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Following the process and trying to understand the details behind the proposed relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma on Okinawa to a site off the coast from Camp Schwab is a difficult and often frustrating endeavor, especially for the citizens of Okinawa. How big will this offshore air facility be? How severe will the environmental impacts be on marine life and coral in the area? How will the noise from this offshore facility disrupt the lives of Okinawans living near Camp Schwab? Unfortunately, the governments of Japan and the United States are continuing to remain quiet on these matters, and the scarcity of public information on the Futenma relocation plan has only increased the level of distrust by many Okinawans toward the Japanese and American officials charged with overseeing this relocation effort.

As a former U.S. Marine Corps officer who was stationed on Okinawa from 1986- 88, I am interested in the U.S. Marine Corps' role in this controversial relocation process. In particular, I am concerned that the Marine Corps will be sidetracked from its totally appropriate role as professional military advisers on the Futenma issue into an utterly inappropriate role as public advocates for the relocation.

Specifically, my concern about the Marine Corps taking a political role in the Futenma relocation process stems from a Japan Times newspaper article published on May 17, 1997, written by Marine Corps Major Dan K. Carpenter, who is public affairs officer for Marine Corps Bases Japan. What is alarming about this article, coming from an American military officer is its implication that in addition to having to be ready to “fight in every clime and place,” the Marine Corps has taken on the added responsibility of justifying their military presence in Japan. In his article, Major Carpenter gives a list of reasons why “we need to be here” on Okinawa. Further, this Marine major, apparently speaking in his official

capacity as Marine Corps Bases Japan public affairs officer, states that, “First, I would fully agree that Okinawans have borne a disproportionate share of the burden of housing U.S. forces in Japan. . .we feel that the final report of the Special Action Committee on Okinawa, agreed to by the governments of Japan and the United States, is a movement in the correct direction.”

Now, any way you slice it, these comments are political statements, implying that the Marine Corps has an official position on Okinawa, and this Marine Corps spokesperson even seems to be criticizing the Japanese government for not burden-sharing equally among its Japanese prefectures. Further implied is that the Marine Corps also has an official political position approving the very controversial Special Action Committee on Okinawa report.

What is puzzling is why a Marine Corps spokesperson is making such political comments at all in a public forum, instead of relying on civilian Pentagon policy spokespersons to enunciate official American defense policy? The Marine Corps should know better than to make political statements about highly controversial subjects, since a staple of American professional military education is Samuel P. Huntington’s classic work, *Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, in which Huntington argues that the military should be totally removed from politics, and that when the professional military does get involved in politics-whether it be in Argentina, the United States, or Okinawa-everyone loses.

There certainly is an appropriate role for the Marine Corps in the Futenma relocation planning process, and this role relates to the ongoing process of defining the engineering and other technical requirements for an offshore military air facility to replace Futenma. For example, Marine Corps technical experts are now tasked with assembling an honest, exhaustive and all-encompassing list of requirements for an air facility including the space needed for hangars, aircraft parts, tools, flight operations, medical facilities, ammunition, fuel, and all other support required to fly the many helicopters of a Marine division. The Marine Corps technical experts can also be counted on to demand that the proposed air facility be adequately protected from the ferocious typhoons that periodically strike Okinawa. After the requirements process is complete, however, the Marine Corps role in the decision-making process should be largely over. For example, any decision actually to proceed with the offshore construction project, such as a decision to erect typhoon-proof giant seawalls which might cause great damage to the beautiful coral reefs of Okinawa, should be a decision made only by politicians, and out of the domain of the Marine Corps.

Why is the Marine Corps assuming a role as public advocate for the official U.S. government position? Rather than concluding that there is simply a breakdown in the civilian-military chain of command, another theory is that the Marine Corps has no choice. In this scenario, American politicians and political appointees in the Pentagon are using the good reputation of the professional Marine Corps both as a propaganda tool to sell an unpopular Futenma base relocation scheme, and as a screen to protect themselves from criticism. If, in fact, this is the case, and the Marine Corps is being manipulated by its American political masters for short-term political gains, then the Marine Corps might end

up being the “fall guy” when the Futenma relocation plan goes awry, and one long-term cost may be further deterioration in trust and good relations between the Marine Corps and the people of Okinawa.

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“More Like Us?”

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“Change!” “Deregulation!” “Reform!” These have been the catchwords in Japan since August 1993, when Morihiro Hosokawa became the first non-Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) prime minister in 38 years.

The Hosokawa prime ministership lasted all of eight months, to be followed by Tsutomu Hata (two months), and the Socialist Tomiichi Murayama (19 months). Since January 1996, we are back to an LDP prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto. Nonetheless, the above slogans remain very much in vogue. Indeed, some Japanese are fond of explaining to their foreign interlocutors that we are now witnessing the “Third Opening” of Japan, following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the post-World War II Occupation of 1945-52.

This is music to the ears of Westerners, who have for centuries prayed, hoped, and predicted that Japan would become “more like us.” This conceit is firmly based in Western philosophy and social, economic, and legal history. Western philosophy teaches us that modern democracies are founded on certain principles defining the individual’s relationship to the state—a social contract—as expounded by such philosophers as John Locke, Jean- Jacques Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill. The grand theorists of Western social science— Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx—also base their sociological analyses primarily on the European experience and posit an ineluctable evolutionary progression of modern industrial societies toward convergence.

Economic theory is based on a model of perfect information, no transaction costs, and a “rational economic man” who calculates and makes decisions aimed at maximizing utility and self-interest. Many American economists believe that “the market” operates similarly in all societies and that the tools of “economic science” are universally applicable with little regard to historical, political, societal, institutional, cultural, or psychological differences.

Lawyers—who constitute a large segment of the political and government leadership in the United States—have been trained that they too are invested with the tools of case analysis,

argumentation, and dispute resolution that are universally applicable. This intellectual parochialism is further bolstered by the confidence that, with the United States as “the world’s only superpower,” the values of liberty, equality, and freedom as understood by Americans are universally valid.

It is therefore no surprise that Westerners, and Americans in particular, have a tendency to equate “change” in Japan with “reform” and to infer that both are leading- indeed, forcing- Japan to “converge” and become “more like us.”

But are things really so simple? Two recent books by leading American historians of Japan dispel such wishful thinking. The first is by Ivan Hall, whose Harvard doctoral dissertation in the 1960s was on Mori Arinori, Japan’s first Minister of Education. Hall’s new book, *Cartels of the Mind: Japan’s Intellectual Closed Shop* (W. W. Norton), is described on the dust jacket as “an inside look at Japan’s use of professional barriers, both institutional and psychological, against the entire outside world.”

By examining the Japanese legal profession, journalism community, universities, and research organizations, Hall demonstrates how Japan blocks access by foreign professionals to intellectual discussion and debate in Japan. In his penultimate chapter, subtitled “Cowing the Critics,” Hall documents how “Japanese intellectuals and cultural spokesmen manipulate their dialogue with the outside world to deflect scrutiny, put down criticism, and raise false hopes of intellectual decartelization.”

No better example of this raising of false hopes can be found than in the current discourse about change in Japan. For although change is certainly taking place in Japan-it always has-the outcome is not likely to be the simple convergence to become “more like us” that so many Westerners assume. The raising of unrealistic expectations is partly a result of Western naivete, partly-as charged by Hall-a function of Japanese manipulation, and partly a genuine, if mistaken, belief by Japanese that things are changing dramatically to conform, in the au courant parlance, to the “global standard.” But the pace, magnitude, and direction of change as defined by Japanese and by Westerners may in fact be light years apart.

The second new book relevant to the current discussion is *Molding Japanese Minds: The State in Everyday Life* (Princeton University Press), by Sheldon Garon, a Princeton professor of modern Japanese history. The book is a brilliant historical study of the relationship between state institutions and civil society in Japan.

Garon argues that “few Americans realize the extent to which the Japanese state has promoted economic development by actively managing and mobilizing society itself. . . . Japan at the end of the 20th century remains, in some ways, as it was at the start: a national at war in peace.”

Whether American norms and policies are desirable merits debate, but that is not the point. The issue is whether or not the changes currently being touted in Japan are leading Japan toward “convergence” with the other advanced industrialized societies, as most Western

observers assume. Garon quotes a prominent Japanese government official as asserting, "I'm not a nationalist in the narrow sense of the word, but too much deregulation would create great confusion. . . . It's naked market forces against cultures. It would be the end of Japanese-style capitalism if we pushed this change too far. Japan would be split, as America is split."

Indeed. A dose of candor from the Japanese leadership is always refreshing.

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