

Obama vs Hatoyama: The making of an unequal, unconstitutional, illegal, colonial and deceitful US-Japan agreement.

By [Gavan McCormack](#)

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Elections at the end of August gave Japan a new government, headed by Hatoyama Yukio. In electing him and his Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the Japanese people, like the American people less than a year earlier, were opting for change – a new relationship with both Asia and the US, including a much more equal one with the latter. Remarkably, however, what followed on the part of the Obama administration has been a campaign of unrelenting pressure to *block* any such change.

The Obama administration has targeted in particular the Hatoyama desire to re-negotiate the relationship with the United States so as to make it equal instead of dependent. Go back, it seems to be saying, to the golden days of “Sergeant-Major Koizumi” (as George W. Bush reportedly referred to the Japanese Prime Minister) when compliance was assured and annual US policy prescriptions (“yobosho”) were received in Tokyo as holy writ; forget absurd pretensions of independent policies.

The core issue has been the disposition of American military presence in Okinawa and the US insistence that Hatoyama honour an agreement known as the Guam Treaty.

The Guam Treaty

The “Guam International Agreement” is the US-Japan agreement signed by Secretary Hillary Clinton and Japanese Foreign Minister Nakasone Hirofumi in February and adopted as a treaty under special legislation in May 2009, in the first days of the Obama administration. Support for the Aso government in Japan was collapsing and the incoming Obama administration moved urgently to extract formal consent to its plans in such a way as to ensure that any such agreement would bind any subsequent Japanese government.

8,000 Marines and their 9,000 family members were to be relocated from Okinawa to Guam, and the US marine base at Futenma would be transferred to Henoko in Nago City in Northern Okinawa, to a new base to be built by Japan. The Japanese government would also pay \$6.09 billion towards the Guam transfer cost (\$2.8 billion of it in cash in the current financial year). [1] The effect in Okinawa would be that the US military would vacate some of its larger bases in the densely populated south but concentrate and expand those in the north of the island.

These matters (save for the detailed financial clauses) had all been resolved by a previous agreement, nearly four years earlier under Koizumi – the October 2005 agreement on “US-

Japan Alliance: Transformation and Realignment for the Future” reconfirmed by the May 2006 “United States-Japan Roadmap for realignment Implementation.” [2] Now, to compel compliance, Article 3 of the new Agreement declared that “The Government of Japan intends to complete the Futenma replacement facility as stipulated in the Roadmap [i.e. by 2014]” even though the parties had virtually given up hope that that was possible in the face of entrenched Okinawan opposition. [3]

The Agreement was one of the first acts of a popular, “reforming” US administration and one of the last of a Japanese regime in fatal decline after half a century of LDP rule. It set in unusually clear relief the relationship between the world’s No 1 and No 2 economic powers. The Agreement is worthy of close attention because, as analysed below, it was unequal, unconstitutional, illegal, colonial and deceitful.

Unequal

First, it was in the classic sense of the term, an “unequal treaty.” The Government of Japan interpreted it as a binding treaty, while for the US it was merely an “executive agreement”, lacking Congressional warrant. [4] It obliged Japan to construct and pay for one new base complex for the US on Okinawa and to contribute a very substantial sum towards constructing another on Guam, while on the American side it merely offered an ambiguous pledge to withdraw a number of troops (on that ambiguity, see below). Though binding on Japan, it was not binding on the US (which even reserved to itself the right, under Article 8, to vary it at will). [5] Furthermore, it may be that the Guam Treaty is in breach of US law: as a revenue raising measure (stipulating the sum of \$6 billion to be supplied by Japan), it requires Congressional authorization but has merely presidential executive authority. A treaty binding on one side only is by definition an unequal treaty.

Unconstitutional

Second, it was unconstitutional . Under Article 95 of the Constitution, “A special law, applicable only to one local public entity, cannot be enacted by the Diet without the consent of the majority of the voters of the local public body concerned, obtained in accordance with law.” The Guam treaty was plainly a special law in its effect on the single prefecture of Okinawa, yet not only was no attempt made to consult the people of Okinawa, but the Diet rode roughshod over their well-known wishes.

Furthermore, to ram the Agreement through the Diet, the Aso government utilized extraordinary constitutional powers under a procedure (Article 59) unused for more than half a century that allowed adoption of a bill rejected by the Upper House if passed a second time by a two-thirds majority in the Lower. Ramming the bill through the Diet on 13 May 2009, Aso was sidelining, in effect abolishing, the Upper House in a kind of constitutional *coup d’état*. [6] Much of the rest of Aso’s legislative record during his 9 months in office – ten major bills including the Terror Special Measures Law and virtually all the legislation of importance to Washington – was of dubious constitutional propriety for this same reason, though it must have been pleasing to Washington.

Illegal

Third, the Guam treaty is in breach of Japanese law. Since the Treaty took precedence over domestic law, it also had the effect of downgrading, in effect vitiating, the requirements of Japan’s environmental protection laws. Any serious and internationally credible

environmental impact assessment (EIA) would surely conclude that a massive military construction project was incompatible with the delicate coral and forest environment of the Oura Bay area. But it was taken for granted that Japan's EIA would be a mere formality and the treaty further undermined the procedure.

Further, the Diet and the Obama administration were pre-empting any order that might issue from the San Francisco court where a judge is hearing a suit against defendants including the Pentagon. The judge has already ordered the Pentagon to take conservation measures as required by the National Historic Observation Act, and to require the same of the Government of Japan, in relation to the Henoko construction project. [7]

Sakurai Kunitoshi, president of Okinawa University and a specialist on environmental assessment law, argues that since 2005 Japanese governments have been in breach of the Environmental Assessment Law in the way they have pursued the Futenma Replacement Facility. Therefore, the process must be reopened. He concludes that any serious and internationally credible EIA would conclude that the FRF cannot be built at Henoko. [8] If Sakurai is right, the Japanese government's EIA is fatally flawed and an internationally credible, independent scientific survey has to be launched.

Colonial

Fourth, it was colonial. The US had grown increasingly irritated at the lack of progress following the 2005-6 Agreements and peremptory in spelling out what Japan had to do. In November 2007, Defense Secretary Robert Gates instructed Japan to resume its Indian Ocean naval station (then hotly debated), maintain and increase its payments for hosting US bases, increase its defense budget, and pass a permanent law to authorize overseas dispatch of the SDF whenever the need arose. It was essentially the position of the Armitage-Nye report on the US-Japan Alliance through 2020 published earlier that year. [9] Armitage, Gates and other US officials generally added the pious sentiment that everything was up to the sovereign government of Japan. Occasionally, however, they spelled out the consequences of non-compliance, as when Secretary Gates bluntly told Japan that it could not hope to receive US support in its bid for a permanent seat on the Security Council unless it pursued the prescribed agenda. [10]

Richard Lawless, who as Deputy Defense Secretary had headed the negotiations that culminated in the Roadmap, told the *Asahi* in May 2008 that the alliance was drifting.

“What we really need is a top-down leadership that says, ‘Let’s rededicate ourselves to completing all of these agreements on time; let’s make sure that the budgeting of the money is a national priority’... Japan has to find a way to change its own tempo of decision-making, deployment, integration and operationalizing [sic] this alliance.” [11]

He castigated Japan for “self-marginalization” and for “allowing the alliance to degenerate towards sub-prime because of its withdrawal syndrome.”[12] Under that pressure, Prime Minister Aso appears to have buckled, clinging to power through 2008 and early 2009 at least in part to try to do Washington one last favour by adopting the “top-down” steps it was demanding for “operationalizing” the alliance. That had to be done while the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) still enjoyed the Koizumi majority in the Lower House precisely because support for Aso had sunk below 20 per cent with virtually no prospect of recovery.

In keeping with its colonial character, the Obama administration was firing a shot across the bow of the then opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), assuming without question the prerogative of intervention in the Japanese political process. By pressing the Guam treaty on Japan, sending Hillary Clinton to Tokyo as enforcer in its opening weeks, the Obama administration was maintaining the defining features of Bush diplomacy: paternalistic, interventionist, anti-democratic, intolerant of any Japanese search for an independent, regional or UN-centred foreign policy. Secretary Clinton spoke with satisfaction of the deal: "I think that a responsible nation follows the agreements that have been entered into, and the agreement that I signed today with Foreign Minister Nakasone is one between our two nations, regardless of who's in power." [13] What she meant was this: You in the DPJ had better learn which side your bread is buttered on.

Characteristic of colonial policy, the "natives" were to be guided but not consulted, so the thinking of the people of Okinawa was always irrelevant in the deliberations that culminated in the Guam Treaty.

Deceitful

Fifth, the treaty was characterized by what in Japanese is known as "gomakashi" – trickery and deceit dressed in the rhetoric of principle and mutuality. There is no precedent for a sovereign country paying to construct a military base in another country. Thus the Government of Japan had to minimize debate and rely on lies.

Although reported as a US concession to Japan, a "withdrawal" designed "to reduce the burden of post-World War II American military presence in Okinawa," [14] it was actually something quite different: a design to increase the Japanese contribution to the alliance by having it pay an exorbitant sum towards construction of US military facilities on Guam, in US territory, and by having it substitute a new, high-tech, and greatly expanded base at Henoko for the inconvenient, dangerous, and obsolescent Futenma.

The Agreement was riddled with deception. It stipulated withdrawal of "8,000 Marines from Okinawa to Guam" and the Japanese government insisted this was the key to reducing the burden of the bases on Okinawa, yet interpellations in the Diet early in 2009 revealed that there were only 12,461 Marines actually stationed in Okinawa, and since the Government of Japan insisted that 10,000 was the necessary deterrent force, it meant that fewer than 3,000 would actually be withdrawn. [15] And only in a San Francisco courtroom hearing a suit on behalf of the endangered dugong was it revealed that the so-called "Futenma replacement" included a 214 meter long wharf. The Government of Japan had not thought to mention that the Futenma facilities were to be expanded by addition of a deep-water Oura Bay port capable of hosting nuclear submarines.

One of the last acts of the Aso government was to hand over 34 billion yen, \$363 million, as its fiscal year 2010 contribution towards the Guam construction costs, although the US had yet to produce any detailed cost estimates, let alone to appropriate its proportion of the funds. Months later, Congress slashed by 70 per cent the appropriation sought by the Pentagon for the same year, from \$300 million to \$89 million, about one-quarter of the Japanese contribution. [16] So dire are the US financial straits that it is far from certain that Congress will authorize any more. The Guam Agreement committed the US side to use the moneys only in the stipulated ways, but Japan had no right to supervise the expenditure. Once the Pentagon pocketed the money it seems highly unlikely Japan will ever see it returned, whether the base works proceed or not. Furthermore, the housing for the Guam

Marines was calculated at 70 million yen per unit (enough to construct the most extravagant mansions, three-quarters of a million dollars each. Put differently, this was about 14 times the going rate for housing construction in Guam.

One Japanese member of the Diet protested, what happens if, indeed, the US Congress decides not to fund the Guam plan? Would Japan get its money back? [17]

Obama and the DPJ

While working to tie Japan's present and future governments by the Guam Agreement, the US knew full well that the then opposition DPJ's position was clear: no new base should be built within Okinawa and Futenma should be returned tout court. [18] US pressure rose steadily through the months leading to the party's electoral triumph in August 2009 and from then to this day.

When DPJ leader Ozawa began to adumbrate a shift in Japanese foreign and defense policy from a Washington centre to a UN-centre, ending its deployment of the Maritime Self-Defense Forces to the Indian Ocean in service to the US-led war effort in Iraq (then hotly debated), Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, who till then had refused to meet him, suddenly demanded a meeting, and prominent US scholar bureaucrats joined in issuing thinly veiled threats about the "damage" that Ozawa was causing to the alliance. [19] During Hillary Clinton's February visit to Japan, Ozawa Ichiro spent a perfunctory 30 minutes with her, while he found three times as much time a week later to meet and discuss the future of the region with the Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party's International Section. He also made clear his dissent from the new president's resolve to expand and intensify the Afghanistan War, and then went further, raising the possibility of reducing the US presence in Japan to the (Yokosuka-based) US 7th fleet. His message was clear. If the 7th Fleet was indeed sufficient to all necessary purposes for the defense of Japan, then the bases - all thirteen of them with their 47,000 officers and military personnel - were unnecessary. Immediately after stating these controversial views, Ozawa was caught up in a corruption scandal involving staff misuse of funds, late in May resigning as party chief and being replaced by Hatoyama Yukio. Though it must have given Washington satisfaction to see Ozawa shunted from party leadership, he remains the party's undisputed grey eminence. The DPJ issue was not so easily settled.

The Futenma replacement issue gradually became the centrepiece in the confrontation between the Obama and Hatoyama governments. Obama's "Japan team" simply inherited the Bush-Cheney-Rumsfeld agenda and applied steadily heightening pressure on Japan to "honour" its Guam Treaty commitment. So much for those in Okinawa who hoped that Obama's administration might actually mean "change".

With the exception of the new US Ambassador to Japan, John V. Roos, Obama retained the same personnel who had played formative roles in the negotiation of the agreements since 2005: Kurt Campbell, who had been responsible for the Futenma negotiations under Bush became Obama's Deputy Secretary of State for East Asia, Wallace Gregson, marine commander in Okinawa under Bush became head of the Department of Defense's Asia-Pacific section, and Kevin Maher, Consul-General in Okinawa under Bush became director of the State Department's Office of Japan affairs. [20] The policy settings of the Nye-Armitage vision were adopted, apparently without question. Joseph Nye, principal architect of post-Cold War US Japan policy, issued two unmistakable warnings to the DPJ. In a Tokyo conference in December 2008, he spelled out the three acts that Congress would be inclined

to see as “anti-American”: cancelation of the Maritime Self-Defense Agency’s Indian Ocean mission, and any attempt to revise the Status of Forces Agreement or the agreements on relocating US Forces in Japan. [21] He repeated the same basic message when the Democratic Party’s Maehara Seiji visited Washington in the early days of the Obama administration to convey his party’s wishes to renegotiate these agreements, again warning that to do so would be seen as “anti-American.” [22]

As the year wore on and as the new agenda in Tokyo became apparent before and after the August election, the confrontation deepened. Warnings became more forceful. Kurt Campbell told the Asahi there could be no change in the Futenma replacement agreement. [23] Michael Green, formerly George W. Bush’s top adviser on East Asia, though moved under Obama to the private sector at the Centre for International and Strategic Studies, warned that “it would indeed provoke a crisis with the US” if the Democratic Party were to push ahead to try to re-negotiate the military agreements around the Okinawa issue.” [24] Gregson, for the Pentagon, added that the US had “no plans to revise the existing agreements. [25] Ian Kelly, for the State Department, stated that there was no intention on its part to allow revision. [26] Kevin Maher (also at State) added a day later that there could be no reopening of negotiations on something already agreed between states. [27] A “senior Department of Defense spokesperson” in Washington said it would be a “blow to trust” between the two countries if existing plans could not be implemented. [28] Summing up the rising irritation in Washington, an unnamed State Department official commented that “The hardest thing right now is not China. It’s Japan.” [29]

The drumbeats of “concern,” “warning,” “friendly advice” from Washington that Hatoyama and the DPJ had better not implement the party’s electoral pledges and commitments rose steadily leading up to the election and its aftermath, culminating in the October Tokyo visit by Defense Secretary Gates and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Michael Mullen. Gates is reported to have insulted his Japanese hosts, refusing to attend a welcoming ceremony at the Defense Ministry or to dine with senior Japanese Defense officials. [30]

Gates’ message was no-nonsense:

“The Futenma relocation facility is the lynchpin of the realignment road map. Without the Futenma realignment, the Futenma facility, there will be no relocation to Guam. And without relocation to Guam, there will be no consolidation of forces and the return of land in Okinawa.” [31]

For Michael Green, architect of Japan policy under George W. Bush, this showed that Gates was a “shrewd judge of his counterparts,” and that Hatoyama and his government would not be able to “continue slapping around the United States” or to “play with firecrackers.” [32] In case there remained any shadow of doubt in Japanese minds, Admiral Mullen added that the Henoko base construction was an “absolute requirement.” [33] “Challenge the Guam Treaty at your peril,” was the Obama administration’s unambiguous message.

Intimidation had an affect. Defense Secretary Kitazawa Toshimi was first to yield and suggest that there was no real alternative to construction at Henoko. [34] Foreign Minister Okada Katsuya began to waver. In late July, a month before the election, Okada had a brief exchange with U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy: [35]

Fluornoy: The reorganization of US forces in Japan is in accord with agreement between the

two countries.

Okada: There are 64 years of history dragging along behind the US-Japan relationship.

Weeks after the victory, he told British journalist Simon Tisdall, "If Japan just follows what the US says, then I think as a sovereign nation that is very pathetic." [36] He seemed clear on the point that building a new base at Henoko was not the way to reduce the burden on the people of Okinawa. "It should be inconceivable in ordinary thinking," he said, "for the sea to be destroyed to construct a base." [37] It was also Okada who said, "The will of the people of Okinawa and the will of the people of Japan was expressed in the elections ... I don't think we will act simply by accepting what the U.S tells us..." [38]

One day after the Gates and Mullen statements, however, Okada shifted ground to say that moving the Futenma base out of Okinawa was "not an option" (*kangaerarenai*) and to suggest (23 October) that the functions of the Futenma Marine base might after all be transferred within Okinawa. He declined to endorse the Henoko project, but proposed Futenma's functions be merged with those of the relatively close US Air Force base at Kadena, and that the agreement be limited to 15 years.

Okada's suggestion of a transfer of the Futenma functions within Okinawa, even though through this rather novel formula, caused shock waves of disbelief in Okinawa. 80 per cent of Kadena township is already occupied by the existing base. The prefecture's *Ryukyu shimpo* in a passionate editorial lamented the incapacity of the new Hatoyama government to counter the "intimidatory diplomacy" of Gates and Mullen, and the drift back towards "acceptance of the status quo of following the US." If that is to be the new government," it concluded, "then the change of government has been a failure." [39]

The Okinawan Perspective

Okinawa "reverted" from the US to Japan in 1972, but nearly four decades later most major US bases remain intact, taking up one-fifth of the land surface of Okinawa's main island. Nowhere is more overwhelmed by the US military presence than the city of Ginowan, which has grown around the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station. The US and Japan agreed in 1996 that Futenma would be returned, but made return conditional on construction of a replacement, which would also have to be in Okinawa, and not just anywhere in Okinawa but in environmentally sensitive north, the coral and forest environment of Henoko in Nago City, where a precious colony of blue coral was discovered only in 2007, where the internationally protected dugong graze on sea grasses, turtles come to rest, and multiple rare birds, insects, animals thrive.. Thirteen years on, there the matter still stands.

Between 1996 and 2005, a peace and environment citizens' coalition fought the first version of that plan – for a pontoon-supported structure on the reef just offshore from Henoko (originally a modest "helipad," as it was referred to in 1996, 45 metres in length according to the first designs), [40] which gradually grew to have a runway stretching to 2,500 meters across the coral – to such effect that in 2005, Prime Minister Koizumi cancelled it, citing "a lot of opposition." It was an unprecedented triumph for a mobilized citizenry over the combined resources of the two powerful states. The second, and current, version, adopted in 2006, was for a significantly expanded project, this time based on an onshore site in the same Henoko district. It would be built on land and landfill extending from the existing Camp Schwab US base into Oura bay and would boast dual 1,800 meter runways stretching out into Oura Bay, plus a deep sea naval port and other facilities, and a chain of helipads scattered through the forest – a comprehensive air, land and sea base able to project force

throughout Asia and the Pacific.

Time and again, the project was blocked by popular opposition, but time and again the Japanese government renewed and expanded it. The struggle continues throughout Okinawa against this latest, largest, most environmentally devastating design. On the sea-floor from 2007, teams of divers acting as surveyors for the state, and even backed by a Maritime Self-Defense Force frigate, confronted civic opponents determined to defend the sea and its creatures; in San Francisco, a judge continued hearings in a suit against the Pentagon on behalf of the Okinawan dugong and their marine habitat; and at Henoko and Takae (deep in the forest) the sit-in continued.

Japan's nation state under the "old regime" to 2009 of the Liberal-Democratic Party insisted that military priorities prevail over civil or democratic principle, the interests of the Japanese (and American) states over those of the Okinawan people, and the US alliance over the constitution. As government in Tokyo struggled to secure the compliance of the Okinawan people to their own continuing subordination to the military, Okinawa became Japan's domestic "North Korea" in the sense of a prefecture committed to "*Songun*" (Military-Firstism). Except that in this case, it was a foreign military power imposing its will. It was bitter for Okinawans to have Nobel Peace laureate Obama continuing to thrust such priorities on them.

On the only occasion the people of Nago were consulted as to whether they would accept a new base, in a 1997 plebiscite, despite massive government intervention designed to sway them in favour, the outcome was unambiguously negative. In a bizarre outcome, the then mayor flew to Tokyo to announce the outcome, reject it on behalf of the City, and announce his resignation. For almost a decade thereafter, the views of Nago citizens were studiously ignored save that monies were poured in to "development" projects designed to subvert them. By dint of enormous effort, however, the people thus far have thwarted Tokyo's and Washington's plans.

In October 2009, the "sit-in" protest launched by that opposition at Henoko in 2004 passed its 2,000th day, well outlasting the Solidarnosc Polish worker sit-ins to become the longest in modern history. Despite pressures from the state, anti-base opinion in the prefecture seems, if anything, to have strengthened. Where, in 1999, opinion had been almost evenly divided between those who opposed relocation within Okinawa and those who were ready to accept it, a May 2009 survey by the *Okinawa Times* found prefectural opinion running at 68 per cent against and only 18 per cent in favour. [41] Six months later, in the heat of the current "battle of Okinawa," a joint *Mainichi shimbun* and *Ryukyu shimpo* survey found the number of Okinawans who wanted the Futenma base shifted outside of Okinawa, whether in Japan or overseas, had risen to 70 per cent, while hardly anyone – a derisory 5 per cent – endorsed the Guam Agreement formula – the formula on which Washington and Washington were insisting, for a base to be constructed at Henoko. [42]

In the national elections of August 2009, DPJ candidates swept the polls in Okinawa, recording a higher vote than ever before in the proportional section and sweeping aside the representatives of the "old regime." Both prefectural newspapers, the majority in the Okinawan parliament (the Prefectural Assembly, elected in 2008), are also opposed, [43] and 80 per cent of Okinawan mayors believe the Futenma base substitute should be constructed either overseas or elsewhere in Japan. [44] On 2 November, the Naha City Assembly passed a unanimous resolution calling for Futenma to be relocated beyond Okinawa, whether in Japan or elsewhere. [45]

Okinawan newspapers hardly circulate outside the prefecture, or mainland ones within it, and mainland Japanese opinion is remarkably ignorant, and unsympathetic, to Okinawa. Even the “liberal” Asahi editorially scolded the Hatoyama government, saying “There is a limit to Washington’s impatience ... It would be very unfortunate for both countries if the Futenma issue became blown out of proportion.” [46] Okinawan civic thinking was paid little attention. At the time of Hillary Clinton’s February 2009 February visit to Tokyo, a representative group of Okinawan civic leaders wrote her an “Open Letter.” It read, in part: [47]

“Okinawa, a small island, has lived under such great stress for over sixty years. The presence of US military bases has distorted not only the politics and economy of Okinawa, but also its society itself and people’s minds and pride.

We do not need to remind you that Okinawa is not your territory. Your fifty thousand military members act freely as if this is their land, but, of course, it is not. Please remember that we, the Okinawa people, own “the inherent dignity” and “the equal and inalienable rights of all the members of the human family,” which is stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, just as your family and friends do.

The governments of the United States and Japan legitimized the US military occupation of Okinawa with the San Francisco Treaty in 1952, and the reversion of administrative rights in 1972 created a structure of economic and financial dependency in exchange for the presence of US military bases on Okinawa. The governments have changed their strategy for maintaining the base presence from using force to using money.

This is very cruel treatment. The people of Okinawa have increased dependency on such money. The money has created a system which has corrupted our minds. It has taken away alternatives. The acceptance of US bases is seen as the only way to live. ... It is as if the Japanese government has made Okinawa a drug addict and the US government takes full advantage of the addiction, in order to maintain its military presence ...

In 2005 and 2006, the governments of the United States and Japan reached agreement on the construction of new bases and it seems that they are trying to make the US military presence in Okinawa permanent. This plan would add a further burden on the people of Okinawa who have suffered long enough.”

They ended by demanding cancellation of the Henoko plan, immediate and unconditional return of Futenma, and further reductions in the US military presence.

However, although “old regime” thinking, predicated on absolute compliance with the US and on continuing priority to US strategy and planning in determining Okinawa policy, long cultivated by conservative LDP governments in Tokyo, never sank roots in Okinawan society, it did sway high levels of Okinawan administration, especially the prefectural governor and the Nago mayor. In the LDP system, such local dignitaries focussed on “development,” “employment” and the “promotion” of Okinawa, avoiding any stance on base issues, while Tokyo poured in money designed to serve those purposes. A May 2007 law extended nation-wide the policy pioneered in Nago and Okinawa’s northern districts of reward for cooperation and punishment for recalcitrance in promoting US base interests.

Tokyo’s cultivation of regional dependence encouraged cynicism and corruption, while blocking development rooted in local needs. After a decade of such a system, Okinawa’s

income levels remained the lowest in the country, unemployment was roughly double the national average, and virtually all local governments were in the throes of unsustainable fiscal crisis.

But, despite the “betrayal of the clerks,” the political winds of 2009 suggested that the Okinawan social consensus against base development had strengthened under the change of government. Certainly the political credibility of the promise of “development” in return for submission had been fatally weakened by failure to deliver. However, when in August 2009 the government of Japan that had tried unsuccessfully by every means to weaken, split, buy off and intimidate those opposed to the construction of the new base was itself thrown from office, the local representatives of the system in Okinawa, the Governor of the Prefecture and the Mayor of Nago, remained in office (till elections in 2010).

Both tried to shield their submission by seeking a slight revision of the Guam Agreement – to shift the construction design a short distance offshore – as if a reversion to the basic scheme of 1998-2005 would somehow solve the problem. Knowing the American resistance to the idea, they made it only in perfunctory way, with no attempt to insist on it. Governor Nakaima also spoke of a “best” solution – even if it was impractical – being relocation somewhere outside the prefecture.

It was characteristic of the Governor’s vacillation that he chose to absent himself from the prefecture on the occasion of the 8 November All-Okinawa Mass Meeting to express opposition to the Futenma relocation within Okinawa. When Okinawans joined in demanding the closure of the “world’s most dangerous base,” their Governor was in Washington. Days before the Mass Meeting, he stood alongside Kanagawa Governor Matsuzawa Shigefumi who, as head of the Association of Base-Hosting Japanese Prefectures, told their hosts that he saw no alternative to construction at Henoko of the Futenma replacement. [48] Nakaima protested only in the most feeble terms.

Regime Change

In the 64 years since the Marines stormed ashore on Okinawa amid a rain of fire and steel, the islands have known no peace. The intractable nature of the prefecture’s problem stems from the fact that the base issue is set in a procrustean bed of assumptions and principles inherited from the US occupation and the Cold War. Hatoyama might declare the aspiration for “equality” in the relation with the United States, but submission, and the assumption that to please the United States was the first principle of Japanese diplomacy was deeply entrenched. Apart from the \$6 billion “relocation costs” for the Guam transfer it is estimated that the Henoko base construction, if it went ahead, would cost around one trillion yen (some \$11 billion). These sums come on top of the annual subsidy of around 200 billion yen (roughly \$2.2 billion) Japan has been paying the US ever since the reversion of Okinawa in 1972 under the rubric of “omoiyari” (consideration or sympathy, known in the US as “Host Nation Support”), [49] the \$13 billion subsidy towards the costs of the Gulf War and the many subsequent appropriations towards the costs of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. [50] It was once said of George W. Bush that he was inclined to think of Japan as “just some ATM machine” for which a pin number was not needed. Hatoyama has made no move to close the “sympathy” spigot, and must know that to do so would provoke Washington even more than his attempts to renegotiate the Guam Treaty.

The Japanese state of the “old regime” became a “mercenary in reverse,” one that paid to subject itself. To explain such a peculiar state formation and its accompanying psychology, I

have suggested thinking of Japan as America's "Client State," i.e. a state that enjoys the formal trappings of Westphalian sovereignty and independence, and is therefore neither a colony nor a puppet state, but which has internalised the requirement to give preference to "other" interests over its own. [51]

Prime Ministers of the "old regime" sought ways to channel Japanese monies to Washington, while seeking in return help in shoring up their government and resisting the will of the Japanese people. It would be too much to think that a single election could securely install a "new regime," but the Hatoyama government has taken some steps in that direction.

Throughout the post-1945 decades, there has never been such a confrontation between the US and Japan as grew during 2009 around the change of government in Tokyo. At issue, the *Ryukyu Shimpo* insisted on the eve of the All-Okinawa Mass Meeting, was nothing less than whether the Japanese constitution's guarantees of popular sovereignty, basic human rights, and peace applied to Okinawa. [52] The Hatoyama government is split: Defense Minister Kitazawa for implementation of the Guam Agreement and construction at Henoko, Foreign Minister Okada for merger of Futenma facilities with those of the USAF base at Kadena on a 15 year limited basis, while Prime Minister Hatoyama has called for prioritizing the views of Okinawans.

By November, despite their worries, officials in Washington must have felt with satisfaction that they had accomplished a lot in a short space of time, opening divisions within the Hatoyama government. They would have noted with pleasure that Okinawa Governor Nakaima and Nago Mayor Shimabukuro had both kept a low profile as the crisis grew and maintained their distance both from the new Government in Tokyo and the Okinawan popular movement, and that both were conspicuously absent from the platform of the All-Okinawa Mass Protest meeting of 8 November. Washington would be bound to pay more attention to that fact, and to the message of quiet reassurance that Nakaima was delivering to his American hosts, than to the message of the Mass Meeting that followed days afterwards.

With the last shots from the Washington barrage still exploding around him [53] and Obama's visit imminent, Hatoyama continued to study his options and Washington to insist on its demands. Hatoyama faced an impossible choice: he could reject the US demands, risking a major diplomatic crisis, or he could submit to them, provoking a domestic political crisis and driving Okinawans to despair. The optimism one could feel just a few short months ago as the new Government was elected slowly drained away.

Gavan McCormack is emeritus professor at Australian National University, coordinator of The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus, author, most recently, of [Client State: Japan in the American Embrace](#) (in English, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean), and contributes a monthly column to the Korean daily Kyunghyang shinmun. For his earlier articles on Okinawan matters, see The Asia-Pacific Journal. A much abridged version of this article is to be published in Korean in Kyunghyang shinmun on 10 November and in Japanese in Ryukyu shimpo on 11 November.

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Notes

- [1] "Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the United States of America concerning the Implementation of the Relocation of 111 Marine Expeditionary Force Personnel and their Dependents from Okinawa to Guam," Tokyo, 17 February 2009. [Link](#)
- [2] For details, see my *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*, London and New York, Verso, 2007.
- [3] Admiral Timothy Keating, head of US Pacific Command, told a New York press conference in November 2008 that he did not expect the Roadmap target of 2014, "or maybe even 2015," to be met. "Obama and Japan – Futenma relocation a pressing issue," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 20 November 2008.
- [4] Reply by Prime Minister Aso to Diet question from Teruya Hironori, 5 March 2009. [Link](#)
- [5] Sato Manabu, "Obama seiken no Amerika," in Miyazato Seigen, Arasaki Moriteru, and Gabe Masaaki, *Okinawa jiritsu e no michi wo motomete*, Tokyo, Kobunken, 2009, pp. 83-94
- [6] It was used on 26 occasions between 1947 and 1957, to pass 28 laws, then not till Aso revived it in 2008, when he used it to railroad 10 bills on 8 occasions (Jimbo Taro, "Media hiho" (20), *Sekai*, August 2009, pp. 92-99, at p. 92).
- [7] For details, see , [Yoshikawa Hideki](#), "Dugong Swimming in Uncharted Waters: US Judicial Intervention to Protect Okinawa's "Natural Monument" and Halt Base Construction," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 7 February 2009.
- [8] [Sakurai Kunitoshi](#), "The Guam treaty as a Modern 'Disposal' of the Ryukyus."
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- [11] Yoichi Kato, "Interview/ Richard Lawless: Japan-U.S. alliance faces 'priority gap'," *Asahi shimbun*, 2 May 2008.
- [12] Quoted by Funabashi Yoichi, "Obama seiken to Nichibei kankei – Heiji no domei tsuikyū suru toki," *Asahi shimbun*, 26 January 2009.
- [13] "Clinton praises strong U.S.-Japan Ties," *Yomiuri shimbun*, 18 February 2009.
- [14] AFP, "Clinton, Japan sign US troops pull-out deal," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 February 2009.
- [15] [Hattori Peace-Net](#), "Guam kyotei iten no mondaiten," 15 June 2009. See also Yamaguchi Hibiki, "Kaiheita Guam iten," *Peoples Plan*, Summer 2009, pp. 2-15.
- [16] [Satoshi Ogawa](#), "U.S. senate cuts funds for marines' Guam move," *Daily Yomiuri Online*, 7 November 2009.
- [17] Hattori, cit.
- [18] "Futenma wa kengai isetsu" (Futenma to be moved outside of Okinawa), See the Democratic Party's "Okinawa Vision 2008." However, in the 2009, pre-election version, the pledge was qualified to "move in the direction of re-examining the realignment of U.S. military forces in Japan."
- [19] Kurt Campbell and Michael Green, "Ozawa's bravado may damage Japan for years," *Asahi shimbun*, 29 August 2007.
- [20] Maeda, pp. 15-18.
- [21] Quoted in Narusawa Muneo, "Shin seiken no gaiko seisaku ga towareru Okinawa kichi mondai," *Shukan Kinyōbi*, 25 September 2009, pp. 13-15
- [22] *Asahi shimbun*, 25 February 2009. See also Maeda Tetsuo, 'Juzoku' kara 'jiritsu' e – *Nichibei Ampo o kaeru*, Kobunken, 2009, pp. 17, 25.
- [23] Yoichi Kato, "U.S. warm to proposal to reaffirm security pact," *Asahi shimbun*, 23 July 2009.
- [24] Quoted in Mure Dickie and Daniel Dombey, "Prospect of power softens DPJ's

stance," *Financial Times*, 21 July 2009.

[25] "Bei kokan 'minaosanu' tsugitsugi," *Ryukyu shimpo*, 3 September 2009

[26] Hiroshi Ito, "U.S. on Futenma revisit: Forget it," *Asahi shimbun*, 2 September 2009.

[27] "'Kokka-kan no goi' kyocho," *Okinawa Times*, 4 September 2009.

[28] "Futenma isetsu dekinaba Nichibei kankei ni dageki,, Bei kokan ga keikoku," *Asahi shimbun*, 18 October 2009.

[29] [John Pomfret and Blaine Harden](#), "U.S. pressures Japan on military package," *Washington Post*, 22 October 2009.

[30] Ibid.

[31] "Joint Press Conference with Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates," Tokyo, 21 October 2009, Department of Defense, News Transcript. [Link](#)

[32] [Michael Green](#), "Tokyo smackdown," The New Foreign Policy.com, 23 October 2009.

[33] "Joint Chiefs chairman: Futenma must move to Nago," *Yomiuri shimbun*, 24 October 2009.

[34] ["Hatoyama, key ministers split on Futenma,"](#) Weekly Japan Update, 29 October 2009.

[35] "Beigun saihen meguri gekiron - Minshu Okada kanjicho to bei kokubo jikan," Nikkei Net, 26 July 2009.

[36] *The Guardian*, 10 August 2009.

[37] "Gaisho - Henoko-an o saimonshi, Futenma isetsu," *Okinawa Times*, 23 October 2009.

[38] "Japan urges U.S. to respect 'democracy' over base," AFP, 22 October 2009.

[39] "Okada gaisho hatsugen - boso suru Hatoyama seiken no genkai, Ampo no Okinawa izon kara dakkyaku o," *Ryukyu shimpo*, 25 October 2009.

[40] Shimokobe Jun, then Vice-Minister at the National Lands Agency, quoted in Sato Manabu, "Obama seiken no Amerika," cit, p. 90.

[41] "Futenma hikojo daitai, kennai isetsu hantai 68%," *Okinawa Times*, 14 May 2009. In the Northern Districts (including Nago City) opposition was even higher, at 76 per cent.

[42] "Futenma iten: Genko keikaku ni 'hantai' 67%, Okinawa yoron chosa," *Mainichi shimbun*, 2 November 2009; for a partial English account, "Poll: 70 percent of Okinawans want Futenma moved out of prefecture, Japan," *Mainichi Daily News*, 3 November 2009. Foreign Minister Okada's "Kadena option" also had scant support. 72 per cent of people opposed it.

[43] [Gavan McCormack and Matsumoto Tsuyoshi](#), "'Okinawa says 'No' to US base plan," *Japan Focus*, 21 July 2008.

[44] 34 of 41 local government heads in Okinawa. "Futenma 'kengai' 'kokugai' 34 nin," *Okinawa Times*, 30 October 2009.

[45] "Nahashi gikai Futenma no 'kengai kokugai' motome ikensho aketsu," *Ryukyu shimpo*, 2 November 2009. Five Communist members absented themselves from the Chamber during the vote, but their position was that it was too soft; only Futenma's immediate and unconditional return would satisfy them.

[46] "Relocating Futenma Base," *Asahi shimbun*, 23 October 2009.

[47] "Hirari R. Kurinton Beikokumu chokan e no shokan (Open Letter to Secretary of State Clinton), by Miyaazato Seigen and 13 other representative figures of Okinawa's civil society, 14 February 2009, (Japanese) text at "Nagonago zakki," Miyagi Yasuhiro blog, 22 March 2009; English text courtesy Sato Manabu.

[48] Nakaima uttered the bizarre remark that he might not necessarily share Matsuzawa's "tastes." ("teisuto ga sukoshi watakushi to ha chigau ka mo shirenai," ("Futenma kengai isetsu ha fukano' ho-Bei chu no Kanagawa chiji ga koen," *Ryukyu shimpo*, 6 November 2009; See also "Kanaga chiji, Henoko-an osu 'Futenma isetsu," *Okinawa Times*, 7 November 2009.)

[49] The figure of 5.5 trillion yen, 50 billion dollars, is the best estimate of the Japanese subsidy to Pentagon coffers over the years.

[50] On the latter, see my *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*, passim.

[51] The definition here is one I adopt in the revised Japanese, Korean and Chinese editions of my 2007 book, *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*.

[52] "Okinawa no min-i - Kennai isetsu 'No' ga senmei da," *Ryukyu shimpo*, editorial, 3 November 2009.

[53] Ian Kelly of the Department of State, was quoted one week before Obama's visit as saying "Japan has to decide what kind of relationship it wants with the US." ("Futenma de Nihon seifu no boso ken'en, Beikokumucho," *Tokyo shimbun*, 4 November 2009).

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