STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
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The independence movement on Okinawa, Japan.
A study on the impact of US military presence.

Bachelor Thesis in Japanese studies
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Abstract
Ryūkyū independence movement has ever since WWII been an actor working towards independence for the Ryūkyū islands. Since the Okinawa Reversion Agreement 1971 the military bases has been a topic for debate. In this research the influence of the American military bases and its personnel's behavior have on the independence movement is examined using a qualitative analysis method. Further, this research argues that the military bases have influenced independence movement to gain more momentum for autonomy on Okinawa between 2004-2017.

Keywords
Ryūkyū, Identity, Ryūkyū independence movement, American military bases, Collective identity.

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Romanisation of Japanese words and names
Japanese words and names will be written with the Hepburn romanization system. Long vowels such as a e i o u will be written with a macron (ā ē ī ō ū). For example Ryūkyū (琉球) would otherwise be written with long vowels as ryuukyuu. Japanese names are traditionally written with family name and given name subsequently. This thesis will use the western standard i.e. given name first and family name second. For example Takeshi Onaga the governor of Okinawa Prefecture in Japan (In tradtional Japanese standard 翁長 雄志 Onaga Takeshi).

Conventions
WWI - World war one
WWII - World war two
ACSIL - The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans

Japanese translation
All translations from Japanese to English is made by the author or if nothing else is said.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Ryūkyū Island or Okinawa prefecture as it is called today, is an archipelago located south of mainland Japan. It is the southernmost prefecture of Japan and is approximately 1,200 square kilometers. Okinawa is comprised of around 1000 Ryūkyū Islands with the largest called Okinawa island where most of the population, roughly 1.4 million, reside. The Ryūkyū Islands are located around 600 kilometers from mainland Japan and are closer to Taiwan than Japan. Okinawa has been a part of Japan since 1879 but was occupied by American military from the end of World War II and onwards for 27 years, until 1972 when it became part of Japan once again. Ever since the end of World War II, around half of the US military bases in Japan are placed here. Since Okinawa is part of Japan its rich culture and history have been a big factor for the Ryūkyū identity staying strong all these years. Because of this strong national identity of the Okinawan people an Independence movement has erupted since World War II. The Ryūkyū independence movement was created when America's occupation of Japan began after 1945.1 At that time Okinawan people felt that they should eventually become an independent state instead of once more becoming a part of Japan again.2 Since then the Ryūkyū independence movement has fought for an independent Okinawan sovereign state.

In recent years the ongoing debate about the Okinawan independence has once more erupted because of incidents involving American military personnel. It peaked in the mid 1990s when three American navy soldiers were accused and later convicted of raping a 12 year old Okinawan girl. This started a debate about the “Agreement Under Article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security: Facilities and Areas and the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan”. The treaty stated that americans in service when committing crimes have privileges. American military personnel who were suspected of crime and arrested by the Japanese police were handed over and sent back to the US before prosecution. In the previously mentioned rape case the three American navy soldiers were handed over to the Japanese police because of a

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1 Ryūkyū Independence movement 琉球独立運動.
2 Christopher Gerteis, Timothy S. George, 2013, Japan Since 1945: From Postwar to Post-Bubble, London ; New York : Bloomsbury, p 75-76.
tremendous amount of pressure by the Japanese public and government to cooperate with the Japanese police investigation. Because of the incident the Ryūkyū independence movement had a huge swing in popularity but has since then not been a big topic until a more recent event in 2016.

In 2016 an ex-marine soldier working as a private contractor at Kadena air base was taken in for questioning regarding the disappearance of a young Japanese woman. He allegedly confessed to kidnapping, sexually assaulting and murdering her. This event sparked an outrage by the Okinawan people and politicians concerning the American military bases on Okinawa.

People who are against American military bases are not automatically supporting an independent Okinawa. Today the two biggest actors supporting an independent Okinawa are the political party Kariyushi Club and The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans (a research think tank with the objective of achieving independence on Okinawa). There are also anti-base activists who are split up into people who are against the military bases on Okinawa but still want to be part of mainland Japan and people who seek independence. The question is, how many are supporting an independent Okinawa? The support for an independent Okinawa is shown in a survey from 2017, it shows that 2.6% of the respondents wish to be independent but an astonishing 35% wish for Okinawa to be granted more autonomy.³

It is with the previously mentioned events from which this thesis make its initial assumption on the impact the military bases have on the Okinawan island and its people. It is from this event this thesis will take its initial assumption to give a deeper understanding for the impact the military bases have on the Okinawan island and its people.

1.2 Research puzzle

In recent years state sovereignty and independence have been a growing topic in democratic states. Autonomous regions have been demanding referendums and trying peacefully to affect

³Jichiken kyōka 35% nozomu 「現行通り」半数割る 琉球新報県民意識調査(Ryūkyū Shimpō survey reveals 35% of Okinawans favor increased autonomy, less than half support status quo) Published 1 Januaury 2017, viewed April 4. http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/entry-420582.html.
politicians to recommence the debate for indigenous groups and citizens of autonomous regions. Few of these regions have had success to reach a referendum or increased autonomy. In similar situations in Europe, in Scotland and Catalonia in Spain, these have had success. Especially so in Scotland, where they managed to pressure the government of the United Kingdom to hold a referendum in 2014.

These events have inspired the Ryūkyū independence movement and has boosted support for an independent Okinawa. Yasukatsu Matsushima, a member and co-founder of ACSILs posted a comment in connection with the Scottish independence referendum:

From the viewpoint of an independent Ryūkyū I want to create a network and ties between Scotland and the Ryūkyū Islands. I feel that from the viewpoint of when a new country is born Ryukyu people can learn a lot about political economy, historical culture and society etc⁴

As a prominent figure in the Independence movement this can be seen as an indication for the organisation that they are seeking support internationally and inspiration on how to make mainland Japan recognize their wish for an independent Okinawa, and possibly a referendum for independence.

This indication can also be seen in politics on Okinawa in regards to the American military bases. In 2014 the Okinawan assembly voted for Takeshi Onaga as governor of Okinawa, a man who strongly opposes the American military bases on Okinawa. He is a supporter for the American military bases to be relocated out of the Okinawan prefecture, and can be seen as a sign that the independence movement have an impact on the region politics.

1.3 Aim and Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to research the ongoing debate of relocating the US military air base Marine corps air station, Futenma, and the direct effect this relocation might have for the Okinawan people. Can the American military bases be a factor that strengthen the Ryūkyū independence movement? Can they lead to the organisation receiving greater support for an independent state of Okinawa? These questions leads to the research question:

How has the American military bases and the incidents connected to the American military presence influence the Ryūkyū independence movement between 2004-2017?

With this research question this thesis will attempt to give a better understanding of the effect the American military bases have on the independence movement on Okinawa.

1.4 Objective

The main objective of this thesis is to give a deeper understanding of the effect the American military bases have on Okinawa, and how they might be contributing to the independence movement on Okinawa. Further the objective is to see how the Ryūkyū identity may be a contributing factor for the movement to boost support for an independent Okinawa.

There has been a lot of research done on social movements and in recent years specifically on independence movements around the world. Especially in stable democratic societies, where many try using nonviolent measures in order to reach independence. As mentioned previously there has been an increase of momentum for independence movements in Europe and democratic countries.\(^5\) Especially with Scotland where they used political pressure and gained a referendum back in 2014. This trend in modern time can be seen as a breakthrough for autonomic regions around the world. In democratic countries they can use political measures to persuade governments to recognize minority wishes for an independent state. Previous research has tried to understand the phenomenon of independence movements around the world. The same can be said about the military bases on Okinawa since these have been a hot topic for the Okinawan people, mainland Japan as well as America. But how they can correlate with the support gained for the Ryūkyū independence movement has previously not been researched on.

Therefore this research intends to close that gap and see what effect American military bases on Okinawa might have on the independence movement.

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1.5 Limitation

The research has been limited to the empirical material by members from Ryūkyū independence movement, The Association of Comprehensive Studies for Independence of the Lew Chewans and Okinawan politicians who raise the question about the American military bases on Okinawa. Because of the time limit and the limited resources for this research it will examine already existing data. One can argue that an optimal research would be to either interview members of the Ryūkyū independence movement or quantitatively ask people on Okinawa about their own stance on American military bases. But with the limits set for this thesis it instead intends to deepen the understanding of the impact the military bases on Okinawa might have on the Ryūkyū independence movement through existing data.

1.6 Previous Research

There has been a great deal of research made on the Ryūkyū culture, identity and history and especially on the Ryūkyū islands historical perspective as a subordinate to the imperial Japan. Previous research on the military bases on Okinawa by Gavan McCormack, professor of Australian National University and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, Director of the Peace Philosophy Centre, a peace-education organization in Vancouver will be what this thesis base its initial assumptions from. Primarily from Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu, 2012, *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu’s research analysis on the historical perspective of the military bases on Okinawa. More specifically it looks at how historical events have shaped contemporary Okinawa and it is resentment towards war and military bases. They emphasize the importance of the occupation of the former called Ryūkyū kingdom and from 1870s and onwards how Okinawa prefecture has been treated by the imperial mainland Japan. The treatment of Okinawa can be seen as similar to other colonized countries such as Korea or Taiwan where it is citizens had to adapt to the Japanese culture and language. Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu argue that this way of treating Okinawa is a key factor
for Okinawa's stance on the military bases on Okinawa whether American or Japanese military.\textsuperscript{6} Over a long period of time the Okinawan people’s own view on Okinawa has been neglected. They have none to little to power on how to affect the Japanese government or the American government regarding the bases. Furthermore, the Japanese government favor and prioritize US interest and military bases instead of the Okinawan citizens.\textsuperscript{7}

Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu highlights the historical perspective and gives a more explanatory view of the Okinawan stance on mainland Japan and American military bases. On the other hand, Laura Elizabeth Hein, professor at Northwestern University and Mark Selden at The Asia-Pacific Journal discuss in Islands Of Discontent: Okinawan Responses To Japanese And American Power, the interdependence Okinawa have on the American military bases and the Japanese government. Laura Hein & Mark Selden can also be seen arguing how the Japanese government can also be seen to have taken advantage of Okinawa's poor economy, which have remained ever since the occupation of Okinawa.\textsuperscript{8, 9} The research discuss the economic problem of Okinawans wish for more autonomy from the government in Tokyo while at the same time accepting money to tackle unemployment.\textsuperscript{10} But Okinawa do not have much of an alternative. They will not survive without subsidies from Tokyo and because of this there are a lot of people on Okinawa who do not see independence as an alternative.\textsuperscript{11}

Miyumi Tanji on the other hand argues in Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa that even with economic incitament the people might still oppose the military bases. In a study five years prior to the crash of a helicopter at Okinawa international university, only 41\% was against the relocation of the Futenma air base to Henoko.\textsuperscript{12} While the same year after the accident it had roose to 81\%.\textsuperscript{13} But how much impact do these events have over a long period of time?

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 61.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 8-9.
\textsuperscript{12} Tanji, Miyumi, 2006 Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa, Routledge, p 180.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu try to give a deeper understanding of the people of Okinawa’s resentment towards the American bases. It is still unclear if it can be seen as a resentment towards the Japanese and American governments or the direct influence of the American bases. By trying to dig deeper into the influence that the American bases might have on recent events, this thesis will give a different angle and a deeper understanding of the influence of American bases in modern time.

1.7 Disposition

The second chapter of this research will go through the historical background of the independence movement. The Japanization of Okinawa and the historical impact on today's Okinawa. Finally the chapter will also go through Okinawa’s reversion agreement. The third chapter will discuss the theory of this research, how it will be applied and why it is appropriate. Furthermore what criticism can be made towards it. The fourth chapter will discuss the method that is used and what problems might occur. This chapter will also discuss the reliability and validity of the research. Lastly it includes the empirical material that will be used and why it might be applicable for this research. The fifth chapter will then analyse the material to give a deeper understanding of the material at hand. Finally, chapter six will based on the analysis draw conclusions and attempt to formulate advice for future research in this field.
2. Historical background

It is hard to understand how the Okinawan people may feel about the military bases without knowing the Okinawan History. Hence, this chapter will go through the Okinawan History from the occupation of the Ryūkyū kingdom in 1870s and the “japanization” of the islands and how the Ryūkyū identity was portrayed as something that should be eradicated. As well as the historical consequences of the battle of Okinawa. How the battle of Okinawa have impacted contemporary society there. Also the birth of the independence movement in the early stage of post WWII. Finally, the Okinawa Reversion Agreement and the sway of opinion by the Okinawan people.

2.1 Japanization of the Ryūkyū kingdom

It is historically common for the losing side to oblige by the victorious. This was the case for Okinawa as well when it was annexed by Japan in 1879. By various means did the Japanese imperial government try to Japanize the Ryūkyū kingdom by creating policies to indoctrinate the Okinawan people. First and foremost the Okinawan people were forced to adopt Japanese as their national language. If you were caught speaking Okinawan in school you were timed-out and forced to wear a hōgen fuda (dialect card) as a form of punishment. You also had to change your own Okinawan name and substitute it with a Japanese name.

The Ryūkyū kingdom had previously strong ties with Taiwan and the Chinese mainland. Because of the good relationship with China they had adopted to a more Chinese educational system. Therefore it was hard for the Japanese government to implement these new measures into the Okinawan school. But when China was defeated in the late 18th century the Okinawan people slowly changed their opinion.

Japan started to organize the people on all the islands to internalize them into the Japanese government system. The young people was educated to the Japanese system at school while the

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14 Japanization 皇民化.
16 Ibid.
older was organized in units for the upcoming wars. The people were volunteered to act as a local home guard. They organized the village by strengthening and repairing buildings. This was a way for Japan to strengthen the shorelines but also for the people to become internalized into the Japanese empire.\(^\text{17}\)

As Japan kept expanding in Asia and spending more resources on the military they also implemented laws for all of the empires subordinates to contribute to the imperialistic Japan. They implemented a law at the beginning of WWII for all the people living under the Japanese emperor to contribute to the fast expanding imperium called the \textit{national mobilization law}.\(^\text{18}\) This law forced all men and women to prepare Japan for the war. Men were forced to enlist to the Japanese army and the women to either be relocated to the mainland and work at the factories or to enlist in the military as nurses.

These policies by the Japanese government contributed the rapid progress of Okinawa in becoming integrated and internalized into the Japanese government system and culture. But it also crippled the relation to the Japanese mainland. Even today these tendencies can be seen as the Okinawan resistance and wish for autonomy from the central government in Japan.

\subsection*{2.2 Battle of Okinawa}

One of the bloodiest battles in Japan was fought on the Okinawan islands. Because of Okinawa’s proximity to Japan it became one of the last defensive positions to mainland Japan during WWII. The invasion of Okinawa was fought in the end of WWII between April 1, 1945 until June 22, the same year. The war was short lived but is remembered for its fierce battles. Furthermore the amount of people deceased during this short period of time was tremendous. 241,336 people lost their lives.\(^\text{19}\) 77,402 of the Japanese military deceased and approximately 14,009 of the American forces.\(^\text{20}\) But the death toll of Okinawans was almost a third of the whole population at the time,
149,362 Okinawans were deprived of their lives.\textsuperscript{21} Around 100,000 were estimated to be civilians.

The battle of Okinawa was the last battle in the Pacific war. Before the war the Japanese admirals and high ranking officers prepared for the battle at Okinawa. They were all worried about the imminent war and focused on different measures to defend the last outpost before mainland Japan. The Japanese Empire had started to crumble and felt forced to go to extreme length to defend itself.

Against those terrible threats, the need for what was called ”special” measures was clear. The chief of staff informed the Emperor about provisions for Kamikaze operations, which had already begun against the American fleet carrying out the pre-invasion bombardment.\textsuperscript{22}

The allied forces still pushed through and initiated operation Iceberg. Operation Iceberg was the operation of the invasion of Okinawa by America and the allied forces. Okinawa had reinforced the island against the Americans offensive and recruited Okinawans to aid the Japanese military to defend the island. Under the total mobilization law everyone from seventeen to the age of forty-five was forced to enter the military service.\textsuperscript{23} First to assist in building airfields and military defenses and later to supplement military forces. When the invasion rapidly approached even junior high school students were recruited because of the limited resources of the Japanese empire. They also intensified Kamikaze attacks to stall the american advance to Okinawa.

Because of the bloody battle at Okinawa American officers feared another invasion to mainland Japan. This fear was one of the reasons why the American decided to finalize the operation by using the atomic bombs “little boy” over Hiroshima and “fat man” over Nagasaki.

The raw statistics of how many people who died during the battle of Okinawa is horrific. Still the most memorable for the Okinawan people today is the Japanese government stance to the events. Especially how they have rejected to include the mass suicide ordered by the Japanese military in history textbooks. It wasn't until 2008 that the Ministry of Education,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Feifer, George, Battle of Okinawa: The Blood And The Bomb, first paperback edn., Lyons Press, 2001, p 4-5.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Allen, Mathew, 2002, Identity and Resistance in Okinawa, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, p 23.
\end{itemize}
Culture, Sports, Science and Technology decided to include it into the history books for highschool students.\textsuperscript{24}

2.3 The Okinawan island post war and the creation of the notion of an independent state

In the aftermath of WWII and the beginning of the American occupation of Japan and Okinawa facilitated the emerging of the Ryūkyū independence movement and the desire to eventually receive Independence from America and mainland Japan. But some former political parties on Okinawa after the WW2 and beginning of the occupation saw the Americans as liberators from the Japanese mainland.

The Okinawans on the island were left with an island in ruins. Their homes were either destroyed in the war or occupied by American military. Therefore the Okinawans were forced to live in temporary shelters such as tents. In general Okinawa's agriculture was scarce because of the flat landscape. The Americans military forces occupying the island had claimed most of the land used for farming. This was because these areas were the few places where it was possible to build the American military bases. This in combination with the lack of food made the Okinawans survive out of rations from the American military.

Nonetheless the Okinawan locals started to form political parties to try to tackle the immediate problems such as food and shelter to recover from the postwar, socially and economically. But they also focused on autonomy. First the Yaeyama Labour Party was created. Followed by Okinawan Democratic League, Okinawa People’s Party and Okinawa Socialist Party.\textsuperscript{25} Okinawa People’s Party was one of the parties that welcomed the US occupation and saw it as liberation from the former occupation by mainland Japan. This was because of how they felt they were treated by the Japanese mainland and they looked for an opportunity to be able to reach independence.

\textsuperscript{25} Tanji, Miyumi, 2006 Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa, Routledge, p 56-57.
2.4 Okinawa Reversion Agreement

Okinawa Reversion Agreement was the agreement that was signed 1971 between America and Japan to relinquish all rights of the Okinawa prefecture to Japan under the Treaty of San Francisco. The agreements was divided into several articles. The first three have been subject of great debate because all the people involved have had a hard time to come to a satisfying agreement for all parties. Article 1 stating that America would end its occupation and relinquish all of Okinawa to Japan.\textsuperscript{26} They would be granted responsibility, authority and legislative jurisdiction. Article 2 agreed to that all agreements except for the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan would be applicable to the Okinawan prefecture on the date that the agreement was set on.\textsuperscript{27} This was one of the biggest setbacks for the Okinawan people. The people supporting the idea of reuniting with mainland Japan was led by prominent figures such as former Okinawan governor Chōbyō Yara (governor between 1972–1976).\textsuperscript{28} He and his supporters backed reuniting with the mainland on the basis of relocating or phasing out the American military bases from Okinawa. The 3rd article stated that the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan would be applicable to Okinawa and the Americans would be able to let the military bases remain and use them as they pleased.\textsuperscript{29}

2.5 Summary of the historical backgrounds impact on today's Okinawa

In the early years after WWII a lot of the political parties and the people of Okinawa saw the American military as a liberation and a form of way to be able to seek independence in the future.\textsuperscript{30} The positive attitude towards the Americans by the Okinawan people is argued to be because of the wish for independence from mainland Japan would be plausible if they had strong ties to the American military. Over the years these opinions slowly changed. The Okinawan

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Tanji, Miyumi, 2006 Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa, Routledge, p 99-100.
\textsuperscript{30} Tanji, Miyumi, 2006 Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa, Routledge, p 56-57.
people sought to reverse back to Japan because of the a wish for the American military bases to be phased out or relocated from Okinawa. The opinions were split by the people on Okinawa but prominent figure and former governor Chōbyō Yara who was pro reuniting with mainland Japan was it due to the possibility for the American military bases on Okinawa to be relocated out of the prefecture. Still the question remains, how have the contemporary Okinawa been impacted by this?
3. Theory

This chapter will discuss the theory of collective identity by Alberto Melucci. Why it has been chosen and why it might be applicable for this study. How concepts of identity and interest can be linked together through collective identity. The theory will provide analytical tools and the main theoretical framework for this study. Lastly, this chapter will go through the limitation and criticism against the theory.

3.1 Collective identity theory

This study will use collective identity theory from Italian Alberto Melucci who lived between 1943 - 2001. He was a professor at the university of Milan in the field of sociology. He was a prominent figure in the world of sociology for his view on collective identity theory. His view on social movements have had a great impact on contemporary social and political movements. He argued for the collective identity to be used as an analytical tool to explain and understand social movements. Instead of previous research which has had a more traditional static approach to collective identity and social movements he did introduce a notion of the collective identity to be an ever changing in process.

This essay considered using Benedict Anderson’s theory on nationalism, notion of “imagined communities”. This was later excluded because of the Ryūkyū independence movement connection to the social movements against the American military bases on Okinawa. Theory on collective identity emphasize on the movement and it’s actors while theory on nationalism emphasize on the notion of the nation-state. Therefore did this essay opt for the collective identity theory from Alberto Melucci.

But first and foremost, what is collective identity? Alberto Melucci published 1995 in *Social Movements and Culture* together with other sociologists and contributed with chapter three called *The process of collective identity*. There he argued that collective identity is something that is ever changing. While previous researchers had discussed collective identity as something with ‘agency and structure’ or ‘values and beliefs’. Melucci argued that these more
‘realistic’ views on collective identity didn’t explain how social movements maintained over time or how collective actions derive from previous experience or from individual motives. To understand modern social movements it is important to make sense of the groups actions and understand the process in it to understand collective identity. This is what he called *Processual approach to collective identity*. To understand the process it is important to make a new definition of collective identity, he therefore wrote in *Social Movements and Culture*:

> Collective identity is is an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals (or groups at a move complex level) concerning the orientation of their action and field of opportunities and constraint in which such action is to take place.

One of the key components in a social movement are the actions that the collective take to achieve their goals. But the process of the social movement is something that is negotiated over time. He therefore divided his approach into three sections, *Cognitive definition*, *Active relationships* and *Emotional investment*. *Cognitive definition* are the goals, means and actions for the the collective identity. These are all framed in language, culture, rituals, etc and calculated between investment and reward. Therefore collective identity refers to a social movement as a network of relations. Alberto Melucci called this *Active relationships*. Active relationships is the interaction between actors who communicate and influence each other. Finally, he argues that it is an *emotional investment* in collective identity. Emotional investment is a keystone for collective identity and one of the most common definitions while talking about collective identity. Emotional investment makes individuals feel like they’re a part of the collective. Even if you understand his theory on collective identity it is important to understand that he still argues that collective identity is just a analytical tool to understand social movements. *Collective identity is a concept, an analytical tool and not a datum or an essence, a ‘thing’ with a ‘real’ existence.*

Collective identity is nothing that has a real existence. it is instead something similar to nationalism or feminism where struction from social groups shape and use collective identity to get a deeper understanding of it.

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33 Ibid., 77.
Alberto Melucci emphasize the importance of two factors for social movements. The first factor is as previously mentioned emotional investment. The individual actors in social movements are fueled by the construction of an collective identity. This is a necessity to create an ‘us’ against ‘them’ feeling and a condition for the social movement actors not to have mixed feelings or contradictory feelings towards the social movements and boost positive energy. The second factor is emotional background. It is something that collective actors try to emphasize to strengthen the ‘we’ and motivate the social movements actors. Historically all social movements are different in regard to when they originated. Social movements in the past were more structured than today’s. For example the Labour movement, civil rights movement or the environmental movements. Because of the limited resources such as internet or easy access to phones. In contrast to modern social movements who have become more vague with loose structures and organisations. Alberto Melucci emphasize that it is important for social movements to maintain while changing according to the past. Further, the process of adjusting has never been more important.

The theoretical framework of collective identity has previously been applied in modern time to feminist, HBTQ, environmental social and political movements. But it has not been applied to the protest movement of the Ryūkyū independence movement. Previous studies on the Ryūkyū independence movement have not taken into account the impact the collective might have on this social movement. The Ryūkyū independence movement is a relatively small and disperse movement but to understand the collective goal for this movement it is fruitful to apply a collective identity theory.

When doing a study solely on the Ryūkyū independence movement, Alberto Melucci’s theory will work as the theoretical framework of collective identity as an analytical tool to the forthcoming analysis of the empirical material. Firstly, it will show how the collective identity is an empowering factor for the members of the social movement to despise the American military bases. Furthermore how Okinawan people primarily identify themselves as part of Okinawa instead of Japanese. Secondly, will aim to provide possible reasoning for the gathered empirical

34 Ibid., 83.
material. Consequently a theory regarding collective identity and social movements will help provide and present a plausible argumentation and make it possible for a reasonable conclusion drawn from this theory.

Lastly, how is the collective identity theory relevant for this study? The Ryūkyū independence movement is a movement which is scattered with individuals with different views on how independence should be reached. Especially how members from the Kariyushi Club and members of the public might view the American bases. The Okinawan public have been seen to be reluctant towards the relocating the American bases on Okinawa while Kariyushi Club can be seen to be open-minded towards relocating the American bases (will be discussed further in the analysis).

3.2 Limitation and criticism against the collective identity theory

By applying the theory of collective identity on an independence movement. The biggest obstacle for this research is, how can you apply a theory from Alberto Meculli who applied his theory on social movements back in the 70s and 80s. Much has changed since then. Can this theory be relevant and applicable to today modern social movements? Also Alberto Meculli studied social movements in the western hemisphere, how can this be relevant for an independence movement in Japan? One might also argue that this analytical theory is to vague and diverse to be applicable.

James M, Jasper and Aidan McGarry discuss in their book *The Identity Dilemma Social Movements and Collective Identity* previous risks towards collective identity theory. They discuss the risk of the collective identities critique of being to vague and disorientates the complexity behind the actual problem.36 While Foucault and Judith Butler's critique towards identity theory is that the individuality is stripped from the actors.37 But how can one not use an individual to represent an organisation or institution if not part of a collective identity? This is a question that is important to address when doing a study with collective identity. In an organisation it is important to know that there are always representatives. People gather together

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37 Ibid.
to try make a greater impact. To unify people they try to create bonds and a collective identity. This is the case of the culture identity of the Ryūkyū culture and Ryūkyū independence movement on Okinawa.

Modern scholars have had a keen interest on collective identity and applied it to social and political groups all over the world. Alberto Meculli view on the historical context and emotional identification is by today's scholars something that is in practise. Thus collective identity theory seems to be as relevant today as it has been before. Furthermore, with a collective identity theory this research can distinguish this group and reinforce how the movement has progressed, changed and evolved.
4. Method

This chapter will thoroughly go through the qualitative method that will be used in this research as well as why it is appropriate and applicable for this study. Furthermore, what limitations this method might have and criticism against it. This chapter will also go through the reliability and validity. Also the empirical material that will be used and why. Finally, limitation and criticism against the material.

4.1 Qualitative method

This study is based on an inductive approach and aim to provide the empirical material combined with the help of the theoretical framework from the collective identity theory. The empirical material together with the sociological approach from the theoretical framework this essay will try to explain the impact the American military bases have on the Ryūkyū independence movement. This study will use an in depth analysis of statements from prominent figures on the Ryūkyū independence movement in connection to incidents with the American military bases.

This study will use what Alan Bryman calls case study in his book *Social research methods*. A case study is an in depth study of an organisation, community or location. This particular case study will with a qualitative content analysis examine the empirical material in form of statements and news articles (will be explained further below). Content analysis is usually associated with mass media but as Bryman say “Content analysis...has a much broader applicability”.  

What is content analysis? Holsti coined a renowned definition for content analysis in his book *Content Analysis for the social science and humanities*, “Content analysis is any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages”. The essay will try to understand the statements from the members and supporters of the Ryūkyū independence movement with a combination of how the people of Okinawa might

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39 Ibid., 305.
think with additional material concerning the opinion of the people on Okinawa from Ryūkyū Shimpō.

4.1.1 Motivation

A question that might occur looking at the method is “Why a qualitative case study on the Ryūkyū independence movement without doing interviews?”. There is a few factors that affected the decision for the method for this study. The biggest issue was the time limit. There was not enough time to conduct interviews. Additionally, the Ryūkyū independence movement is a small and quite unorganized movement. Would it be possible to get in contact with a person close to the organisation?

With the chosen method and analytical tools this research will be able to get a broader aspect of the American military bases and what kind of influence they might have. Especially, in regards to the different parties in the independence movements and their view on the American military.

4.2 Validity & Reliability

4.2.1 Validity

The validity of this research is based as mentioned on Alan Bryman’s book Social research methods. The validity in this study is based on the assumptions that the result can be found in similar studies at the subject of social movements. Opinion polls on Okinawa reassure that similar studies on the American military shows indications for this research basis. As well as Okinawan people on the Ryūkyū identity contra the Japanese. This indicates whether or not there is validity in this research. However, a problem with the validity is that it might seem weak. There is not many similar academic research on the Ryūkyū independence movement. But as previously mentioned there is a significant amount of indicators for similar results such as the opinion polls made by newspapers on Okinawa and historical research.
4.2.2 Reliability
The reliability in this research relies in the *test-retest* method in Alan Bryman’s book *Social research methods*. The key point in reliability to see if the concept is stable and replicable. All the material for a similar study is at hand and can easily be followed by anyone. If a researcher would step by step follow the same method as in this research they would receive the same result. However a problem with the reliability is that the researchers own opinion or bias might influence the study. Because this study does not use interviews or surveys the bias lays in the chosen material. An important aspect to reduce the bias in research is to be aware of it. Also this research puts its trust in *Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research* by Nahid Golafshani that the reliability is the consequence of the validity.\(^{41}\) He argues that if the study can be seen as have validity the reliability will be strong if the study is replicable.\(^{42}\)

4.3 Material
The empirical material consists of both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources includes statements from politicians, members and supporters from the Ryūkyū independence movement. While the secondary sources includes books, journals and material collected on the internet. One of the primary empirical material for this study is previously made opinion polls by the *Ryūkyū Shimpō* (leading newspaper on Okinawa). There is opinion polls for a long period of times but this research will analyze the most essential for how the public opinion have swayed during incidents in regard to the American military bases and it is personal.

Why this material? Different materials and statements from diverse sources were considered when formulating the basis for this study. The first limitation regarding the material was the time frame between 2004-2017. These years was chosen because of the material being available as well as contemporary. Therefore, material in regard for example the rape case in 1995 was excluded because of the time frame.


\(^{42}\) Ibid.
The statements in this study were chosen because of their public role in the debate regarding the American military bases and the Ryūkyū independence movement. Therefore statements from ordinary people were decided not to be used. Also statements from people who live outside of Okinawa and the Japanese government were also not included because of their weak connection to the Ryūkyū independence movement. With use of the statements from the people who represent these different parts of the anti-base activists and Ryūkyū independence movement, this study can give a bigger picture of the social movement.

4.3.1 Statements

The primary material for this study will be the statements from members at ACSIL, Kariyushi Club and people of the public who publicly address the american military bases. The statements from ACSIL will be brought from their website. The statements from ACSIL is from recent years from their public archive and questions addressed towards the research group. They talk about the opportunity for Okinawa to become independent. Especially, the practical part and how they can economically be able to become independent and make money by abolishing the American bases.

The interview with Hiroji Yamashiro will be used together with the opinion polls to see how the Japanese people consider the American military bases. The interview was conducted in 2013 by Nakafuji Satomi addressing his view on the bases as one of the leading figures of the anti base movement.

From the political Party of Kariyushi Club will the statements be mainly from the political candidate Yara Chōsuke. His answers addressed regarding the party's view on independence will be used.

Lastly, this study will view the sitting governor of Okinawa Takeshi Onagas statement in 2016 regarding the relocation of the American military bases. He have as previously mentioned been strongly against the American military bases on Okinawa.

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43 http://www.acsils.org/.
4.3.2 Surveys from Ryūkyū Shimpō & Ryūkyū University

To get a deeper understanding of the previous mentioned empirical material this research will use opinion polls from the Ryūkyū Shimpō newspaper. The Ryūkyū Shimpō have in modern time made several opinion polls regarding the Ryūkyū identity and independence. The opinion polls from The Ryūkyū Shimpō that will be presented is between 2015-2017.

The survey from Ryūkyū University is conducted between 2004-2006 and can give a comparison how an eventual change in opinion might have changed overtime. How either an increase or a decrease in support for more autonomy and support for a relocation of the american military bases might be.

These surveys will give an overview how the Okinawan people might view the American bases. Further, how the Okinawan might view their identity and an independence from mainland Japan and the American military bases.

4.4 Criticism on the material

One of the most noteworthy points of critique in this study is the choice of material as well as how we can be certain that these people represent the Ryūkyū independence movement. The people and organisations chosen for this study were chosen because of their public and prominent roles regarding independence and American military bases. The Ryūkyū independence movement is a scattered social movement with different actors. The chosen actors for this research represent the positions of these different movements. Therefore, the material for this study gives an overall picture of the independence movement and their opinion regarding the American military bases.

With what will the opinion polls contribute? The opinion polls work as measures of how the Okinawan people might view their collective identity, as well as how the collective identity strengthens their emotional investment. This gives an indication of to what extent the American military bases impact the Okinawan public in connection to incidents regarding the American military bases.
5. Analysis

This chapter will first go through the previously mentioned opinion polls and discuss their position and how the identity of the Ryūkyū people is a factor to the collective, its influence over the “we” against “them” mentality. Further, it will discuss how the Okinawan public might view the possibility of an independent Okinawa, as well as how members of the independent movements view the possibility of an independent Okinawa. Lastly it will look at how the American military bases might impact the independence movement.

5.1 Ryūkyū independence and an identity in process

How is the collective identity of Ryūkyū seen by the Okinawan people? In 2007, 28% of the people participating in a survey made by Ryūkyū university thought of themselves as Okinawan rather than part of Japan. This was a decrease compared to previous years. However, the first survey was conducted just months after a helicopter crashed on Okinawa international university. Therefore the decrease in result in later studies might be showing the impact the crash had on the first surveys result. The survey might thus be influenced by people feeling a stronger resentment towards the bases and a commonness with their fellow Okinawan people in connection to the crash.

In the same survey in 2007 the Okinawan people's views on the American military were seen as a factor for 30% of the participants why the Okinawan public's conscious regarding the Okinawan economy, history and military situation had raised. It was also seen by 31% of the participants as a result of the Ryūkyū independence movement support had been a factor. This indicate the influence the military bases and the Ryūkyū independence movement have on

45 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
today's political situation on Okinawa. Even if the indication weak it can still be seen as an influence on the Okinawa public towards the American bases and and the independence movement.

But in the same survey on the question concerning the independence of Okinawa, the participants still seem reluctant. Between 2005 and 2007 the support for an independent Okinawa decreased from 28.4% to 14.3%. This can be seen as a weak link between the American military bases behavior and conduct and the independent movement. The closer to a major incident with the American military bases the stronger is the support for an independent state of Okinawa. Also, it might reflect how the Okinawan Ryūkyū identity may seem equivalent to national identity. The collective Ryūkyū identity is enforced by the incidents and in all three surveys people do consider themselves as purely Okinawan rather than a part of Japan.

The ACILSs address the identity of Ryūkyū by pointing out the difference between Okinawan and Japanese people. They reinforce their claim by saying “Lew Chawans are Lew Chewans”. Also to boost the emotional background, they address themselves differently compared to Japanese people. This is because they try to increase the “we” mentality in the collective identity.

In 2014 Ryūkyū Shimpō had a survey published, which gave a clear indication of the Okinawan public view on the American military bases. Specifically, the relocations of the airbase Futenma to Haneko. The survey showed a clear resistance towards building and relocating the military bases in the prefecture.

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50 Ibid.

The graph shows that 80.2% of the participants favored a cessation for the military bases. The same survey also showed that 79.7% of the people participating was in favor to relocate the military base out of the prefecture or abroad. Even if the people on Okinawa seem to be pessimistic about the American military bases, this indicates a shift where participants are more in favor of an independent Okinawa. A study from 2013 at Okinawa international university shows a mere 6% to be in favor of an independent Okinawa. Still, the same study shows an increase since previous studies and can be seen as a positive indicator for the independence movement because 36% of the participants answered they had thought of an independent Okinawa.

Since 2014 two high profile rape cases sparked a huge debate on Okinawa. Also in connection to these events the new anti base governor Onaga Takeshi took office. He said at a rally in regard to the relocation of the American military bases:

The thought that there will be a new base in Henoko makes me feel strong resentment and unease about the dangerous Osprey flights that will happen

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53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55沖縄独立考えた36% 県内大学生意識調査 [36% is thinking of an independent Okinawan, survey of university students consciousness in the Okinawan prefecture] Published February 24 2014, viewed 2017 May 10
56 Ibid.
tonight and continue in the future. I am committed to prevent Osprey from flying in our skies\(^{57}\)

The Okinawan people shows a strong resentment towards the American military bases and the relocation of the Futenma airbase. But the Independence movement have had weak support until the latest survey in *Ryūkyū Shimpō*. The survey shows a big swing for the independence movement. Though the number people who sought independence for Okinawa was still quite small as many as 34.5% said they wish for greater autonomy for Okinawa.\(^{58}\)

The independence movement uses the American military bases as a means to strengthen the collective identity and boost the peoples emotional investment. As previously stated; people feel more like Okinawan rather than Japanese and by portraying the American bases as “them” or “outsiders” it increases the commonness of the social collective identity. Also the independence movement tries to strengthen the Ryūkyū identity by emphasising the emotional background. They point out the difference between Okinawa and Japan such as the ethnic background and the Okinawan language. Because of the shift from the Okinawan public the cognitive definition of the Ryūkyū independence might also change.

5.2 Do all actors have the same standpoint?

In the *Ryūkyū Shimpō* survey from 2016 did 46.2% of respondents say that one of the greatest political concerns at Okinawa is the American military bases. 53.8% thought that the greatest concern was the economy. This view is shared by the ACILs who research for the practical part of an independent Okinawa. Specifically, how it would be possible for the Okinawan prefecture to become independent and sustain a prosperous economy.

As one of their responses to “frequently asked questions” they give an outline of how much the land the American bases is built upon is worth. They argue that in the present situation the

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\(^{58}\) Jichiken kyōka 35% nozomu 「現行通り」半数割る琉球新報県民意識調査 [Ryūkyū Shimpō survey reveals 35% of Okinawans favor increased autonomy, less than half support status quo] Published 1 January 2017, viewed April 4. [http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/entry-420582.html](http://ryukyushimpo.jp/news/entry-420582.html).
military bases are estimated to amount to around 5% while the occupied land would be worth numerous times.\(^5\)

By showing economic incitament for relocating the American military bases they try to increase the support and widen the gap between themselves and the bases.

The ACSILs also say that, “The presence of military bases pulls Lew Chew into wars and other conflicts”.\(^6\) By having military presence on Okinawa it makes the surrounding state aware of the constant threat Okinawa is and this in itself might lead to war on the islands. Anti-base activist Hiroji Yamashiro does not say that the American military bases might be a factor for war, but he says it is one of the reasons why voices from the independence movement have increased.\(^7\)

Hiroji Yamashiro also raise the question concerning the Osprey aircrafts and its deployment. He said during an interview:

“In 2007 did the construction of the helipad in Takae start… that time people had no information of what kind of aircraft Osprey was, therefore did not the voices against the construction start until around 2011”.\(^8\)

The anti-base movement had a huge swing in support when they got informed regarding the construction and deployment of the aircraft's. More than 100 000 people gathered to demonstrate against the base. The surge of people against the bases can also be seen as increased support for autonomy on Okinawa, because of the previous mentioned connection between the military bases and rise in wish for autonomy. But this claim has to be taken cautiously since Hiroji Yamashiro say, “The Osprey would be deployed even if 200 000 people would gather”.\(^9\)

This is a response of how little influence the Okinawan people feel they have towards the Japanese mainland and government in Tokyo whom have no intention to relocate the military air

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\(^{8}\) Ibid.

\(^{9}\) Ibid.
bases outside of the Okinawa prefecture. This is confirmed by Takeshi Onaga after the decision was made in court to relocate the Futenma airbase in Okinawa prefecture. In response he said: "The statement has great significance in shaking the Japanese government, which continues taking high-handed measures and ignoring the will of Okinawans".64 This also shows that the Japanese mainland have influence on the previously mentioned increased wish for more autonomy on Okinawa. This shows that the military bases might be a smaller factor on the Ryūkyū independence movement because the Japanese mainlands stance to not relocate the bases out of Okinawa might influence their stance.

The political party Kariyushi Club and its leader Yara Chōsuke and his political candidates has had an open mind about the American military bases on Okinawa. While answering a few of the most common questions with regards to the independence on Okinawa he have had an ambiguous answer regarding the military bases. He says, A Ryūkyū who have been able to reach independence would have to rely on allied forces and the UN to guarantee security.65 He therefore as opposed to everyone else holds an open door for the American military bases on the island. These allied forces include the American military bases even if there is a wish for them to be reduced. As the only political party on Okinawa who advocates independence as well as a more liberal view on the American military bases he is quite popular. In last city council election on Okinawa 2014 he received more than 10 000 votes, which amounts to more than 7% of the voters.66 This is a contradiction to the claim that the American military bases and recent events correlates with the increased support for the Ryūkyū independence movement.

The Kariyushi Club can also be seen as an outlier since they are the only party in the Ryūkyū independence movement which is pro independence but is open to the military bases

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being stationed in Okinawa prefecture. Yet, the party can be seen to have support from the public. This shows the collective identity of the people seeking independence as part of the social movements emotional investment. The question regarding the American military bases is essential but the collective identity of the group can be seen as important.
6. Discussion & Conclusion

This chapter will discuss the findings from the analysis and how to they can be interpreted. It will go through the conclusion from this study and lastly, recommendations for further research.

6.1 Discussion

This study has shown how different the opinions of the Ryūkyū independence movement are towards the American military bases and how the American military bases influence the independence movement. There are two main points coming out of this study. At first glance the answer seems obvious; the American military bases would have an impact on the Ryūkyū independence movement. Therefore it was surprising to see how Kariyushi Club (the only political party who favors an independence) do not firmly state a demilitarization of the American military bases. They hinted in their statement that if they reach independence, the American military bases were to be relied on to secure peace on Okinawa.

Further, the increased resistance towards the American military bases can be seen as an indicator of increased support for the Ryūkyū independence movement. The resistance towards the American military bases have strong ties with the independence movement since most of the movement is firmly against any military bases on Okinawa. Even if the resentment towards the mainland might influence the opposition against the American military bases, the bases can be seen as a mean to boost the collective identity of the Ryūkyū independence movement and their ultimate goal for independence. Also, the collective identity of the Ryūkyū is of great importance for the Okinawan people. As previously stated, a large portion of the people living on Okinawa would consider themselves as Okinawan rather than Okinawans living in Japan and this indicates that the collective identity is strong. So, even if the support for an independent Okinawa has decreased, the support for more autonomic power had increased tremendously and this can be seen as a big victory for the independence movement.
6.2 Conclusion

This thesis has taken an in depth look at how the American military bases could be a factor in garnering support for the independence movement. It started off with the question:

- How has the American military bases and the incidents connected to the American military presence influence the Ryūkyū independence movement between 2004-2017?

This research has showed that there is a connection between the American military bases and Ryūkyū independence movement. However, the presence of the American military bases has not affected the support for the Ryūkyū independence movement in their quest for an independent Okinawa during this time period. Yet we can see that incidents with the American military bases and the conduct of its stationed troops has increased the resentment towards the American military presence. We can also see that these incidents have contributed to strengthen the collective identity of Ryūkyū identity and people seeking more autonomy for Okinawa.

6.3 Recommendations for further research

There is a lot of uncharted territory in the field of the Ryūkyū independence movement. Therefore it is a lot of research that could be done. On the same note as this research a study on the Ryūkyū independence movement with a different method would be of great interest. Especially a qualitative in depth study with interviews on how the Kariyushi Club might view the American bases in the case of independence of the Ryūkyū islands. It would be of interest to see what their view on the American military is.

On the field of the American military bases on Okinawa it would be interesting to have research made on the opinion of people who support an independent Okinawa and the people who is against the military bases to see if the two have different views. As this study shows there is a small indicator that this is the case but it does not give enough evidence.
Summary

This thesis has examined the influence the American military bases and it’s personnel might have on the Ryūkyū independence movement. The research question is:

- How has the American military bases and the incidents connected to the American military presence influence the Ryūkyū independence movement between 2004-2017?

With a qualitative content analysis method, this thesis attempts to give clarity in the influence the American military bases might have on the Ryūkyū independence movement. This thesis has examined existing data containing statements from prominent political figures on Okinawa and leading members from the Ryūkyū independence movement, together with surveys made by Ryūkyū Shimpō. Alberto Melucci theory on collective identity has been applied as an analyzing tool to give a deeper understanding of the material and conducting the analysis. This thesis has concluded that there is a connection between the American military bases and the Ryūkyū independence movement. However, the presence of the American military bases has not affected the support for the Ryūkyū independence movement in their quest for an independent Okinawa during this time period. Yet we can see that incidents with the American military bases and the actions of its stationed troops has increased the resentment towards the American military presence.
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