

Okinawa: Japan's Prefecture That Keeps Saying NO

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I. Okinawa – The Prefecture That Keeps Saying No

Modern Japanese history has no precedent for the phenomenon of a prefecture saying “No” to the authorities of two of the world’s great powers, and doing so consistently, over a period of decades. The political history of Okinawa in the 48 years since its reversion has been one of resistance to the assigned status of Client State of the United States’ Client State of Japan. Prime Minister Abe appears to see Okinawa as a patch of enemy territory within an otherwise submissive domain, yet it is the Okinawans who take seriously his call for going “beyond the post-war system” and “taking back” Japan. For them, however, it is Okinawa itself, “lost” 74 years ago, that is to be taken back and Abe who stands in the way, blocking them.

Okinawa’s confrontation with the Japanese nation state is rooted in the unique experience of incorporation by violence – into the early modern (Edo) state in 1609 and into the modern (Meiji) state in 1879,⁽¹⁾ followed by the overwhelming catastrophe of war in 1945, the ensuing severance from Japan, US occupation

(1) See G. McCormack (2018). “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* (pp. 118-134). London and New York: Routledge.

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between 1945 and 1972 as Japan's "war state," matching the mainland-Japan "peace state" under the San Francisco Treaty determination of 1951,⁽²⁾ and the fierce, ongoing confrontation with the national government over the key national policy for Okinawa from 1972: that its *raison d'être* has to be: serve the United States.⁽³⁾

During the early years of US occupation, while under complete US military control, the islands were assigned a key role in global war planning. Up to 1,300 nuclear weapons were stored there and Pentagon planners assumed a major role for Okinawa in scenarios involving the destruction of *all* major cities in the then Soviet Union and China, with the killing of around 600 million people (sic) very possibly bringing human civilization itself to an end.⁽⁴⁾ And, in case that might not suffice, the US also stockpiled 13,000 tons of poison gas materials, of which Okinawans only learned when some leaked out.⁽⁵⁾ Struggling then against the appropriation of their land, they believed that if only Okinawa were to be restored to Japan the principles of the constitution would ensure recognition of their democratic rights and the winding back of bases and return of their land. It was a vain hope. Instead, under the process known in Okinawa as the terror of "bayonet and bulldozer" expropriation of their land proceeded inexorably, and military bases consolidated. After the reversion (in 1972), US hegemony, and the associated priority to its military, simply became entrenched. US extraterritorial control spread over a network of bases covering just under 20 per cent of the land

(2) See G. McCormack (2014). "The San Francisco Treaty at Sixty—The Okinawa Angle". In Kimie Hara (Ed.), *The San Francisco System and Its Legacies: Continuation, Transformation, and Historical Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific* (pp. 144-161), New York and London, Routledge.

(3) For details, Gavan McCormack and Satoko Oka Norimatsu (2018). *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States, Second Edition*. Rowman and Littlefield.

(4) Daniel Ellsberg (2017). *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a nuclear war planner*. London, Bloomsbury Publications, See also Ellsberg in conversation with Peter Hannam (2018). Setting the world alight. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 March 2018.

(5) Okinawa Prefectural Archives (2019). *Doku gasu heiki tekkyo no tataikai*. Retrieved January 16, 2020, from https://www.archives.pref.okinawa.jp/event_information/exhibition_course/8248/

area of Okinawa Island and including two airports, three marine ports, multiple training areas, hospitals and communications facilities, three golf courses and about one dozen schools.

With the end of the Cold War, Okinawans again began to hope for a “peace dividend” via the return of their land. Not only was this not to be, but the infamous rape of a twelve-year old Okinawan girl by three US servicemen in 1995 stirred unprecedented anger and sadness. The two governments sought to quell these sentiments by promising that Futenma Marine Air Station would be returned within “five to seven years.” Like the “reversion” of Okinawa itself in 1972, it was an empty promise, Futenma would only be returned once a substitute facility had been constructed, and that substitute would have to be in Okinawa. The proposal was rejected, firstly by a Nago City plebiscite in 1997, by numerous resolutions of the Okinawan parliament and successive Okinawan governors, but the two governments have not since wavered.⁽⁶⁾ The project, initially for a “heliport,” gradually grew into a grand, multi-functional facility with twin, “V”-shaped, 1,800-meter runways on a platform projecting ten meters above the sea, plus ancillary deep-sea port and storage facilities.

II. Manoeuvres, Judicial and Political, 2006-2019

Following the agreement of the two governments on the grand design for “Realignment of US Forces in Japan” (2006), and preliminary survey works at the designated site, Henoko on Oura Bay, the issue moved to the top of the agenda of Okinawan politics.

A governor committed to stopping the proposal, Nakaima Hirokazu, was elected in 2010. Under heavy pressure – or, just possibly in accord with a carefully orchestrated plan – he reversed himself three years later, agreeing to the reclamation of Oura Bay and the construction of the new base. He was denounced by the Prefectural Assembly, then voted out of office the following year (2014),

(6) For details, see Gavan McCormack (2018). *The State of the Japanese State: contested identity, direction, and role*. Kent: Renaissance Books. See also G. McCormack, and Norimatsu (2018).

Resistant Islands, passim.

replaced by Onaga Takeshi, elected on a mandate to continue the opposition to the base. Onaga did indeed stop the works in October 2015, cancelling (*torikeshi*) the license, but the government immediately countermanded his order and the Supreme Court ruled against him in September 2016.⁽⁷⁾ Preliminary construction work resumed in April 2017. In July 2018, confronting serious, soon to prove fatal, illness, Governor Onaga launched formal proceedings to rescind (*tekkai*) the original, problematic reclamation license issued by his predecessor. No sooner did he do this, however, than he suddenly died (on 8 August).

The prefecture continued the process of revocation, and works were suspended (from 31 August). Again, however, the state moved to strike down the prefecture's protest. The (government's) Okinawan Defence Bureau called on Ishii Kei-ichi, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, and Transportation, to review the prefectural revocation under the Administrative Appeal Act and issue an order cancelling its effect. On 30 October, Minister Ishii did what was required of him, suspending the prefectural order and ruling that any rescission of the reclamation permit was "unreasonable" and "likely to undermine relations of trust with Japan's security ally, the United States."⁽⁸⁾

In September 2018, despite an unprecedented level of national government intervention on behalf of its preferred candidate, the anti-base construction Tamaki Denny was elected governor succeeding to the deceased Onaga Takeshi by a massive (eighty-thousand-vote) margin. His campaign pledge was clear: he would stop the Henoko reclamation/construction works. Within days of his election, however, the Abe government declared that it intended to proceed regardless of prefectural sentiment. Brushing aside outraged Okinawan protests in November the Okinawa Defense Bureau (ODB) ordered works at Oura resumed. Since then fleets of tankers and ships have been mobilized but to date works have been confined to the shallow waters of Henoko that constitute around one-quarter of the site, leaving untouched the deep waters of Oura Bay. Works continued through 2019.

(7) On the complex legal moves of 2016-2019, McCormack and Norimatsu, pp. 280-291.

(8) Kyodo.Okinawa governor meets top gov't official over US base transfer. *The Mainichi*,

November 6, 2018.

As successive recent Okinawan prefectural and national elections returned anti-base construction candidates, Governor Tamaki repeatedly called on Prime Minister Abe to enter a dialogue on the differences between nation and prefecture, but Abe refused. The national daily *Asahi* editorialized early in 2019 that the Henoko project was “clearly doomed” and that it was time to “to open talks with the US.”⁽⁹⁾ Although the project at the end of 2019 was only around one-per cent complete, already 147 billion yen, more than one-third of the originally allocated budget, had been spent.⁽¹⁰⁾ If expenditure was to continue at that rate (147 billion yen for one per cent of the project), it would eventually cost the Japanese state fourteen trillion yen or 127 billion dollars. The civic opposition protest movement continues on a day-to-day basis while the Government spend a staggering 20 million yen (around \$180,000) per day, just for security guards tasked with crushing or inhibiting local opposition.⁽¹¹⁾ In 2016-2017 the UN Human Rights Commission lambasted the government of Japan for its five month-long detention of protest leader Yamashiro Hiroji in solitary confinement as if he were a terrorist.⁽¹²⁾ For having baffled and infuriated the state by his brilliance as choreographer of the resistance, leading it in song, dance and debate, he was seen as a dangerous foe. His confinement, the UNHCR said, “constitutes a violation of Articles 2 and 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Articles 2(1), 26 and 27 of the Covenant, on the grounds of discrimination against a civic

(9) *Asahi Shimbun*. Henoko project clearly doomed; time to open talks with the US.

Asahi shimbun, February 23, 2019.

(10) “Henoko 9300 oku en umetate o sokuji chushi seyo.” editorial, *Ryukyu Shimpo*. December 27, 2019.

(11) The per person daily rate is a remarkable 90,000 yen or around \$825. (Mochizuki Isoko et al (2019). *Zei o ou – hadome naki boeihi* (10) Henoko-shin kichi kensetsu kenmin osae saigen naki yosan. *Tokyo Shimbun*, 25 November 2019).

(12) Gavan McCormack, and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, 2018, pp. 295-6. And see, UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Human Rights Council. Opinion No 55/2018 concerning Yamashiro Hiroji (Japan), Opinions adopted by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention at its eighty-second session, 20-24 August 2018. UN Human Rights Council, December 27, 2018 A/HRC/WGAD/2018/55

activist aimed at and resulting in ignoring the equality of human beings.”

Expert opinion on the Henoko project is negative. To cite just three examples: in October 2018 a statement bearing the signatures of 110 administrative law specialists declared the government to be acting “illegally ... lacking in impartiality or fairness,” and failing “to qualify as a state ruled by law;”⁽¹³⁾ in January 2019, 131 constitutional law specialists, academics and lawyers, published a similar statement declaring the government’s actions a matter of the fundamental human rights of the people of Okinawa, and the Henoko project both illegal and unconstitutional,⁽¹⁴⁾ and in a prefectural referendum on 24 February 2019 just over 72 per cent of voters said No to the project, far outweighing the 19 per cent in favor of it (or the 8.7 per cent who voted “neither”).⁽¹⁵⁾ Undeterred, the government pressed ahead.

Although Prime Minister Abe insists that Japan is a country governed by law, as one representative of this constitutionalist group put it, “What the Abe administration is doing in Okinawa is, precisely, trampling on the ‘rule of law’.” Governor Onaga (in office 2014-2018) was acclaimed by Okinawans when he berated the national government as “condescending,” “outrageous,” “childish,” “depraved,” [*rifujin, otonagenai, daraku shita*] and “ignoring the people’s will.”⁽¹⁶⁾

III. Bay-Bottom Mayonnaise

In February 2019, a panel for the resolution of disputes between central and local governments rejected an Okinawan prefectural government plea

(13) Okinawa taimusu (2018). Henoko Shin Kichi, Gyoseiho Kenkyusha 110 Nin No Seimeibun Zenbun. *Okinawa taimusu*, October 31, 2018.

(14) Ryukyu Shimpo (2019). 131 Constitutional Scholars Speak up against Henoko Base Construction. *Ryukyu Shimpo*, January 24, 2019. (Words quoted from Iijima Shigeaki of Nagoya Gakuin University).

(15) E. Johnston (2019). More than 70% in Okinawa vote no to relocation of US Futenma base to Henoko. *Japan Times*, February 24, 2019.

(16) McCormack and Norimatsu, pp. 278-9

to overturn the Ishii order on technical grounds.⁽¹⁷⁾ It was the fifth negative or unresponsive judicial process. The prefecture months later launched two further suits challenging the validity of National Land Minister Ishii's cancellation of the Okinawa Governor's August 2018 cancellation of the reclamation license, one under the Local Autonomy Law in the Naha branch of the Fukuoka High Court on 18 July and the other under the Administrative Case Litigation Law in the Naha District Court on 7 August.⁽¹⁸⁾ It protested, both formally that the Minister's decision had been an improper exercise of power by the government – acting as both “player and umpire”⁽¹⁹⁾ as Denny put it – since one section of it was adjudicating on the propriety of the act of another, and substantially, that the site was incompatible with the military purposes assigned it because the Bay floor was composed of sludge and crossed by active fault lines. Okinawans soon came to refer to the Bay bottom as made of mayonnaise, or occasionally of tofu.

Both factors, concealed from the public at the time of the environmental impact survey (2014-2016), only came to light in 2018 due to the efforts of civic protest groups under Freedom of Information. In December 2018, the government said that it would address the problem by inserting forty thousand sand compaction piles into the seabed. In January, it raised the number to sixty thousand. A few weeks later it became 76,999, while increasing the depth to which they would have to be inserted from sixty to ninety metres (sixty in water and

(17) On the grounds that the prefecture's suit was based on the Administrative Complaints Review Act, but that the tribunal only had jurisdiction over complaints under the Local Autonomy Act (The Mainichi (2019). Dispute resolution panel throws out Okinawa request to reinstate landfill ban. *The Mainichi*, February 19, 2019).

(18) For summary of these two suits, Okinawa Environmental Justice Project (2019). Review Henoko Plan!: 33 civic groups send a statement regarding US National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020. (November 1) Retrieved January 20, 2020, from <http://okinawaejp.blogspot.com/2019/11/review-henoko-plan-33-civil-groups-send.html/>, <http://okinawaejp.blogspot.com/2019/11/review-henoko-plan-33-civil-groups-send.html/>.

(19) Quoted in *Okinawa taimusu*, April 6, 2019.

thirty in sludge).⁽²⁰⁾ On 30 January 2019 Prime Minister Abe made a remarkable admission to the Diet: he could neither say when the project would be completed nor how much it would cost.⁽²¹⁾ Two weeks later, on 15 February, his government submitted to the Diet documents reckoning that “bottom enforcement” works would take an additional three years and eight months, so that, even according to the “best” scenarios for construction, the date for reversion of Futenma would be pushed back well beyond the 2022 target agreed in 2013.

Structural engineers doubt that the massive concrete and steel structure planned for Henoko-Oura Bay could be stably imposed on the designated site because of those two factors. They doubt that Japan has the necessary engineering skills or experience for reclamation under such conditions. No country had ever attempted anything like it. And, even if the government persists with the project, it would call for “more than ninety” sand compaction vessels to be mobilized to Oura Bay, their anchor chains inevitably scraping the sea-bed, bringing noise and pollution certain to weigh heavily on dugongs, sea turtles, and other Bay dwellers.⁽²²⁾ Improbably, the Government claimed that the massive project could be accomplished without seriously affecting the Bay as eco-system. At very least, the original design would have to be fundamentally re-drawn.⁽²³⁾

As of the end of 2019, the government insisted that it would proceed with

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- (20) Ryukyu Shimpo (2019). *Nanjaku jiban ni kui 6 man bon, koto mukei na koji o yameyo*. (February 3, 2019). Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <https://ryukyushimpo.jp/editorial/entry-870361.html/> For the 76,999 and ninety metre figures see Ryukyu Shimpo (2020). *Asase mo kui 1.3 man bon, nanjaku jiban koji kei 7.6 man bon boei kyoku hokokusho de hanmei*. February 3, 2019. For analysis in English, Hideki Yoshikawa. (2019). Abe’s military base plan sinking in mayonnaise: implications for the US court and IUCN. *The Asia-Pacific Journal – Japan Focus*.
- (21) Abe to the Diet on 30 January 2019: “Koki ya hiyo ni tsuite kakataru koto o moshiageru koto wa konnan.”
- (22) Okinawa prefecture - Washington DC office (2019). Concerns for Environmental Impacts of Seabed Improvement Work in Land Reclamation in Henoko. (July 17, 2019). Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <http://dc-office.org/post/1056/>
- (23) Kitaueda Tsuyoshi (2019). Henoko shin kichi wa tonza suru. *Sekai* (July 2019), pp. 44-54.

the construction but it drastically revised its estimates of both cost and time.⁽²⁴⁾ It will dig 77,000 holes deep into the Bay floor, insert a ninety-metre-high pillar of sand into each one, and top it with a vast spread of concrete and steel, using untried engineering techniques, in an unpredictable time frame. Reclamation will follow, and could be expected to take twice as long as originally estimated (ten years instead of five), with construction of the actual military facilities – base, port, weapons storage bunkers – to follow then and to take at least an additional three years. The government's December 2019 figures were roughly in accord with Okinawa Prefecture's December 2018 estimate so far as time (13 years) was concerned but where the prefecture estimated cost blowout at two and a half trillion yen (\$23 billion), ten times the original estimate,⁽²⁵⁾ the government gave a much lower, though still humongous figure of 930 billion yen, just 2.7 times greater.

The “helipad” project of 1996 was first bruted as something to be accomplished so that Futenma Marine Air Station, situated in the midst of Ginowan City could be returned to Japan within five to seven years. It is now set to remain in US hands till the late 2030s. The Abe government has committed Japan's highest state priority through the coming two decades to the construction of a base to suit the convenience of the US Marine Corps. Despite official protestations, it was inconceivable that the project could go ahead without seriously affecting the bay as eco-system for the thousands of creatures that inhabit it. Astonishingly, the massive scale, serial miscalculations, and many times revised completion date stirred scarcely a whimper of protest at the national level from ether parliament or media.

Inevitably, estimates as to time and cost both depended on first securing the

(24) Okinawa media in late December 2019, especially *Okinawa taimusu* of Deember 23, (“Henoko kansei made 13 nen, Futenma henkan mo 2030 nendai nakaba igo ni nanjaku jiban de seifu mitoshi,” and editorials in *Okinawa taimusu*, December 24, 2019 (“Shin kichi kansei made 13 nen’ koji chushi betsu no michi sagure”) and *Ryukyū Shimpō*, December 27, 2019 (“Henoko 9300 oku en, umitate sokuji chushi seyo”).

(25) Asahi Shimbun (2018). Okinawa says new base to cost 10 times what Tokyo estimated. *Asahi shimbun*, December 12, 2018.

consent of the prefecture to a major re-design. Since Governor Tamaki had been elected on a platform of opposition to any construction, and had many times reiterated that opposition, further prolonged delay at least could be expected. Despite the Abe government's concession that the project faced huge new difficulties, was way over time and cost, and could not be completed till some time in the 2030s, the wheels ground inexorably on. Although it would lock Japan into military support and dependence on the United States for decades to come it was a base, according to Abe, that simply had to be built. And, while attention focussed on Henoko, the people of Ginowan City, unwilling hosts to Futenma Marine Corps, would have to endure hosting "the world's most dangerous base" for at least one and probably two or more decades. Were it located in the continental US in such a high-risk setting, the Henoko project would never get off the ground and, irrespective of any replacement, Futenma Marine Air Station would be closed forthwith for safety and environmental reasons.

Apart from the mayonnaise bay bottom and the fault lines across Oura Bay the time for building military bases on sea-front sites may have passed due to the threat of rising ocean levels caused by global warming.⁽²⁶⁾ As the collapse of the polar and Himalayan glaciers gathers momentum, ocean front cities such as Naha and Nago are bound to suffer. It is a factor not yet seriously considered, but undoubtedly the Pentagon has an eye on it. According to one well-informed observer, the major US naval shipyard at Norfolk, Virginia, might become unusable thirty years from now, and that same fate likely awaits the projected Henoko base "in 60 or 70 years."⁽²⁷⁾ Kansai International Airport (opened in 1994) was also built on a reclaimed island (in Osaka Bay) at a cost of around \$20 billion, but, although it too was reinforced by the insertion of multiple piles, it continues

(26) The sea-level around Okinawa has risen at the average rate of 2.2 mm per year since 1954, slightly less than the global average but at rising rate. Okinawa Kishodai (2019). Okinawa no kiko hendo kenshi ripoto. (March, 2019). Retrieved January 28, 2020, from https://www.jma-net.go.jp/okinawa/data/kiko/2019_all.pdf/

(27) Lawrence Wilkerson, former senior adviser to Colin Powell in George W. Bush administration in the early 1990s, quoted in "Koron, Henoko, Beikoku kara mita rorensu uirukuson, jamesu schoff san," *Asahi shimbun*, February 22, 2019.

to slowly sink and had to be closed when almost submerged by storms in 2018.

IV. Prospects, 2020 and Beyond

Despite its adoption by the national government as a state policy priority of the highest order, all attempts by the two governments over decades to persuade, buy off, or intimidate the people of the Okinawa islands into submission to the clientelist, military-first prescription have failed. Works continue, and such is the imbalance of forces that one would have to think the Okinawan resistance doomed in the end to be crushed and Okinawa subjected permanently to military priorities. What are the prospects in this mighty struggle between the governor and people of Okinawa and the state of Japan?

Firstly, it is almost inconceivable that Okinawa prefecture might win a judicial victory, a court at some level finding for them and ordering a stop to the Henoko base works. Ever since the Sunagawa case in 1959 the principle adopted then by the Supreme Court has held firm: that matters pertaining to the security treaty with the US are “highly political” and so not to be subjected to judicial contest.⁽²⁸⁾ In effect, the Security Treaty (Ampo) trumps the constitution (Kempo), there is no division of powers, and the judiciary is sure to uphold state prerogative. Even if every single Okinawan were to say “No,” the government would still press ahead and the courts would legitimise its doing so. The new base would be built.

On 23 October 2019 the court delivered its verdict in the first of the two 2019 cases, brusquely dismissing the prefecture's case. On the procedural matter, it found, mysteriously, that although there were differences between a claim by an individual and a claim by the state, “in matters of substance (*honshitsu bubun*) there was no difference,”⁽²⁹⁾ in effect declaring that state power was not to be constrained by the constitutional principle of local self-government. The *Asahi shimbun* summed up the outcome by saying “It is utterly unacceptable for the courts, which are supposed to see that the law is observed, to retrospectively

(28) McCormack and Norimatsu, pp. 53-54.

(29) Ryukyu Shimpo (2019). Kanyo torikeshi sosho, kuni tsuiju no ippoteki na hanketsu da.

Ryukyu Shimpo, October 24, 2019.

legitimize governmental acts that trample on the spirit of the law.”⁽³⁰⁾ The court had nothing to say on the substantial question of the highly problematic site.

While judgement in this (July 2019) case is referred on appeal to the Supreme Court proceedings still continue in the second (Naha District Court) case in which the prefecture has filed a 432-page document with several additional attachments.⁽³¹⁾ If the courts are true to form, judgement in a few lines retrospectively endorsing decisions by the national government can be expected.

V. Political Resolution?

If the judicial prospect looks uncertain, what then of the prospect of a political resolution? Might the popular movement evolve to such a point that it can compel the government to back down and submit to the will of the Okinawan people? Alternatively might the Abe government at last succeed in its task of persuading or educating the Okinawan people to accept the Henoko base? One seems as unlikely as the other. Prime Minister Abe is most likely impervious to any essentially moral case and the Okinawan people have shown in every conceivable forum over decades that they are not to be moved. The sit-ins and protest events to date have certainly delayed and complicated the works, but they have not stopped or even seriously threatened them. Currently the Tamaki administration attempts to sway national (and international) opinion by a “caravan” campaign pleading the “All-Okinawa” cause nationally and by presentations by the Governor and members of the Prefectural Assembly internationally, but again to date without significant (or at least conspicuous) impact. The Okinawan movement sticks to classic, non-violent appeals to law, reason, and persuasion, believing that truth and justice will eventually prevail, but it faces a ruthless and unprincipled opponent,

(30) Asahi Shimbun (2019). Henoko hanketsu ‘datsu-ho kyoi’ yurushita shiho. Editorial, *Asahi shinbun*, October 26, 2019.

(31) *Okinawa taimusu* (2019). Henoko de 7 do-me no saiban’ kosei de jisshitsuteki na shinri wo. *Okinawataimusu*, July 18, 2019. Fortextofthedossier, <https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/chijiko/henoko/documents/190807sojou.pdf/> (Retrieved January 16, 2020).

and the odds against any “local” movement pitted against the nation state are almost infinitely unequal.

In terms of the balance, or imbalance, of forces, the Governor is a somewhat ambiguous figure. The common view beyond Okinawa is that both the present and immediate past Governors (Tamaki Denny and Onaga Takeshi) are/were anti-base and anti-military, but that is not quite true. Both have been conservative *supporters* of the base system and the US-Japan military alliance. In fact, with the sole exception of Ota Masahide, governor between 1990 and 1998, no Okinawan governor has challenged the overarching insistence of the US and Japanese governments that military and alliance interests should be paramount in determining Okinawan policy. For daring to suggest otherwise, and to conceive of a future demilitarised Okinawa, Ota earned the unrelenting hostility of Tokyo and was removed from office.⁽³²⁾ Former Governor Onaga, by contrast, even seems to have entertained the bizarre aspiration to have Okinawa serve as a global command center for the Marine Corps.⁽³³⁾

Furthermore, while the Governor and majority Okinawan opinion opposes new base construction at Henoko, under relentless state pressure pro-base (or base-tolerant) forces have gained some ground in political circles throughout the islands. While “All-Okinawa” candidates have won 12 and lost only one of the gubernatorial and national Diet elections over the five years from 2014, at the city mayor level eight of the prefecture’s eleven local government bodies, including key centres such as Ginowan, Nago, and Okinawa cities, were as of 2019 headed by the mayors who belong to “Team Okinawa” who are for the most part silent on the Futenma replacement and Henoko construction issues but backed by the Liberal-Democratic Party and inclined to cooperate with the Abe government. They constitute what became known as “Team Okinawa”, a well-organized and strongly Tokyo-backed opposition to the anti-base “All-Okinawa” forces led by

(32) The same fate was to befall Hatoyama Yukio as Prime Minister in 2009-10.

(33) Reported in January 2018. (*The State of the Japanese State*, p. 115.)

Governor Tamaki.”⁽³⁴⁾

In September 2019, when Ginowan City Assembly, reluctant home to Futenma Marine Corps base, adopted a resolution calling for the Futenma base to be relocated from within its city boundaries to Henoko (in Nago City), it was the first time for any local government body to declare explicit support for the government’s relocation agenda.⁽³⁵⁾ It followed, and in a sense responded to, the resolution adopted the previous day by Nago City Assembly demanding an immediate halt to construction works at Henoko. Having waited 23 years (since 1996) for the return of core city lands long appropriated by the Marine Corps, it is not surprising that some in Ginowan City political and economic circles should surrender to the government’s plan to accomplish reversion by shifting the burden to another city. Upon such divisions the Government can be expected to work harder henceforth to drive the wedge deeper and to persuade other cities, especially Nago to submit.

It is also the case that, like Onaga before him, Governor Tamaki today confines his objections to the Henoko new base project and takes no position on the comprehensive militarization of the prefecture, on the helipad works in the Yambaru forest in the north of Okinawa Island or on the Abe government’s rapidly advancing plans for the extension of military (i.e., Japanese Self-Defence Force) facilities through the Southwest islands adjacent to Okinawa island, notably Miyako, Ishigaki, and Yonaguni. Tamaki confirmed his pro-Security Treaty, pro-base stance in speeches in Tokyo and New York in November 2018.⁽³⁶⁾ He makes no real effort to ban the use of northern Okinawan ports for transport of reclamation/construction materials by ship, (and of fill by road) and very

(34) Okinawa taimusu (2019). Ikkatsu kofukin no kakuju o, hoshukei 8 shicho de tsukuru ‘chimu Okinawa’, jiminto ni yosei. *Okinawa taimusu*, September 3, 2019.

(35) Asahi Shimbun (2019). Henoko isetsu no sokushin motomeru ketsugi, Ginowan shigikai ‘gaman genkai’. *Asahi shimbun*, September 27, 2019.

(36) To the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan on 9 November and to New York University on 11 November. See discussion in Kihara Satoru (2018). *Okinawa, bei sentoki FA18 no suiraku wa nani o shimesu ka*. Ari no hitokoto, (November 15, 2018). Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <https://blog.goo.ne.jp/satoru-kihara/d/20181115>

recently he introduced his and the prefecture's stance in a May 2019 letter to the US ambassador (and through him to President Trump) that adopted an almost grovelling tone, saying that he, and Okinawa, "appreciate the United States government for its tremendous contributions in maintaining the security of Japan as well as the peace and security of East Asia."⁽³⁷⁾

Tamaki also supports the "return" by the US of Naha Military Port. That return, first promised in 1974, 45-years ago, was made dependent on construction of an alternative. As "reversion" of Futenma Marine Air Station meant construction of the much expanded and upgraded Henoko facility, so that of Naha Military Port came to mean major new base construction at adjacent Urasoe. In 2019, long suspended negotiations on the move were resumed between the prefecture, Naha City and Urasoe City,⁽³⁸⁾ none expressing any doubt as to the prefecture's continuing to host a major US military port facility. The Naha Military Port, like the Kadena US Air Force base and the Marine Corps' Futenma, is sacrosanct. "Reversion," for any major US military facility, can only be upgrading or improving. The return of Naha Military Port, already 45-years delayed, could not occur earlier than 2028.⁽³⁹⁾

Furthermore, Governor Tamaki was no sooner elected (in September 2018) than he indicated his readiness to consider one of the key US demands for the Japanese client state: the transformation of military bases in Okinawa from single (US or Japan) management and use to "joint" facilities.⁽⁴⁰⁾ His declaration to the right-wing national newspaper, *Sankei Shimbun* occurred almost simultaneously with the report of the Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) making precisely that same demand. Both were looking to reinforce

(37) Governor Tamaki, Letter to William F. Hagerty, US ambassador to Japan, May 14, 2019. Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <http://dc-office.org/post/1056/>

(38) Okinawa taimusu (2019). Naha gunko no Urasoe isetsu-an, Okinawa-ken, Naha-shi, Urasoe-shi ga kento kaigi setchi de goi. *Okinawa taimusu*, October 25, 2019.

(39) Naha Port (2018). Global Security. Retrieved November 10, 2018, from <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/naha-port.html/>

(40) Sankei Shimbun (2018). Tamaki Deni-shi, jieitai to beigun no kichi kyodo shiyo kyogi mo, intabyu de hyomei, Okinawa ken chijisen. October 2, 2018.

the US-Japan alliance.⁽⁴¹⁾ So the Okinawan Governor's message to Tokyo and Washington is to support and embrace Ampo; just please stop Henoko.

As of early 2020, the national government attempts to find answers to the engineering tasks it has now admitted while the anti-base Okinawan movement seeks to widen the focus of struggle from the effort to stop Henoko to a broader anti-militarist stance. The challenge for the popular movement is to simultaneously combat the deeply entrenched, comprehensive prefectural submission to the US military (including but not confined to Henoko), the ongoing expansion of Japan's own militarism on the outlying Okinawa islands and the planned development of the new Urasoe "Military Port" base project.

VI. Okinawa in (US) Court and Congress

But if the domestic prospect does not look bright, what might be the prospects beyond Japan? The internationalisation of the Okinawa issue provides ground for cautious optimism. Global attention occasionally focuses on Okinawa, as in January 2014 when 103 "international scholars, peace activists and artists" issued a statement condemning the moves to reclaim a swathe of Oura Bay and construct the base.⁽⁴²⁾ But it proved difficult to maintain that momentum and the matter became so complex that many could not grasp its twists and turns.

However, there is a possibility of a thumbs down from either a US court or even directly from the Pentagon on the Henoko project. Two such matters warrant attention. First, a suit launched in 2003 in the name of the dugong [that docile, seagrass-munching mammal] by a coalition of Okinawan, Japanese and American nature NGOs in a Californian district court under the US National Historic Preservation Act (1966) is currently before the US Court of Appeal with a verdict expected during 2020. It has become one of the longest-running nature protection suits in US history. The court is considering an appeal in the name of

(41) See the CSIS reports of 2012 and 2018.

(42) Peace Philosophy Centre (2014). International Scholars, Peace Activists, and Artists Condemn Agreement to Construct US Marine Base in Okinawa. (January 7, 2014). Retrieved January 16, 2020, from www.peacephilosophy.com/2014/01/international-scholars-peace-activists.html/

the dugong, in the case that began as “Dugong dugong vs Donald Rumsfeld,” against a Californian court’s August 2018 ruling in favour of the government’s construction plans. The NGO’s insist that the government’s withholding of crucial environmental information (especially the sea-bottom mayonnaise) should make its conclusion that the dugong would not suffer “adverse effects” from construction improper and unwarranted.⁽⁴³⁾



Illustration from the “Save the Dugong” International Campaign. Source: J. Willen *.Dugong_Marsa_Alam*. Julian Willen/Wikimedia Commons. Retrieved January 13, 2020, from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dugong_Marsa_Alam.jpg

It would be hard to imagine a more serious and adverse effect of the project for the dugong than extinction. Little attention has so far been paid to this ongoing case in either Japan or the US, but its implications are considerable. Among other things, it amounts to a major test of the independence of the US judicial system. It is very much a confrontation of our times between nature and militarism, and it may well be that the chances are better of a favourable judicial outcome in a US court than in Japanese one.

(43) Hideki Yoshikawa (2019). Abe’s military base plan sinking in mayonnaise: implications for the US court and IUCN,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal – Japan Focus*, 17. See also Hideki Yoshikawa (2009). Dugong swimming in uncharted waters: US judicial intervention to protect Okinawa’s ‘natural monument’ and halt base construction. *The Asia-Pacific Journal - Japan Focus*, 7. and Hideki Yoshikawa (2018). Jugon saiban: Jugonen no kei-i to kongo no tembo. *Kankyo to Kogai*, pp. 29-33.

There is also a significant new development on the US political front. The US Congress is currently undertaking a “review of the planned distribution of members of the United States Armed Forces in Okinawa, Guam, Hawaii, Australia, and elsewhere” under the National Defense Authorization Act. Seizing that as an opportunity, thirty-three Okinawan civil society organizations recently addressed a cogent appeal to the Senate and House Armed Services Committees, calling for reconsideration of the Henoko project as part of this process on “democratic, legal, environmental and cultural” grounds.⁽⁴⁴⁾ In November 2019, Governor Tamaki appealed to US government circles in Washington on this matter. The outcome is far from assured, but while the United States has from time to time indicated an openness to consider alternatives to Henoko, insisting that it is a matter for the Japanese to resolve, so long as the Japanese government remains adamant and pays for everything, it seems likely that the US government will continue showing the green light even if it agrees with the analysis posed by Okinawan civil society, and actually thinks of the project as dubious, if not already failed.

Still, the fact is that “Okinawa” was included in the original Senate draft as needing to be reviewed. If indeed the Henoko project is seriously reviewed its absurdity will be difficult to conceal.

VII. UN(ESCO) and IUCN

The Government of Japan in 2017 submitted an application for registration of a swathe of territory in the Okinawan Islands (Amamiyoshima, Tokunoshima, Iriomote and the Yambaru forest of northern Okinawa) as World Heritage wilderness. The question of Yambaru, adjacent to the US military’s Northern Training Area and close to the Henoko-Oura Bay base construction site, raises

(44) For a critical discussion from an Okinawan NGO perspective, Okinawa Environmental Justice Project, “Yambaru Forest’s Second Attempt for World Natural Heritage Status: Improvements and Challenges”. 26 February 2019. <http://okinawaejp.blogspot.com/2019/2/yambaru-forests-second-attempt-for.html>. See also Hideki Yoshikawa (2019). Hesitant heritage: US bases on Okinawa and Japan’s flawed bid for World Natural Heritage status. *Asia-Pacific Journal – Japan Focus*.

acute problems for a government that has repeatedly made clear that base and military considerations trump climate change or species depletion in determining policy.

As part of the deliberative process, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which advises UNESCO has already called three times (2000, 2004, 2008) on the Japanese and US governments to “conduct a proper EIA and to implement a protection plan for the dugong.”⁽⁴⁵⁾ Addressing the Government of Japan's 2017 submission it raised significant questions and called on Japan to “clarify” its “Northern Parts of Okinawa Island (NPOI)” [i.e. the Yambaru forest] submission. The government of Japan thereupon withdrew its submission, revising and re-submitting it early in 2019,⁽⁴⁶⁾ but still failing to mention the fact that parts of the proposed Wilderness had been used for decades as a US jungle warfare training site and remained “littered with bullet shells, unexploded ordnance, and other, discarded military materials, including toxic chemicals,” and that the Henoko Marine Corps base to which the Government is intent on constructing would, if ever completed, house at least 70 military aircraft that would among other things conduct low-level and night flights above the forest.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Even as the government struggled to find verbal formula that would not dwell on matters that might diminish its Heritage project, the environment of Yambaru forest and Oura Bay was degenerating.

The extraordinary bio-diversity of Oura Bay is not disputed. The government's own Okinawa Defense Bureau (ODB) puts the figure of 5,334 on the bio-species of the Bay (262 of them endangered).⁽⁴⁸⁾ 2018 was the International Year of Coral. As if to mark the occasion, ironically, the government of Japan set about

(45) Okinawa Environmental Justice Project, *op. cit.*

(46) The Government of Japan (2019). Nomination of Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, the Northern Part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island [for UNESCO World Natural Heritage]. Retrieved January 28, 2020, from <http://kyushu.env.go.jp/okinawa/amami-okinawa/world-natural-heritage/index-en.html/>.

(47) Okinawa Environmental Justice Project, *op. cit.*

(48) Sakurai Kunitoshi (2018). Oura-wan seibutsu ni shi no senkoku. *Ryukyū shimpo*,

Retrieved December 2, 2018.

reclaiming much of one of the world's most prolific and bio-diverse coastal coral reef zones, killing off unique and precious colonies in the process. Prime Minister Abe assured the Diet that endangered coral from the construction site had been safely transplanted when in fact just nine *Porites Okinawensis* colonies had been relocated, of a total of 74,000 needing transplant.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Prefectural permission (unlikely to be granted) is required and the survival rate for transplanted coral is low. Apart from the coral, by 2019 the dugong (less than 10 individuals left) and the Okinawa Woodpecker or *noguchigera*, (between 50 and 249 individuals left), both steadily decline in numbers and are “critically endangered.”⁽⁵⁰⁾ The dugong could conceivably be already extinct as none had been sighted for over a year.⁽⁵¹⁾ As for the *noguchigera*, the US-based Center for Biological Diversity has served notice of its intent to file suit against the US government (the Fisheries and Wildlife Service in the Department of the Interior) for failure to protect it in the forest area in the vicinity of the US Northern Training Area.⁽⁵²⁾

So long as the state gave priority to military concerns, the condition of Oura Bay would continue to decline. It strained global credibility for the government of Japan to declare that Northern Okinawa will be both protected as one of the world's most bio-diverse and pristine environments and simultaneously developed into a world-ranking concentration of military force.

For Okinawa, in other words, the national polity of Japan as a US client state

(49) Ryukyu Shimpo (2019). For Henoko land reclamation, Prime Minister Abe claims, ‘The coral there is being relocated,’ however the reality is no such activity is taking place in the landfill area. *Ryukyu Shimpo*, January 8, 2019.

(50) IUCN (2019). Red List. (December 2019). Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/157011948/157011982/>

(51) Apart from the discovery of one dugong corpse (Individual B) in March 2019, other previously sighted animals, including those known as A and C, had not been sighted for more than one year. Okinawa taimusu (2019). Dugong zetsumetsu ka’ koji o tome zenken chosa o. *Okinawa taimusu*, October 13, 2019.

(52) Centre for Biological Diversity (2019). Lawsuit Launched to Protect Critically Endangered Okinawa Woodpecker. (June 26, 2019). Retrieved January 16, 2020, from <https://biologicaldiversity.org/w/news/press-releases/lawsuit-launched-protect-critically-endangered-okinawa-woodpecker-2019-06-26/>

calls for transformation of one of nature's greatest natural treasure-houses into a fortress from which the United States could continue indefinitely projecting its power over East Asia. It was, "counter to the moves towards regional peace, cooperation and community, counter to the principle of regional self-government spelled out in the constitution, counter to the principles of democracy and counter to the imperative of environmental conservation."⁽⁵³⁾

VIII. Conclusion

As the problems mount, more experts, and more peace, human rights, and environmental organizations come to doubt the Government of Japan's competence and the viability of its scheme. Many will see it, as did the editorial board of the *New York Times* in October 2018, as "an unfair, unwanted and often dangerous burden on Japan's poorest citizens."⁽⁵⁴⁾ Others recoil in disgust from the spectacle of a natural wonderland and cradle of biodiversity being sacrificed to the interest of the Pentagon.

For Okinawans, the continued depredations on their environment in the name of defense and national security have the same ring as would the appropriation of the Grand Canyon as a military base to a citizen of the United States. In sum, the Okinawan anti-base movement has judicial, political, and environmental levers of pressure to try to secure its objectives against the national government. Their coordination across Okinawan, national, and international fronts is the challenge. The essential absurdity of the Henoko project is their core message. While the prospect of a favourable outcome at the political or judicial level in Japan is far from bright, it is somewhat brighter in the US court system, the US Congress, and the UN-centered global environmental protection forum (UNESCO/Wilderness/ IUCN). Were any such to occur, it would have huge potential consequences.

It may be that the "Okinawa" cause can only be effective nationally when "All-Okinawa" becomes "All-Japan.," when the struggle comes to be and to be

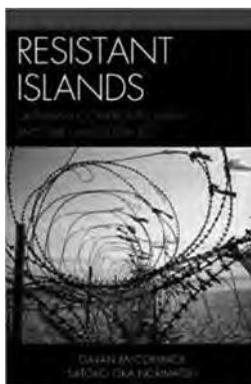
(53) *The State of the Japanese State*, pp. 246-7

(54) The Editorial Board (2018). Toward a smaller American footprint on Okinawa. *New York Times*, October 1, 2018.

seen as “national,” when regular charter flights begin to ferry mainland students, citizen activists, professors to join the Bay-front protests, and when the Okinawan case is effectively presented before multiple international fora.

While the two governments ride roughshod over Okinawan creatures such as the dugong, the woodpecker, and the blue (and other) coral, it is at least possible that Okinawan nature might launch a successful resistance in the unlikely venue of a US court. Otherwise, there is the potential for the intervention of nature itself. Abe’s government likely have no real technical “fix” for the project’s geological, seismological, and climatological problems. Human laws may be twisted or ignored, but not so the laws of nature.

Fatigued by decades of exhausting struggle against a relentless and unprincipled foe, the sentiment nevertheless remains strong in Okinawa that popular resistance will prove more than a match for the force of the Japanese state, that therefore Henoko will not be built, and that a halt can be called to the steady militarisation of Okinawa and its adjacent islands.



Resistant Islands, Second Edition, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018.

IX. Postscript

The intractable nature of the “Okinawa problem” owes much to decisions made during the tumultuous years that followed the collapse of the Japanese

empire in 1945, when the state structure for Japan was set in place. Under the constitution adopted in 1946, the emperor was absolved of responsibility for the war and reinstated at the peak of the state system, albeit in “symbolic” role. However, no sooner did Hirohito take up this new role, in 1947, than he intervened at the very highest level in a matter of national policy by urging the US to maintain its direct rule of Okinawa, severing it from Japan under direct US military rule. The US Mission's W.J. Sebald commented that the emperor's “hope” for continuing US military occupation of the Ryukyus “undoubtedly is based upon self-interest.” By that he implied that Hirohito was ensuring his future as pro-American and pro-occupation, providing good reason to pass over his very recent role as Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army. When Hirohito took this remarkable initiative, he was only months into the newly circumscribed constitutional role as “symbol” and was acting in breach of it. That 1947 document is attached below. ⁽⁵⁵⁾

(55) W.J. Sebald (US Political Adviser for Japan), "Emperor of Japan's Opinion concerning the Future of the Ryukyu Islands," Memorandum to Secretary of State, 22 September 1947, US National Archives, Maryland, copy accessible at Okinawa Prefectural Archives at <https://www.archives.pref.okinawa.jp/wp-content/uploads/Emperors-message.pdf/>.

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By 8987 NARA Date 2/4/98

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



RECEIVED
UNITED STATES POLITICAL ADVISER
FOR JAPAN

1947 SEP 30 AM 11:40

Tokyo, September 22, 1947.

CONFIDENTIAL
COMMUNICATIONS BRANCH

No. 1293

SUBJECT: Emperor of Japan's Opinion Concerning the Future of
the Ryukyu Islands.

*Original to FE
Mr. Malone*

10/6/47 CR

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose copy of a self-explanatory memorandum for General MacArthur, September 20, 1947, containing the gist of a conversation with Mr. Hidenari Terasaki, an adviser to the Emperor, who called at this Office at his own request.

It will be noted that the Emperor of Japan hopes that the United States will continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus, a hope which undoubtedly is largely based upon self-interest. The Emperor also envisages a continuation of United States military occupation of these islands through the medium of a long-term lease. In his opinion, the Japanese people would thereby be convinced that the United States has no ulterior motives and would welcome United States occupation for military purposes.

Respectfully yours,

W. J. Sebald
W. J. Sebald
Counselor of Mission

Enclosure:

Copy of memorandum for General
MacArthur, September 20, 1947.

Original to Department.

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WJSebald:lh

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By NND 5-76-4
NARS, Date 4-6-79

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Authority NND 76 0050
By SP7 NARS Date 2/6/58

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Enclosure to Despatch No. 1293 dated September 22, 1947 from the United States Political Adviser for Japan, Tokyo, on the subject "Emperor of Japan's Opinion Concerning the Future of the Ryukyu Islands".

COPY

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SUPREME COMMANDER FOR THE ALLIED POWERS
Diplomatic Section

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

20 September 1947

MEMORANDUM FOR: General MacArthur

Mr. Hidenari Terasaki, an adviser to the Emperor, called by appointment for the purpose of conveying to me the Emperor's ideas concerning the future of Okinawa.

Mr. Terasaki stated that the Emperor hopes that the United States will continue the military occupation of Okinawa and other islands of the Ryukyus. In the Emperor's opinion, such occupation would benefit the United States and also provide protection for Japan. The Emperor feels that such a move would meet with wide-spread approval among the Japanese people who fear not only the menace of Russia, but after the Occupation has ended, the growth of rightist and leftist groups which might give rise to an "incident" which Russia could use as a basis for interfering internally in Japan.

The Emperor further feels that United States military occupation of Okinawa (and such other islands as may be required) should be based upon the fiction of a long-term lease--25 to 50 years or more--with sovereignty retained in Japan. According to the Emperor, this method of occupation would convince the Japanese people that the United States has no permanent designs on the Ryukyu Islands, and other nations, particularly Soviet Russia and China, would thereby be estopped from demanding similar rights.

As to procedure, Mr. Terasaki felt that the acquisition of "military base rights" (of Okinawa and other islands in the Ryukyus) should be by bilateral treaty between the United States and Japan rather than form part of the Allied peace treaty with Japan. The latter method, according to Mr. Terasaki, would savor too much of a dictated peace and might in the future endanger the sympathetic understanding of the Japanese people.

/s/ W. J. Sebald

W. J. Sebald

CLASSIFICATION CHANGED
~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
BY AUTHORITY OF Am. Gen. Tokyo
Aug. 10/52 5-8-56
BY Robert A. Gibson - RMB

DECLASSIFIED
NNDG S-76-4
By SP7 NARS, Date 4-6-79

Four years later, the United States' special adviser on policy for the restoration of sovereignty to Japan, John Foster Dulles, arrived in Tokyo to negotiate the terms of a peace treaty. The following principle may be referred to as the "Dulles Demand."
"Do we get the right to station as many troops as we want where we want and for as long as we want? That is the principle question."⁽⁵⁶⁾

With Okinawa completely cut off from it as in effect a US military colony, Japan proper was to be subject to an only slightly modified form of US hegemony. It was the clearest possible statement of principle, taking away with one hand the sovereignty being granted with the other.

The third document included here (in part) is the November 1971 proposal by the Government of the Ryukyu Islands (Okinawa) on the eve of "reversion" to Japan the following year.⁽⁵⁷⁾ It reads (in part):

For these 26 years since the end of war, America has exercised direct control over Okinawa. In the name of defence of the free world in the Far East, America has taken exclusive arbitrary actions to construct huge military bases. It feels as though Okinawa exists within a US base. The one-million people of Okinawa have lived these past 26 years on these narrow islands surrounded by military bases, nuclear weapons and gas weapons. Not only that but our various political rights have been encroached upon to suit the military priorities of a foreign people and even our basic human rights have been denied us.... We strongly appeal for reversion as islands of peace, without war ...

(56) J. F. Dulles (1951). Dulles Mission Staff Meeting, January 26, 1951. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 6, pp. 811-5, at p. 812.

(57) Ryukyu Seifu (1971). Fukki sochi ni kansuru kengisho. (November 16, 1971), Okinawa-ken kobun shokan [Okinawa Prefectural Archives]. Retrieved January 20, 2020, from https://www.archives.pref.okinawa.jp/proposal_document/.

A majority of Okinawan people are dissatisfied because our wishes have not been properly taken into account and the military bases are being made permanent under the reversion. ... And, as to the stationing of Japanese Self-Defense Forces in Okinawa an absolute majority is opposed to this ... Having suffered horrendously in the last war, we seek absolute peace and reject everything to do with war.⁽⁵⁸⁾

While Ryukyu chief executive Yara Chobyō was still on his way to the Diet to deliver the Okinawan petition to the special session on Okinawan reversion, before either of the two Okinawan representatives had had a chance to speak and in the absence of the opposition parties, the [governing] Liberal Democratic Party railroaded the reversion agreement through the Diet, “disposing” (*shobun*) of Okinawa much as had the Japanese state in 1879 when it tortured and intimidated Okinawan elites into submission, abolished the Ryukyu Kingdom and assimilated the islands under its control.

Ignoring the bitter complaint uttered by Yara in 1971, Okinawa was returned to Japan in continuing submission to the will of the Pentagon, under the long shadows cast by Emperor Hirohito and John Foster Dulles. The Okinawan aspiration to demilitarize and enjoy constitutionally proclaimed human rights uttered then by Yara has been countless times repeated by later Governors and (prefectural) governments but in 2020 as in 1971 governments in Tokyo and Washington have no ears to listen.

(58) *Ibid.*

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Okinawa: Japan's Prefecture That Keeps Saying NO

<Summary>

Gavan McCormack

Gavan McCormack here explores matters raised in his 2018 book with Satoko Oka Norimatsu (*Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States*, 2nd edition), outlines recent judicial, political, diplomatic and ecological developments with a bearing on the "Okinawa problem," and considers the tactics and strategy employed in the long-running contest by Okinawa's social movements on the one hand and the Japanese state on the other. The text that follows is a slightly revised version of the invited lecture he delivered at International Christian University in Tokyo on 11 November 2019. A postscript includes three documents, dating from 1947, 1951, and 1971, that dramatically illustrate the deep-rooted and multi-dimensional quality of the "Okinawa problem."

