

U.S. Military Base Construction at Henoko-Oura Bay and the Okinawan Governor's Strategy to Stop It

Hideki Yoshikawa, with an introduction by Gavan McCormack

Abstract

This paper analyses the present (2018) state of the struggle between the government of Japan and the government and people of the prefecture of Okinawa, focussing on its most recent phase, since the Okinawan prefectural complaint was dismissed by the Supreme Court in December 2016. Governor Onaga then revoked his 2015 cancellation of the 2013 license to reclaim parts of Oura Bay as site for the base construction and works resumed in April 2017 after one year in suspension.

Since then, Governor Onaga has repeatedly declared that he will rescind the license under which those works are being carried out, but has given no indication as to when.

Work now continues, at an accelerating pace, and the Governor has recently issued permits allowing ports in Northern Okinawa to be used for transport of construction materials.

This paper analyses the apparent contradictions in the Governor's stance and the way they are understood within the protest movement.

Keywords

Okinawa anti-base struggle, Henoko-Oura Bay, Governor Onaga, Tekkai,

Introduction

The Asia-Pacific Journal - Japan Focus is pleased to present Hideki Yoshikawa's account of recent developments in the ongoing (20-

year) contest between the people and government of Okinawa and the governments of the United States and Japan.

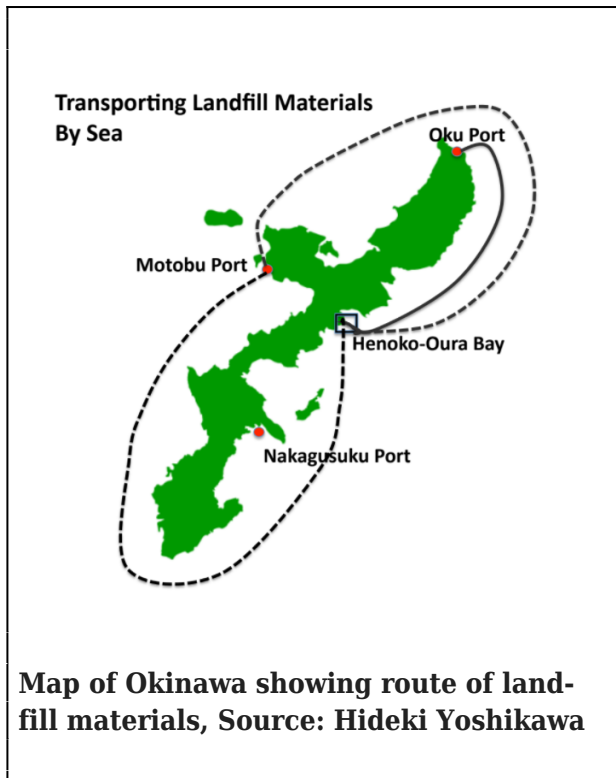
Readers of this journal will be well aware of the general tenor of this struggle, of the reversal of his anti-base construction stance by then Governor Nakaima in December 2013, allowing the national government to commence works to reclaim part of Oura Bay in Northern Okinawa (offshore from Henoko) for base construction. Ten months later, in December 2014, an aroused electorate dismissed Nakaima from office and delivered the Governorship (by a massive, 100,000 vote majority) to an avowed opponent of the reclamation/base construction plan, Onaga Takeshi. Another ten months followed before Onaga duly (in October 2015) "cancelled" (*torikeshi*) the reclamation license.

From November 2015, the dispute was subjected to a series of judicial and semi-judicial actions. Works were suspended for one year from March 2016, but the main proceedings issued in a December 2016 Supreme Court ruling that found against the prefecture. The Governor thereupon "cancelled" (*torikeshi*) his original cancellation order, and site works resumed in April 2017. The prefecture launched a related suit in the Naha District Court July 2017 seeking a suspension of the Bay works, but as of January 2018 no judgment has yet issued.

Over the past year, Governor Onaga has many times spoken of his intent to rescind (*tekkai*) the December 2013 reclamation permit (i.e., going beyond his October 2015 "cancellation,"

which he cancelled in December 2016). There is no question that he has such power, although there is also no question that its exercise would be subject to immediate judicial challenge by the national government. Consequently it is understandable that he should choose with great care how and when to exercise it.

However, while almost one year has now passed without any sign of Onaga actually implementing his *tekkai* promise, daily hundreds of truckloads of material are delivered to the Oura bay construction site, and from late 2017 that daily convoy has been supplemented by shipments from Oku port, in the far north of Okinawa Island. Governor Onaga issued a permit for that, and then in December issued similar permits for use of facilities at two other ports, Nakagusuku and Motobu.



Relying on dump-truck delivery of materials, and assuming a delivery rate of about 175 trucks per day (the rate as of late December 2017), to deliver the necessary three million

tons would take a staggering 46 years, and only then, upon such a site, could actual base construction commence. So the government is intent on speeding up the works, either by massively increasing the tempo of road transport delivery or by resort to delivery by sea, or more likely both. The sea delivery has the great advantage from the government view of being more difficult for citizens to block. Either way, the process threatens to overwhelm the infrastructure of Okinawa’s north.

With the Onaga Prefectural government seemingly engaging in endless procrastination, and the national government, through the Okinawan Defense Bureau, steadily stepping up the tempo of sea-wall construction works, uncertainty spreads within the Okinawan anti-base movement. Could it be that Governor Onaga is going to betray them (as most believe his predecessor, Nakaima, did in December 2013)? How credible is Onaga’s stance, as a supporter of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the Okinawa base system who opposes only the specific Henoko project and the deployment of the Osprey? Is he, despite the confusing signals he issues, engaged on a complex but consistent strategy to achieve the main goal - stopping Henoko?

On 4 February, Okinawan voters go to the polls in Nago City to elect a new mayor. In 2010, they chose Inamine Susumu, on a platform of “no new base on land or sea within Nago City.” They re-elected him in 2014 and now he seeks a third term. He has proven a major thorn in the side of government construction plans, so the Abe government attaches a high priority to defeating him. The national government, along with the LDP and Komeito party organizations, have pledged full backing to his opponent, Toguchi Taketoyo. Anywhere else but Okinawa it would be unimaginable that the central government would interfere so blatantly to promote its candidate in a local government election. As part of this intervention, the Chief Cabinet Secretary recently held meetings with

heads of various Nago City wards (Henoko, Kushi, and Toyohara) and Higashi and Kunigami Villages, bypassing the city administration in an attempt to subject the city to national government control. Moreover, from 2015 it has been making significant subsidy payments to these districts, rising from 39 million yen in 2015 to 120 million yen for 2018) to try to ensure defeat of Inamine and the city's submission. This was surely in breach of the constitution's clauses on regional self-government. Meanwhile the national government reduces each year the regular budgetary allocation to Okinawa prefecture, plainly to punish Governor Onaga for his non-cooperation.

Apart from the ongoing turmoil due to the Henoko-Oura Bay base construction project, Okinawans continue to suffer the depredations of night and day helicopter and Osprey flights, often over residential areas, at intolerable noise levels, and occasionally sending fully armed forces on parachute drops or (December 2017) accidentally dropping potentially lethal objects in the vicinity of houses and schools. They do not forget the periodic base personnel-related road accidents, sometimes causing death, or the sexual assaults, most notoriously the rape-murder of April 2016. The Abe government's defense and security policies exact a heavy toll on them. They continue to resist.

Yoshikawa here presents a detailed account of the Henoko-Oura Bay issue as of January 2018. (GMcC)

What is happening with the Onaga Administration?

As the year 2018 began in earnest, the people of Okinawa are trying to figure out where their Governor, Onaga Takeshi, is taking them in their fight against the construction of a U.S. military base in Henoko-Oura Bay in the north of Okinawa island. On November 3, 2017, the

Okinawa Times reported that Governor Onaga had in September, behind closed doors, issued a permit to companies under contract to the Okinawa Defense Bureau to use Oku port in the north of Okinawa Island for transport of materials for base construction.¹ With the permit in hand, the Okinawa Defense Bureau has moved to accelerate its construction work, transporting landfill materials from Oku port to Henoko-Oura Bay by sea, thus avoiding protesters' road blockage on the land.

The report surprised, confused, and angered many people in Okinawa because it contradicted the Governor's pledge that he would do all in his power to stop the base construction. Many contend that the Governor should instead have used his discretionary power to refuse to issue the permit.

In response, Onaga reiterated his "everything in my power" pledge, provided explanations, and to placate the rising tide of criticism, indicated that it is now "considering revoking the permit."² However, a growing number of people are questioning whether Governor Onaga is sincere about his pledge, and they call on the Okinawa prefectural government to take immediate action to rectify the situation.

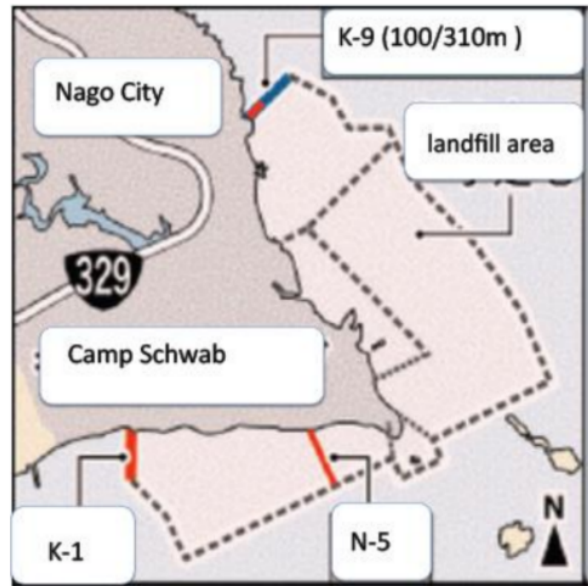
What is happening with the Onaga administration? How are the people of Okinawa reacting to this unsettling situation? Will they continue to resist the base construction? The following offers an analysis of recent developments in Okinawa.

Explanations by the Onaga Administration

According to a statement issued by the Governor and a transcript of a press conference held on November 15,³ the Onaga administration and the prefectural government decided to issue the permit because, upon review of the applications received in June, they could find no flaws. Consulting with their

legal advisers, they concluded that they needed to adhere to the principles of fair and equal application of laws and exercise of administrative discretion and that they could not deviate from the “standard practices” of prefectural governments’ issuing use-permits even though these particular applications were for U.S. military base construction. Governor Onaga stressed that his government had taken extra time, a few months instead of the usual two weeks, to review the application.

Governor Onaga also claimed that the permit, issued under the Port and Harbor Act, pertained only to the keeping of landfill materials and the berthing of ships at the port, not to transport of landfill materials from the port by sea. He stressed that for transport by sea from the port of such landfill materials, the companies and the Okinawa Defense Bureau should have applied for a separate permit under the Land Reclamation Act, indicating that the Bureau and companies were in breach of the Act. On November 15, the same day Governor Onaga held a press conference, his administration sent a letter to the Bureau requesting it to stop transporting landfill materials by sea.



Seawall construction at K-1, N-5 and K-9 as of early January 2018. Red lines indicate that seawall construction is under way. Source: Hideki Yoshikawa



K-1 and N-5 Seawall Construction, © Yamamoto Hideo

The Okinawa Defense Bureau, however, repudiated the Governor’s claims. It insists that the land reclamation permit which was issued by former Governor Nakaima Hirokazu in December 2013 enabled the Defense Bureau to transport landfill materials by sea from Oku port to Henoko-Oura Bay.⁴ They noted that Governor Onaga had lost his lawsuit in the Japanese Supreme Court in December 2016 over his withdrawal (torikeshi) of the land reclamation permit.⁵

Meanwhile, a high-ranking prefectural official told the Okinawa Environmental Justice Project that the Onaga administration and its lawyers were concerned that a refusal to issue a permit would be construed as a failure to comply with the law and administrative duty. The official explained that the Onaga administration had decided that any action that could be deemed unlawful should be avoided, especially because

the prefectural government is already in court battling the Japanese government over the issue of a reef-crushing permit (see below). Such concerns outweighed those over possible public backlash that the Onaga administration would face over issuing the permit.

The official acknowledged, however, that not consulting with the people of the Oku district prior to making its decisions, and not publically disclosing the information on the issuance of the permit in a timely manner, were mistakes and that the Okinawa prefectural government needed to rectify the situation. On November 14, 2017, 10 days after the *Okinawa Times*' report on the issuance of the permit, the Okinawa prefectural government held a formal meeting with the people of the Oku district and on the very next day, Governor Onaga issued the above-mentioned statement, explaining its actions and asking for understanding from the Okinawan public.

Patience, Anger, and Doubt: Local Reactions and Moves by the Onaga Administration

When the *Okinawa Times* report on the issuance of the permit came out at the beginning of November, the Japanese government was starting construction of the N-1 and D-5 seawalls. Since the Onaga administration vehemently condemned the start of new seawall construction,⁶ people in Okinawa were surprised and confused by the report. However, two contrasting reactions have been manifest among the Okinawan public.

Staunch supporters of Governor Onaga remain willing to accept the Onaga administration's explanations for issuance of the permit. Seeing the administration's actions as tactical they hold to the view that his administration government will prevail in the end to stop the construction. They argue that if the people of

Okinawa do not support the Onaga administration's actions and explanations, it would mean the negation of their 20-years of struggle against base construction.

On the other hand, a growing number of people feel angry and betrayed. Many now question whether Governor Onaga and his government are sincere and serious about stopping the base construction. These reactions are evident especially among protesters who are already weary from daily protests, continuing now for years, at Camp Schwab and Henoko-Oura Bay, as they now have to head off also to the distant port of Oku.



Protesters at Oku Port, © Kitaueda Tsuyoshi

In this context, the actions taken by two prominent supporters of Governor Onaga and of the anti-base construction movement are significant. Yamashiro Hiroji, chair of the Okinawa Peace Movement Center, demanded an emergency meeting with the prefectural government. At that meeting, held in on November 15, he openly criticized Governor Onaga for breaking his pledge. He demanded that Onaga "stop talking" and withdraw the permit for use of Oku port.⁷

Yamauchi Tokushin, a former national Diet member and symbolic figure in Okinawa's peace movement over decades who was also present at the November 15 meeting, on November 29 wrote a sharply critical article for the *Okinawa Times* blaming prefectural government officials for ill-advising the Governor on the issuance of the permit. Criticizing the prefectural officials for acting as if they were "petty officials from the Japanese government," he demanded that the prefecture revoke the permit.

Meanwhile, on November 23, the Oku District Association adopted a resolution opposing use of the port by the Okinawa Defense Bureau.⁸ On November 28, the Association sent a delegation to the Okinawa Defense Bureau to protest, and in response the Bureau temporarily suspended the sea transport of landfill materials from the port. The Association also sent a delegation to the prefectural government to demand that it withdraw the permit.⁹

Facing anger, doubt, and criticism from the Okinawan public, the Onaga administration has announced that it is "considering" revoking the permit for use of Oku port, reiterating that Governor Onaga is committed to stopping the base construction.^x So far, however (as of mid-January 2018), it has taken no such action.

Instead, on December 7, the Onaga administration issued another permit to the Okinawa Defense Bureau for the use of Nakagusuku port by tugboats accompanying ships from Oku port to Henoko-Oura Bay. Following the Onaga administration's issuance of these permits, on December 11, Mayor Takara Fumio of Motobu Town in northern Okinawa also issued a permit for the Defense Bureau to use the port of Motobu.¹¹ Both the Onaga administration and Mayor Takara provided the same explanations as had been given earlier by the Onaga administration: they had reviewed and found no flaws in the

companies' applications and they needed to adhere to the principles of fair and equal application of the law and exercise of administrative discretion.

With the issuance of those new permits, the negative public sentiment towards the Onaga administration might have been expected to intensify. However, two U.S. military aircraft-related incidents distracted the Okinawan public. On December 7, a small cylindrical object belonging to the U.S. military fell on the roof of a nursery school with school children playing in the school garden as a U.S. military aircraft flew over the area.¹² On December 13, 2017, a window from a U.S. military helicopter fell on the grounds of an elementary school while students were taking physical education class.¹³ Both the nursery school and elementary school are located near the U.S. Marine Corp's Futenma Air Station, the very military base that the construction at Henoko-Oura Bay is planned to replace. As Governor Onaga quickly condemned the U.S. military for the accidents, public sentiment to press his administration over the issuance of the permits was deflected.

As of January 17, 2018, the Okinawa Defense Bureau is transporting landfill materials from the port of Motobu to Henoko-Oura Bay, while remaining ready to resume transport operations at the port of Oku, and, however limited the Onaga administration may claim it is, seawall construction is underway. What is one to make of this situation?

Querying the Onaga Administration's Strategy

It can be argued that the Onaga administration's issuance of the permits was a consequence of two things: its own overall (unwise) strategic decisions in the fight against base construction on the one hand and the way the Japanese government has been able to take

advantage of its strategic errors on the other.

As discussed in an earlier paper,¹⁴ having lost its supreme court battle against the Japanese government over Governor Onaga's withdrawal (*torikeshi*) of the land reclamation permit, the Onaga administration chose to fight in "lesser battles" first, only then moving on to the main battle over the land reclamation permit. Lesser battles are to be (or have been) fought with Governor Onaga's administrative power over the issuance of (ancillary) permits for coral reef crushing, coral transplant, changes to the reclamation and construction plans, and so forth. The main battle remains to be fought over Governor Onaga's administrative power to revoke (*tekkai*) the land reclamation permit. Issued by former Okinawa Governor Nakaima in 2013, suspended in 2015 and reinstated following the Supreme Court ruling in 2016, the land reclamation permit provides the principal legal ground for land reclamation work and thus for base construction.

It appears that the Onaga administration assumed that the lesser battles could slow construction work and provide legal and moral grounds that could be used against the Japanese government when Governor Onaga finally revokes the land reclamation permit. Perhaps it still hopes at least for this delay effect.

The Japanese government, however, has been able to turn the Onaga administration's strategies against it. When the Onaga administration prepared to take the Okinawa Defense Bureau into an administrative battle over the reef-crushing permit in April 2017, claiming that the Okinawa Defense Bureau needed a permit from Governor Onaga, the Japanese government simply dismissed those claims. Having persuaded the local fishermen's association to renounce their fishing rights to Henoko-Oura Bay, the government insisted that it was not necessary to obtain any permit from the Governor. The Okinawa Defense Bureau

then began seawall construction in April 2017.

This situation forced the Onaga administration to file a suit in the Naha District Court against the Japanese government in July 2017.¹⁵ That suit has in turn placed the Onaga administration in a bewildering situation. Now the burden of proof rests on the prefecture to show that the Japanese government has violated prefectural ordinances and regulations. In the Japanese system of government, this is extremely difficult, and it appears to be exhausting the Onaga administration and the prefectural government.

As mentioned above, many within the Onaga administration feel that to engage in a court battle the Okinawa prefectural government must present itself to the court as a thoroughly law-abiding entity. Thus, when the Okinawa Defense Bureau applied for ancillary permits such as to use the ports of Oku and Nakagusuku, to transplant corals, and to conduct a survey in Henoko-Oura Bay, the Onaga administration and prefectural government believed they had no choice but to review the applications and, provided there were no flaws, grant the permits.¹⁶ As a kind of delaying tactic, they sent inquiry letters and directives demanding information and explanation to the Okinawa Defense Bureau, but such tactics had very limited effect.

It can also be argued that the Onaga administration's strategy undermined its own efforts, facilitating the "*tatewari gyosei*" ("vertically compartmentalized administration") of the Okinawa prefectural government to its detriment. As with any local government bureaucracy in Japan,¹⁷ different sections of the Okinawa prefectural governments are often influenced more by their counterpart ministries of the central government than by other sections of the prefectural government. Coordination among different sections of the prefectural government is also often minimal and there is a tendency among officials not to

intervene in the affairs of other sections. To counteract these bureaucratic tendencies in its fight against base construction, the Onaga administration created in June 2015 the Henoko Base Construction Countermeasures Division Executive Office within the Governor's Office.¹⁸ The Henoko Executive Office is staffed by members of different departments including the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction and the Department of Environment.

However, the Onaga administration's strategy to fight lesser (thus compartmentalized) battles first has rendered the *tatewari gyosei* a de facto mode of operation. Rather than giving top priority to the Onaga administration's basic "No" stance against construction, each section of the prefectural government has tended to operate in accordance with its narrowly defined responsibilities and duties. Thus, when the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction, the principal department in charge of issuing use permits for ports, finally decided to issue permits for the ports of Oku and Nakagusuku in the name of Governor Onaga, important environmental issues were barely taken into consideration. Despite the fact that environmental impacts from base construction have been observed and there have been violations of environmental conditions on which former Governor Nakaima approved the land reclamation in 2013,¹⁹ and even though there could have been sufficient reasons for Governor Onaga to revoke (*tekkai*) the land reclamation permit, these environmental issues were seen as falling outside the administrative responsibilities of the Department of Civil Engineering and Construction reviewing the applications for port use.

Against this backdrop of the Onaga administration's tactics and the Japanese government's counter maneuvering, there has been a resurgence of calls for a prefectural referendum to be held to help push Governor

Onaga to revoke the land reclamation permit, in other words to engage in the main battle.²⁰ The proponents of such a referendum insist that a prefectural referendum opposing the base construction at Henoko-Oura Bay would provide Governor Onaga with a strong legal foothold in a likely lawsuit filed by the Japanese government against the Governor, and argue that the Governor cannot, or should not, revoke the permit without public backing demonstrated by such a referendum. They have proposed a referendum to be held at the same time as the gubernatorial election scheduled for November 2018.

Others have argued however that the people of Okinawa in 2014 elected Governor Onaga to revoke the land reclamation permit and he has reason to do so without a referendum. They insist that a referendum would be time consuming and require a great deal of effort, and given the present state of the base construction the Governor and the people of Okinawa have neither time nor energy to spare. Some even go further to argue that such referendum would give the Governor an excuse to postpone revocation of the land reclamation permit.²¹

Governor Onaga and his administration have not taken a stance on the referendum proposal. Nor have they indicated when or how the Governor will use his power to revoke the land reclamation permit. While insisting that the Governor will revoke it at an appropriate time, they tightly guard information on what many consider as the Governor's last resort strategy, fearing that the Japanese government will take advantage of whatever information comes available.²²

Meanwhile, it is reported that the Onaga administration is preparing to propose its own alternative plan to close Futenma Air Station, aiming to challenge the Japanese and U.S. governments' insistence that "the relocation [of Futenma] to Henoko is the only solution."²³ This

latest move can also be understood as a manifestation of the Onaga administration's frustration with the fact that, while stressing the importance of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, most governors of Japan's other prefectures are unwilling to host (or even discuss hosting) U.S. military bases or training in their prefectures. In other words, they persist in "free riding" on the US-Japan Security Treaty at Okinawa's expense.²⁴ The Onaga administration's alternative plan likely incorporates the recommendation laid out by the Tokyo and Washington-based think-tank, "New Diplomacy Initiative," which calls for development of a "new rotational system" for the U.S. Marine Corps stationed in the Pacific.²⁵ Apparently, the Onaga administration is contemplating presenting its alternative plan during Governor Onaga's visit to Washington D.C. in March 2018.



Governor Onaga addressing the United Nations, © Hideki Yoshikawa

Many in Okinawa seem to have been unable to form an opinion about the Onaga administration's latest move as it has provided no details on the alternative plan. Others argue that this late move is a waste of time and energy as they see that it alone would have no impact on the Japanese and U.S. governments. Still others criticize the whole idea as just a

way for the Onaga administration to distract the attention of the Okinawan public from the fact that it has not taken effective action, including revoking the land reclamation permit, to stop base construction.²⁶

By proposing such an alternative plan as its own for whatever reason, the Onaga administration would be bound to face more problems. Such an action would contradict the Governor's previous stance that it is the responsibility of the central government to come up with alternatives to the Henoko plan, and it would also undermine the long held stance by the Okinawan public against militarization since it would appear to engage Okinawa in military strategic planning.²⁷ Moreover, if it also involved naming of alternative (or rotational) sites in other prefectures in Japan or within Okinawa, a backlash, similar to what the Hatoyama administration experienced in the recent past, would be inescapable.²⁸ Questioned about this, one high ranking Okinawa prefectural official told the Okinawa Environmental Justice Project that the Onaga administration could not propose such an alternative plan as its own without support from the Okinawan public, and thus public discussion needs to begin. It remains to be seen whether and how the Onaga administration could promote such public discussion and it remains questionable whether the administration could make this new strategy meaningful. .

As the year 2018 began, the people of Okinawa nervously awaited the Onaga administration's next action and many who oppose base construction are preparing their own next actions. In this, they share the view that they do their best to prevent the Japanese government from taking advantage of any emerging public discord, whether over the Onaga administration's strategies, the proposed prefectural referendum, or the sincerity and seriousness of Governor Onaga's pledge to fight the base construction. Many

also believe that such public discord can be resolved only through effective action taken by the Onaga administration.

Can the Onaga administration and the people of Okinawa fight back?

An overwhelming majority of the people of Okinawa oppose base construction at Henoko-Oura Bay. The most recent opinion poll conducted by the Ryukyu Shimpo (in September 2017) shows that 80 percent of people aged 18 years or older oppose base construction and only 14 percent approve it.²⁹ In response, the Onaga administration asks the people of Okinawa to understand that it is doing its best to stop it while arguing that its overall strategy has slowed down construction and will work in the end to stop it. It is painfully obvious, however, that, after the supreme court's ruling against Governor Onaga's withdrawal of the land reclamation permit, the Onaga administration's strategy has failed to stop construction. Instead, both the Japanese and U.S. governments can point to the current state of construction work as a *fait accompli*, and claim that despite its strong anti-base construction rhetoric, the Onaga administration, by issuing permits, is actually supporting base construction.

If the Onaga administration is serious about stopping base construction and continuing fighting against the Japanese and U.S. governments with the support of the people of Okinawa, it has to take urgent action to thwart any claim that construction work is a *fait accompli*. It needs to reconsider its overall strategy and to take concrete steps towards the revocation of the land reclamation permit. In other words it must shift its focus to the main battle. Any delay in revoking the permit, including a referendum to support the Governor's action, should be regarded as contrary to Governor Onaga's pledge and to Okinawa's 20-year struggle against the base

construction.

The Onaga administration needs to refuse to issue any more permits relating to base construction and to revoke the ancillary permits it has issued so far. In other words it has to be smarter about how it conducts its lesser battles. For this, it should take a close look at how Nago City Mayor Inamine Susumu has used his mayoral power to stop base construction.³⁰ In 2014, Mayor Inamine and Nago city officials engaged in a series of exchanges with the Okinawa Defense Bureau regarding the Bureau's applications for consultation (*kyogi sho*) on its proposal for necessary changes to the original construction plans. Citing flaws in the applications, the Mayor and Nago city repeatedly demanded that the Bureau revise them. Eventually the Bureau withdrew one of its applications regarding the proposed changes to the diversion of the Mijya river running through Camp Schwab, a critical component of the base construction works.³¹ Since then, there has been no consultation between the Bureau and the Mayor and Nago city. The city has forced the state to stumble in its otherwise forceful rush towards base construction.

In order to engage in both main and lesser battles, the Onaga administration urgently needs to develop a coherent policy on base construction to which all sections of the Okinawa prefectural government are committed. Such policy should not be based on "standard practice" or narrowly defined responsibilities and duties in the *tatewari gyosei* of the prefectural government. It should be built upon Governor Onaga's pledge and the voice of the people of Okinawa against the base construction as well as upon review of the impact of base construction on the environment of Henoko-Oura bay. Above all, it should be rooted in comprehensive and critical review of the position of all U.S. military bases on Okinawa.³²

Most importantly, the Onaga administration has to make sure that the way it challenges base construction is transparent and maximizes collaboration with the Okinawan public, especially those who have opposed the construction and who possess expert knowledge in the fields of civil engineering, public administration, law, the environment, and strategies of internationalization.³³

Only through such collaboration between the Onaga administration, officials of the prefectural government and the Okinawan and Japanese civil society and international support, can the construction of the U.S. military base at Henoko-Oura Bay be stopped.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my appreciation to officials of the Okinawa prefectural government for providing valuable information through formal meetings and personal communication. I also express my appreciation to Gavan McCormack of Australian National University, Sato Manabu of Okinawa International University, Shimabukuro Jun of the University of Ryukyus, and Abe Mariko of the Nature Conservation Society of Japan for their advice and suggestions for this article. The sole responsibility for the content of the article lies with the author.

Gavan McCormack is emeritus professor of the Australian National University in Canberra, a fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and a founding editor of *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. His recent publications include: *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States*, (co-authored with Satoko Oka Norimatsu), second, revised and expanded, paperback edition, 2018 (Japanese, Korean, and Chinese editions available); *The State of the Japanese State: Contested Identity, Direction and Role*, Folkestone, Kent, Renaissance Books, 2018; and “Ryukyu/Okinawa’s trajectory: from periphery to centre, 1600-2015,” in Sven Saaler and Christopher W.A. Szpilman, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Modern Japanese History*. He writes regularly on Okinawan and Japanese matters at *The Asia-Pacific Journal*. A shorter version of this article, without notes, was published in the Australian online *Pearls and Irritations*, June 2022.

Yoshikawa, Hideki is a Nago resident anthropologist teaching at Meio University and the University of the Ryukyus, International director of the Save the Dugong Campaign Center and Director of the Okinawa Environmental Justice Project. He is the author of several major articles at *The Asia-Pacific Journal*.

Notes

- ¹ “Henoko koji Okinawa ken ga okuko no shiyo o kyoka Onaga kensei de hatsuka Umikara sekizai unpane [Henoko construction work: Okinawa prefectural government issued use-permit for Oku port; it is the first such permit issued under Onaga prefectural administration. Stone materials will be sea transported],” *The Okinawa Times*, November 3, 2017.
- ² “Considering revoking the permission to use Oku Port of the new Henoko base construction,” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 16, 2017.
- ³ The Ryukyu Shimpo published a full statement and a full transcript of a press conference by Governor Onaga in its November 15 publication. See “Okuko kara no kaijyo hannyu ‘Aratana jitai ga detekitteiru’ [Sea-transportation from Oku port; a new situation has emerged],” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 15, 2017.
- ⁴ “‘Minato o kyoko shiyo’ kunigamison okuku ga chushi yosei boeikyoku ha ‘kenni kyoka eta’ [‘The port forcefully used’; the Oku community of Higashi village demands a halt to the use of port; the Defense Bureau claims ‘it has obtained permission from the prefectural government’],” *The Okinawa Times*, November 28, 2017.
- ⁵ “Okinawa in tight spot as top court sides with gov’t in Henoko reclamation case,” *The Mainichi*. December 21, 2016.
- ⁶ “More seawall construction at site of new US base despite presence of endangered coral,” *The Mainichi*, November 6, 2017.
- ⁷ “Oku shiyo kyoka shimindantai ga tekkai wo yosei Yamashiro shi ra chiji wo hihan [Civil groups request withdrawal of use-permit for Oku port; Mr. Yamashiro and others criticize Governor],” *The Okinawa Times*, November 16, 2017.
- ⁸ “Kunigami Oku ko shiyo ni ku ga hantai ketsugi Henoko shinkichi eno sekizai hanshutsu [Oku community adopted a resolution against use of Oku port in Kunigami for transport of stone materials for Henoko new base construction],” *The Okinawa Time*, November 24, 2017.
- ⁹ “‘Oku ko no shiyo torikeshi wo’ Oku kumin ga ken ni yosei [‘Withdraw use permit!’ People of Oku community request prefectural government],” *The Okinawa Times*, November 28, 2017.
- ¹⁰ “Considering revoking the permission to use Oku Port of the new Henoko base construction,” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 16, 2017.
- ¹¹ “Motobu cho ga shiyo wo kyoka Henoko shinkichi heno sekizai hanzo de shiyo kikan ha 12 nichi kara 31 nichi [Motobu Town allows use of Motobu port for transport of stone materials for Henoko new base from 12th through 31st],” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, December 12, 2017.
- ¹² Koyama, Kentaro, “U.S. aircraft part falls on nursery roof, sparks outcry,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, December 8, 2017.
- ¹³ “Window falls from U.S. military chopper onto Okinawa school grounds,” *Kyodo News*, December 13, 2017.
- ¹⁴ Yoshikawa, Hideki, “Seawall Construction on Oura Bay: Internationalizing the Okinawa Struggle,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, June 1, 2017, Volume 15 | Issue 11 | Number 1
- ¹⁵ “Okinawa files new legal battle over U.S. airfield off Henoko,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, July 25, 2017.
- ¹⁶ “Okuko kara no kaijyo hannyu ‘Aratana jitai ga detekitteiru’ [Sea-transportation from Oku

Port, [A new situation has emerged](#)],” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 15, 2017.

¹⁷ For discussion on the Central government’s control over local governments and the *tatewari gyosei*, see McVeigh, Brian J. (1998/2013), *The Nature of the Japanese State: Rationality and Ritualy*, Nissan Institute/ Routledge Japanese Studies Series, Routledge.

¹⁸ [The website of Henoko Base Construction Countermeasures Division Executive Office](#) provides information mainly in Japanese on how the prefectural government fights the base construction.

¹⁹ [In a letter sent to Governor Onaga on December 28, 2017](#), the Nature Conservation Society of Japan requests the Governor to revoke the land reclamation permit. The letter outlines environmental impacts from base construction including loss of sea grass beds, feeding grounds for dugongs, and alteration of the sea floor from more than 500 concretes blocks placed in Oura Bay. It also points out that ships transporting landfill materials from Oku and Motobu ports to Henoko-Oura Bay are in violation of the conditions on which former Governor Nakaima granted land reclamation permission because they operate in dugongs’ habitats.

²⁰ See [“2018nen Okinawa chijisen to dojitsu jishi? Shinkichi sanpi tou ‘kenmin tohyo” kento, kengikaiyoto no nerai \[Ruling party prefectural assembly members consider prefectural referendum at the same time as 2018 gubernatorial election\]](#), *The Okinawa Times*, December 23, 2017. See also [“Henoko kenmin tohyo de sanpi chijisen doujitsu osoi \[yes or no; prefectural referendum to be held on the same day as gubernatorial election; it would be too late\]](#),” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, December 26, 2017. Ben Arakaki and Satoko Norimatsu debated the pros and cons of such a referendum in *The Okinawa Times* between March and May 2017.

²¹ [“Henoko shin kichi: ‘kenmin tohyo ni nigeruna’ Yamashiro gicho ga Onaga chiji ni kugi \[‘Don’t seek help in prefectural referendum’ chairperson Yamashiro warns Governor Onaga\]](#),” *The Okinawa Times*, December 26, 2017.

²² See Governor Onaga’s statement and press conference transcript in [“Okuko kara no kaijyo hannyu ‘Aratana jitai ga detekitteiru’ \[Sea-transportation from Oku port; a new situation has emerged\]](#),” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 15, 2017.

²³ [“Henoko no daitai an okinawa ken ga chakushu futenma heisa e dokuji an \[Okinawa prefecture began to develop alternatives for Henoko plan: own plans to close Futenma\]](#),” *The Okinawa Times*, January 1, 2018. For the U.S. and Japanese governments’ insistence on the Henoko Plan, see [the transcript of the joint press conference held by Defense Secretary James Mattis and Defense Minister Inada Tomomi in February 2017](#).

²⁴ See, for example, [“Zenkoku chiji anketo: Okinawa no kichifutan keigen ni shokyoku teki \[Survey on governors of Japan: Unwilling to help reduce the burden of U.S. military bases in Okinawa\]](#),” *The Mainichi Shimbun*, December 13, 2017.

²⁵ Yanagisawa Kyoji, Yara Tomoharu, Handa Shigeru, and Sado Akihiro, *A New Vision for Okinawa and Asia-Pacific Security: A Recommendation from the New Diplomacy Initiative (ND)* (Tokyo: New Diplomacy Initiative, February 2017).

²⁶ Nakasone Isamu, [“Koji susumu henoko shinkichi; ‘daitai’ an teiji no shini ha nanika \[Henoko new base construction underway; What is the real purpose of \(proposing\) an ‘alternative’ plan?\]](#),” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, January 10, 2018.

²⁷ See Kihara Satoru [“Onaga chiji no henoko daitai an ha gongo dodan \[Governor Onaga proposing an alternative to the Henoko plan is deplorable\]](#)” at his blog site. I am thankful to Gavan McCormack, Satoko Norimatsu, and Steve Rabson for their discussion of this issue.

²⁸ McCormack, Gavan and Norimatsu Oka Satoko, “Chapter 6 The Hatoyama Revolt” in *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012).

²⁹ “Recent poll shows 72 % of Okinawans deem the Osprey “dangerous” as 68% suggest withdrawal,” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, September 28, 2017.

³⁰ For information on the Nago Mayor’s administrative power to stop base construction, see this Diet Questions document (*shitsumon shuisho*) submitted in January 2014 by Diet House of Representative Member Kantoku Teruya [here](#).

³¹ For information on the exchange between the Nago City Mayor’s Office and Okinawa Defense Bureau, see [this document](#) provided at the website of the Nago City Office.

³² See Sato Manabu, “‘Henoko soshi no housaku’ Anpo no jijitsu hattshin wo ‘jinken’ shucho dewa todokazu [Strategies to stop Henoko; spread facts about the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty; “human rights issues” are not enough],” November 24, 2017. *The Ryukyu Shimpo*.

³³ With the help of environmental NGOs, the Okinawa prefectural government is in contact with the International Union for Conservation of Nature regarding the base construction at Henoko-Oura Bay. See Governor Onaga’s letter to IUCN Director Inger Anderson, [here](#). Also, the Okinawa prefectural government exchanges information with U.S. and Japanese NGOs involved in the “dugong case” in the U.S. federal court after the U.S. Ninth Circuit Appeals Court ruled in August 2017 against the U.S. Department of Defense. See “‘Shinkichi kensetsu soshi de renkei o’ jyugon sosho beigawa bengo danga kento kyodo kakunin [‘Collaborate to stop new base construction’ U.S. plaintiff group and Okinawa prefectural government confirm their collaboration],” *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, November 29, 2017. See Helen Christophi, “9th Circuit Revives Fight for Endangered Dugong on Okinawa,” *The Courthouse News*, August 21, 2017.