

## ESSAY

### THE OKINAWAN RAPE INCIDENT AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR IN EAST ASIA

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The Cold War in Europe ended in 1989, when the people of Berlin defied their overlords and began to dismantle the wall that divided their city. I believe that the Cold War in East Asia only began to end six years later, on September 4, 1995, when three American servicemen abducted and raped a twelve-year-old schoolgirl in Okinawa. The reaction to that rape throughout Japan and also in South Korea was to draw attention to the persistence of Cold War-type relationships in East Asia—particularly to the presence of a foreign legion of 100,000 American troops—but also including the artificial distinction between economics and security in relations between the United States and its trading partners in East Asia. It caused some Japanese to begin to see Okinawa not simply as Japan's poorest prefecture but also as an example on Japanese soil of the American base at Guantanamo in Cuba.

The end of the Cold War in East Asia differs from Europe in that the USSR acquiesced to its loss of "superpower" status, whereas the United States has chosen to act as if nothing much has changed. The "reaffirmation" at the April Summit in Tokyo last year of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty makes it clear that the United States intends to maintain its forward bases in Japan and South Korea because it considers them "the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives and for maintaining a stable and prosperous environment for the Asia-Pacific region as we enter the twenty-first century."<sup>1</sup>

In his confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate, the new Secretary of Defense, William S. Cohen, said "I intend to give new focus to our security relations in the Asia-Pacific region. Beyond the near-term threat from North Korea, our interests are potentially jeopardized by the danger of instability and rivalry among major regional powers." He added that "the United States should not only maintain its troop presence in Asia, but also expand our security engagement in the region."<sup>2</sup> In confirming Cohen by a vote of 99-to-0, the Senate did not even give what he had to say a second thought.

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1. Tokyo Summit Officially Reaffirming the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, April 17, 1996 (joint statement of Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Clinton).

2. *Confirmation of Former Senator William Cohen to be Secretary of Defense*, 105th Cong., 1st Sess. (Jan. 22, 1997) (chaired by Senator Strom Thurmond).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these assertions is the assumption that Japan and the U.S. have common security objectives and the linking of our military presence with economic prosperity. During the postwar decades when the U.S. and Japan have interacted on a vast array of different fronts, trade and defense have always been separated. The Japanese and American governments have done everything in their power to pretend that there is no relationship between Japan's huge trade surpluses and the American taxpayers' picking up the tab for Japan's defense. Now that the Cold War has ended, any rationale for continuing such a separation has evaporated. But the two countries perpetuate a division of labor in which the United States carries the full burden of Pacific security more or less alone while Japan reaps most of the economic benefits.

During the Cold War, fearing that Japan might be tempted toward neutralism and wanting to use Japan as a model of development to counter the appeal of communism in Asia, the United States allowed Japan to rig its domestic market in ways that it permitted no other ally. The U.S. also encouraged Japan to export to the American market, and it facilitated transfer to Japan of a vast array of American technologies, even though Japan refused to allow the American owners of these technologies to invest in Japan or sell their products directly to Japanese consumers.

In return for supporting and tolerating Japanese protectionism and mercantilism, the United States was given military basing rights; there are still well over 50,000 American troops and their dependents in Japan and another 37,000 in South Korea. The island of Okinawa, smaller than Kauai in the Hawaiian Islands, hosts 29,020 American troops, mostly Marines, and 22,474 dependents. Japan also passively supported American foreign policy in East Asia, even when it disagreed with the United States (as it did over China and Vietnam).

With the end of the Cold War, the main irritant for the United States has become its defense of a nation with which it has a \$50 billion annual trade deficit and to which it is going deeply into debt. The main irritant for Japan is its now anomalous status as a protectorate of the United States while simultaneously paying for and living with foreign troops stationed in its country.

When the United States signed its first postwar security treaty with Japan in 1951, Japan still had a devastated economy and was in the last stages of American military occupation. Two years earlier, Communists had swept to power in China, the Korean War was in full swing, and the yen was 360 to the dollar. When the Security Treaty was revised in 1960 amidst serious anti-American rioting and President Eisenhower had to abandon his proposed trip to Japan for his own safety, the American GNP was still eleven-and-a-half times larger than Japan's. By 1993, that difference had shrunk to 1.3 times.

Today, Japan has the most modern industrial structure in the world, it has not run a trade deficit with the United States for almost three decades, the dollar has lost nearly 80 percent of its original postwar value against the yen, and Japan faces no known military threat. The U. S. troops based in Japan

cannot afford a bowl of noodles if they leave their bases, given the current yen-dollar exchange rate.

Rather than attempting to alleviate these conditions by returning the troops to their own country, the U.S. has reaffirmed its intention to forward deploy 100,000 troops and their dependents in South Korea and Japan, with only cosmetic efforts on Okinawa to “consolidate, realign and reduce U.S. facilities and areas.” Even these promises are largely hollow, since they depend upon Japan’s making available “adequate replacement facilities” elsewhere. These are the terms under which the United States promised to return Futenma Marine Corps Air Station on Okinawa. But the American and Japanese officials knew when they made the promise that there was not another place in Japan that would tolerate, much less welcome, an American military facility of any size or purpose. And in September 1996, ninety percent of the Okinawan people voted in a plebiscite to ask the Americans please to go home. It is safe to predict, as most Japanese newspapers have, that a return of Futenma after five-to-seven years was, and is, an empty promise.

Meanwhile, Okinawans continue to bear the brunt of American superpower pretensions. Although the Pentagon claims American soldiers are there at the invitation of the Japanese, it is important to recall that the Okinawans have never had any kind of voice or input whatsoever into the decisions that place American combat forces in their midst. Okinawans have, in fact, been betrayed repeatedly by both the Japanese and the Americans. Okinawa was an independent kingdom that paid tribute to China from the 14th century until the late 1800s. Japan then annexed the islands, forcibly exiled the last Okinawan king, and made Okinawa a prefecture. Many Okinawans believe that Hirohito sacrificed them in 1945 in a meaningless battle while trying to get better surrender terms from the Allies, and that Tokyo sacrificed them again in 1952 so that Japan could regain its independence and begin enjoying economic prosperity. From 1952 to 1972, Japan retained only “residual sovereignty” over Okinawa while the U.S. military actually ruled the place. The people of Okinawa became stateless wards of the U.S. High Commissioner for the Ryukyus, an American lieutenant general. These were the prices the American extracted for an early peace treaty with Japan proper.

Japan has lived comfortably with the Japanese-American Security Treaty because it got rid of most of the unwelcome American military bases by consigning them to a small southern island where they and the problems that come with them could be ignored by the majority of Japanese. Even today, with the so-called “renewal of the security treaty,” Japan itself makes little or no contribution, except to pay other Japanese lavish rents for the property occupied by the Americans. All the physical costs of the alliance are born by the Okinawans and the Americans.

Between 1953 and 1956 the U. S. military, using armed troops and often at the point of a bayonet, removed Okinawan farmers from their homes and then bulldozed the land to make way for runways for B-52 bombers—the

same airplanes that flew countless missions to Haiphong, Cambodia, and the Ho Chi Minh Trail during the Vietnam War. A similar extension of the runways at Tachikawa air base on the outskirts of Tokyo led to the Security Treaty riots of 1960, but since Okinawa was still under American military rule its protest demonstrations were firmly suppressed. In fact, during the 1950s and 1960s, the American military command on the island forced or induced large numbers of Okinawans who had been displaced by the building of Kadena Air Force Base or who seemed to stand in the way of America's cold war plans to emigrate to Bolivia, where they were simply dumped in the jungle terrain of the Amazonian headwaters. During 1995, the Japan Policy Research Institute, which I head, sponsored a mission to Colonial Okinawa near Santa Cruz, Bolivia, to visit the remnants of these Okinawans discarded 40 years earlier by the Americans. JPRI has written a report on it, which is available on request or on the JPRI web site.

Okinawa was not a location where the cream of the American military was stationed or wanted to be sent; it was not NATO, to say the least. In 1949, Frank Gibney wrote, "For the past four years, poor, typhoon-swept Okinawa has dangled at what bitter Army men call 'the logistical end of the line,' and some of its commanders have been lax and inefficient. More than 15,000 U.S. troops, whose morale and discipline have probably been worse than that of any U.S. force in the world, have policed 600,000 natives who live in hopeless poverty. . . . In the six months ending last September, U.S. soldiers committed an appalling number of crimes—29 murders, 18 rapes, 16 robberies, 33 assaults."<sup>3</sup> Only in 1972, thanks to the initiatives of former American Ambassador E. O. Reischauer and President Nixon, did the United States return Okinawa to Japan—but with the American bases intact. Okinawans view Japan's acquiescence to leaving the status and the size of the bases unchanged as their third modern betrayal.

Okinawa measures some 454 square miles, almost exactly the size of Los Angeles. It was the scene of the last great battle of World War II, which was also the last time the United States used military force victoriously in East Asia. Some 14,005 Americans and 234,000 Japanese soldiers and civilians were killed in that battle, which was so bloody it became the main American justification for the subsequent atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Americans claimed that using atomic weapons to end the war prevented more Okinawan-type carnage in an invasion of Japan's main islands. Since 1945, the United States military has occupied Okinawa, regardless of the treaties and legalities concerning its sovereignty. Today, American bases occupy some 20 percent of the island. Approximately 75 percent of all American facilities in Japan are located in Okinawa, which comprises less than one percent of the land area of Japan.

In 1990, the Okinawans elected retired university professor Masahide Ota as governor on a platform of getting the bases back from the Americans. At

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3. Frank Gibney, *TIME*, Nov. 20, 1949.

the time of the Battle of Okinawa, Governor Ota was a high school student who was pressed into service, and he was wounded. The monument he helped sponsor as governor to the war dead, recently unveiled on the 50th anniversary of the end of the war, is thought to be the only war memorial on earth that lists the names of all the people killed on both sides of the battle. Ota was partly educated in the United States and has published many books on Japanese and American discrimination against Okinawa. He has emerged as the only Japanese politician in living memory who has both paid attention to what the people elected him to do and who did not betray them when faced with bureaucratic resistance.

In February last year, I visited Okinawa at the invitation of Governor Ota and saw some of the 42 American military installations on the island—facilities that no high-ranking official of the Clinton administration has even thought of coming to inspect, least of all the Secretary of Defense or the authors of the Pentagon's report calling for stationing an expeditionary force of 100,000 Americans in Northeast Asia until 2015. I was shocked by the greedy sprawl of these American military cities and by their undisguised signs of colonial overlordship.

One of these bases, Camp Hansen, where the three convicted rapists were based, is an obscenity. Housing 5,000 Marines who squeeze the small, old town of Kin (pop. 10,000) between the sea and their concrete barracks, Hansen was built in the 1960s when Okinawa was under direct American military administration and Okinawans had to get a passport from the Americans in order to visit Japan. For the past three decades, Camp Hansen's Marines have passed the time of day firing 105 mm. and 155 mm. howitzers over a main prefectural road into a hill called Mt. Onna (the Japanese word for "woman," although in this case written with different characters). The forest fires and soil erosion these "training" exercises have caused would not be permitted on any American firing range, even one located in the Nevada desert. The firing also causes continuous earth tremors in the town of Kin and makes many ordinary civilian activities, such as running schools, practically impossible.

Although Okinawa is Japan's poorest prefecture, it sports three of the largest and best airports in East Asia. Only one of these can Japanese citizens enter or use. The others—Futenma Marine Corps Air Station and Kadena Air Force Base—were built for the Cold War and were never consolidated, largely due to interservice rivalries. Futenma is surrounded on all sides by the city of Ginowan, where on October 21, 1995, some 85,000 people gathered to protest its presence. Although it is now scheduled to be given back within the next five to seven years after adequate replacement facilities are completed, Okinawans are reminded of the dock area at Naha, still controlled by the U.S. Army more than twenty years after Japan and the United States agreed to return these wharves. Governor Ota would like to transform these docks to commercial use, much as the Filipinos have done with Subic Bay. At the present time, only one U.S. military vessel a month calls there, and for the rest of the time they sit empty behind razor-topped

fences and signs saying, "U.S. Army, Keep Out."

Still another emblem of the troubled Japanese-American relationship is the Awase Golf Course, with its neatly stenciled parking places reserved for colonels in one place, for Navy captains in another place, and farthest away from the first tee, for master sergeants. It looks like a caricature of the last days of the British Raj. Japanese (referred to as "indigenous personnel") are allowed to play this course only if accompanied by an American serviceman.

In my opinion, in the wake of the threat to the Japanese-American alliance caused by the rape incident, the United States should have forthwith closed Camp Hansen, given back Futenma without delay, become more sensitive to the noise and environmental pollution of Kadena, opened the Awase Golf Course to the general public, and transferred the Naha docks to Okinawan administration. Congress should also conduct full-scale hearings into the Pacific Command and its dismal record of administering the Japanese-American alliance. Okinawa is today the Pentagon's and the CIA's island-sized "safe house" for training in covert operations, unpublicized arms transfers, and the vast intelligence collecting apparatus of our government. It cries out for Congressional oversight and the establishment of some priorities that are relevant to the vastly changed world of today compared with 37 years ago, when the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was last publicly debated.

The Japanese press now routinely speaks of the "Okinawan Problem" but historians are likely to call it the Okinawan Pretense. Every day, what the Japanese and American governments say about Okinawa diverges more and more sharply from what they do, making it impossible for any citizen of Okinawa, the U.S., or Japan to believe his or her own government. Okinawa has thus become a moral symbol of the costs of the Cold War in East Asia and of the lack of awareness of the American people to the burdens their foreign policy imposes on others.

As these contradictions continue to grow, people inevitably begin to suspect that Washington and Tokyo have hidden agendas. The first casualty of the Okinawan pretense is thus popular trust in democratic government. The longer term and more serious damage is likely to be to friendly relations between Japan and the United States, including the Japanese-American Security Treaty itself.

The main contradiction on the American side is its repeated and intransigent refusal to withdraw any of the ground forces it has based in Okinawa. The U.S. government says over and over again that peace and stability in East Asia depend on its continued presence. But if the U.S. were really worried about threats to peace and stability in East Asia, wouldn't it produce a much more integrated strategy and pay much greater attention to its implementation? As it is, almost six months after the American presidential election, the U.S. government has not named ambassadors to Japan or South Korea or an assistant secretary of state for East Asia nor offered any explanation for its failure to do so.

The U.S. administration keeps extending military commitments around

the world while closing embassies, slashing aid budgets, stalling on United Nations' dues, and in other ways failing to produce strategies seriously oriented to possible threats to peace and stability in East Asia or elsewhere. The Pentagon's budget accounts for one-third of global military spending and is five times larger than that of any other country. Washington claims to be worried about the Korean peninsula, but ground forces in Okinawa would make no difference at all if the much larger armies already based on the Korean DMZ failed to deter an attack from the north. U.S. relations with China are in total disarray as the evidence mounts that Chinese lobbyists from the mainland, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia have, for at least the past two years, funneled large amounts of money to both American political parties. All of this suggests that the United States is not so much worried about peace and stability in East Asia as about keeping its foreign legions located there.

The major contradiction on the Japanese side is that while the government proclaims it wants to perpetuate the Japanese-American Security Treaty unchanged from its Cold War configuration, it does nothing to assume any of the burdens of the treaty. Instead, Tokyo pays huge amounts of money to buy the Japanese people's toleration of the treaty. And it imposes virtually all of the costs of basing 47,000 American troops (plus an almost equal number of their dependents) on the defenseless and long-exploited people of Okinawa. If the presence of these troops is really necessary to Japan's security, why not base them in Tokyo or Osaka, near Japan's major centers of population, finance, and government?

Ever since the reversion of Okinawa to Japanese rule in 1972, Tokyo has had the capability to eliminate the Okinawan problem overnight. All of the problems concerned with Futenma Marine Corps Air Station or Camp Hansen or the Naha Docks could be solved by simply relocating these facilities to mainland Japan. That Tokyo refuses to do so raises doubts in the minds of many American military planners whether the Japanese-American Security Treaty could or should be relied on in a crisis.

In the U.S.'s alliance with Germany, American troops are actually located in Germany itself; in the U.S.'s alliance with Japan, American troops are located in a peripheral area so that they will not inconvenience the Japanese people in any way. Well-informed Americans understand that many Japanese have long seen the Okinawans in the same light as American racists regard the U.S.'s Afro-American minority. This makes them very suspicious of Japan's sincerity.

Meanwhile, a continuing series of events, all occurring long after the rape incident of 1995 refocused attention on the Okinawan problem, also calls into question the sincerity of the U.S.'s claim that it wants to be a "good neighbor." In December 1996, an American military aircraft jettisoned a large bomb into the main shipping lane for Okinawa's capital city, Naha, and yet took days to tell any civilian authority about it. Two months later, sensational headlines revealed that in September 1995, shortly after the rape incident, Marine Corps aircraft mistakenly fired more than 1,500 rounds of depleted uranium ammunition into an Okinawan target range. The Marines did not tell

the Japanese government about this for over a year and only did so because a Washington newspaper leaked the story.

According to Pentagon regulations, depleted uranium bullets are never to be test-fired except on American firing ranges where their radiation can be monitored. This type of armor-piercing ammunition was used in the Gulf War and is currently associated with the scandal about the health problems of American veterans of that war and the Pentagon's refusal to conduct an honest investigation. Even after the Americans told the Japanese government about the incident, it took the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs another month to let the Okinawans know that they had a potentially serious environmental problem. The U.S. military then made its own investigation into the effects of the firings on Torishima Island and concluded that there was no problem. This may be true, but it is no more believable than the Pentagon's investigations into the so-called Gulf War syndrome.

There have been many other such developments. It has now come to light that on May 15, 1972, the Japanese and American governments signed a secret agreement concerning American operations at its bases on Okinawa. This has raised questions about whether there have been nuclear weapons in Okinawa all these years, despite formal American assurances that they were withdrawn. Even when the Americans do try to be good neighbors, the effect often backfires. On March 12 and 13, 1997, the Marines grounded their helicopters at Futenma so that Okinawan high school pupils could take college entrance exams in peace and quiet. But all this did was to show that even the Marines realize that on ordinary school days, they make so much noise students cannot hear themselves think.

In 1972, when the formal American military occupation of Okinawa ended, the Japanese government had to deal with numerous claims by Okinawan landowners. These landowners wanted back land that the Americans had expropriated for bases or they wanted appropriate compensation. The Japanese government's answer was to pass the Special Measures Law for Land for American Military Bases, which recognizes the Okinawan landowners titles to the land and pays them rent for its continued use by the American forces. This law applies only in Okinawa since the land used by the American forces on the Japanese mainland is owned by the Japanese government and was never private property.

The leases to some 36.3 hectares of land (almost 90 acres) falling under the terms of this law expire on May 14th of this year. Most of the land is under the runways of Kadena Air Force Base, the largest U.S. airfield in Asia. Approximately 3,000 Okinawan landlords are refusing to renew their leases voluntarily, saying that they now want their land back. Of these 3,000 landlords, about 2,900 own only one tsubo of land (a tsubo is a Japanese measure equal to 3.3 square meters or about the size of two tatami mats). They bought their small plots as a way of protesting Japanese and American discrimination against Okinawa. Rather than giving them back their land, the Japanese government of Prime Minister Hashimoto is engaged in enacting a new law that will forcibly transfer the right to use this land to the U.S.



military.

In my view, these 2,900 one-tsubo landlords are the Japanese people with whom the United States ought to be allied, and I would like to encourage more mainland Japanese to become one-tsubo landlords. If it were possible for a foreigner to do so, I would love to buy one tsubo of Okinawan land under Kadena Air Force base and I would encourage sympathetic Americans to do likewise. The confiscation of privately-owned land by the Japanese and American governments is one of the most unjust legacies of the Cold War in East Asia. It is time to demand that both governments finally undertake honest, not just cosmetic, reforms of this situation.

Unfortunately, the protests of the one-tsubo landlords are no more likely to have an effect on Tokyo than the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl by three American servicemen did on the Pentagon. Instead, we are likely to witness the continuing pretense of policy by the leaders of both countries until another, more serious incident finally destroys the Japanese-American relationship. When the Japanese and American people finally awaken to the mismanagement of their alliance, it will probably be too late to fix it.

