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# Deception and Diplomacy: The US, Japan, and Okinawa 欺瞞と外交 ––アメリカ、日本、沖縄 •Japanese text available

**Gavan McCormack**

## Deception and Diplomacy: The US, Japan, and Okinawa

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**A Japanese translation is available here.**

*The following text makes extensive use of the treasure trove of documents on the US-Japan-Okinawa relationship released by Wikileaks and published in The Asahi Shimbun and Ryukyu Shimpo in May 2001, setting them in the frame of four decades of chicanery. It also discusses the so-called "mitsuyaku" or secret diplomacy between the two countries that has gradualy come to light in the past two years without any help from Wiki, the "confession" of former Prime Minister Hatoyama, the strange case of the "Maher affair, and the shock waves of recent shifts in thinking about the Okinawa problem in Washington.* APJ

**1. Zokkoku Blues**

For the student of contemporary Japan, these are sad times, and it is not just because of the catastrophe that struck the country in March and the Chernobyl-like horrors that have continued since then to spread across the Northeast, though it has been impossible to observe these without shock and grief. But it is sad above all because of the growing sense that Japan lacks a truly responsible democratic government to address these issues, and because its people deserve better.

It seems only yesterday that the Japanese people, tired and disgusted with a half century of corrupt and collusive LDP rule, voted to end it. How quickly since September 2009 their efforts were reversed, renewal and reform blocked, and a compliant US-oriented regime reinstated whose irresponsibility is matched only by its incompetence. This is true whether considering the response to the nuclear crisis, marked by evasion, manipulation and collusion (of bureaucrats, politicians, the media, and the nuclear industry), or of the handling of the Okinawa base issue, which is central to the country's most important relationship, that with the United States. The argument of my book published in 2006 was that Japan is a US "Client State," or *zokkoku*, structurally designed to attach priority to US over Japanese interests.[1] Much fresh evidence to support that thesis has come to light since I wrote, exposing the relationship as marked by the sort of humiliation that used to be characteristic of relations between centre and periphery in the old Soviet empire. Between the world's two most powerful capitalist economies and supposed flag-bearers of democracy it is deeply incongruous.

Especially since the September 2009 advent of the Hatoyama government, which came to office promising a new regional order in the Asia-Pacific, there have been successive revelations of the truncated character of the Japanese state. Created and cultivated under US auspices in the wake of war nearly seven decades ago, that state maintains to this day a submissive orientation towards its distant founding fathers. Here I focus on five recent events or sets of materials that between 2009 and 2011 help illuminate it: the *mitsuyaku* or secret agreements, the "confession" of Prime Minister Hatoyama, the Wiki-leaks revelations, the "Maher affair," and something still in train as these words are being written (May 2011) that may, provisionally, be called the "Levin-Webb-McCain shock." Seen as a whole, they compel the sad conclusion that the notion of democratic responsibility on the part of the Japanese state is illusory. Independence for Japan is not something to be protected, but something still to be won.

**2. Mitsuyaku: Okinawan "Reversion" and Secret Diplomacy, 1969-2009**

The frame of US-Japan relations of the late 20th and early 21st century was set in a series of secret agreements negotiated in the late 1960s and early 1970s and known by the Japanese word *mitsuyaku*. The *mitsuyaku* were subject to an investigation by a formal inquiry set up under the DPJ government in 2009-10, and continued by further revelations from Japanese archival sources under freedom of information, in part pursuant to a Japanese court order. The key secret agreements covered Japanese covert cooperation in US nuclear war strategy on the one hand and the reversion of Okinawa to Japan that took place in 1972 on the other. Deviousness and deception were the keynotes.

The Okinawan "reversion," trumpeted as *kakunuki hondonami* (no nuclear weapons and equality in terms of base burden between Okinawa and mainland) and therefore a triumph of Japanese diplomacy and an end to the postwar, was in fact enmeshed in secret agreements that essentially negated it.[2] By including a provision that the US could reintroduce nuclear weapons without prior consultation if or whenever it deemed it necessary,[3] the parties negated both the publicly proclaimed *kakunuki* and the "Three Non-Nuclear Principles" Prime Minister Sato had announced in 1967 and for which he was awarded the 1974 Nobel Peace Prize. In other words, the Japanese (and US) governments lied to the Japanese and Okinawan people, setting the stage for the reversion, and till 2009 successive Prime Ministers and governments repeated the lie, denying even directly contradictory documents from the US archives acknowledging the nuclear deal. Only when four successive former Vice-Ministers confessed, and the government changed, in 2009, was the truth admitted.

The fresh light that recently opened materials cast on the secret protocols surrounding the Okinawa Reversion agreement reached between Sato and Richard Nixon in November 1969 allows us to see much more clearly the nature of the deal.

Firstly, from the commencement of the negotiations, the Government of Japan insisted that, although it sought *"reversion,"* it actually meant *retention*; i.e., that the US must not think of closing

**Sato and Nixon, 1969**

down its bases following administrative reversion of the islands to Japan. To the Sato government, the bases were an essential deterrent, even though their principal function at the time was as instrument of aggression in the daily bombing of Vietnam.

Secondly, the US side insisted that for this peculiar deal, Japan should pay; setting the terms for future base arrangements; in other words, the *"reversion"* was a *buy-back*. The US government insisted on the enormous sum of $650 million, used the term "price-tag" to apply to it, and insisted that most be in the form of a "lump sum" payment. In the event, $650 million was more than double the officially announced $320 million, nominally for return of US assets, and even that $320 million was deceptive. It included the item of $70 million, supposedly to remove nuclear weapons, but 40 years later the then chief Japanese negotiator revealed that they had decided on that figure "in order to be able to say 'Since Japan paid so much, the nuclear weapons were removed.' We did it to cope with opposition parties in the Diet."[4] The Okinawan *"reversion"* was a *"buyback"* in which Japan insisted the asset it was buying remain in US hands, an arrangement that doubly violated the Japanese constitution both because it was premised on a lie and because it violated Article 9 in the most blatant way possible. Japan paid the US while insisting the US *not return* what it was paying for. It created two separate accounts, a secret one with the real figure entered and a public one, which referred to about half the real sum, and even that public figure was substantially false.

By insisting the US retain its military assets, with full freedom in their use, returning only the unnecessary responsibility for local Okinawan administration, and paying a huge sum to sweeten the deal, Japan ensured that the island's principle *raison d'être* would continue to be war, making a mockery of the Okinawan people's revulsion for war and their desire for the peace principle at the centre of the constitution.

Two decades later, the Cold War ended. Okinawans anticipated that, after long delay, at last the peace constitution would be extended to them and the burden of the US bases reduced, but again, however, that did not happen. A Governor who declared his determination to work towards return of the bases and demilitarization of the islands was arraigned before the Supreme Court and ordered to sign compulsory orders renewing the lease of Okinawan land to the US forces.

In 1995, the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl by three American servicemen stirred the prefecture to waves of protest that profoundly threatened the base presence (and therefore the "alliance." The two state parties felt obliged to make concessions designed to restore their interests and characteristically they did so in the form of a deception. They agreed that Futenma Marine Air Station, in the middle of densely populated Ginowan city and dubbed by Donald Rumsfeld the world's most dangerous base, would be returned to Japan. It is impossible to forget being astonished at this announcement. The deception of this "reversion" was in the small print. Where in 1972 *"reversion"* (of Okinawa) had meant *"retention,"* in 1996 *"reversion"* (of Futenma) meant *substitution*: the construction of a new, enlarged, technically sophisticated multi-service facility to replace the inconvenient, dangerous and obsolescent Futenma. Fifteen years on, that agreement remains unfulfilled.

**"The world's most dangerous base"**

Okinawans rejected the deal from the start. The history of the subsequent 15 years has been the history of that Okinawan refusal to allow the Futenma replacement to proceed in the face of US and Japanese pressures to consummate the deal. When Governor Ota Masahide declared in February 1998 that he would not allow the project to go ahead, Tokyo froze all dealings with him and mobilized (illegally and unconstitutionally), spending large sums of secret funds in the campaign and successfully unseating him later in the year. The details of that intervention too, were revealed only in 2010.[5]

With a compliant governor installed, and with substantial national funds poured in to buy off the opposition in the north to the Henoko project, Prime Minister Koizumi from 2001 attempted to push the construction of the Futenma replacement facility (FRF) at Henoko. In 2004, when survey work commenced in the adjacent sea, the opposition began a protest sit-in (seven years on, that too continues). The movement gathered broad prefecture-wide sympathy and support and became so effective that in 2005 Koizumi conceded defeat and canceled that (offshore) plan. A year later he revived it, in a different, land-based, design. The intent, as always, was to evade popular will, since shifting the project within the bounds of the existing camp Schwab meant it would be more difficult for opponents to block construction. The opposition held firm, however, and by late 2008 nation-wide anger at the corruption and incompetence of the Liberal Democratic Party's five decade long one party rule threatened the relocation plan. The opposition Democratic Party gathered national and particularly Okinawan support around the proposition that there would be no Futenma replacement in Okinawa.

In the first days of the Obama government and the last days of LDP government in Japan (early 2009), therefore, the managers of the "alliance" in Tokyo and Washington again sought a way to avoid the outcome sought by the Okinawan public and their representatives. The US embassy in Tokyo reported to Washington that the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted the 2006 "Reorganization" agreement to be endorsed and reinforced as a treaty, i.e., to elevate the agreement into a "Treaty-level (on the Japanese side)" agreement that would be "legally binding on the current and future Japanese cabinets."[6]

The Guam International Agreement that followed was a remarkable diplomatic agreement both as to its content and its form. Japan was to pay both an unspecified sum (common estimates in the $10 billion range) for construction of a new base to substitute for Futenma at Henoko and $6.1 billion for the construction of US military residential and other facilities in Guam, so that "8,000 Marines and their 9,000 dependents" could be transferred from Okinawa to Guam by 2014 (leaving a smaller Marine contingent on Okinawa). As a treaty, the agreement had binding legal status. The Japanese (LDP) government, its credibility rapidly collapsing, pulled out all stops to make sure it could pay $336 million dollars to the US Treasury by May 2009, with $2.8 billion in cash and the rest in credits toward the total of $6.1 billion. The core concern was not national security – which does not appear even to have been discussed – but the determination to prolong the US occupation of Okinawa (and provide whatever service might be possible for the US's Afghan and Iraq wars), regardless of cost.

Signed in Tokyo by Hillary Clinton in February 2009, and ratified in the Diet in May, this first initiative of the new Obama government towards Japan was plainly an unequal treaty in the sense that it imposed binding obligation on one side only. It was a design by the two governments to circumvent the democratic will of the Japanese people. The rush to sign the deal reflected the fact that the LDP was on the verge of collapsing at the polls. As I wrote then, the Guam International Agreement (Treaty)

> "is likely to be studied by future generations as something crystallizing the defining moment of a relationship, when both parties went *too far*, the US in demanding (hastily, well aware that time was running out to cut a deal with the LDP) and Japan in submitting to something not only unequal but also unconstitutional, illegal, colonial, and deceitful. Excess on both

sides was likely to generate resentment and in the long run to make the relationship more difficult to sustain."[7]

That is indeed what happened. For the distinguished Tokyo University political scientist, Shinohara Hajime, the 28 May agreement was Japan's "second defeat," i.e. tantamount to August 1945.[8]

**3. DPJ: From Hatoyama to Kan (2009- )**

In 2009, Japan elected a new government, ending a half-century of one party, heavily US-supported rule. Hatoyama, like Obama in the US the previous year, was elected because he had a vision for Japan and tapped a mood of desire for change. Among the components of his grand design was his pledge to take back government from the bureaucrats and open it to the people through their elected representatives; to re-orient Japan away from US-centred unipolarism towards a multi-polar world in which Japan would re-negotiate its relationship with the US on the basis of equality and become a central member of an East Asian community. The most concrete pledge was to close the Futenma base, at the very least to move it somewhere outside Okinawa.

The US was deeply suspicious of Hatoyama's Asian community agenda. Moreover, never contemplating the possibility of an "equal" relationship with any state, it found particularly absurd that a compliant Japan should propose one. Above all, Washington resolved to block Hatoyama on the Futenma issue. Because Hatoyama challenged the deeply embedded structures of the "Client State" system, projecting a democratic and an independent and Asia-centered vision, Washington saw him as a threat, to be neutralized or crushed.

President Obama refused to meet Hatoyama or discuss his agenda or his vision. The Departments of State and Defense delivered ultimatum after ultimatum, beating out a crescendo of warnings and intimidation demanding he obey and build the new ("Futenma substitute") Marine base at Henoko.[9] No other major ally – and perhaps no enemy either - had ever been subjected to the sort of abuse and intimidation that Hatoyama faced during those late 2009 months.

But that was not all. The documents released courtesy of Wikileaks in May 2011 reveal the extent to which Hatoyama was betrayed by his own government. If ever there was a *trahison des clercs*, this was it. From the earliest days of the Hatoyama government, his senior officials had clandestine, one can fairly say conspiratorial, links with US officials, advising the Obama administration to stand firm, to understand that Hatoyama was a Prime Minister "with personality shortcomings," he was "weak when speaking with strong individuals" and "usually voiced his opinion based on the last strong comments he had heard;" his government was "still in the process of organizing itself,"[10] it was "inexperienced" and "stupid,"[11] and its policy process "chaotic."[12] Hatoyama's senior state officials, both politicians and bureaucrats, like their predecessors in the LDP for over half a century, were loyal to Washington rather than to him or to the Japanese electorate.

The constant refrain from these Tokyo officials was to reassure Washington that provided it stand firm, and "refrain from demonstrating flexibility,"[13] they could turn the government around and see to it that the base agreement be implemented. The head of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke of his Department's focus as being "finding a quick way to back away from the DPJ's campaign pledge to reopen the realignment pledge," i.e. to subvert his government.[14] Okinawans could basically be ignored, because, as DPJ Diet Affairs chief Yamaoka Kenji put it, "in Okinawa "it's all about opposing for its own sake ... If Okinawa's will is respected, nothing will ever happen."[15] For that matter the Japanese people were not much better because, according to Yamaoka, they were "spoiled" and took US protection for granted.[16] Not only that, but as Fukahori Ryo (a former division deputy director at Ministry of Foreign Affairs) put it, "the vast majority of the Japanese public did not understand security issues."[17] And indeed the Prime Minister too seemed to fit into this category of hopeless ignorance, such that Vice-Foreign Minister Yabunaka Mitoji, over lunch with American ambassador Roos, helpfully suggested that "it would be beneficial for the US to go through the basic fundamentals of security issues with the Prime Minister," i.e., explain to him the (political) facts of life.[18]

To better pull the wool over the eyes of the Japanese and especially the Okinawan people and enforce the base deal, the bureaucrats on both sides manipulated the figures on the Guam troop transfer and on the proportion of costs that would be met by Japan.[19] The Roadmap (2006) and Guam and Tokyo agreements of 2009 and 2010 on relocation of US forces in Japan included provision for 8,000 Marines and their 9,000 dependents to be relocated from Okinawa to facilities which Japan would pay $6.1 billion to construct on Guam, thereby "reducing the burden" on Okinawa. For Japan to pay such a huge sum for construction of facilities (including medical clinic, bachelor enlisted quarters, fire station, etc) on American soil was unprecedented, although *"omoiyari"* or "sympathy" payments to help the US maintain its forces in Japan had become an established budgetary item, commencing in 1978. However, as the Embassy despatch put it, "both the 8,000 and the 9,000 numbers were deliberately maximized to optimize political value in Japan."[20] There were at the time only "on the order of 13,000" Marines, and the total number of dependents was "less than 9,000." The US side "regularly briefed" the Japanese government on these numbers, so when government ministers repeatedly used the figures of an Okinawa Marine force of 18,000 to be reduced to 10,000 following the transfer of 8,000 to the newly built facilities in Guam, there is no doubt that they did so in bad faith; i.e., they lied. The cost too was inflated by inclusion of an item of $1 billion for construction of a military road on Guam. This item was nominally to be met by the US but the "billion dollar road" was simply "a way to increase the overall cost estimate and thereby reduce the share of total costs borne by Japan."[21] Its inclusion reduced the Japanese proportion of the $10.1 billion overall cost from 66 per cent to 59 per cent, making it seem slightly less unequal. The road was neither necessary nor likely ever to be built.

Surrounded by such faithless – if not treasonous – bureaucrats, torn between the pressures of Washington on the one hand and Okinawa on the other, and lacking the courage or clarity of purpose to confront them, Hatoyama's resolve and his political position crumbled. The pressure peaked in October with an overtly intimidatory visit to Tokyo by Defense secretary Gates and Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell's blunt warning to Hatoyama that "U.S. patience would wear thin if the DPJ government continued to make multiple suggestions to review and adjust extant alliance arrangements."[22] On 8 December 2009, the government, through DPJ Diet Affairs Chief Yamaoka Kenji, assured the US embassy that, although it would have to be patient, "a decision had already been made" and "the government would implement the deal," though "managing the Diet" made it difficult to do so immediately and it might take until the summer of 2010.[23] The following day, Maehara Seiji, who among other things was then State Minister for Okinawa, delivered the same message to Ambassador Roos: The GOJ [Government of Japan] would explore "alternative options" but "if no alternative options are accepted, then

**Hatoyama visits Okinawa, May 4, 2010**

SDP and PNP coalition minority parties Social Democratic Party and People's New Party would agree to accept the Henoko option." In other words, "if the US did not agree to any alternative" (the likelihood of finding any being "virtually zero") then the existing plan would go ahead.[24] With these secret understandings in place, Hatoyama and his government maintained the public façade of searching for a relocation site outside Okinawa (in accordance with his and the Party's electoral pledge) for six more months. What was enacted on the Tokyo political and media stage over those months was essentially an elaborate charade.

In May 2010, Hatoyama declared that at last he had come to understand the importance of the Marine presence in Okinawa for "deterrence" purposes, and on that ground he had decided to accept that the Henoko relocation plan should go ahead. Having signed a deal to that effect on 28 May, he immediately resigned.

Half a year later, Hatoyama confessed that he had simply made that up. Deterrence was just a pretext, *hoben*, to justify submission to irresistible bureaucratic and diplomatic pressure.[25] Officials in the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Defence had "scornfully dismissed" (he said) his ideas till, eventually, he reached the point where "... anything else was futile, I could go no further and I came to doubt my own strength."[26] There is a clear contradiction between this recollection and the documentary evidence that his government made its decision at latest by early December the preceding year. Whichever be the case, the government was deeply engaged in the politics of deception.

The parties quibbled,[27] but they lent themselves without qualm to a massive confidence trick on the Japanese public. The process by which "numbers were deliberately maximised to optimize political value in Japan" was, as the *Asahi* put it, "an unpardonable betrayal of the people."[28] To the *Okinawa taimusu*, it was another *mitsuyaku* or secret treaty,[29] and to the *Ryukyu shimpo* the Wiki revelations showed that, "although Japan was supposedly a democratic country, its officials, bowing and scraping before a foreign country and making no effort to carry out the will of the people, lacked any qualification for diplomatic negotiation" and Japan was destined "to go down in history as in practice America's client state."[30]

Such sources as the Hatoyama confession and the Wikileaks documents, however unorthodox and even if in part contradictory, help fill out the picture of this tragic Hatoyama government. In the 50th year of the Ampo relationship, it became clear that in a "mature" alliance a Japanese government could not survive loss of Washington's confidence, and that bureaucrats in Tokyo gave absolute priority to serving the US, taking it as beyond question that Okinawa should continue to serve US military purposes above all else and at whatever cost. When Hatoyama handed the reins of government to Kan Naoto, Kan's task was described throughout the national media as to heal the "wounds" that Hatoyama had caused to the alliance, restore Washington's trust and confidence in Japan, and resolve the Okinawa problem by "persuading" Okinawa to accept the new base.

If the Hatoyama government thus abandoned a core policy objective after nine (or, as now seems more likely, just three) months, it did, nevertheless, leave one positive – if unintended - accomplishment: it stirred the Okinawan people from the widespread but often fragmented *opposition* into a prefecture-wide mass movement of *resistance*, without precedent in modern Japanese history. Through 2010, by every conceivable democratic means, Okinawans made their views known:

**January**: the election of a Nago City mayor who was determinedly anti-base;

**February**: the adoption of a unanimous resolution opposing construction of any new base in the prefecture by the regional parliament, the Prefectural Assembly;

**April**: "All-Okinawa" mass meeting to oppose base construction;

**July**: a second unanimous Prefectural Assembly resolution, this time also declaring the US-Japan Agreement of 28 May (Hatoyama's "surrender") a "violent, democracy-trampling act" that "treated Okinawans as stupid;"

**September**: election of a majority of anti-base candidates to the Nago City Assembly;

**November**: the election of a Governor who said he would demand the base be relocated elsewhere than in Okinawa.

Despite the clarity of the message, and the democratic and non-violent ways in which it was articulated at the polls and in direct action, neither Tokyo nor Washington was moved.

By May 2011, Kan Naoto had been in office for 11 months, just a little longer than Hatoyama. He and his government use honeyed words, apologize, express deep regret to Okinawa; but they continue to strive to coopt, divide, persuade or crush the resistance and they insist that the many bilateral agreements all centring on the Futenma replacement facility (Henoko) be fulfilled.

Kan has reassured the US government of his determination to press ahead with the base construction at Henoko (and the helipads for the marines at Takae and in the surrounding Yambaru forest). Late in 2010, he launched steps to compel Nago City's mayor to allow survey work to commence in the Henoko area and at about the same time, far from public or media scrutiny, he moved to crush the resistance to construction of the heliports. Foreign Minister Maehara even suggested that if the schools and hospitals of Ginowan City were troubled by the Marine base next door, they could all be moved out of the base's way."[31] Visiting Okinawa in December 2010, Kan expressed his "unbearable shame as a Japanese" over the way it had been treated by

**Prime Minister Kan inspecting Okinawa, Dec 2010. Mainichi Shimbun photo**

successive governments. But he went on to say that, while relocating Futenma to Hhenoko "may not be the best choice for the people of Okinawa, in practical terms it is the better choice." Okinawans were outraged and the Governor responded sharply that any relocation within the prefecture would be "bad." Cabinet Secretary Sengoku told Okinawans they would have to "grin and bear" *(kanju)* their burden.[32] Months later, in April 2011 the Kan government informed Washington that it had yielded on what seemed the last point of dispute: it would accept the "V"-shaped dual runway design at Henoko that the Marine Corps preferred. Ironically, however, even as Kan and his government moved towards implementation, Washington (as discussed below) was inclining towards abandonment and re-negotiation.

**Henoko sit-in site, December 2010, day 2,434. Author left with activists. Photograph Norimatsu Satoko.**

**4. The Department of State**

Early in December 2010 came an event that was unexpected but pregnant with significance. The Department of State's senior Japan specialist and therefore adviser to Hillary Clinton, Kevin Maher, met to brief a group of American University students on the eve of their visit to Japan. In relaxed mood, Maher set aside diplomatic niceties and spoke his mind. He described Okinawans as lazy (too lazy even to grow goya, the Okinawan staple bitter melon), immoral (there were too many out-of-wedlock children and they drank too much strong liquor), and as "masters of manipulation and deception" who had irresponsibly allowed schools and housing to be built to the perimeter of Futenma.[33] They also had "darker skin," were "shorter" and had an "accent" like Puerto Ricans.[34] Because Okinawans were extortionists, the base relocation could easily be accomplished, he said, if only the national government would tell the Governor of Okinawa, "if you want money, sign it."

These insults pointed to the frustration that must have been felt in Washington that Okinawa, the insignificant client state of their Japanese client state, should have the temerity to resist them both with such extraordinary tenacity. Okinawa saw his words as ignorant, abusive, and racist, and exploded in indignation. The *Okinawa Times* commented editorially that "those responsible for the Futenma base transfers seem, deep in their hearts to despise Okinawa and make light of the base problem."[35] It added two days later,

> "The more one understands Okinawa's post-war history and the circumstances surrounding the base problem, the more one understands that the Henoko base construction plan is impossible and outrageous. The Japanese and US governments have exhausted all and every means to get an impossible project endorsed locally by dangling money in front of people."[36]

Okinawan anger at the insult would not be assuaged by perfunctory expressions from Washington of "Sorry."[37]

*Ryukyu shimpo* agreed. Maher had given, "unintentionally, a revelation of real US thinking,"[38] adding, days later,

> "At the heart of the Okinawa base problem is the structure of confrontation between the Okinawan people who are always protesting over the US-Japan security treaty and the US bases, and the governments of Japan and the US that are always striving to maintain and reinforce them. Throughout the post-war era the two governments have cleverly used policies of carrot and stick to divide Okinawan society and people and accomplish 'free use of the bases' whatever the cost."[39]

Maher was removed from his post, but the apologies (by Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell in Tokyo and by Ambassador Roos in Okinawa) did indeed seem perfunctory. Maher's defence, not mounted till some weeks later, was blanket denial. He simply accused the students of lying, and in an interview, (in Japanese with the *Wall St. Journal* on 14 April) of fabricating their evidence "in an attempt to damage the bilateral relationship."[40]

Maher was not dismissed, however, but merely retired, apparently with full honours. His retirement was postponed from the day after it was submitted to allow him to accept appointment, immediately following the Fukushima earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear crisis, to coordinate US government disaster relief operations with Japanese and other governments and agencies. Maher's appointment to head the US end of the biggest joint US-Japan operation in history (commonly known through the Pentagon's role as "Operation Tomodachi," Tomodachi meaning friend) made clear that official Washington found nothing untoward in his remarks. Maher's colleague, Michael Green, former special assistant to the president for national security affairs and senior director for Asian affairs at the National Security Council

**Kevin Maher**

during the Bush administration, defended him, saying "Maher is a veteran Japan hand who knows the politics of Okinawa better than just about anyone."[41]

Upon his eventual, delayed retirement (6 April) from government, Maher immediately transferred, in the fashion that Japanese would describe as *amakudari* – floating down on a silken parachute from the public sector to a lucrative post in the private sector- becoming a senior adviser and consultant (specialist on Japan) to a high-powered international consortium, with responsibility in particular for resolving the problem of disposal of the radioactive wastes from the Fukushima reactors.[42] One month into his new job, in this capacity he was welcomed at the Prime Minister's residence for a 90 minute meeting, a rare event for any private business person, particularly for one who had been declared *persona non grata* just two months earlier, and for whose behaviour the US government has issued high level apologies, surely unprecedented.[43] For the governments of the US and Japan to pass over the abuse Maher had heaped on Japan, especially Okinawa, and the apologies that had been proffered and accepted for them in this way, was to expose the depths of contempt for Japan in official Washington and the corresponding depths of self-abnegation in official Tokyo.

**5. The Levin-Webb-McCain shock**

But while the Kan government girded its loins for a renewed assault on Henoko and Takae (the base complex and the helipads), official Washington confronted a soaring deficit, two (by some counts three or even four) failed, deadlocked, and prodigiously expensive wars, a rising China, and spreading social and economic crisis and political gridlock over the budget and social programs. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen, stated that "the biggest threat we have to our national security is our debt." A non-partisan Congressional committee was set up in May 2010 to identify defence sending cuts. It was headed by Democrat Barney Frank and Republican Ron Paul. Frank had unambiguously stated, "We don't need marines in Okinawa. They're a hangover from a war that ended 65 years ago," and he and Paul agreed that military spending had to be drastically cut and one way to do it was by reducing US forces based overseas.[44] In these circumstances, a high-level Congressional "razor gang" examined commitments and sought areas in which to rein in expenditure, paying special attention to the overseas basing structure, and within that to the Futenma return/replacement pledge that had been made no advance since 1996, and to the Guam International Agreement.

**Levin and Webb (right) in Japan**

In April 2011, the senate team of Karl Levin (Chair of the Armed Services Committee) and Jim Webb (former secretary of the Navy and current chair of the Foreign Relations sub-committee on East Asia and the Pacific) visited Tokyo and Okinawa (and Korea) to study the situation. In Tokyo, Kan's government assured them that the project, despite delays, would go ahead. In Okinawa, however, the message they received was very different. The Governor told them it would be "extremely difficult" (read: impossible) to proceed, and the Okinawan daily *Ryukyu shimpo* addressed them (and through them the US Senate) with an "Open Letter" asking that the facilities at Futenma be removed "altogether" from Okinawa and expressing hope and anxiety as to how "American democracy handles this test."[45]

"Do we want a situation in which every time the United States sneezes, Japan follows; in which if the United States orders Japan to turn to the right that is exactly what happens? Or do we want a situation in which both parties respect each other's opinions and do not hesitate to state their position on matters, however difficult that may be. Which kind of U.S.-Japan relations would you prefer?

... Okinawa faced many trials and tribulations during the reign of the U.S. military government, which took control of Okinawan people's land at the point of a bayonet and used bulldozers to build military bases. They blatantly violated the basic human rights of the local people with outrageous behavior and placed limitations on Okinawa's autonomy.

... In April 1996, the Japanese and U.S. governments agreed that the United States would return the land used by Futenma Air Station, which is located in a densely populated area, to Okinawa on the basis that the facilities would be moved to an alternative location within the prefecture. However, local Okinawans have consistently opposed the construction of such replacement facilities.

The Governor of Okinawa Hirokazu Nakaima and all the heads of the various municipalities of Okinawa are opposed to the agreement reached by the Japanese and U.S. governments by which the U.S. military would relocate the Futenma Air Station facilities to a coastal area of Nago City. Okinawa's prefectural assembly passed a resolution calling for the Futenma Air Station to be relocated out of the prefecture or out of Japan altogether, and in the national election, all politicians who accepted the option of relocation of the air station within the prefecture lost their seats.

... The U.S. government ... should feel guilty for neglecting what is clearly a dangerous situation. ... Okinawan people feel that they were sacrificed in the name of defense of the main islands of Japan during the Battle of Okinawa and that the same occurred after the war in the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. ...

... We consider that the closure and removal of the facilities at Futenma is necessary to rebuild good neighborly relations between the U.S. and Okinawa and we hope that you sense and accept the sincerity of the "spirit of Okinawa." To respect the will of the people of Okinawa, please show us the true worth of American democracy..."

The Asia-Pacific Journal (so far as we know) was the sole place outside Okinawa that reproduced this document. But Senators Levin and Webb undoubtedly read it, and when, weeks later, they issued their report, it was a bombshell. Senators Levin and Webb, joined for the

occasion by former Republican presidential candidate and ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee, John McCain, issued a joint statement declaring the realignment plans "unrealistic, unworkable, and unaffordable."[46]

It was, as Webb put it in his longer statement of their thinking, "a massive, multi-billion dollar undertaking, requiring extensive landfill, destruction and relocation of many existing facilities, and in a best-case scenario, several years of effort – some estimate that the process could take as long as ten years." [47]

Collectively, the three proposed that the Pentagon set about

> "Revising the Marine Corps force realignment implementation plan for Guam to consist of a presence with a permanently-assigned headquarters element bolstered by deployed, rotating combat units that are home-based elsewhere, and consideration of off-island training sites.
>
> Examining the feasibility of moving Marine Corps assets at MCAS Futenma, Okinawa, to Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, rather than building an expensive replacement facility at Camp Schwab – while dispersing a part of Air Force assets now at Kadena to Andersen Air Base in Guam and/or other locations in Japan."[48]

The proposals, they insisted, would save billions in taxpayer dollars, keep U.S. military forces in the region, reduce the timing of sensitive political issues surrounding Futemna, and reduce the American footprint on Okinawa.

These views were supported in broad outline by other high-level Washington insiders, most prominently Marine Corps General James Jones, who, till October 2010 had been Obama's national security adviser. In one respect, Jones went even further, saying that "it really did not matter where the Marines were,"[49] thus utterly negating the widely repeated view that Okinawa was crucial to their functioning in the regional and global frame of deterrence.

The Kan government was profoundly shocked that such views should be adopted by some at the highest levels of power in Washington. Prime Minister Kan and cabinet secretary Edano insisted, rather forlornly, that Levin and his colleagues were not the American government and that what counted were government to government agreements. The fact was, however, that the Levin group concentrated enormous power and its recommendations will be hard to resist given constrained budget circumstances. The government of Japan will simply have to wait on Washington to decide what it would do. The trump card Japan has played from time to time over four decades to ensure that the Marines not leave Okinawa – the payment of substantial sums of money – is more difficult to play now because Japan itself is broke, bowed under the heaviest debt burden of all OECD countries, and facing huge reconstruction costs for its devastated northeast. All that can be said for sure is that its bureaucrats, following their past record, will pull out all stops to try to put together a sufficiently attractive package to entice Senators Webb, Levin and McCain (and General Jones) back to the Henoko proposal. And that the Webb-Levin-McCain vision cannot but strengthen Okinawan resistance to moving ahead to block the Henoko base plan.

**US tanks land at Henoko, January 27, 2011**

**6. Conclusion**

The US-Japan relationship appears strong. Academic and public figures constantly affirm it to be so. Most would agree with the influential scholar Gerald Curtis, who said early in 2011 "The Obama administration has learned from its mistakes and in my view has gotten its Japan policy just about right."[50] Pundits generally agree that adjustments that have to be made are to be made essentially by Japan, to make the alliance "mature" in line with the recommendations of the various reports that have been issued from Washington over the years. It is Japan that needs to make legislative and if necessary constitutional changes to better serve US strategic ends.[51] There is an alternative view, but it is very much a minority one:

"For the more that Japan defaults to ready dependence on the United States in security and foreign policy, the more it will simply compound Japanese concerns over the risks of entrapment and abandonment by its ally over issues such as North Korea and the East China Sea, and the more that this will frustrate Japanese ambitions as a major power and engender mutual suspicions within the alliance and thus weaken its basis."[52]

This most peculiar of state relationships is shown by evidence such as that discussed in this paper to be characterized by the match between servility on one side and condescension and contempt on the other. For want of a better word, I have called it a "Client State" one. On the American side, the conviction that Japan is, after all, an American creation and its government a kind of branch office, rooted in the experiences of war and occupation, combines with the pragmatic attraction of the billions of dollars that can be extracted each year in subsidies from the Japanese government. Kevin Maher alluded to this when he concluded his remarks to the American students by saying, "We've got a very good deal with Japan." But on the Japanese side it is more difficult to understand how servility should be the unquestioned choice of men and women of intelligence and presumed personal integrity. Those in its grip appear to be convinced that Japan's national interest is best served by it. The best outcome of the recent spate of revelations would be if it were to awaken the Japanese people in general to the harsh and unequal reality of the relationship.

The gradual exposure of the secret deals that surrounded Okinawan reversion and US nuclear strategy and more recently of the multiple layers of deception and deceit shown by the secret and confidential despatches released in May 2011 have thus far had no apparent effect on general public and media perceptions. Of the overall Wiki cache of 251,000 diplomatic documents, by mid-May 2011 only 12,648, less than 5 per cent had been released. Their authenticity has thus far not been seriously challenged. The *Asahi shimbun* says that it gained access to "nearly 7,000" documents related to US-Japan negotiations in January 2011, of which in May it released a mere 54.[53] What it released, though a tiny fraction of the whole cache, opened a devastating window on the inner workings of the relationship. When, or if, it will see fit to release the remainder is unknown.

The Government of Japan has studiously avoided comment on the authenticity or significance of the materials and the national media, including the Asahi that initially published them, has paid little serious attention to them. No public figure has yet demanded a public or parliamentary inquiry. To date, the most serious analysis has been that published in the Okinawan daily, *Ryukyu shimpo*.[54] To take just three of those who contributed essays to it:

Magosaki Ukeru, former Director General of the Intelligence and Analysis Bureau of Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

> "The Democratic Party government elected in 2009 planned to revise relations with the US, including concerning the Futenma problem. When the US issued warnings, leading figures in the departments of Foreign Affairs and Defense acted contrary to the intent of the Prime Minister. What they did was contrary to the principles of democracy. What has become of the country, Japan? It has lapsed into a chronic ailment of lack of self-hood."

Amaki Naoto, former Japanese ambassador to Lebanon:

> "The crime of the authorities is so serious that, if the US has tricked the Government of Japan then the Japanese people must accuse it of deception, and if the Government of Japan has lent a helping hand to the US to deceive the people of Japan and has improperly and unnecessarily handed over the Japanese people's hard-earned tax monies, then the Japanese people must likewise accuse it of betrayal."

Arasaki Moriteru, Okinawa University emeritus professor and distinguished historian of Okinawa:

> "What is exposed, all too vividly and in concrete detail, in the Wiki diplomatic cables is just how pathetic and decadent are Japan's political and elite bureaucratic circles. We have seen what we did not want to see: the behaviour of politicians and elite bureaucrats who, while talking all the time of 'national interest' and spouting chauvinistic nationalism, were serving the United States and had assimilated to the American 'national interest'."

The sensitivity to the Wiki revelations, as before that to the *mitsuyaku*, the Hatoyama "confession," the Maher affair and the Levin-Webb-McCain shock, is naturally strongest in Okinawa, since the fault lines of the national and regional system run beneath its islands. For the past 15 years, the Okinawan people and their elected representatives have committed themselves to resist a system that prefers US military and strategic ends to democratic and constitutional principle, and that subjects Okinawa to permanently bearing the disproportionate burden of the US military presence. Despite the inequality of the contest, the astonishing outcome is that Okinawa has, in effect, seized the advantage over Tokyo and Washington in defying plans for the new base at Henoko.

By its mass, non-violent resistance, Okinawa's citizenry has for 15 years held at bay the combined forces of the two most powerful countries on earth. They have yet to overthrow a government, but they successfully blocked one Prime Minister (Koizumi) between 2001 and 2005, forced the resignation of another (Hatoyama) in 2010, and now stand firm against another, and against US-Japan plans for a new Okinawan base. Although 2010 was the "50th Anniversary" of the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty, the long-awaited bilateral statement to signify the "deepening" of the relationship has had to be repeatedly postponed. Both the planned June meeting of US and Japanese Foreign and Defense Ministers (the "2+2") and the Kan visit to Washington that was to follow it have been put on hold. With no sign of implementation of the agreements of 1996, 2006, 2009, or 2010, the prospect of the US and Japan agreeing on a statement of vision for the future is not high.

In a dictatorship, the Henoko "replacement" project could still proceed, with citizens who stood in the way being arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. What the Kan government seems still unable to recognize, but Washington (or at least Senators Levin, Webb, and McCain and General Jones) has begun to concede, is that, at least so long as democratic institutions survive, there is no way to persuade or even to compel the submission of determined opponents, and therefore no way the Henoko project will proceed. After 15 years of struggle, the Okinawa movement has accomplished a signal victory. It has saved Oura Bay. It may be only one step in a struggle that seems to know no end, but it is a hugely significant one.

**Oura Bay near Henoko**

In December 2010, the State Department's Kevin Maher referred contemptuously to Okinawa and Okinawans as mendacious and duplicitous: "masters of deception." Those, however, are precisely the terms that have to be applied, strictly speaking, to describe the treatment that the governments of Japan and the US have meted out to the Okinawan people for four decades.

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**Notes**

[1] Client State: Japan in the American Embrace, London and New York, Verso, 2006, (Japanese, Korean, and Chinese translations in 2007 and 2008).

[2] I have written at length on these events in previous essays and so here concentrate only on the new insights gained into them by recent revelations.

[3] Other secret agreements, not discussed here, included one that the US could enjoy free use of all its bases in the event of renewed war in Korea. (See "Nichibei kaku mochikomi mondai," Wikipedia, 28 April 2011)

[4] "Ex-negotiator: Cost to remove U.S. nukes from Okinawa exaggerated to dupe public," Asahi shimbun, 13 November 2009.

[5] For details, see my 2010 essays on this site.

[6] In Confidential Despatch of 19 December 2008, part 1, Jim Zumwalt, Deputy Head of Mission, Wikileaks, released 4 May 2011.

[7] "The Battle of Okinawa 2009: Obama vs Hatoyama," The Asia-Pacific Journal, 16 November 2009.

[8] Shinohara Hajime, "Toranjishon dai ni maku e," (interview) Sekai, November 2010, pp. 85-92.

[9] For details, see my earlier essays at The Asia-Pacific Journal, especially the three part "Ampo's Troubled 50th: Hatoyama's Abortive Rebellion, Okinawa's Mounting Resistance and the US-Japan Relationship," of May 2010.

[10] Various senior Japanese officials, quoted in Ambassador Roos, "secret" despatch, 15 October 2009. Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[11] Saiki Akitaka, Director-General of the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, speaking to Kurt Campbell Assistant Secretary or State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, on 18 September 2009, in Roos, 21 September 2009. Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[12] Izawa Osamu, foreign policy assistant to Hatoyama, quoted in Raymond Greene, confidential, 5 October 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[13] Takamizawa Nobushige, Director-General of Defence Policy at Ministry of Defence, over lunch with US officials, 12 October 2009, quoted in Roos, secret, 15 October 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[14] Nagashima Akihisa, Parliamentary Vice Minister at Ministry of Defence, speaking to Okinawan Consul-General Raymond Greene, 30 September 2009, in Greene, confidential, 5 October 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[15] Yamaoka Kenji, quoted in Ambassador Roos, confidential despatch of 9 December 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Quoted in Ambassador Roos, secret despatch, 16 December 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[18] Ambassador Roos, secret despatch, 30 December 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[19] "The truth behind Japan-US ties (3) Numbers inflated in Marine relocation pact to increase political impact," Asahi shimbun, 4 May 2011, and see Zumwalt, confidential despatch, 19 December 2008, parts 1 and 2, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[20] Zumwalt, op. cit.

[21] Zumwalt, op. cit.

[22] On Gates visit, see my "Ampo's Troubled 50th: Hatoyama's Abortive Rebellion, Okinawa's Mounting Resistance and the US-Japan Relationship," and on Campbell, Ambassador Roos, Secret despatch, 15 October 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[23] Ambassador Roos, Confidential despatch, 9 December 2009, Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[24] Ambassador Roos, Secret despatch, 10 December 2010. Wikileaks, 4 May 2011.

[25] For Hatoyama's "confession," see "Interview, The Hatoyama revelations," Ryukyu shimpo, 13 February 2011. Satoko Norimatsu, "Hatoyama's Confession: The Myth of Deterrence and the Failure to Move a Marine Base outside Okinawa," The Asia-Pacific Journal – Japan Focus, 8 March 2011. Unabridged text at, "Hatoyama zenn shusho intabyu@giin kaikan," 31 January 2011.

[26] The phenomenon Hatoyama describes will be recognizable to historians as gekokujo, by which during the rise of fascism and militarism junior officers and officials rebelled against their superiors and usurped authority from them.

[27] The US Embassy in Tokyo reported that, "The Japanese side ... registered frustration with over two years of U.S. inability to provide more detailed data on the actual number of dependents ... that will relocate to Guam, and voiced suspicion that the U.S. intends to hold on to excessive housing in Okinawa and force Tokyo to build more housing in Guam than is required." (Zumwalt, op. cit.)

[28] "Leaked documents reveal shocking Japan-US diplomacy," Asahi shimbun, 5 May 2011.

[29] "Kichi iten no jittai kakusu 'mitsuyaku'," Okinawa taimusu, 5 May 2011.

[30] "Gaiko koden bakuro – seifu ni kosho no shikaku nashi – taisei, atarashi shikirinaoshi o," Ryukyu shimpo, 5 May 2011.

[31] "Kengai isetsu e jikko keikaku, Chiji, nendonai ni mo sakusei," Okinawa Taimusu, 29 December 2010.

[32] "Kan naikaku to Okinawa 'kanju seyo' to semaru oroka," Tokyo shimbun, 23 December 2010.

[33] For text of Maher's 3 December talk, see "Mea shi kogi memo zenbun," Ryukyu shimpo, 8 March 2011.

[34] David Vine (offering several additional glosses on the Maher talk), "Smearing Japan," Foreign Policy in Focus, 20 April 2011.

[35] "Mea shi zekka shinjirarenai bujoku hatsugen," Okinawa Taimusu, 7 March 2011.

[36] "'Nichibei kyokucho kyu kaigi' konna toki ni 'Henoko' ka," Okinawa taimusu, 10 March 2011.

[37] "'Mea shi kotetsu' - rakuchaku ni wa naranai," Okinawa taimusu, 11 March 2011.

[38] "Mea shi sabetsu hatsugen, kainin shi Bei no ninshiki aratameyo, yuganda Okinawa kan o toei," Ryukyu shimpo, 8 March 2011.

[39] "Mea shi kotetsu, Futenma tekkyo e no tankan da, tsuyo senu ame to muchi," Ryukyu shimpo, 11 March 2011.

[40] "Mea shi machigaenaku hatsugen, Bei jun kyoju ga zai hanron," Ryukyu shimpo, 17 April 2011. And see "US official responds to Okinawa flak," Wall St Journal Online, Japan edition, 14 April 2011.

[41] Josh Rogan, "State Department Japan hand loses post as Campbell goes on Tokyo apology tour," The Cable, 9 March 2011.

[42] The board of New Magellan Venture Partners, NMV Consultancy, founded by Richard Lawless, former Deputy Defense Minister, includes other retired senior military and bureaucratic figures and offers "deep expertise in the defense and aerospace; transportation; energy; mineral resource; property development and high-technology sectors." See [NMV Consulting: Welcome] and [NVM Consulting: Kevin K. Maher]. (accessed 12 May 2011).

[43] "Mea shi, minkan de kaku nenryo mondai o tanto, sabutetsuteki hatsugen de kotetsu," Tokyo shimbun, 12 May 2011.

[44] Yonamine Michiyo, "Economic crisis shakes US forces overseas: The price of base expansion in Okinawa and Guam," The Asia-Pacific Journal, 28 February 2011.

[45] "Open letter, to Mr. Carl Levin, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee," April 27, 2011. editorial, Ryukyu shimpo.

[46] "Senators Levin, McCain, Webb Call for Re-Examination of Military Basing Plans in East Asia," press release, 11 May 2011.

[47] Senator Jim Webb, "Observations and Recommendations on US Military Basing in East Asia, May 2011. Note that the "Kadena merger" idea seems to stem from a suggestion made by Shimoji Mikio, People's New Party Okinawan Diet representative. Shimoji, the sole Okinawan Diet member prepared to contemplate a Futenma replacement facility in the prefecture, exercises considerable influence among Japanese and American officials who want to believe that he represents a "realist" strain of thinking. ("Futenma isetsu Bei ni "san nen kigen' Shimoji shi Nihon e no dentatsu yobe," Ryukyu shimpo, 7 May 2011.).

[48] Levin, McCain, Webb press release, cit

[49] "Zen Bei daitoryo hosakan ga Henoko isetsu o nanshi," Okinawa taimusu, 8 May 2011.

[50] Gerald Curtis, "Future directions in IUS-Japan Relations," Background paper for the "New Shimoda Conference," February 2011.

[51] For discussion of the various Washington policy think-tank reports of 2000 and 2007 identified with Joseph Nye and Richard Armitage in particular, see especially my "The Travails of a Client State: An Okinawan Angle on the 50th Anniversary of the US-Japan Security Treaty," The Asia-Pacific Journal, 8 March 2010.

[52] Christopher Hughes, "Japan's foreign policy for a new age: realistic realism," Asahi shimbun, 26 February 2011

[53] "Editorial: Leaked documents reveal shocking Japan-U.S diplomacy," Asahi shimbun, 6 May 2011.

[54] See the series "'Futenma' koden o toku," Ryukyu shimpo, 7-11 May 2011. Other articles in the series are by Sato Manabu of Okinawa International University and Ota Masahide, former Governor of Okinawa.