



The US–Japan Security Treaty at 50: Entering Uncharted Waters

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2010 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the key charter of the US–Japan relationship, the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security (also known as '*Ampo*', a term derived from the Japanese name for the treaty), which was rammed through Japan's Diet in 1960 amid huge public protests. As in 1960, the US–Japan alliance's relationship is again today passing through troubled times towards a still uncertain future. Nine months of intense US pressure wore down the new Japanese government (in power since September 2009) to the point of accomplishing *de facto* a 'regime change'. The half-century-established Security Treaty system would not tolerate any challenge or attempt on Japan's part to renegotiate it. Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama's challenge was crushed and 'LDP (Liberal Democratic Party)-type' subservience reinstated. New Japanese Prime Minister Kan inherited a poisoned chalice in June 2010.

Hatoyama's Campaign Pledge on Futenma

The terms of the 1960 treaty confined military cooperation to the defence of Japan in the 'Far East'. Although the tumult of the treaty's 1960 passage was such as to deter the two governments from any attempt at overt revision thereafter, countless *de facto* revisions were instead adopted, steadily extending the scope of cooperation, especially in the twenty-first century, as Japan's cooperation was sought in the 'Global War on Terror'. The burden of such cooperation fell most heavily on Okinawa, and within Okinawa upon the communities of Ginowan City, reluctant home to the Futenma Marine Air Station, and Henoko (near Nago City), designated home to the Futenma replacement facility that Japan has been promising to construct since 1996. Nominally a Futenma replacement, actually the Henoko design grew to become a much expanded, hi-tech, multi-service military facility, far larger and more multifunctional than the obsolescent, inconvenient, and dangerous Futenma.

Until 2009, Japan's LDP governments tried by all means to advance the Futenma replacement agenda, but were stalled by determined, non-violent, Okinawan opposition. As legitimacy and power slowly slipped away from the LDP, the incoming Obama administration in the United States hastened to tie the LDP's successor to the construction pledge by extracting commitment in the form of a treaty (the Guam Treaty, which was signed in February and adopted in the Diet in May 2009). When Hatoyama Ichiro's Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) took office in September 2009, having campaigned on pledges to see Futenma relocated outside the prefecture, it faced the problem of reconciling the Guam Treaty agreement with its Okinawan pledge. Attempts to square the circle of *Ampo* and Okinawa simply tied them in knots. When Hatoyama grasped the irreconcilability of the contradiction, there was nothing for him to do but to raise the white flag of surrender to US President Obama.

The Alliance: Lies and Deception

The fiftieth anniversary also coincides with a series of shocking revelations of the lies and deception on which the alliance has rested since its foundation. Two highly sensitive areas of the relationship—US nuclear war preparations and Okinawa—were reserved for secret

diplomacy. The much vaunted 'Three Non-Nuclear Principles' on which Japan's diplomatic posture has been based for almost 40 years is now known to have been a deceit. Japan's Prime Minister Sato, who first enunciated the Principles and accepted the 1974 Nobel Peace Prize primarily in recognition of adopting them, himself signed secret agreements negating at least one of them and said that he thought they were 'nonsense'. All subsequent Japanese governments until 2009 denied the existence of the secret nuclear agreement and cooperated fully in US nuclear war preparations. Not until March 2010 did an 'Experts Committee', appointed by Japanese Foreign Minister Okada, confirm this and other secret understandings at the heart of the alliance's relationship.

Okinawan sentiments were especially aroused in 2009–2010 as the contest over the military base issue coincided with revelations of the deception practised by LDP governments over the past half century, and with exposure of the readiness of successive Japanese LDP governments to pay almost any price to retain the US forces in Okinawa. Okinawans protest that much of the shameful record was not disclosed by the Okada Experts Committee. In April 2010, a Tokyo District Court explicitly criticized the Foreign Ministry's 'insincerity' in 'neglecting the public's right to know', noted its suspicion that the Ministry might have deliberately destroyed sensitive documents in order to cover up the record, and ordered it to locate and disclose documents concerning Okinawan 'secret agreements'. For Okinawans, the bitter fact is that twelve years before the reversion, the *Ampo* Treaty confirmed Japan's post-Second World War division into 'war state' (American-controlled Okinawa) and 'peace state' (demilitarized and constitutionally pacifist mainland Japan), and despite Okinawa's inclusion from 1972 under the Constitution of Japan—with its guarantees of peace, democracy and human rights—in practice the principles of the Security Treaty (including its secret elements) have always outweighed those of the Constitution. In Okinawa, resentment over past deceptions combines with anger over continuing insistence on the burdens that Okinawan people are expected to bear for the sake of the US–Japan alliance.

As the LDP rule collapsed nationally and an alternative government took office in 2009, it was the Okinawan periphery that set the agenda for the national debate on Japan's and the region's future. The revelations of lies and deception surrounding the US relationship coincided with general disgust at the incompetence and corruption of the LDP government, causing an electoral shift and bringing to power a DPJ government that promised change. In Okinawa, where one-fifth of the main island's land surface remains occupied by US forces almost four decades after its supposed 'reversion' to Japan, more was at stake than elsewhere. Expectations of a new and more democratic order and of a better and more equal relationship with the United States rose, and DPJ promises to block any new military base construction stirred great excitement.

Okinawan Resistance

Fourteen years of efforts to persuade, intimidate, or buy off the Okinawan resistance to constructing a base in these seas merely stiffened the resistance. In 2010, the Okinawan parliament (the Prefectural Assembly) adopted a unanimous resolution calling for Futenma to be closed and returned to Okinawa, without being replaced in the prefecture. All Okinawa's 41 local town mayors and its eleven city mayors adopted the same stance. In late April 2010, 90,000 Okinawans gathered at Yomitan village to underline the same message. There is no longer a 'progressive–conservative' divide in Okinawan politics. The mayor of Okinawa's capital, Naha, a former president of the Liberal Democratic Party of Okinawa, calls for the Okinawan people to remain united 'like a rugby scrum' to accomplish Futenma's closure and return. If such struggles had unfolded somewhere in the former Soviet Union, or in any country not allied to the West, they would be acclaimed as a model of popular democracy in action; yet Okinawa attracted minimal interest or sympathy.

Setting aside the diplomatic, political and military considerations, on ecological grounds alone the project defies sense. Not only are the seas off Henoko—the designated site for the Futenma Replacement Facility—home to the internationally protected dugong (a large marine mammal, one of which swam by to the immense delight of Okinawans on 12 May 2010), but turtles come to rest and lay their eggs, and multiple rare birds, insects and animals thrive. A

colony of blue coral, which was only discovered in 2007, was placed in 2008 on the 'red', or critically endangered, list (with the dugong). A 2009 study by the World Wildlife Fund found an astonishing 36 *new* species of crabs and shrimps in Oura Bay. The idea that a huge new military installation could be constructed here without ill effect was implausible.

Without Historical Precedent

As Hatoyama's self-imposed deadline of the end of May 2010 approached, and as he struggled desperately to find a way to implement the Guam Treaty without abandoning his pledges to Okinawa, the Okinawan resistance consolidated. Then, under immense and continuing US pressure, Hatoyama capitulated, first indicating that he was prepared to 'broadly accept' the existing agreements by proposing a Henoko, offshore, pier-like structure that would rest on thousands of piles driven into the sea bed instead of actual reclamation of Oura Bay, and then, weeks later, surrendering his last shred of resistance and accepting the 2006 Henoko (Oura Bay) landfill design. After nine inglorious and confused months, the 'Hatoyama rebellion' ended in humiliating surrender. In just the same fecund waters that weeks earlier he had declared would be 'sacrilege' to landfill, Hatoyama promised that he would landfill and build the Futenma Replacement Facility on which Washington DC insisted. In an attempt to salvage some face, he insisted that his reclamation would be 'environmentally sensitive'.

In the past, LDP governments contemplated using force, and in 2007 sent Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Forces frigate, *Bungo*, to intimidate the civic defenders of the sea and its creatures, but held back, presumably in fear of the political consequences of mass arrests. The opposition facing Hatoyama was far greater, such that it became likely that he could only proceed if he and his government adopted the kind of coercive measures at which former Prime Minister Koizumi had balked. Such a process would cast a dark shadow over the sixth decade of the alliance.

Modern Japanese history has no precedent for the sort of confrontation that surfaced in 2009–2010 between centre and region. Likewise, diplomatic history has no precedent for the scorn and intimidation that was directed at the Hatoyama government by the Obama administration in that same year. Japan's new Kan government (from June 2010) pledges to carry through Hatoyama's Henoko commitment but, with the entire prefecture of Okinawa today saying 'No', Japan, the United States and East Asia enter uncharted waters.

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