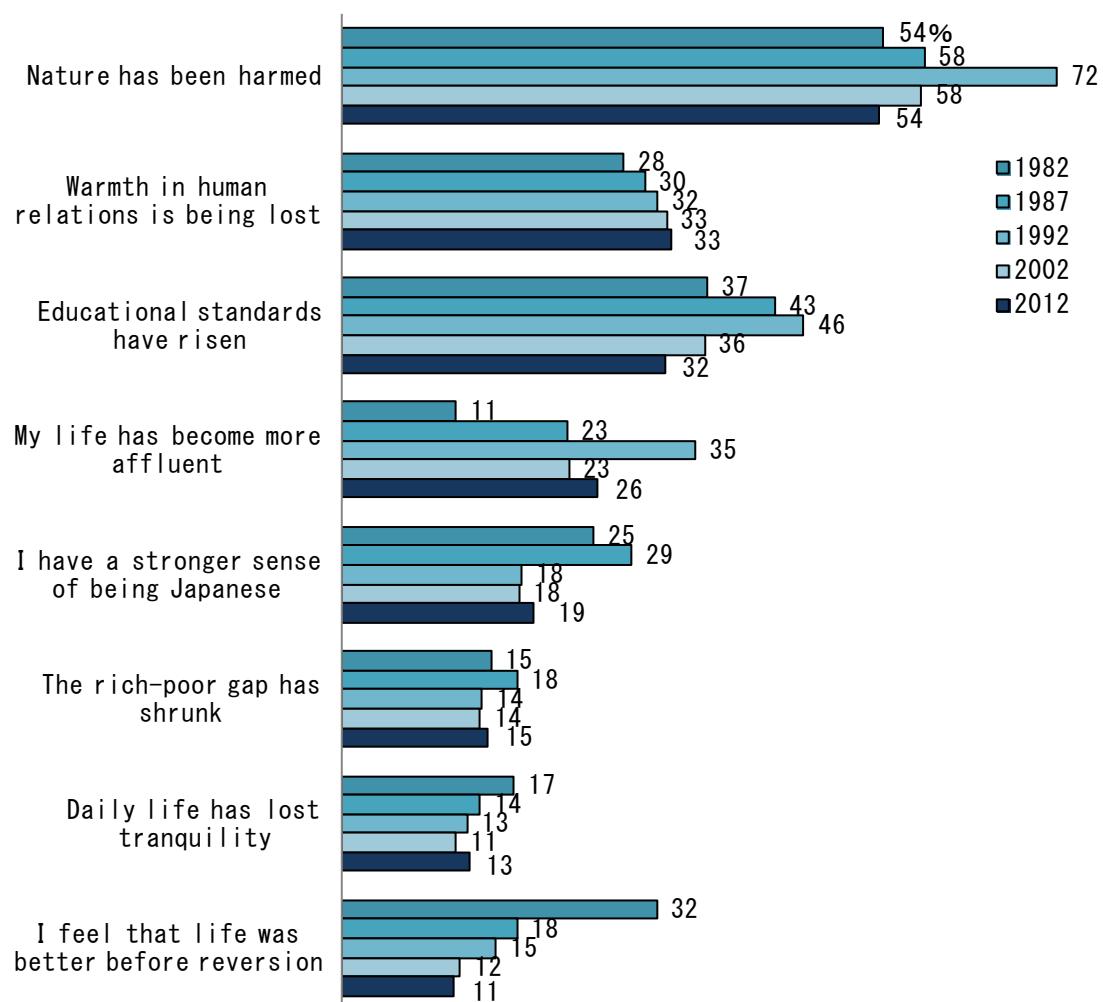
(2) Steady Increase in Feeling the Loss of "Warm Human Relations"

The question about thoughts and impressions 40 years after reversion solicited multiple answers from given options. The option that drew the highest response rate of 54 percent was "nature has been harmed," and next, "warmth in human relations is being lost" drew 33 percent. Thirty-two percent chose "educational standards have risen" (see Figure 3).

⁵ In this article, in cases when two answers, such as "We are worse off" and "We're a little worse off" are combined, they are presented the first time in full, in this instance, as "We are worse off" (including "We're a little worse off"). Thenceforth the two answers combined are presented more simply, in this case as "We are worse off."

The survey results over time show that in 1992 as many as 72 percent thought that “nature has been harmed.” That year followed a period of frantic activity during the bubble economy to develop ever more resort areas and facilities,⁶ and this high rate can be considered an expression of alarm at the proliferation of resorts. In the 2012 survey also, more than half the respondents said “nature has been harmed,” but as if echoing the subsiding development activity as the economy grew sluggish, that opinion has tapered off since the 1992 peak.

Figure 3. Thoughts about Reversion (multiple answers; Okinawa)



⁶ For detail, see Janamoto Keifuku, “Hondo fukki nijunen no Okinawa” [Okinawa Twenty Years after Reversion], in *Hoso kenkyu to chosa*, June 1992.

Of all the response options, the one that shows a slow but steady increase is “warmth in human relations is being lost.” On this point, one long-term survey⁷ identifies a trend nationally of decreasing desire for close personal relationships. This tendency clearly is not confined just to Okinawa.

However, the 1996 NHK “National Survey on Attitudes of Prefectural Residents,”⁸ posed the question, “Do you think people in your region have warm human feelings?” and 85 percent of Okinawans said “yes,” the highest in the whole nation. The strong sense that Okinawans “like warm local human feelings” is one of the characteristics of the people in this prefecture.

Yet even here, where many enjoy a sense of warm human relations, there has been a slow, steady increase in numbers of people who think that quality is being lost. It is significant that this option ranked among the top choices by respondents in the 2012 survey.

(3) Tourism as the Best Alternative

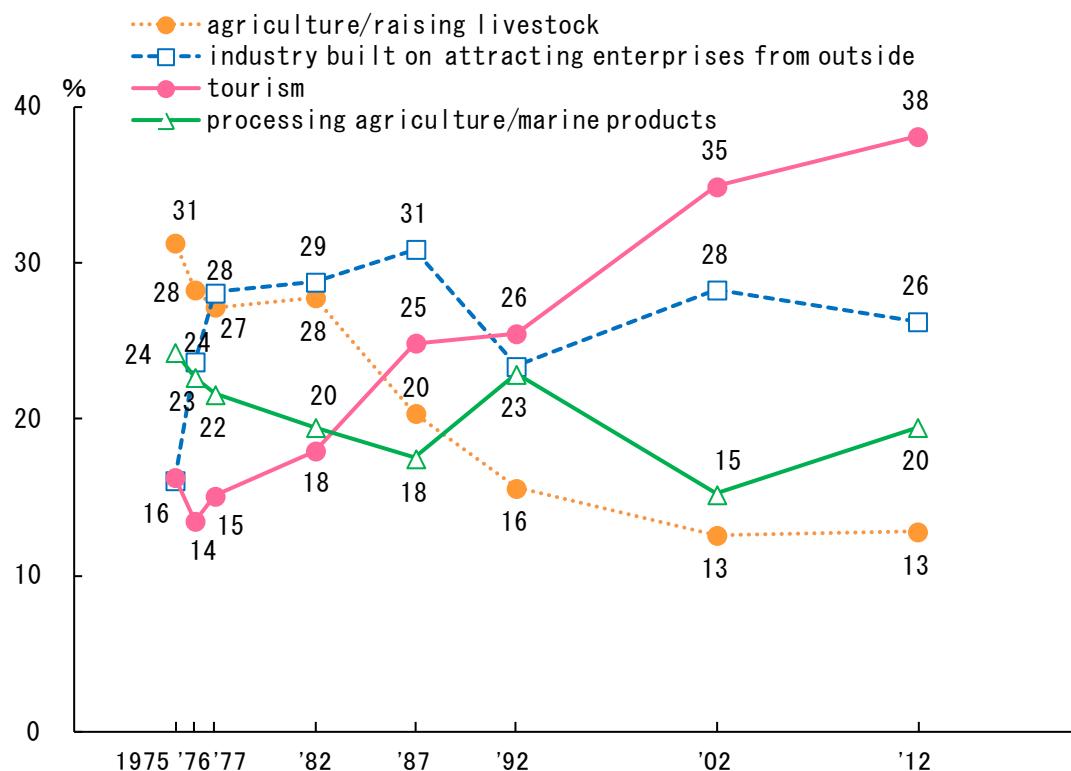
What kind of industries do Okinawa prefecture’s residents think should be prioritized for economic growth? Out of four options, respondents were asked to select one.

The results for 2012 were tourism (38 percent); industry built on attracting enterprises from outside Okinawa (26 percent); processing agriculture and marine products (20 percent); and agriculture and livestock industry (13 percent) in that order (see Figure 4).

⁷ NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, ed., *Gendai Nihonjin no ishiki kozo (dai 7 han)* [The Structure of Japanese Attitudes Today (7th Edition)], Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 2010.

⁸ NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, ed., *Gendai no kenmin kishitsu* [Contemporary Attitudes of Prefectural Residents], Nihon Hoso Shuppan Kyokai, 1997.

Figure 4. Preferred Directions for Economic Growth (Okinawa)



Looking at broad, long-term trends, “tourism” showed an increase; “industry built on attracting enterprises” and “processing marine and agricultural products” remained level, and “agriculture/raising livestock” showed a decline. The rapid rise in the choice of “tourism” over these 20 years is especially striking.

In 2000, partly as the result of a vigorous campaign by the people of Okinawa, the Gusuku (castle) Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu were recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site. And in 2008 the University of the Ryukyus introduced a new department, the Faculty of Tourism Sciences and Industrial Management. Taken together, we can read into these developments an increasingly widespread judgment among Okinawa residents that their best development option for the future is the tourism industry.

An analysis of the “tourism” answers by age group, moreover, shows that the younger the respondents, the more likely they were to choose that option. From these results, we can predict that Okinawa residents’ expectations from the tourism industry will keep rising from now on.

The 2012 survey results also reveal something about the kinds of tourism that Okinawans envision. To the question, “Which should take priority, economic development or protection of the natural environment?” close to 80 percent chose “protection of the natural environment” (including “If I have to choose, I choose protection of nature”). Then, asked, “What aspects of Okinawa give you pride?” close to 70 percent selected “Okinawa’s beautiful natural environment” (multiple answers possible).

On the basis of their answers, it is possible to describe the attitude of Okinawa residents toward tourism as a partnership between tourism and conservation: to promote tourism while protecting the beauty of the natural surroundings that Okinawa is blessed with.

(4) Views Differ on Future Development Policy

At the time of reversion in 1972, an Act on Special Measures for the Promotion and Development of Okinawa was put in place. (By an amendment it became in 2002 the Act on Special Measures for the Development of Okinawa, thus stressing Okinawa’s increasing self-reliance.) The purpose of the act was to facilitate steps to reduce the qualitative economic and social infrastructure gap between Okinawa and the mainland. This act became the basis for development plans for economic growth that have been drawn up every 10 years, so far over four decades. To date, they have called for expenditures of roughly 10 trillion yen. In addition, other special measures have enabled Okinawa to receive higher levels of economic assistance than any other prefecture or metropolitan area.

The tight financial situation of Japan in recent years has changed the environment of the national support measures for Okinawa’s economic growth. There is also some indication that, “In terms of cost effectiveness, it is necessary to verify to the nation’s people whether or not that spending is being adequately accounted for.”⁹

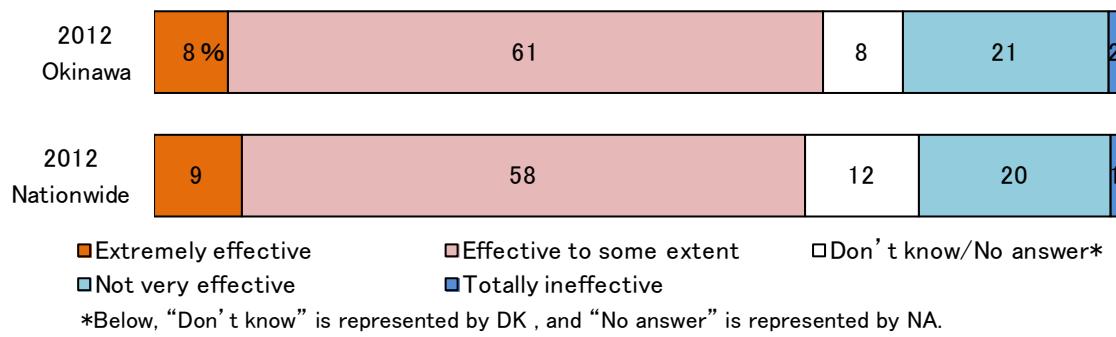
The 2012 surveys included a question aimed at revealing attitudes toward economic support policies for Okinawa while taking into account the above circumstances. Okinawa

⁹ Matsui Kazuhiko, “Okinawa shinko no kadai to kongo no shinkosaku no arikata” [The Question of Okinawa’s Economic Growth and Shaping Growth Policy for the Future], in *Rippo to chosa*, January 2012, no. 324.

residents and people nationwide both were asked their opinion on the degree to which national policies for economic growth in Okinawa have been effective so far.

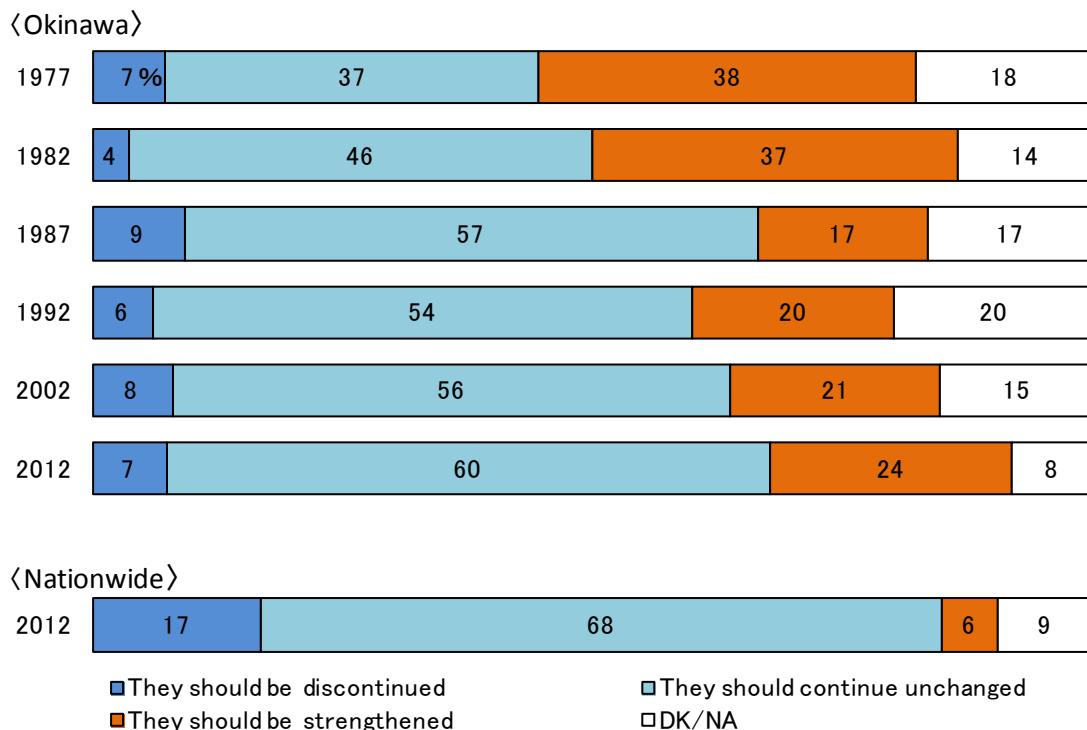
In both Okinawa and nationwide surveys, close to 70 percent said that the policies “have been effective” (“extremely effective” + “effective to some extent”), and there was almost no difference between Okinawan and nationwide answers (see Figure 5). Also in both, most respondents had a very positive view of the economic growth policies in Okinawa to date.

Figure 5. Have Okinawa Development Policies Been Effective?



Moreover, in 2012 respondents were asked about the future of national policies for support and development in Okinawa; respondents who answered, “They should be continued unchanged” were 60 percent in Okinawa and 68 percent nationwide (see Figure 6). The data show a sturdy majority in both Okinawa and nationwide who feel that “I look favorably on the growth promotion policies so far, and I believe they should be continued unchanged in the future.”

Figure 6. On the Future of Special Measures for Okinawa



On the other hand, 7 percent in Okinawa compared with 17 percent nationwide said about growth promotion policies from now on, “They should be discontinued,” and 24 percent in Okinawa compared with only 6 percent nationwide thought, “They should be strengthened.” There thus appears in these rates a subtle difference in perceptions between Okinawa and the nation as a whole.

2. Attitudes toward the Emperor and the Constitution

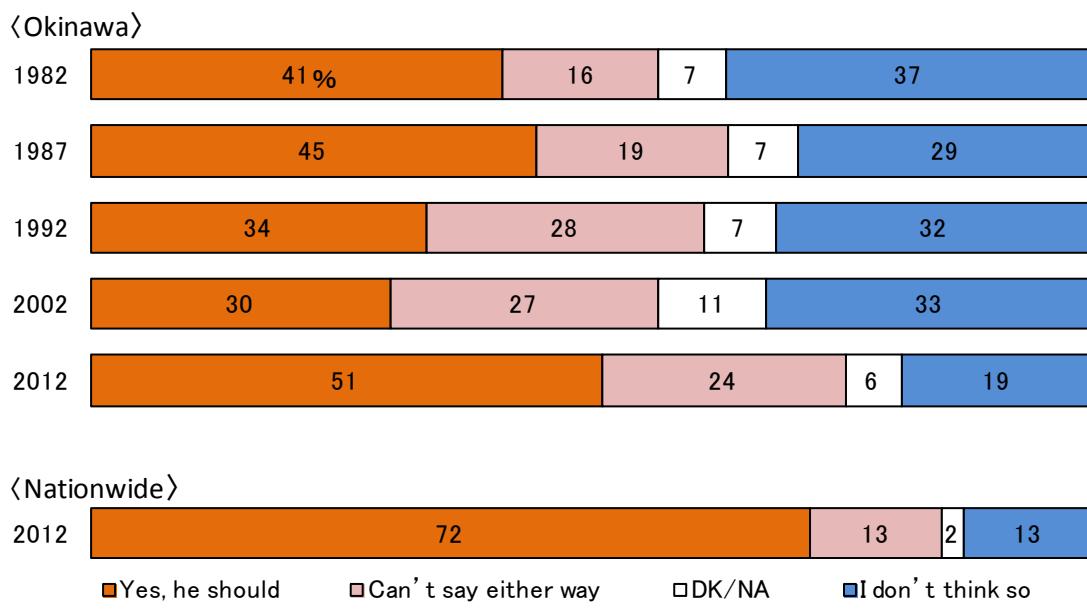
(1) Large Jump in Opinion that “The Emperor Should Be Venerated”

In Okinawa, the only part of Japan to experience land battle in its territory in the Pacific War, what views of the emperor and of the constitution do the residents have? We will look first at Okinawan views of the emperor.

Figure 7 shows the results of the question, “Should the emperor be venerated?” In the 2012 survey roughly half of Okinawa respondents answered “Yes, he should.” This is a lot higher than in 2002, when 30 percent gave that answer. We can presume that the higher 2012

rate was influenced at least in part by the emperor's visit to the earthquake and tsunami disaster area of northeast Japan in March 2011. One more point to consider is that between the 1987 and 1992 surveys, the "Yes, he should" answers decreased and "Can't say either way" rose, but in the interim the Showa emperor died and the present emperor was enthroned (1989).

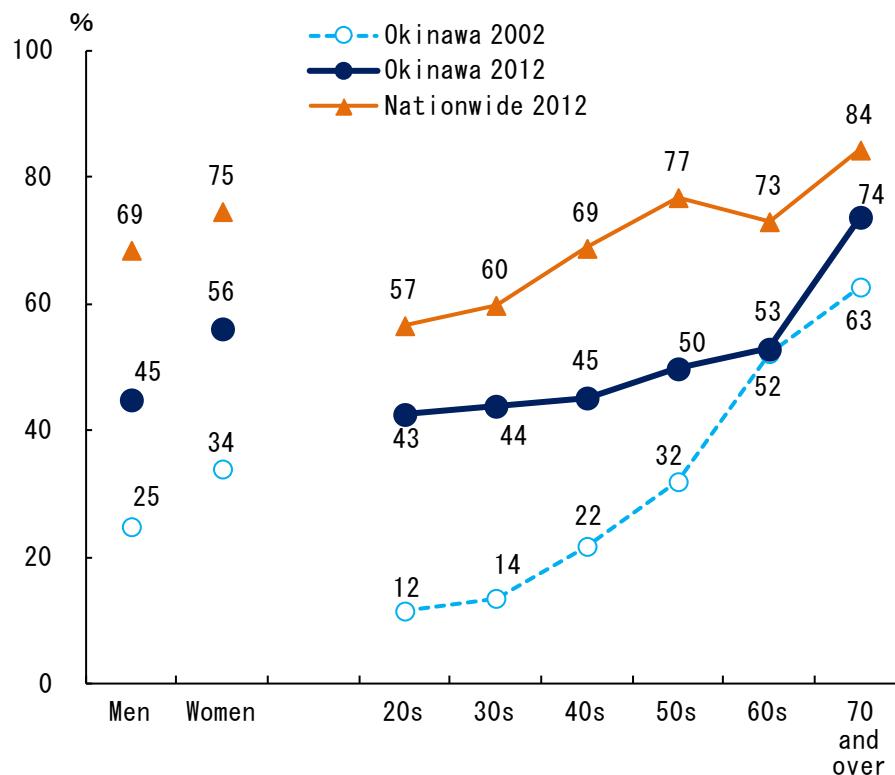
Figure 7. Should the Emperor Be Venerated?



Nationwide the "Yes, he should" response rate was even higher, reaching 72 percent. Thus, while the Okinawa rate increased over previous surveys, it was still lower in 2012 than that of the whole nation.

The "Yes, he should" answers are broken down into age groups for the Okinawa 2002 and 2012 and nationwide 2012 surveys and the data are shown in Figure 8. Look particularly at the difference between Okinawa 2002 and 2012. Compared with 10 years ago, conspicuously more respondents in the 20s-50s age groups said "Yes, he should" in 2012. There was no change in the tendency for that response rate to rise with increasing age, but the differences between age groups was smaller in 2012 than in 2002.

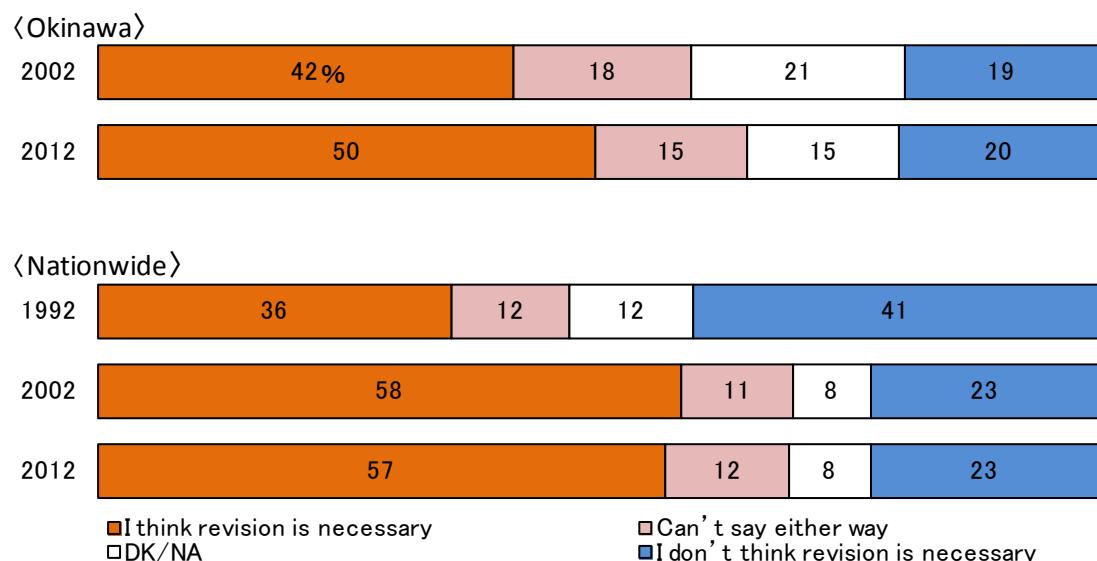
Figure 8. Should the Emperor Be Venerated? (“Yes, he should” answers by gender and age group)



(2) Half in Favor of Constitution Revision

Next, turning to thoughts about the constitution, respondents were asked whether or not they thought it necessary to revise the constitution. In 2012 half in Okinawa answered “revision is necessary,” which is higher than the 42 percent in the 2002 survey (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Constitution Revision Necessary or Not Necessary



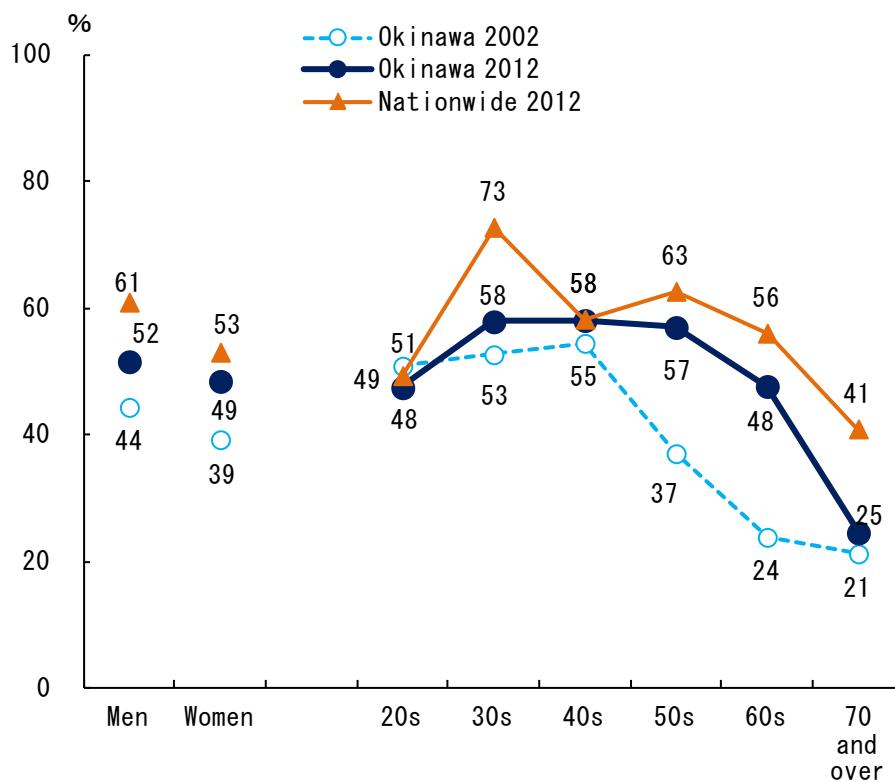
We can compare attitudes about revision of the constitution over time by looking at the results of national surveys. Nationwide between 1992 and 2002, the numbers who said revision is necessary shot up from 36 percent to almost 60 percent, and the latter rate held almost steady in the 2012 survey also.

When we compare “revision necessary” answers in Okinawa and the nation, in 2002 the Okinawa rate was 42 percent and the nation was 58 percent; but in 2012 the Okinawa rate was 50 percent and the nation 57 percent. The difference between them had diminished considerably in those 10 years, but the national percentage still remained higher than Okinawa’s.

When asked to give a reason for the answer “revision needed,” more than 70 percent of respondents in Okinawa and nationwide selected, “Because the times have changed and we now face problems we cannot respond to” without changing the constitution.

Let us look at age-group responses in the 2002 and 2012 Okinawa and 2012 nationwide surveys. Comparing Okinawa 2002 and 2012, many more respondents in 2012 in the 50s and 60s age groups thought revision is necessary than in 2002. And in 2012 close to 60 percent of Okinawans in the 30s-50s age groups gave that opinion (see Figure 10). While about half the Okinawan respondents in 2012 thought constitutional revision was needed, when it came to the specific question of revising article 9 (the renunciation of war clause) 24 percent said “revision necessary” and 55 percent said “revision not necessary.” Those percentages were almost the same as nationwide. Respondents in Okinawa and nationwide think the constitution should be revised, but it seems that most of them do not want any change in article 9.

Figure 10. Revision of Constitution (“Revision needed” responses by gender and age group)



3. Attitudes Regarding Security

(1) Opinion Divided on the Japan-U.S. Alliance

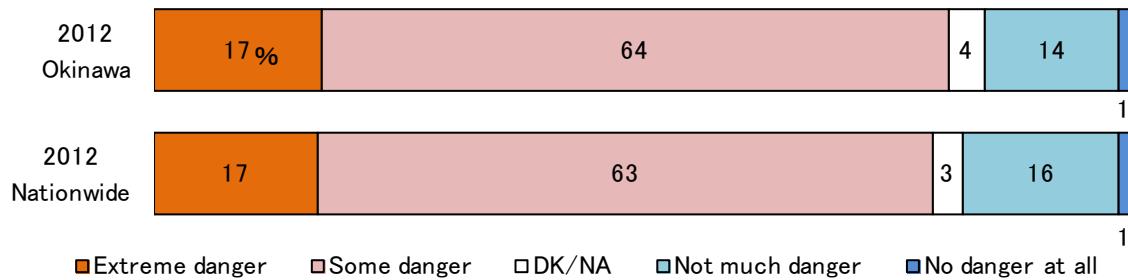
The last few years have witnessed events and developments that must certainly have affected the way Japanese think about their nation’s security, including moves by China to strengthen its military and missile tests by North Korea.

Are there differences between the perceptions of national security by Okinawa residents and all other Japanese? To answer that, first, we will look at a question posed about the danger of aggression in Japan coming from outside.

Respondents were asked, “What level of danger is there of aggression in Japan coming from another country?” About 80 percent of both Okinawa and national respondents answered that “There is danger” (including “an extremely high level” + “some level”), indicating that a large majority feel some kind of danger or threat from the outside (see Figure 11). Breaking down that answer, 17 percent in both Okinawa and the nation said that the danger is “extremely high”; those who said there is “some level” of danger were 64 percent

for Okinawa and 63 percent for the nation—almost the same. Generally, then, there was almost no difference between Okinawa and the nation as a whole regarding perceptions of danger of aggression from outside.

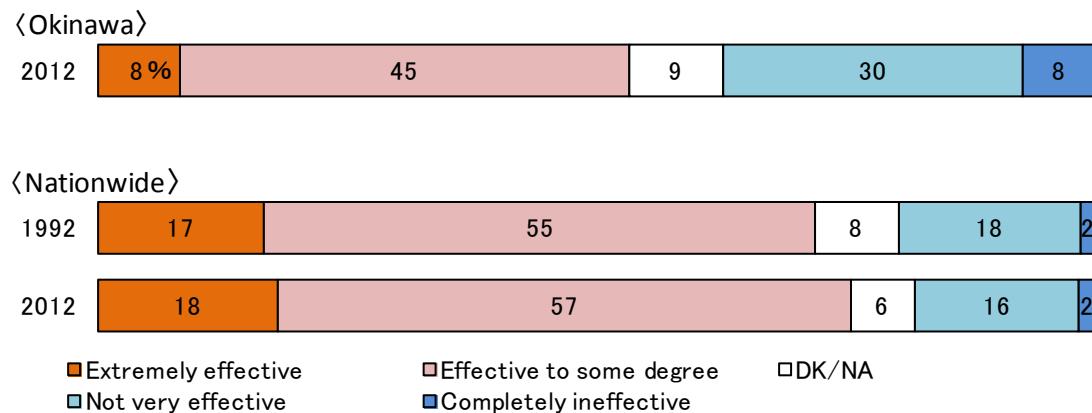
Figure 11. Danger of Aggression from Outside Japan



There was virtually no difference in perceptions of level of danger, but when it came to one method of avoiding that danger, namely the Japan-US security treaty, a difference emerged between Okinawa and the whole nation.

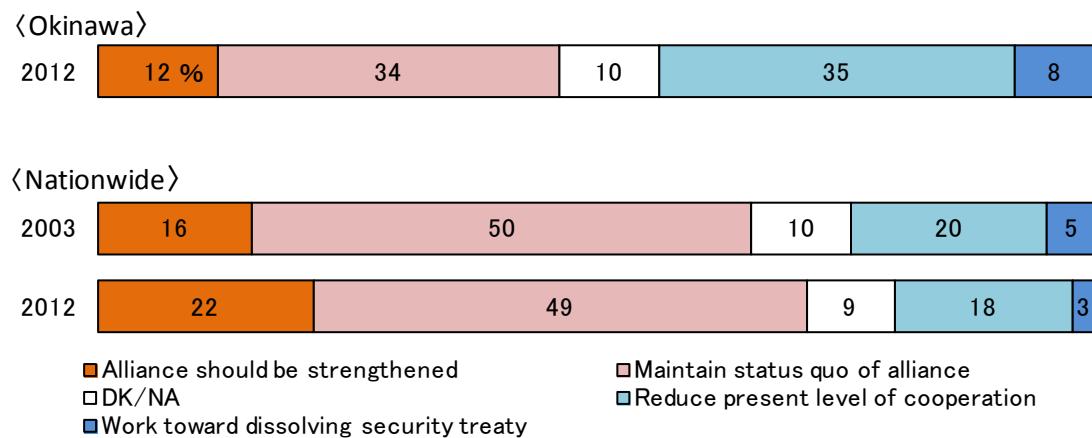
Figure 12 shows results of the question, “How effective is the Japan-U.S. security treaty in guaranteeing Japan’s peace and security?” In the 2012 survey, more than half the Okinawa respondents answered “It is effective” (“extremely effective” + “somewhat effective”). But the nationwide response was 75 percent, quite a bit higher than Okinawa, which highlights one of the large issues posed by the different perceptions held by Okinawans and mainland Japanese.

Figure 12. Is the Japan-US Security Treaty Effective in Guaranteeing Peace in Japan?



Probing a little deeper into the issue of the Japan-U.S. security treaty, respondents were asked “What kind of alliance should Japan have with the U.S. in the future?” Forty-six percent of Okinawa respondents said either “strengthen it” or “maintain the status quo” and rivaling that, 44 percent said “reduce the level of collaboration” or “dissolve the treaty” (see Figure 13). Nationwide, on the other hand, about 70 percent of 2012 respondents said either “strengthen it” or “maintain the status quo.” These percentages bring into sharp focus a significant difference between Okinawa and the nation as a whole.

Figure 13. Future of the Alliance with the United States (nationwide survey)



A general idea of the differences between Okinawa and mainland perceptions emerges when we consider if and how responses about the danger of aggression are related to the kind of U.S. alliance people want. If we look at the combined percentages of the responses “strengthen the alliance” and “keep the status quo” coming from those who chose “there is danger” and “there is no danger,” in Okinawa 49 percent derives from respondents saying “there is danger” and 39 percent from respondents saying “no danger.” For Okinawa, therefore that shows a marked difference, but there was almost no difference nationwide, with 73 percent from respondents saying “there is danger” and 71 percent from respondents saying “no danger” respondents (see Figure 14).

Figure 14. Form of Japan-U.S. Alliance (opinions classified according to perception of danger)

		Overall	Danger of aggression*	
			Danger exists	No danger
Okinawa	Total	1,123 persons	913	167
	Strengthen + status quo	46%	49	39
	Reduce + dissolve	44	44	53
	DK/NA	10	7	8
Nationwide	Total	1,117 persons	891	192
	Strengthen+ status quo	71%	73	71
	Reduce + dissolve	20	21	21
	DK/NA	9	7	8

Danger exists = extreme danger + some danger

No danger = not much danger + no danger at all

* Because the real numbers of “DK/NA” responses were so small, they are not listed here.

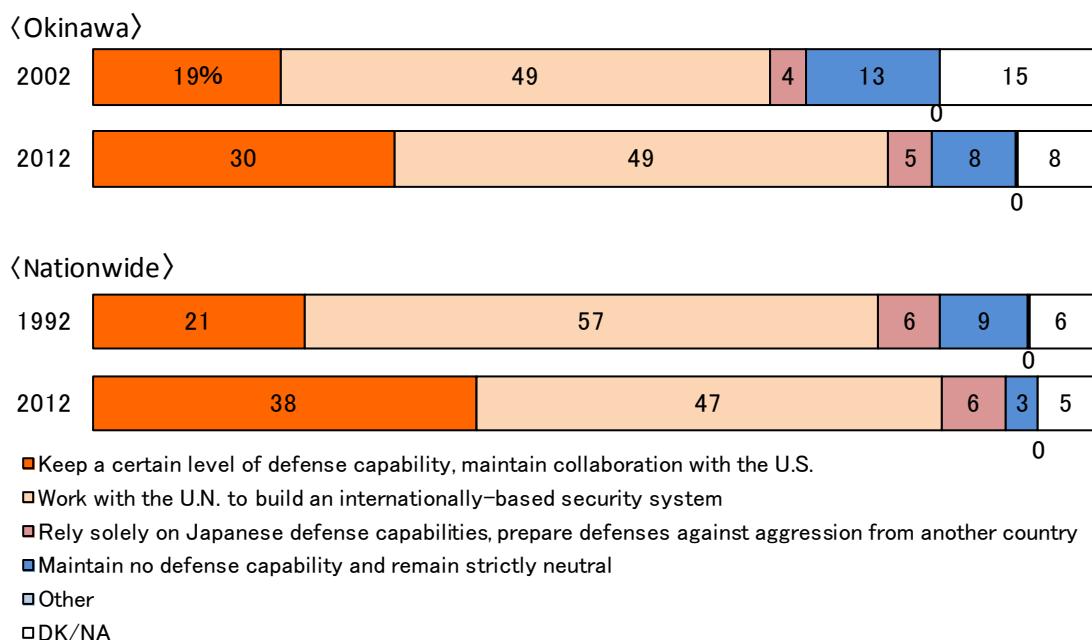
In other words, one factor that affects Okinawan opinions about the kind of alliance, if any, they want with the U.S. is their perception of the “danger of aggression” by another country, but that is not true nationwide. The difference in attitudes that emerges here is related to the different situations in Okinawa and the mainland—Okinawa residents have their own separate set of circumstances that come to bear when they make judgments about the American alliance. One of the weightiest of those circumstances seems certainly to be the sense of being burdened by the large and numerous American military facilities located within their prefecture.

Section 4 will examine Okinawan attitudes toward the American bases in more detail.

(2) “Japan-U.S. Collaboration” Option Rising but Lower than Nationwide

Surveys from the past and in 2012 contain a question whose responses enable us to see changes over time in Okinawa residents’ views of the Japan-U.S. relationship. Figure 15 shows the results of the question, “What do you think is the best way to insure Japan’s security from now on?” Respondents were asked to choose from among four options.

Figure 15. Opinions on the Most Effective Way to Insure Japan's Security



In the 2012 Okinawa survey, 49 percent selected “Work with the U.N.” and 30 percent chose “Maintain collaboration with the U.S.” Nationwide 47 percent chose the former and 38 percent chose “Maintain collaboration with the U.S.” It should be noted here that in both Okinawa and national surveys, about half chose the “Work with the U.N.” option. Furthermore, the 2012 Okinawa response rate for “Maintain collaboration with the U.S.” was higher than 10 years ago. This is the only option of the four in the Okinawa poll that shows an increase, and it is large—rising from 19 to 30 percent. But that is still lower than the nationwide 38 percent.

The pattern of response rates in Okinawa that rise over time but still leave a gap with the mainland is also found in the cases of “The emperor should be venerated” and “Constitutional revision is necessary.”

These tendencies can be taken to indicate that, with progress being made in the integration of Okinawa and the mainland, differences of perceptions and attitudes between Okinawans and mainland residents have steadily diminished. Yet the very fact that differences of this degree still exist 40 years after reversion attests to the tenacity and depth of various issues concerning Okinawa.

4. U.S. Bases on Okinawa

(1) Majority Now Support U.S. Military Presence

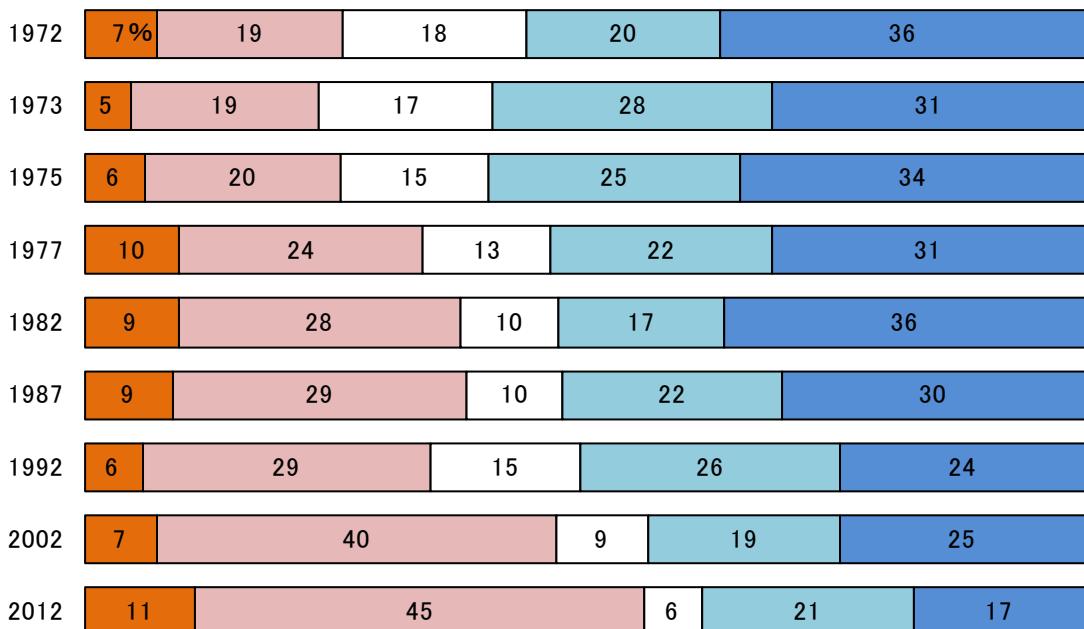
When the San Francisco Peace Treaty was signed in 1952, it brought to an end the U.S. military occupation that began right after the Pacific War, and that year Okinawa was separated from the rest of Japan and put under U.S. administration. Even though Okinawa was returned to Japanese sovereignty in 1972, under the terms of the U.S.-Japanese security treaty Japan is required to provide military bases to the United States, and most of the American military hardware and personnel in Japan have continued to be located on Okinawa; some 74 percent of the total area of facilities for exclusive use by the U.S. forces in Japan is concentrated there. The U.S. bases take up about 10 percent of the total area of Okinawa prefecture, and nearly 20 percent of the main island of Okinawa.¹⁰

The 1972 NHK survey of Okinawa residents conducted immediately before Okinawa's reversion to Japan included the question: "What do you think about the continued presence of U.S. bases in Okinawa even after reversion?" (see Figure 16). In response, 7 percent of Okinawan residents answered that for Japan's security it was "necessary" and 19 percent answered "inevitable," for a combined total of 26 percent. These were far surpassed by those who said "unnecessary" (20 percent) and "dangerous" (36 percent), which comes to a total of 56 percent. That tendency continued for 20 years, until 1992.

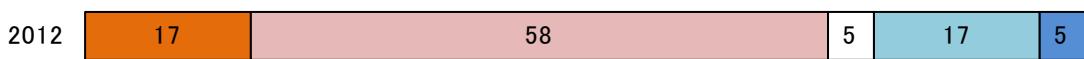
¹⁰ Okinawa-ken Chiji Koshitsu Kichi Taisaku-ka [Okinawa Prefectural Government, Governor's Office, U.S. Base Countermeasures Division], *Okinawa no Beigun oyobi Jieitai kichi (Tokei shiryoshu)* [U.S. Military Bases and Japan's Self-Defense Forces Bases on Okinawa (Statistical Reference Materials)], p. 2, March 2012.

Figure 16. U.S. Bases and Japan's Security

⟨Okinawa⟩



⟨Nationwide⟩



■ Necessary □ Inevitable □ DK/NA □ Unnecessary ■ Dangerous

During the following 10 years until 2002, the 30th year since reversion, the proportion of Okinawans who responded either “necessary” or “inevitable” increased greatly, to nearly half of the total, slightly higher than that of those who said either “unnecessary” or “dangerous.” Of the responses “necessary” and “inevitable,” the latter figure rose, and of the proportion of “unnecessary” and “dangerous” responses, the former decreased. In other words, there was a shift in attitudes away from critical responses to this question toward more middle-of-the-road responses.

In the latest survey, conducted 40 years after reversion, a majority (56 percent) of Okinawan respondents answered either “necessary” or “inevitable,” and this time, not only “inevitable” but “unnecessary” also increased. The proportion who answered “dangerous” dropped from 25 percent to 17 percent compared with one decade ago. With that, those saying either “unnecessary” or “dangerous” shrunk to 38 percent (from 44 percent in 2002). In sum,

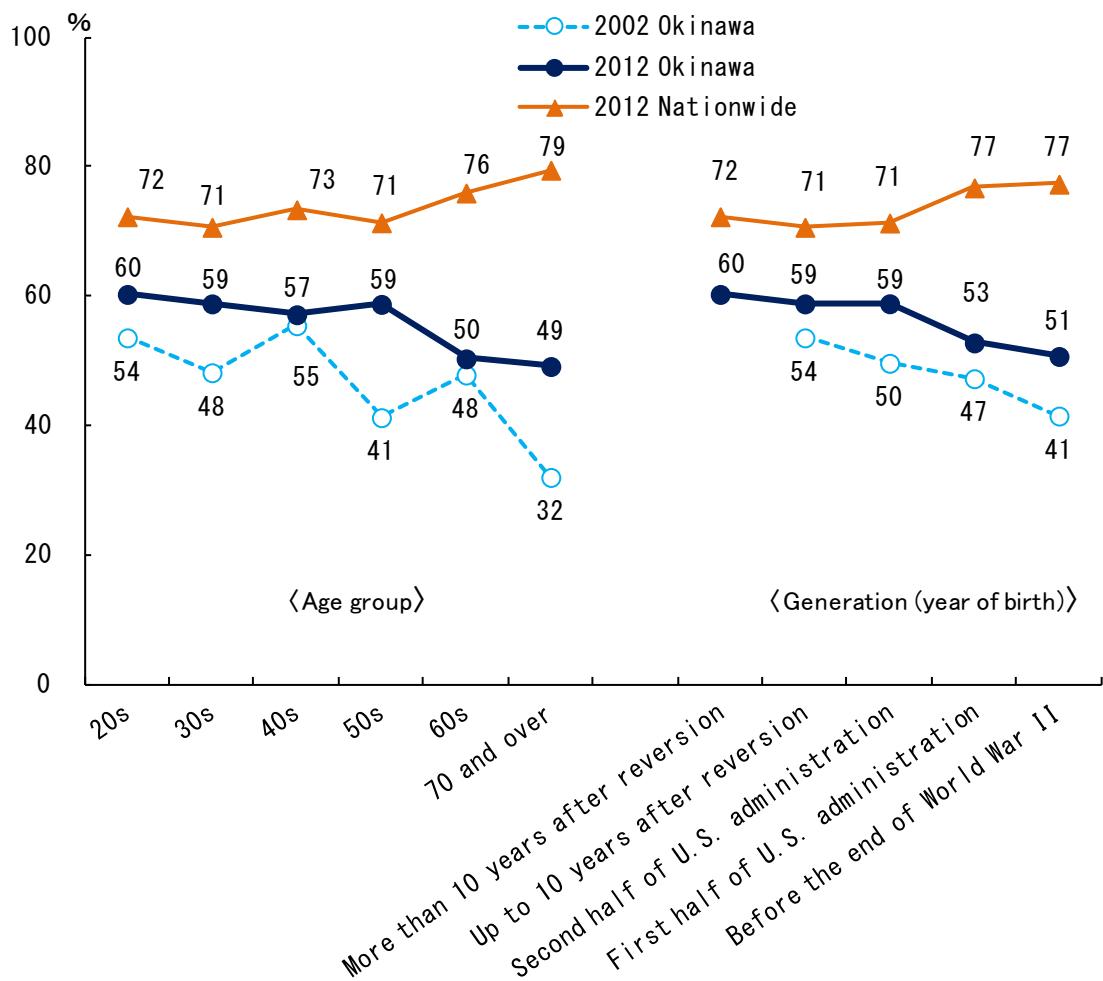
the thinking of the Okinawan people about the U.S. military bases has changed significantly over the past two decades.

Comparing Okinawa and the nation as a whole, the percentages nationwide for both “necessary” and “inevitable” responses are higher than in Okinawa. Those answering either “necessary” or “inevitable” were 74 percent nationwide, considerably higher than Okinawa’s 56 percent.

Thinking Differs by Year of Birth

How has the thinking of Okinawans changed over these 10 years in terms of “necessary” and “inevitable” responses? (see Figure 17) Some age groups show much greater change than others, but by year of birth Okinawans show relatively little change over the past decade. In Okinawa, people differ by generation (year of birth) in their attitude toward U.S. bases; and the older the generation the smaller the proportion regarding the American military bases as “necessary” or “inevitable.” Since each generation shows a similar attitudinal change, the change can be presumed to have occurred in accordance with developments in the past 10 years.

Figure 17. U.S. Bases and Japan’s Security (“Necessary + “Inevitable”; by Age Group and Generation)



A comparison of the 2012 survey results in Okinawa and nationwide reveals that the percentage of people in their 60s or older who said either “necessary” or “inevitable” has decreased in Okinawa while it has increased nationwide.

More Support U.S. Bases than Before among “Useful” Respondents

Does the foregoing tendency have anything to do with thinking about “U.S. bases and jobs”? Let us first look at what people in Okinawa think about the U.S. bases and jobs. In response to the question, “Is the presence of American military bases in Okinawa useful to your life and job?” Sixty-nine percent said it is “not useful” (either “not at all” or “more likely, no”), far exceeding those saying it is useful (either “yes, it is” or “more likely, yes”).

accounting for 29 percent. This tendency has remained unchanged over the past 35 years, with a majority continuing to regard the U.S. bases as “not useful.”

Next, let us consider how the thinking about “U.S. bases and jobs” is related to views of American bases in Okinawa as necessary or unnecessary (see Figure 18). Among people who see the bases as “not useful,” there is little change in the proportion of “unnecessary” plus “dangerous” compared with 10 years ago, while the proportion of “necessary” plus “inevitable” has risen, now almost equaling that of “unnecessary” plus “dangerous.” Among people who consider the American bases “useful,” on the other hand, the proportion of “unnecessary” plus “dangerous” has decreased and that of “necessary” plus “inevitable” has risen sharply. As this shows, the increase in Okinawans who think the bases either “necessary” or “inevitable” is related to the sharp rise in Okinawans who consider the bases “useful” and “necessary” or “inevitable.”

Figure 18. U.S. Bases and Japan’s Security (“U.S. Bases and Jobs”; Okinawa)

		Overall	U.S. bases and jobs (summary)*	
			Useful	Not useful
2002	Total	587 persons	166	383
	“Necessary” + “Inevitable”	47%	61	41
	“Unnecessary” + “Dangerous”	44	31	50
	DK	9	7	9
2012	Total	1,123 persons	324	771
	“Necessary” + “Inevitable”	56%	79	47
	“Unnecessary” + “Dangerous”	38	18	48
	DK	6	3	5

* Due to very low numbers, “DK/NA” figures are not listed here.

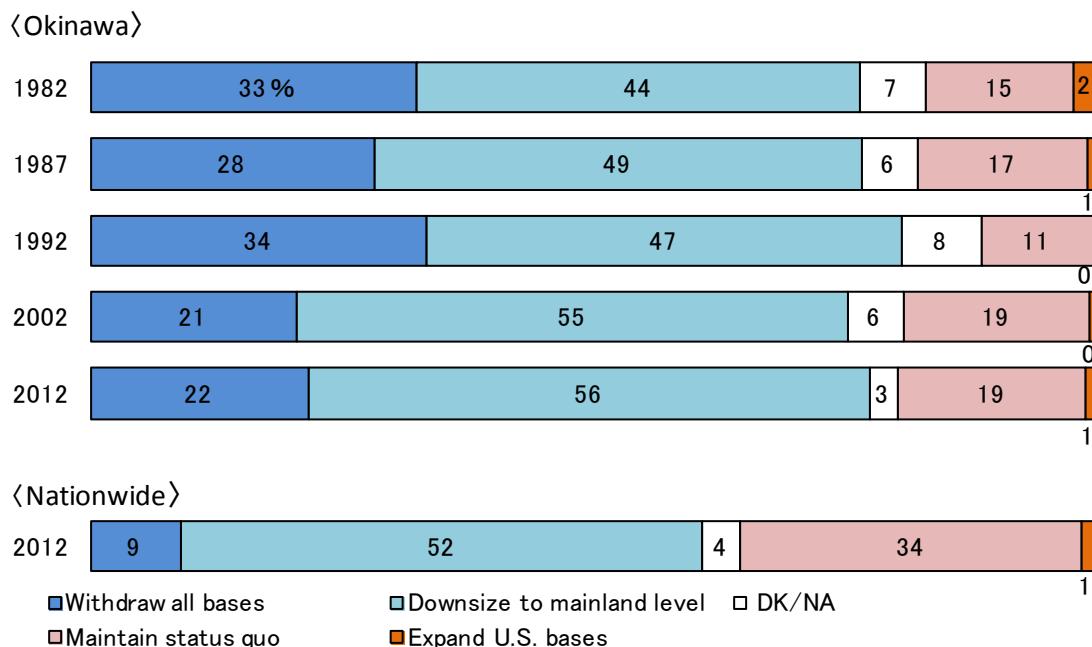
Note: The shaded areas indicate highest rate per category (statistically significant 95 percent reliability)

(2) Eight Out of Ten Call for “Reduction”

Has their thinking about the U.S. bases in general changed, too? Regarding their feelings about the U.S. military bases in their prefecture (see Figure 19), until 1992 about 3 out of 10 Okinawans had supported “withdraw all bases” of the bases, but this rate sharply dropped to only 2 out of 10 by 2002. In 2002 Okinawans in support of “downsize to mainland level” increased to a majority. Those saying “maintain the status quo” also increased, coming very close to those supporting “withdraw all bases,” and this state remained almost the same

in 2012. Supporting either “withdraw all bases” or “downsize to mainland level,” nearly 8 out of 10 Okinawans prefer some degree of reduction of U.S. military facilities. This rate has changed little over the past three decades. Okinawans have been consistent in their wish to have the presence of U.S. bases reduced. Compared with nationwide survey results, in Okinawa more people support “withdraw all bases” and fewer people support “maintain the status quo.”

Figure 19. Views of U.S. Bases on Okinawa

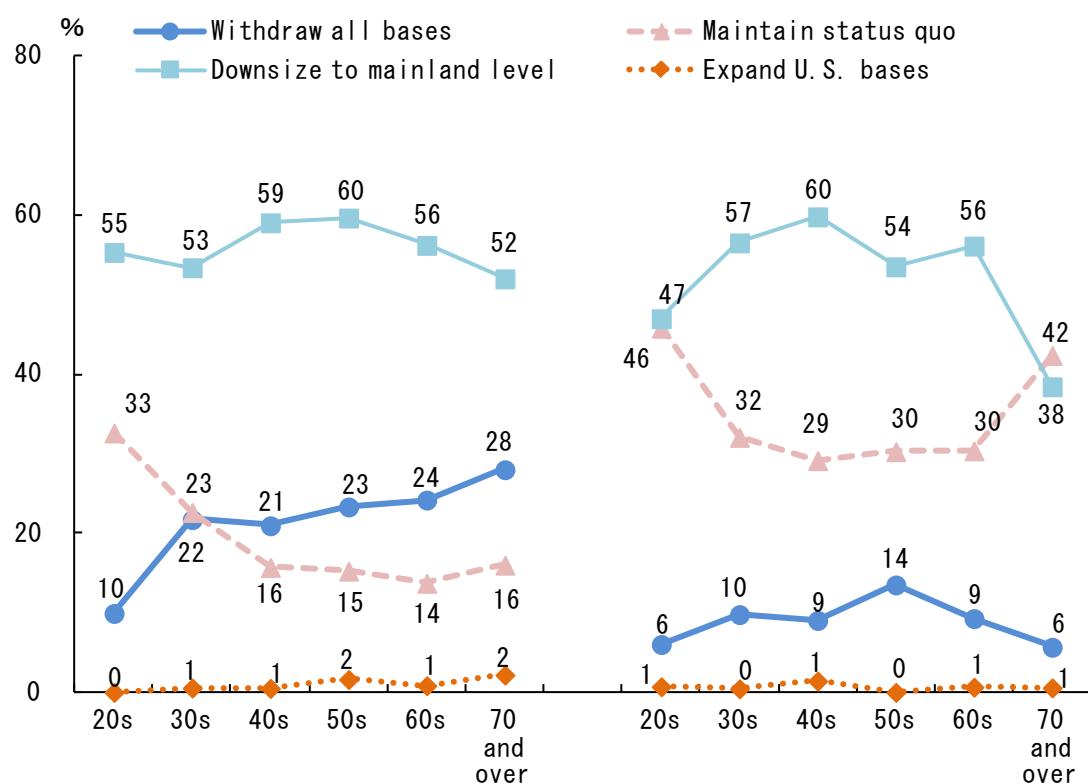


Okinawans’ thinking about the bases seems related to whether they experienced the Battle of Okinawa late in the Pacific War or whether they lived somewhere else before they moved to Okinawa. Among those with the experience of the Battle of Okinawa, more people support “withdraw all bases” and fewer people support “downsize to mainland level” than people nationwide. Among Okinawans who had once lived in other prefectures, the “withdraw all bases” response rate is slightly higher and that of “maintain the status quo” is lower than nationwide.

Let us take a look at Okinawa and nationwide figures by age group (see Figure 20). In Okinawa “downsize to mainland level” is highest among any age group (more than 50 percent). As the age group gets older, the rate of “maintain the status quo” is more likely to

decrease and that of “withdraw all bases” to increase. Among Okinawans in their 40s and older, “withdraw all bases” is higher than “maintain the status quo.” Nationwide, on the other hand, among people in their 20s and in their 70s and older, “maintain the status quo” and “downsize to mainland level” are almost the same. Among those in their 30s to 60s, “downsize to mainland level” is the highest, at nearly 60 percent. “Maintain the status quo” is far higher than “withdraw all bases” for all age groups. In this way, by age group Okinawa clearly differs from the nation as a whole in views of the U.S. military basis, but many young Okinawans in their 20s support “the status quo,” showing a similar tendency to the nationwide response to this option.

Figure 20. Views of U.S. Bases on Okinawa (by age group)

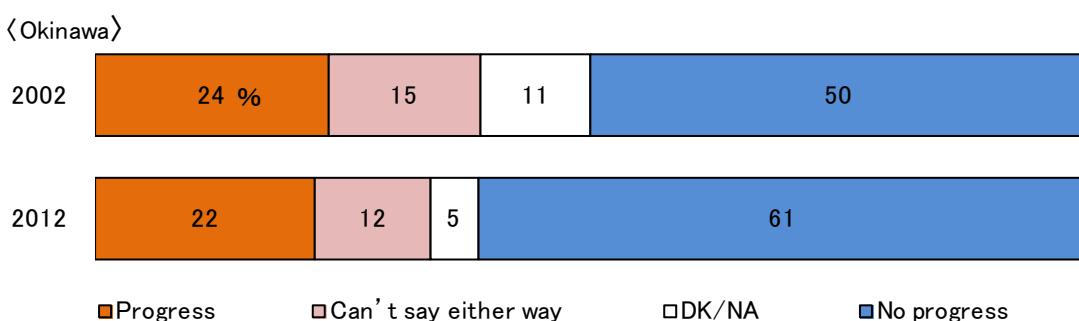


A Majority See Little Progress in the Reduction of Bases

The total area of facilities used exclusively by U.S. forces on Okinawa has decreased by 18 percent over the past 40 years, since Okinawa's reversion to Japan.¹¹ What do Okinawans think about the progress or lack of progress in the reduction of U.S. bases?

Asked, “Do you think there has been any progress in the realignment and reduction of U.S. bases on Okinawa?” (Figure 21), only 22 percent replied yes while those who said “no progress” were 61 percent, which is higher compared with 10 years ago.

Figure 21. Realignment and Reduction of U.S. Bases



Regarding the reasons those respondents gave for scant progress in the realignment and reduction of American bases on Okinawa, the answer “difficulty of relocation [of bases]” showed a large increase in 2012 compared with 2002. Even if the controversial Futenma U.S. Marine Corps base is relocated to Henoko in the city of Nago in Okinawa, it will not mean a reduction in bases. Relocating bases to a site or sites outside Okinawa is proving extremely difficult, too, and this current reality is presumably what pushed up the proportion of “no progress” responses.

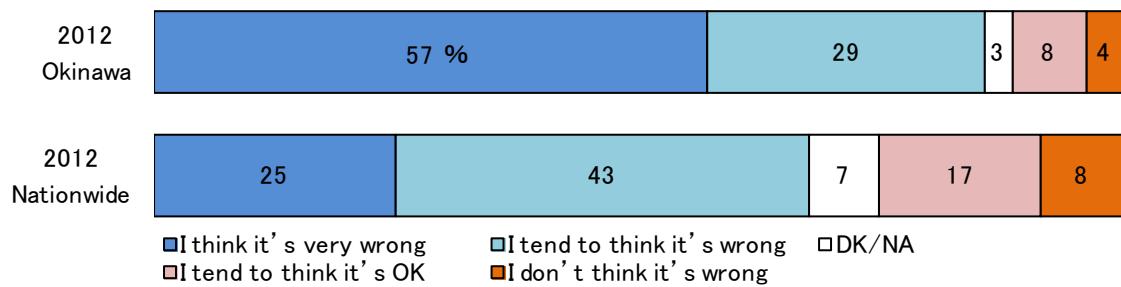
A Majority Considers Concentration of Bases on Okinawa “Wrong”

Asked about the fact that “Okinawa has 74 percent of the facilities for exclusive use by U.S. forces in Japan” (Figure 22), 57 percent of Okinawans thought it was “wrong.” Those who said either “I think it’s wrong” or “I tend to think it’s wrong” together make up 86 percent, which is an overwhelming majority. Nationwide, the response rate for those two

¹¹ *Ibid.*

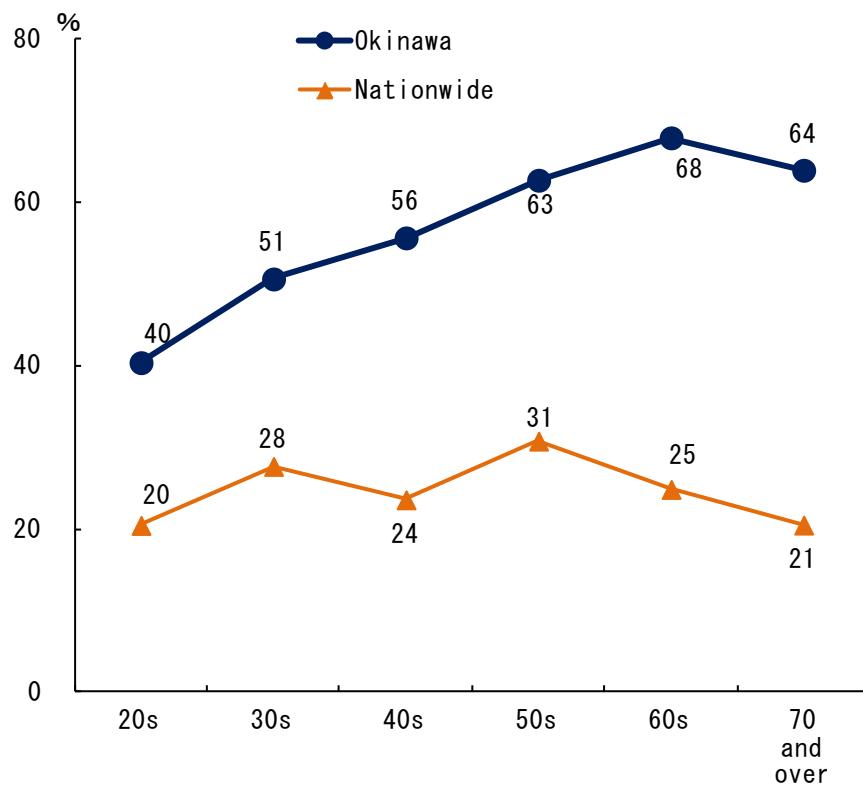
answers together is 68 percent, which is a majority, but the answer “I think it’s wrong” by itself is 25 percent, which is much lower than that for Okinawans (57 percent), demonstrating a vast difference in views on this subject between people nationwide and residents of Okinawa

Figure 22. About the Concentration of U.S. Bases on Okinawa



By age group (Figure 23), there is not much difference nationwide, but in Okinawa the older the age group the higher the percentage of people who believe the concentration of bases to be “wrong.”

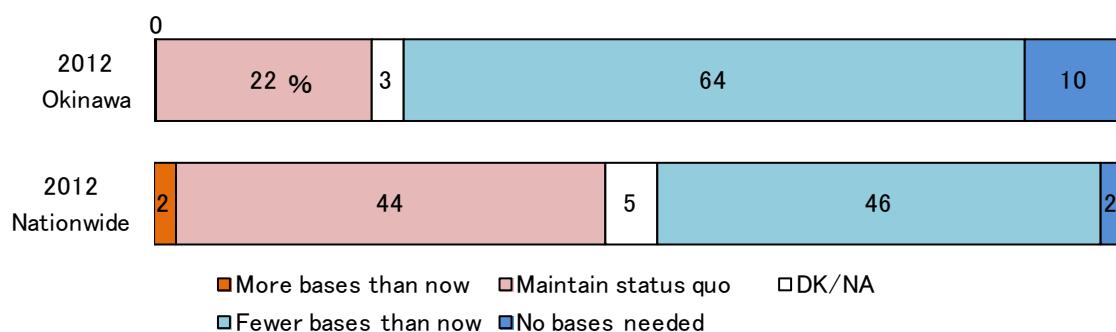
Figure 23. About the Concentration of U.S. Bases on Okinawa (“I think it’s wrong”; by age group)



(3) Nationwide-Okinawa Differences on the Future Status of Bases

The 2012 surveys in Okinawa and nationwide also asked the question as to what the future should be for U.S. military bases not just in Okinawa but anywhere in Japan (see Figure 24). In Okinawa the largest proportion, or 64 percent, chose the option “fewer bases than now,” followed by “the status quo” (22 percent) and “no bases needed” (10 percent). Nationwide, “fewer bases than now” (46 percent) was very closely followed by “the status quo” (44 percent).

Figure 24. Future Status of U.S. Bases



Here let us look at people’s thinking about the future status of U.S. bases in Japan in connection with the U.S. bases in Okinawa (see Figure 25). Among people who support either “fewer bases than now” or “no bases needed,” concerning the Okinawa bases 90 percent in Okinawa and 84 percent nationwide support either “withdraw all bases” or “downsize to mainland level.” Here we can see that thinking about the American bases in Okinawa is almost the same as views about the bases in all of Japan. Concerning the U.S. bases in Japan, among those supporting either “more bases than now” or “the status quo,” 55 percent in Okinawa and 58 percent nationwide—a majority in both cases—chose one of those options for the bases in Okinawa. On the other hand, 44 percent in Okinawa and 39 percent nationwide indicated support for either “withdraw all bases” or “downsize to mainland level.” Those who connect Okinawa’s burden with the future status of U.S. bases in Japan are more numerous than people who do not, but it is worth noting that, even among Japanese nationwide who prefer to maintain U.S. bases in Japan, about 40 percent think the U.S. bases in Okinawa should be reduced.

Figure 25. Okinawans' View of U.S. Bases (by Responses about the Future Status of U.S. Bases in Japan)

		Overall	About future status of U.S. bases in Japan*	
			More bases + status quo	Fewer bases + unnecessary
Okinawa	Total	1,123 persons	252	834
	Withdraw all bases	22%	6	27
	Downsize to mainland level	56	38	63
	Maintain status quo	19	54	8
	Expand U.S. bases	1	1	0
	DK/NA	3	1	1
Nationwide	Total	1,117 persons	521	537
	Withdraw all bases	9%	3	15
	Downsize to mainland level	52	37	69
	Maintain status quo	34	56	14
	Expand U.S. bases	1	2	1
	DK/NA	4	2	2

"More bases + status quo" = "More bases than now" + "maintain status quo"

"Fewer bases + unnecessary" = "Fewer bases than now" + "no bases needed"

* Due to very low numbers, "DK/NA" figures are not listed here.

Note: The shaded areas indicate highest rate per category (statistically significant 95 percent reliability)

(4) About Relocation of Futenma Base

The incident of an Okinawan girl being raped by three U.S. servicemen in 1995 led to a 1996 U.S.-Japanese agreement on closing Futenma marine air base and returning the site to Japan on the condition that the base be relocated somewhere else in Okinawa prefecture. In 2009 the Democratic Party of Japan came to power in the general election. Its head at the time, Hatoyama Yukio, had promised that the Futenma base would at least be moved outside the prefecture, but the following year the party decided to move the base to the city of Nago as agreed in 2006 between the then ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the United States. In a subsequent Okinawa gubernatorial election (2010), Governor Nakaima Hirokazu, who had pledged to relocate the base outside the prefecture, was reelected. So, opinion has been divided between Okinawa and the Japanese government over the Futenma base relocation issue, and it remains unresolved.

Asked about the move of the Futenma base to Nago (see Figure 26), 21 percent of Okinawan respondents said "approve" (combining the answers "strongly approve" and "somewhat approve") while a great majority, or 72 percent said "oppose" the plan (combining "strongly oppose" and "somewhat oppose"). Nationwide, 36 percent "approve" and 45

percent “oppose.” This indicates a clear opinion gap between people in Okinawa and nationwide regarding the future of the Futenma base.

Figure 26. Relocation of Futenma Base to Nago City: “Approve” or “Oppose”?



Let us also consider the “approve” or “oppose” responses to questions concerning the transfer of Futenma base to Nago, looking at respondent groups who want to maintain “the status quo,” “downsize to mainland level,” or “withdraw all bases” (Figure 27). We find that the “approve” and “oppose” options elicited more or less the same percentages from Okinawans who support “the status quo.” On the other hand, responses by Okinawans who want to “downsize to mainland level” or “withdraw all bases” show a large difference; those choosing “approve” are far fewer than those who said “oppose.” Nationwide, more people chose “approve” among “the status quo” respondents and more people chose “oppose” among respondents who chose “withdraw all bases” and “downsize to mainland level.” In both Okinawa and nationwide, the rate of “oppose” is highest among the “withdraw all bases” group, followed by the “downsize to mainland level” group and “the status quo” group, in that order. This “oppose” rate is higher in Okinawa than nationwide.

Figure 27. Relocation of Futenma Base to Nago City: “Approve” or “Oppose”? (according to How People View U.S. Bases)

		Overall	Views of U.S. bases on Okinawa*		
			Maintain status quo	Downsize to mainland level	Withdraw all bases
Okinawa	Total	1,123 persons	212	630	244
	Approve	21%	42	18	9
	Opposed	72	48	76	89
	DK/NA	7	10	6	3
Nationwide	Total	1,117 persons	380	582	101
	Approve	36%	51	33	9
	Opposed	45	28	52	80
	DK/NA	19	21	15	11

“Approve” = “Strongly approve” + “Somewhat approve”

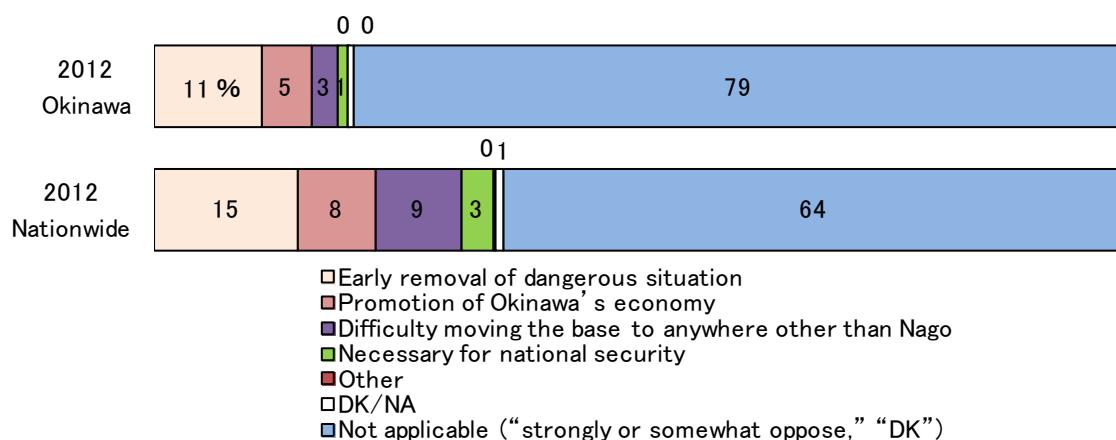
“Oppose” = “Strongly oppose” + “Somewhat oppose”

* Due to very low numbers, “Expand U.S. bases” and “DK/NA” figures are not listed here.

Note: The shaded areas indicate highest rate per category (statistically significant 95 percent reliability)

The surveys then asked those who “approve” relocating Futenma base to Nago the reason for their opinion. Figure 28 shows the reasons and answer rates, together with the proportion of those who do not support relocation. In Okinawa the reason chosen by the highest number of respondents (11 percent) is “to remove a dangerous situation.” The base is located right in the middle of town. In the nationwide survey, in which more people “approve” than Okinawans, the most frequently chosen reasons are “to remove a dangerous situation” (15 percent), “difficulty relocating anywhere other than Nago” (9 percent, as compared with 3 percent among Okinawans), and “to promote Okinawa’s economy” (8 percent).

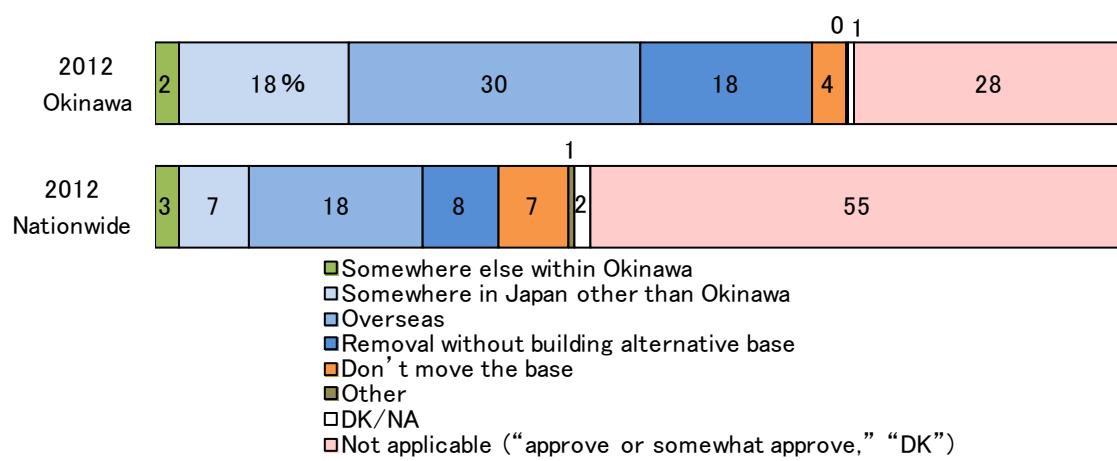
Figure 28. Reasons for Approval of Futenma Base Relocation



A Majority of Okinawans Want Futenma Relocated Outside Okinawa

Next, the survey asked those who said they opposed the relocation what should be done about relocation in the future. Figure 29 shows their proportion in the sample, as well as the proportion of those not opposed. In Okinawa 30 percent said the base should be moved “overseas,” followed by “somewhere in Japan other than Okinawa” (18 percent) and “removal of the base without building any alternative facility anywhere” (18 percent). This means a majority 66 percent thought the base should not be in Okinawa. In the nationwide survey those who answered likewise made up only 33 percent, a sharp contrast with people in Okinawa.

Figure 29. To Where Should Futenma Base Be Moved?



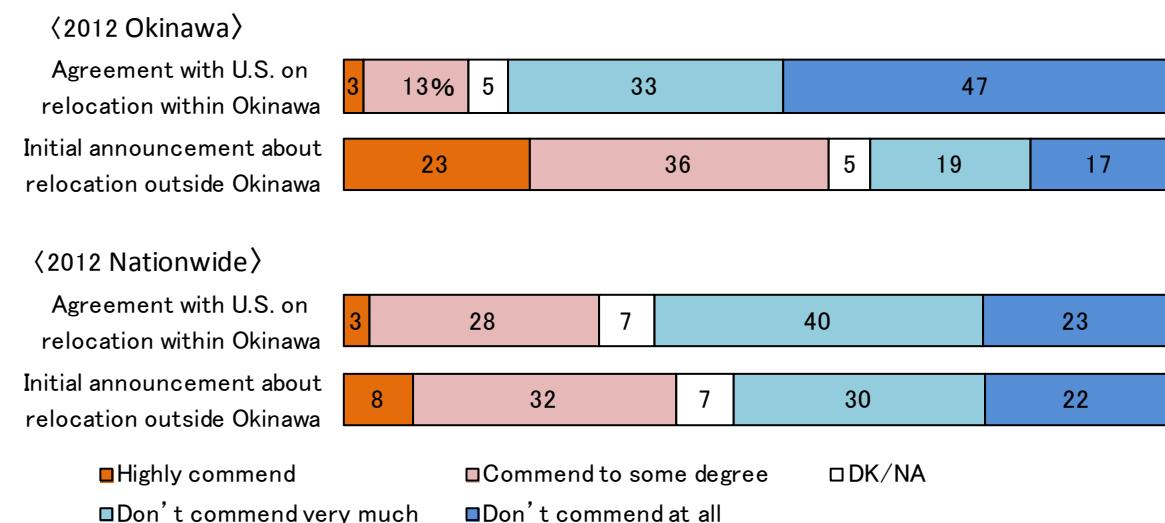
By gender in Okinawa, the highest percentage among both men and women opted to move it “overseas,” followed by, in the case of men, “somewhere in Japan other than Okinawa,” and in the case of women, “removal without building any alternative facility anywhere.” By age group, among Okinawans in their 20s the highest percentage was “removal,” while “staying where it is” was 14 percent among these young people, higher than any other age group.

The Majority Appreciate Government Efforts to Relocate outside Okinawa

Asked in the 2012 survey if they commend the Futenma base relocation policy of the Democratic Party (in power at the time of the survey) (see Figure 30), 15 percent of Okinawa

residents chose “commend” (“highly” or “to some degree”) the administration’s agreement with the U.S. on “relocation within Okinawa,” while a huge majority (80 percent) did “not commend” it (“very much” or “at all”). Regarding the prime minister’s initial announcement that the administration would seek to move the Futenma base outside Okinawa, more Okinawa residents (59 percent) said they “commend” the decision than those who did not (36 percent).

Figure 30. Evaluation of Government Effort about Futenma Base Relocation



Nationwide, more people commend the government agreement with the U.S. than do Okinawans, but those who do not commend it are also more numerous than those who do. As for the initial government announcement about relocating the Futenma base outside Okinawa, fewer people nationwide commend it compared with Okinawans, and, unlike Okinawans, more people nationwide commend it than those who do not. Thus there is a distinct gap between Okinawa and the nation as a whole in the appraisal of the government’s Futenma relocation policy.

(5) Party Support Has Less Influence on Okinawan Views than Nationwide

Let us turn now to correlations between attitudes toward the U.S. military bases on Okinawa and political party support (see Figure 31). Concerning the U.S. bases relationship

to national security, by far the most frequent opinion in both Okinawa and nationwide surveys regardless of party allegiance was “they are inevitable.”

Figure 31. Opinions about Okinawa’s American Bases (by Party Support)

		Okinawa					Nationwide		
Overall	persons	party support*			Overall	persons	party support*		
		LDP	DPJ	NP			LDP	DPJ	NP
US bases related to Japan’s security									
Necessary for Japan’s security	11%	13	16	10	17%	21	25	14	
Inevitable if we want to insure Japan’s security	45	50	58	43	58	57	61	57	
Unnecessary for Japan’s security	21	17	15	22	17	17	8	19	
Dangerous for Japan’s security	17	14	8	19	5	2	3	5	
DK/NA	6	5	3	6	5	2	3	5	
View of US bases									
Withdraw all bases	22	16	12	21	9	10	4	10	
Downsize to mainland level	56	56	58	59	52	47	42	56	
Maintain status quo	19	25	27	18	34	40	51	29	
Expand US bases	1	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	
DK/NA	3	3	2	2	4	1	4	4	
Approve/oppose Futenma air base move to Nago (summary)									
Approve (strongly + somewhat)	21	24	34	19	36	44	54	30	
Oppose (strongly + somewhat)	72	69	61	75	45	45	32	49	
DK/NA	7	7	5	6	19	11	14	21	

*Due to very low numbers, figures for parties other than LDP and DPJ, as well as for “DK/NA” are not listed.

Notes: The shaded areas indicate highest rate per category (statistically significant 95 percent reliability)

However, in the nationwide survey, the first choice for Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) supporters was “maintain the status quo” (51 percent); in Okinawa regardless of party support a majority opted for “downsize to mainland level.” Also on the question of moving Futenma air base to the city of Nago, nationwide, most of the LDP supporters chose “approve” while “approve” and “oppose” responses were about equal for the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) group. In Okinawa, on the other hand, most said “oppose” regardless of party. Thus, Okinawa residents, no matter what their party support, had higher and more consistently negative views on the U.S. bases and the proposed transfer of Futenma base to Nago than nationwide. It becomes evident, therefore, that in Okinawa these feelings about the bases are widely shared and transcend party support.

5. Summary

(1) Differing Perceptions of U.S. Base Issues and Japan's Security

Out of the 59 questions that appeared in the 2012 Okinawa survey, 43 were asked in the nationwide survey as well. The responses to each of those 43 common questions were analyzed and the differences between Okinawa and nationwide answers were computed for each one. Then the number of questions where responses differed by 5 percent or more was counted. Those questions grouped by theme are shown in Figure 32. The questions whose responses showed the largest Okinawa-nationwide differences in attitudes concerned the U.S. military bases and the security of Japan. Specific questions that elicited significantly different responses between Okinawa and the nation as a whole were: “Should the emperor be venerated?” “Is the Japan-U.S. security treaty effective in safeguarding Japan’s peace and security?” “What kind of alliance should Japan have with the U.S. in the future?” “What kind of American military presence do you want in Japan in the future?” And, “Do you approve or oppose moving Futenma air base to Nago?” In each case, more Okinawans give a negative response than nationwide.

Figure 32. Questions with Significantly Different Responses: Okinawa and Nationwide survey

Content	no. questions	no. questions with large differences*
Basic attitudes	5	3
Economic support for Okinawa	2	1
Emperor, constitution	8	4
Attitudes on security	10	6
Self-Defense Forces	3	1
American bases problems	12	11
Mutual understanding and expectations	3	3
Total	43	29

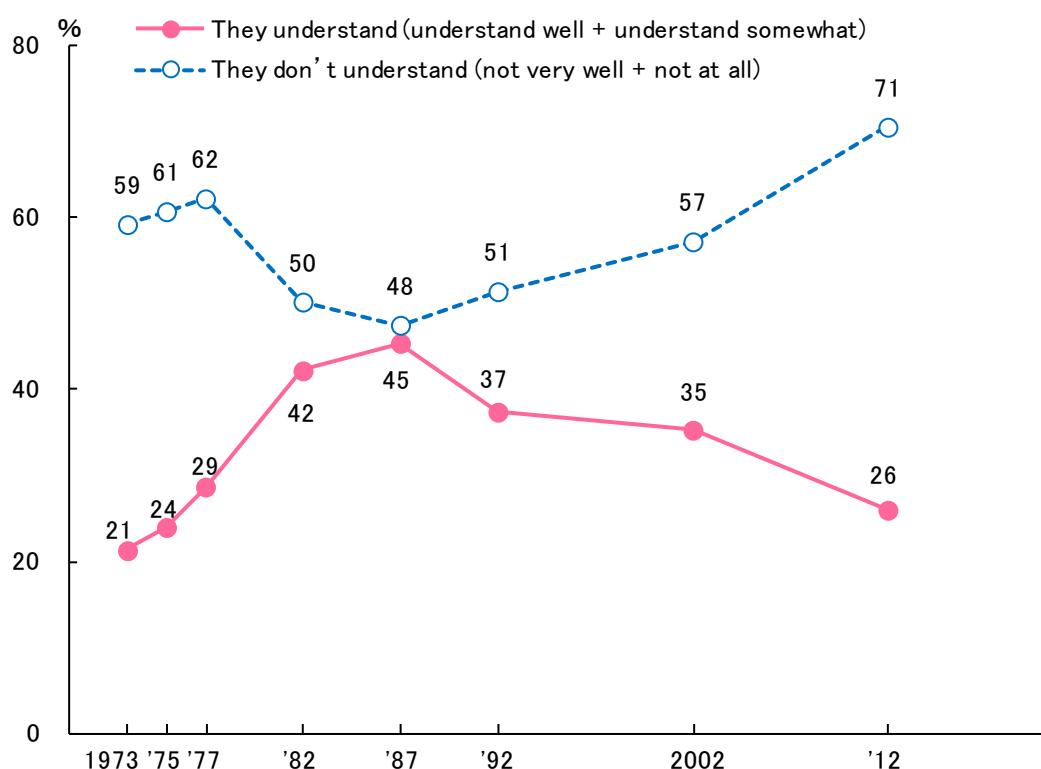
* Responses that yielded a difference of 5 percent or more.

(2) “Mainlanders Don’t Understand Okinawans”

When Okinawa residents were asked, “Do you think people from the mainland understand the feelings of people in Okinawa?” (see Figure 33), the Okinawan response included 26 percent who said “they understand us” (“understand well” combined with

“understand somewhat”) and a high 71 percent saying “they don’t understand us” (“not very well” combined with “not at all”). Over time, the percentage of respondents who said “they understand us” rose steadily until 1987, and then it started a continued fall. The opinion that “they don’t understand us” surged upward between the 2002 and 2012 surveys. The perception that “mainlanders don’t understand the people of Okinawa” has permeated the population of Okinawa prefecture and is today stronger than ever.

Figure 33. Do Mainlanders Understand Okinawans? (Okinawa)



(3) Tolerating U.S. Military Bases for the Sake of National Security

Even in Okinawa, the highest percentage of people feel that the American bases are inevitable—something that must be put up with because they are important to the nation’s security. Here we will look into how the strong “inevitable” response of Okinawans is related to their thinking about the presence of American military bases and Japan’s security (see Figure 34).

Figure 34. Attitudes toward National Security and Views on U.S. Bases (Okinawa)

	Overall persons	U.S. military bases and Japan's security*			
		Necessary	Inevitable	Unnecessary	Dangerous
Total	1,123	125	504	238	192
Security treaty – Effective in preserving peace? (summary)					
Effective	53%	76	66	35	34
Not effective	37	18	29	58	54
DK/NA	9	6	5	7	11
Views on U.S. bases					
Withdraw all bases	22	7	7	39	52
Downsize to mainland level	56	32	68	54	43
Keep status quo	19	56	22	6	3
Expand further	1	2	0	0	1
DK/NA	3	2	2	1	1
Regarding concentration of bases in Okinawa					
I think it's wrong	57	37	46	78	76
I tend to think it's wrong	29	28	38	16	20
I tend to think it's OK	8	18	10	3	3
I don't think it's wrong	4	16	3	2	1
DK/NA	3	2	2	2	1
U.S. bases and jobs (summary)					
Bases are helpful	29	61	36	14	12
Bases are useless	69	37	63	85	86
DK/NA	2	2	1	1	2
Do mainlanders understand Okinawans? (summary)					
They understand	26	36	27	24	20
They don't understand	71	61	71	74	76
DK/NA	4	3	3	2	1

* Due to very low numbers, “DK/NA” figures are not listed here.

Note: The shaded areas indicate highest rate per category (statistically significant 95 percent reliability)

Focusing on the Okinawans who said that for Japan's security the U.S. bases were “inevitable,” the most frequent answers they gave in the several categories of questions were, first, that the Japan-U.S. security treaty “is effective.” Those responses were 66 percent, making a large affirmative majority.

Another large response by the “inevitable” group was 68 percent who, giving their views on U.S. bases, selected “downsize to mainland level,” and if we add to that the even more demanding 7 percent who want to “withdraw all bases,” we come out with a high 75 percent of people who are clearly critical of the status quo of U.S. military facilities in Okinawa.

Forty-six percent of this “inevitable” group thought that the concentration of bases in Okinawa is “wrong,” and 63 percent judged that the U.S. bases are “useless” as far as jobs are

concerned. In both those cases, the “inevitable” percentages are not as high as those produced by respondents who said the U.S. bases are “unnecessary” or that they are “dangerous.”

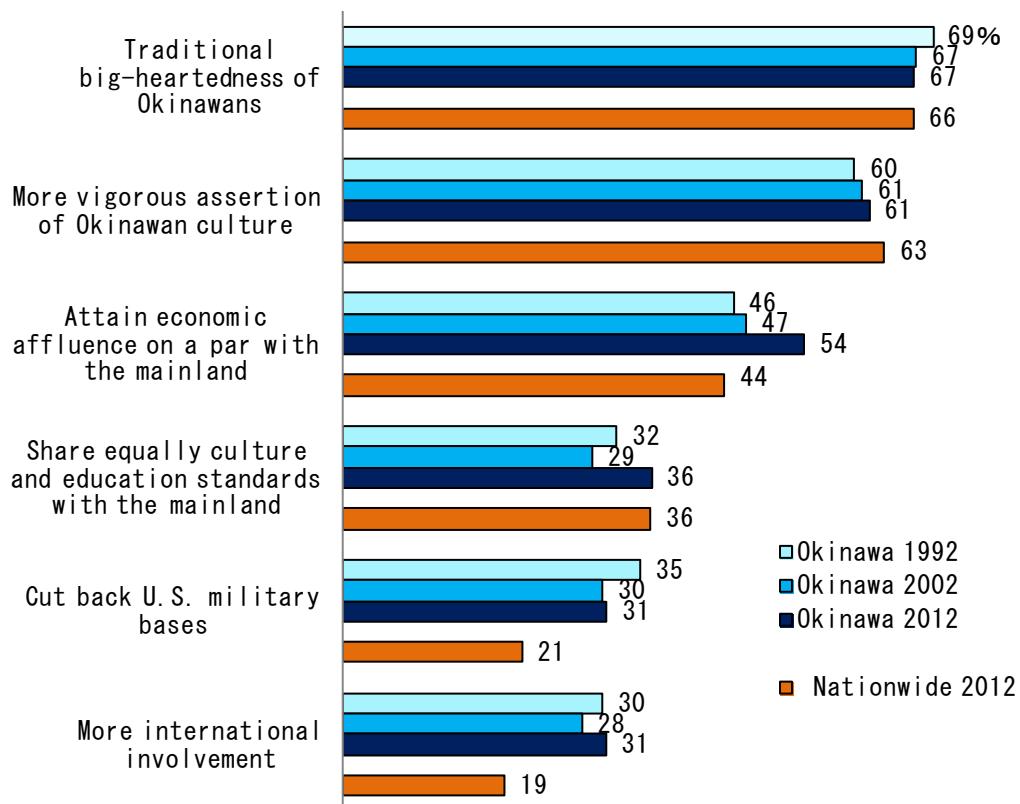
Turning to the question about mainlanders’ understanding of Okinawans, 71 percent of the “inevitable” group said that “they [mainlanders] don’t understand” Okinawans’ feelings, which is fairly close to the 74 percent for the “unnecessary” group and to the 79 percent for the “dangerous” group that gave that answer.

In the large picture, then, a majority of the “inevitable” group had positive feelings about the Japan-U.S. security treaty, but most of them were critical of the U.S. military bases, and, furthermore, a majority thought that mainlanders “do not understand” the feelings of Okinawans. What this conveys is a deep, irritated frustration on the part of Okinawa residents that the American bases problem is not shared by the whole nation but rests primarily on Okinawa’s shoulders.

(4) Expectations for Okinawa’s Future

The responses on this theme were given in answer to the question, “What do you hope for in Okinawa’s future?” and respondents were told to choose up to three options (see Figure 35). Starting at the top, in all the surveys of 1992, 2002, and 2012 the most numerous responses in the Okinawa polls were “traditional big-heartedness,” “more vigorous assertion of Okinawan culture,” and “attain economic affluence on a par with the mainland.” Compared with the 1992 and 2002 survey results, the 2012 figures are higher in both “attain equal affluence” and “share culture and education standards” responses. An interesting point here is that while Okinawan respondents placed a high value on keeping their “traditional big-heartedness,” the expectation of attaining mainland-level affluence showed an increase.

Figure 35. Expectations for Okinawa (Asked to Choose Up To 3 Options; Okinawa and nationwide surveys)



Considering views by age group, the data show that for Okinawans in their 20s popular expectation favored mainland-level affluence, and not many were interested in complete withdrawal of the American military facilities from Okinawa. We can surmise that this group of young people, surrounded for their entire lives by the difficult situation surrounding the U.S. bases, would rather move forward on the economic issues, which are something they can engage with now, than struggle with the problem of the U.S. bases when no one knows what lies ahead or when anything will change. Finally we should note that numbers in the young 20s and 30s groups who said, “I really value the place where I come from” rose above the level of from 10 years ago. That is testimony to rising numbers of young people who take conscious pride in being from Okinawa.

Conclusion

During the four decades following reversion, 59 percent of Japanese mainland areas reserved for exclusive use by the American military has been returned to Japanese jurisdiction, but only 18 percent of the Okinawan areas has been returned. The effect of that difference is to increase Okinawa's share of all the U.S. military facilities in Japan from 59 percent to today's 74 percent.¹² This situation in Okinawa is part of the daily life of its residents, and this difference from the situation on the mainland seems to be reflected in the Okinawa-vs.-mainland differences in survey results.

Again, the generations that personally experienced the Battle of Okinawa are rapidly dwindling. But people want to keep the memory alive. The percentage of Okinawans who said, "We must constantly look back and remember, so that we will never forget" has increased to 90 percent now. Of those who personally experienced the war, furthermore, almost 50 percent said in 2012 that "I want to keep talking about it," which is an increase compared to 10 years ago. In the end, the response, "downsize the U.S. bases," which has held firm throughout all the surveys, represents perhaps best of all the thoughts of the people of Okinawa.

Regarding the Japan-U.S. security treaty as a safeguard for the nation's peace and security, more people nationwide than Okinawans are positive and see it as effective. The American military facilities in Japan exist precisely because of the security treaty. Once again in 2012 the survey results highlight a deep-seated sense among Okinawa residents that their prefecture has shouldered the heaviest burden of the bases so far and now that burden should be made more equitable. The military bases constitute an issue for all of Japan, and every Japanese must rethink how to bring a better balance to the situation.

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¹² According to the Okinawa Defense Bureau, at the time of Okinawa's reversion the area on the mainland reserved exclusively for U.S. military facilities was 196,297 thousand square meters. Our calculation was made using that figure and relevant figures in the statistical material mentioned in footnote 10.