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Japan is more than capable of defending herself -- and should do so, argues *TAC* contributing editor Doug Bandow.

## Still Occupying Japan

BY DOUG BANDOW

World War II ended 65 years ago. The Cold War disappeared 21 years ago. Yet America's military deployments have little changed. Nowhere is that more evident than on the Japanese island of Okinawa.

Okinawans are tired of the heavy U.S. military presence. Some 90,000—nearly 10 percent of the island's population—gathered in protest at the end of April. It is time for Washington to lighten Okinawa's burden.

An independent kingdom swallowed by imperial Japan, Okinawa was the site of a brutal battle as the United States closed in on Japan in early 1945. After Tokyo's surrender, Washington filled the main prefecture island with bases and didn't return it to Japan until 1972. America's military presence has only been modestly reduced since.

The facilities grew out of the mutual defense treaty between America and Japan, by which the former promised to defend the latter, which was disarmed after its defeat. The island provided a convenient home for American units. Most Japanese people also preferred to keep the U.S. military presence on Japan's most distant and poorest province, forcing Okinawans to carry a disproportionate burden of the alliance.

Whatever the justifications of this arrangement during the Cold War, the necessity of both U.S. ground forces in Japan and the larger mutual defense treaty between the two nations has disappeared. It's time to reconsider both Tokyo's and Washington's regional roles. The United States imposed the so-called "peace constitution" on Japan, Article 9 of which prohibits the use of force and even creation of a military.

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