

Defending the Dugong: Redefining ‘Security’ in Okinawa and Japan

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Abstract

Drawing on the theoretical literature of International Relations, this paper will focus on the concept of security, how it is being currently defined by the Japanese government in narrow, military terms and the challenge to this traditional definition in the unlikely form of the Okinawa dugong.

On 1st May, 2006, the U.S. and Japan finalised an implementation plan for their October 2005 agreement on realigning the U.S. military in Japan. A key part of this agreement is the relocation of U.S. Marine Corps’ Futenma Air Station from Ginowan City, Okinawa Island, to a new airfield to be built at Henoko, a small coastal town in the north-east of the island. The waters off Henoko are home to a myriad of species, including the critically endangered dugong¹. In a 1997 non-binding plebiscite, the people of Henoko and Nago City voted 53% against the relocation plan. For opponents of the new airfield, the dugong has become a symbol for the environmental and human insecurity that is engendered when a government prioritises security – defined as military security against external threats – above everything; a species, an ecosystem, the safety and democratic will of its people. Such a traditional, Realist definition of security that, in effect,

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1. Dugongs (saltwater manatees or sea cows) are marine mammals that are genetically closer to elephants than whales or dolphins. Dugongs can grow up to three metres and live up to 70 years. Their slow breeding rate and dietary reliance on sea grasses that only grow in shallow, coastal waters mean that dugongs are particularly susceptible to pollution and human encroachment. Approximately 100,000 dugongs exist in the world, the vast majority living in the waters off northern Australia. Okinawa has the northernmost population of dugongs, once numerous but now numbering less than 50. As friendly messengers from *Nirai-kanai*, the mythical world of the gods, dugongs are considered sacred in traditional Okinawan culture. The dugong has been recognised as a Japanese ‘natural monument’ since 1972.

puts the people and the environment of one part of Japan at risk for the 'good' of the country as a whole must, therefore, be brought into question and redefined.

Introduction

'Okinawa ... is a showcase of everything that is wrong with contemporary Japan. It is the crisis in the Japanese state in microcosm' (Hook & Siddle, 2003b: 244)

'Henoko village becomes the very fraught and unstable centre of the U.S. – Japan alliance' (McCormack, 2003: 107)

The diminishing population of Okinawa dugongs graze the sea grasses in the shallow waters off Henoko unaware of being at the centre of a political, economic and cultural struggle to define the future of Okinawa, and, as a result, of Japan as a whole.

A significant part of the May 2006 agreement on the future of the U.S. – Japan security alliance and the realignment of U.S. military forces in Japan is the planned closure of Futenma Air Base in Ginowan City, Okinawa Island, by 2014 and its relocation to the relatively isolated site of Henoko in the city of Nago. The idea of a sea-based site in this northern area of the main island was first formulated by a joint U.S. – Japan committee in 1996. Local opposition was expressed in a Nago City plebiscite in 1997, and more recently in a two-year sit-in (and swim-in/sail-in) that stalled initial construction efforts. The Japanese government says the new base will be built as it is essential to national security. Critics say that military bases breed insecurity for people locally through pollution, accidents and crime and for the people of 'peace-loving' Japan generally by perpetuating an anti-peace, militarist conception of what constitutes 'security'.

Okinawa has always been perceived as strategically important to Japan, first as a place of trade, then as the southern limits of the constructed modern Japanese state and more recently as the linchpin of the U.S. – Japan defence policy. Despite being pivotal in terms of security, Okinawa remains on the periphery both politically and economically. Politically marginalized from its incorporation as a prefecture of Japan in 1879, Okinawa was 'sacrificed' once by the central government at the end of the Second World War, and critics say that as a military

colony with 75% of the U.S. military presence in Japan, Okinawa continues to be sacrificed for the 'good' or 'security' (as defined by the national government) of all Japan. However, the voices of discontent are getting louder and are now being heard internationally.

What does the Henoko situation say about how 'security' is being currently defined within Japan? And do the words and actions of critics offer alternative ideas of security? To situate these questions in a theoretical context, I will look at the contemporary debates concerning the concept, study and practice of security within the discipline of International Relations (IR). The prioritization of the U.S. – Japan security alliance above all else, including the rights and interests of the people of Japan and at the expense of its natural environment, reflects a traditional Realist definition of security and represents only one possible reading of security. Alternative interpretations of security, as espoused within the expanding area of critical security studies of IR, can also be seen in the words and actions of activists and academics living within and outside of Okinawa.

In the first section, I will outline the principal differences between Realist and critical readings of security within current IR theory, focussing particularly on the work of Ken Booth as a critical writer who attempts to deconstruct notions of 'security' and then reconstruct the concept in an 'emancipatory'² way. In the main section of the paper, I will elucidate the assumptions made about security in both the contradictory foundations of Japanese defence policy, as well as the imposed location of Okinawa on the economic and political margins of Japan. By looking at examples of Okinawa resistance to this created status, shown most recently in the protests to defend the endangered dugong, I will connect the understandings of security voiced and practised within Okinawa to conceptions articulated within critical security studies of IR.

(Re)reading Security

'Security is a complex concept', writes Barry Buzan, but it was not always thought so (Buzan, 1991: 31). As Baldwin notes, 'Paradoxical as it may seem, security has not been an analytical concept for most security studies scholars' (Baldwin, 1997:

2. Booth defines emancipation as 'the freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do' (Booth 1991a: 319)

9). Since the beginnings of the discipline of IR³, the idea of security has been as uncontested as the definition and limits of the discipline itself. IR was assumed to be simply that – the study of the relations between states – and security was ‘national security’ defined in military terms. However, as the boundaries and content of IR have been challenged so too has the concept of security to the point where it is not controversial to say that security is a complex and contested concept.

The timeless wisdom of Realism

‘Realism can be a very good thing: it all depends whether it means the abandonment of high ideals or of foolish expectations’ (Gilpin, 1981: 7).

The theoretical perspective of Realism dominated IR throughout the Cold War. And many would say it still dominates the discipline of IR and the practice of international relations today. In crude terms, Realists⁴ perceive a world comprised of sovereign states. Each unitary, rational state acts in its national interest to try and maximize power in a system of international anarchy. The order within each state is contrasted with the chaos and ‘state of nature’ beyond its borders. Since war remains a possibility in this self-help system, states must have sufficient power, in terms of arms and access to resources, to fend off external enemies. Weapons are power, and when it comes to the crunch, might is right and it is unrealistic to think otherwise. However, as one state increases its military capabilities in an effort to increase its security, other states are likely to interpret this as a threat to their own security and a destabilizing arms race may develop. In periods of stability, brought about by a balance of power between states, other issues may move up the political agenda, for example, economics or even the environment, but security – ensuring the continued survival of the state – will always take priority.

While the world was (or appeared to be⁵) ‘peacefully’ divided between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, it was almost impossible to argue against a Realist theory that seemed to explain the situation so simply and effectively. Nevertheless, some

3. Often dated from 1918, the establishment of the Woodrow Wilson Chair in International Relations at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

4. Realism comes in varying forms; see the liberal Realism of Hedley Bull (1997) and the structural Realisms of Hans Morgenthau (1978) and neo-Realist Kenneth Waltz (1979).

5. From other areas of the world this view of reality did not ‘fit’ so well (Ayoob, 1997).

scholars dared to consider whether the Realist picture was a complete one.

Although the security agenda had generally been synonymous with military power, in the 1980s assumptions about what counted as a security issue were expanded. In 'People, States and Fear', first published in 1983, Barry Buzan contends that security is multidimensional and should include military, political, societal, economic and environmental aspects. Buzan also raises the issue of what or who is being secured – the state or the individual? (Buzan, 1991: 42). According to Buzan, the security of an individual will vary depending on the conceptual model of the state. A 'maximal' state has interests of its own that may be prioritized over individual needs. A 'minimal' state, on the other hand, is more responsive to the needs and values of individuals and is judged according to how its foundations 'impact on the interests of its citizens' (Buzan, 1991: 39). However, Buzan concludes that 'there is no escape from contradictions between individual and national security' (Buzan, 1991: 42).

This broadening of the security agenda is not based on altruism but on a 'larger sense of collective self interest' (Tickner, 1995: 181). Common dangers, such as nuclear weapons and the degradation of the global environment, challenge the sovereign limits of the state and require a concept of 'common security'; security is, therefore, not the zero-sum idea of security of traditional Realist thought but interdependent.

Emancipating Security

'Ideas are power; they are life and death, emancipation and limitation' (Bell, 1998: 208).

'Security and emancipation are two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security. Emancipation, theoretically, is security' (Booth, 1991a: 319).

For some IR scholars, stretching the security agenda is insufficient and even harmful. Simon Dalby questions 'whether, in the process of extending the ambit of threats requiring a military response, one is not further militarizing society rather than dealing more directly with political difficulties. (Dalby, 1997: 5).

Instead of simply extending the security agenda within an accepted account of what (and who) counts in the state-centric, ethnocentric and patriarchal international system, what is required is a 'deepening' of the concept of security itself. For Ken Booth, 'deepening' means 'investigating the implications and possibilities that result from seeing security as a concept that derives from different understandings of what politics is and can be all about' (Booth, 1997: 111).

Although critical scholars, within IR generally and the study of security specifically, draw on a variety of theoretical traditions from within and beyond the disciplinary borders of IR, including the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and Post-Modernism/Post-Structuralism, a common understanding is that the way things are is only one of many possibilities. As Berger and Luckmann state, 'Social order exists *only* as a product of human activity' (Berger & Luckmann, 1991: 70, emphasis in original). Humans construct their own realities, and within those realities their own identities. What is named as 'male', 'female', 'art' or 'nature' is given meaning and value particular to a time and culture. This specific meaning is constructed and then reconstructed daily through language and social custom. Once the temporal and cultural contingency of such concepts is recognised, what has been assumed to be real, inevitable and immutable can be challenged.

Such critical thinking is a profound challenge for IR as a discipline and the study of security within the discipline. 'Anarchy is what states make of it' says Alexander Wendt (1992: 395). Booth takes this one step further, 'security is what *we* make it' (Booth, 1997: 106, emphasis added). Saying that thinking about politics and doing politics can be done differently opens up the space for change. Since power is integral to any social relation, 'security' can be seen as socio-political construct. As one concept of security becomes dominant others are ridiculed, suppressed or not even considered. Since such perceptions are often entrenched to the point of 'naturalness', problematizing them is potentially disturbing and even threatening. The status quo is the status quo because it suits those who have the power to define and keep it that way. Nevertheless, without such 'dangerous' critical questions little substantive change can occur.

Within the expanding and still controversial perimeters of critical security studies many questions are raised: what are the meanings of security and how should it

mean? What/who is being secured and at what cost to what/whom? Whose security is not being voiced or listened to? Booth emphasizes that security is 'essentially a derivative concept', different theories create different readings of security; 'While there is a consensus on the standard definition of security – to do with *being or feeling safe from threats and danger* – security in world politics can have no final meaning' (Booth, 2005a: 13, emphasis in original). The way we theorize politics makes us focus on some things and ask some questions and ignore or be blind to others. How we 'see' security depends on our experience and understanding 'of political theories about nations, sovereignty, class, gender, and other facts by human agreement' (Booth, 2005a: 13).

A Realist's view of security is a specific construct of security that is ethnocentric (Anglo-American), militarized, patriarchal⁶ and methodologically positive⁷. In Realism the state aims to secure itself against external threats and dangers, but what should be defined as a danger? Booth points out that rather than the external threat to national security emphasized in Realism, the greater threat is often domestic/internal; 'To countless millions of people in the world it is their own state, and not "The Enemy" that is the primary security threat' (Booth, 1991a: 318). In 'Writing Security', David Campbell asserts that danger is 'not an objective condition' (Campbell, 1992: 1) but 'an effect of interpretation' (Campbell, 1992: 2). In studying how security is 'written' or constituted, Campbell sets out to highlight 'how the very domains of inside/outside, self/other, and domestic/foreign – those moral spaces [are] made possible by the ethical borders of identity as much as the territorial boundaries of states' (Campbell, 1992: vii). States, which 'are never finished as entities' (Campbell, 1992: 11), have unstable identities the boundaries of which are constructed and reconstructed by representations of external dangers (Campbell, 1992: 3) such that 'the constant articulation of danger through foreign policy is thus not a threat to a state's identity or existence, it is its condition of possibility' (Campbell, 1992: 12).

If critical security studies aims to deconstruct accepted notions of security, how does/should it reconstruct alternative concepts? For Booth, the idea that there is 'no politics-free definition of security in world politics' (2005b: 21) should not be considered negatively. He goes further to say that 'security in world politics must remain an arena of intense political contestation because it is both primordial and

6. See Tickner, 1992 & 1995.

7. Assuming that the relationship between fact and value is unproblematic.

the object of conflicting theories about what is real, what constitutes reliable knowledge, and what might be done in world politics` (Booth, 2005b: 21). Despite the ever-contested nature of security, Booth offers his own critically informed and emancipatory definition of the concept; `Security in world politics is an instrumental value that enables people(s) some opportunity to choose how to live. It is a means by which individuals and collectives can invent and reinvent different ideas about being human` (Booth, 2005b: 23).

Booth warns academics and students of critical security studies not to `ignore or play down the state and the military dimensions of world politics` (Booth, 1997: 107). States exist, even if they are not static entities, and weapons are made and used to harm life, but the Realist conception of what a state is, how many weapons are required and who or what they should be used on should be challenged. Booth advises academics `to expose the hypocrisies, inconsistencies, and power plays in language, relationships, and policies` (Booth, 1995: 115). With this in mind, I will turn now to outline the foundations of modern Japanese defence policy, the contradictions that have existed since its inception, and the definition of security assumed within those foundations.

The Contradiction at the heart of Japan's Defence Policy

The new Japanese constitution, the `Peace` constitution, came into effect on May 3rd, 1947. Article 9 renounces `war as the sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes`. To accomplish this aim `land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained`. In September 1951, Japan and the U.S. signed a security treaty which came into effect when the U.S. occupying forces withdrew in 1952. The U.S. committed itself `to the defense of Japan against foreign aggression and giving itself access to Japanese bases from which to stage military operations throughout the Far East` (Akaha, 2000: 178). The National Police Reserve, at the insistence of an occupying U.S. military already overstretched in the Korean War, was set up in 1950, reorganized into the National Safety Force and eventually became the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in 1954; `legally, the SDF does not have any war potential. In reality, however, it does. Ever since this contradiction has paralyzed Japan`s defense policy` (Tsuchiyama, 2000: 138).

The inconsistencies grew; Article 5 of the revised U.S. – Japan mutual security treaty of 1968 `requires Japan to take collective military action to meet a common danger` (Tsuchiyama, 2000: 142). Balancing (juggling?) such a military alliance with the maintenance (and development) of a highly-equipped `defence` force and Article 9 of the Japanese constitution requires `cognitive dissonance` (Tsuchiyama, 2000: 142).

On May 1st, 2006, after three years of negotiations, the Japanese and U.S. governments announced their joint roadmap for the realignment of military forces, a path set to `take their security alliance to a new level` (Japan Times, 3rd May 2006). The sticking point for the two governments had been the financing of the relocation of the marines to Guam. However, Japan finally agreed to pay 59% (U.S.\$6.09 billion) of the cost of moving the troops with the justification that this would ease the burden on Okinawa (Japan Times, 25th April 2006). A joint statement based on the U.S. – Japan Security Consultation Committee document sets out the countries' shared values of `basic human rights, freedom, democracy, and the rule of law` (MOFA, 2006).

The main points of the agreement include the removal of 8,000 marines and their 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam, the closure of Futenma airbase in Ginowan City, Okinawa Island, and the relocation of its operations to a new base by 2014. The plan for the new base consists of two 1,800m v-shaped runways in the area of Henoko bay. The construction method would be primarily landfill and the U.S. and Japanese governments claim that `this facility ensures agreed operational capabilities while addressing issues of safety, noise, and environmental impacts` (MOFA, 2006). Getting local support for the plan had been an `issue` for the Japanese government, but the Japan Times reported on 25th April that this problem had been basically resolved (Japan Times, 25th April, 2006), a statement that glosses over the continued local opposition.

The Peace constitution was foisted on Japan. However, a population whose early experiences of democracy had been snuffed out by a militaristic government, that had suffered great losses during the Second World War and experienced the horrifying immediate and after-effects of two atomic bombs by and large embraced a pacifist stance. Yet, the imposition of the constitution and the increasing desire for Japan to play a greater role on the Asian and global political scene has meant that the debate to change the constitution and remove Article 9

has gained momentum. This move toward a stronger Japanese identity has been complemented by the proposed new Education Bill, passed in December 2006, which advocates 'love of country' (Japan Times, 21st June 2006).

What are the threats to Japan that merit a stronger U.S. – Japan military alliance? How real the 'threats' to Japan are from North Korea and China is questionable. What is less debatable is the fact that the basic unresolved contradiction at the core of Japan's defence policy combined with an unwillingness (as perceived by other Asian nations) to face up to its aggressive past, the current military build-up – between 1996 – 2000, Japan was the ninth greatest arms purchasing country (Burrows, 2002: 17) – and a greater supporting role of U.S. forces by the SDF is increasing insecurity rather than securing (making safe) the people and environment of Japan. As long as Japan remains passively and uncritically under the security umbrella of the U.S. and agrees to host and fund U.S. military bases, its claim to be a pacifist nation, as defined by Article 9, does not stand up. And as long as the Japanese Supreme Court remains a tool of the executive branch of the government (George-Mulgan, 2000: 10) and continues to back up the government's position on security policy by refusing to 'support a literal interpretation of Article 9' (George-Mulgan, 2000: 10), citizens have no redress apart from civil protest and participating in local plebiscites.

Although put forward as a 'realignment' that will ease the burden on Okinawa, which currently hosts 75% of the U.S. military presence in Japan, the recent U.S. – Japan security agreement will increase U.S. capabilities in Japan and commits Japan to integrate the SDF within U.S. strategy (Japan Times, 5th June 2006) which stretches the cognitive dissonance on security beyond belief and beyond Okinawan endurance. Assumed in the agreement is an interpretation of security as defending the Japanese state against external threats by military means. If Japan is a 'peaceful' country by means of an alliance with the largest military force in the world, can this be labelled peace? Article 9 is a part of the constitution but currently it is only that; words in a document and not a practice. What is insecure is a commitment to active, long-term peace. As the next section will underline, this perception of 'national' security is built upon the insecurity of the people of Okinawa and the destruction of its environment.

Okinawa – dog-tags, development and dugongs

History on the edge of Japan

‘The twentieth century has not been kind to Okinawa. In many ways its geography determined its fate’ (McCormack, 2003: 109)

Okinawa’s situation or ‘problem’ is often explained away in terms of geography. A curve of stepping-stones between larger neighbouring countries, Okinawa was fated to be dominated; or was it? This argument downplays the active policy of the Japanese government in first expropriating, and then marginalizing Okinawa economically and politically.

Okinawa is now considered a ‘war prefecture’ within a peace state (Hook & Siddle, 2003b: 243). However, it was once a state at peace. As a united and independent kingdom that had chosen not to have a military force, the Ryukyu Islands were a centre for trade from the fifteenth century onwards. ‘Given’ to the *daimyo* (lord) of Satsuma province from 1609 by the *shogun* (military leader) Tokugawa Ieyasu, the Ryukyu kingdom retained a semi-independent status until its forced incorporation into the modern state of Japan in 1879⁸. Representatives from the new prefecture of Okinawa requested that the islands should not be sites of military garrisons, but without success (Kerr, 1958: 370). A strict top-down assimilation policy was introduced while the newly-named Okinawans debated the benefits and drawbacks of being ‘Japanese’ (Rabson, 1996). Although heavily taxed, it took twenty-two years before the people of Okinawa were represented in the ‘democratic’ government of the state.

After decades of Japanese rule, Okinawa was still perceived as marginal, backward and vulnerable because of questionable loyalties to the Japanese state. Rabson describes it as a cruel irony that in 1945 the Battle of Okinawa was thus seen ‘as an opportunity to prove, once and for all, their loyalty to Japan and full assimilation as Japanese’ (Rabson, 1996). Over 200,000 Okinawan people were killed in the Battle of Okinawa – a quarter of the population. Thousands died at the hands of Japanese soldiers, killed directly or indirectly through mass forced ‘suicides’ (Hein & Selden, 2003: 14). The Battle of Okinawa has since been

8. The Ryukyu Islands were divided between the prefecture of Kagoshima and the new prefecture of Okinawa.

described as a reckless and unnecessary sacrifice of lives; ‘Okinawans died simply to put off the inevitable surrender just a little longer’ (Hein & Selden, 2003: 14). National security at this time did not cover the security of all Japan; ‘the wartime state was oppressor far more than it was protector of Okinawans’ (Hein & Selden, 2003: 14). The idea of Okinawa as ‘expendable’ to a callous central government, a recurring theme in anti-Tokyo critiques, had its foundations laid in the graves of Okinawa’s too many dead.

At the end of the Second World War, Okinawa could still not rely on the protection of its national government. The U.S. took and retained control of Okinawa until its reversion to Japan in 1972. At first Japan had little choice but to accept the situation, and later, in exchange for allowing U.S. bases on its territory (Tokyo had ‘residual sovereignty’ over Okinawa) it gained economic benefits including ‘preferential access to the American market’ while the U.S. would ‘tolerate [Japan’s] protectionism and mercantilism’ (Johnson, 2002). Unfortunately for Okinawa it was deemed a strategic military post within Asia and so the U.S. policymakers insisted that they ‘must retain administrative control over most of the Ryukyu Islands which entailed forcible land seizures, denials of legal rights, and numerous inconveniences and indignities’ (Rabson, 1996). Japanese writers have commented acidly that while Okinawans lost their families, their land and their livelihoods, Tokyo did nothing; ‘Throughout this process, the government of our “mother country” Japan looked on complacently, neither willing nor able to defend the people of Okinawa’ (Miyazato et al, 2006: 53).

The Dependence Economy of a Japanese Military Colony

Gavan McCormack describes Okinawa as ‘Japan’s virtual colony’; ‘a dual colony in effect to the U.S. and Japan, a status unchanged in thirty years since reversion’ (McCormack, 2003: 93). Okinawa, which has 0.6% of Japan’s total landmass, houses 75% of the acreage of American bases. Thirty-eight military facilities cover 20% of Okinawa Island. Not only does Okinawa bear the overwhelming majority of U.S. military bases within Japan, but the bases are of a different type to the rest of Japan. Nearly all of the U.S. military bases on the mainland are for ‘administration, communications, transport, logistics support, repairs and recreation (Gabe, 2003: 63), while the bases in Okinawa are for marines and special-forces. The effects are different, too. As Gabe states, ‘Because

these forces are next to 1.3 million residences, accidents and incidents are bound to occur' (Gabe: 2003, 64).

Accidents, 'incidents' (a euphemism used officially for crimes, such as rape⁹) and examples of environmental pollution abound in Okinawa. Eight areas within the islands are sites for conducting live ammunition exercises. On Torishima, an unpopulated island, U.S. soldiers mistakenly used depleted uranium bullets in 1995. Washington did not notify Tokyo of the accident until a year later and then the central government failed to inform the prefectural government and public of Okinawa until a month after that; 'This reveals how marginalized Okinawa is by both the U.S. and the Japanese governments' (Asato, 2003: 233). However, the rape of a twelve-year-old girl by three U.S. servicemen in 1995 could not be covered up or ignored and created a surge of anger and resentment resulting in the largest mass demonstration in Okinawan history. The 1996 U.S. – Japan agreement to close Futenma airbase in the middle of the heavily-populated Ginowan City and relocate to the sparsely-populated Henoko area was a direct consequence of the protests. But the 'incidents' do not go away. In August 2004, a U.S. Marine Corps CH-53D heavy-lift helicopter crashed into Okinawa International University injuring the three crew members, an accident that received little press coverage nationally (Simpson, 2004) leading to 'allegations that editorial decisions ... reflected a view that events in faraway Okinawa were of little importance to the nation as a whole' (Simpson, 1995).

How is this vastly unfair situation, a state of affairs that would not be tolerated on the mainland, maintained? Politically, Okinawa has little voice and economically Okinawa has become both victim to and dependent on a base-construction economy that is difficult to give up or be weaned from. Of the 452 members of the Japanese Diet only five represent Okinawa. A NIMP (Not In My Prefecture) attitude prevails. Since other prefectures are unwilling to have U.S. bases in their own areas, and since it is accepted that if the military bases were not in Okinawa they would have to be relocated somewhere else in Japan, any Okinawan formal protests are ignored or overruled. To question the 'need' for American bases in Okinawa would be to question the entire framework of Japanese defence policy, and whenever there is criticism of such a policy the government takes out the trump card of 'national security'.

9. See Mercier (1996) for further information about the treatment of Okinawan women by the military forces.

Okinawa is, of course, more than the sum of its military bases. The U.S. bases have had a profound and prolonged effect on the economy – during the U.S. occupation Okinawa was ‘in effect a provider of support services for U.S. bases’ (Hein & Selden, 2003: 6) – but this direct dependence on the bases in terms of finding employment and providing services has decreased markedly. Base-related revenue has dropped from 25.6% of the local Gross Domestic Product in 1970 to 5.7% in 1996 (Hook & Siddle, 2003: 5), while employment on the U.S. bases decreased from 40,000 to 8,000 over the same time period (McCormack, 2003: 93). The principal effect of the U.S. bases on Okinawa today is through the rental payments given to local landowners for the lease of their land. In contrast to the mainland where U.S. bases had usually been built on land previously owned by the government, in Okinawa 33% of the land occupied by U.S. military is privately-owned (Tanji, 2003: 169). For McCormack the lease of landowners’ land ‘fosters a passive culture of rental dependence, which blocks locally generated initiatives towards self-reliant, non-military dependent development’ (McCormack, 2003: 94).

Opposition to the appropriation and lease of local land has been an expression of protest against the prevailing conceptions of development and security. The post-war confiscation of private land by ‘bulldozers and bayonets’ was a source of great local bitterness (Tanji, 2003: 169). The strength of feeling was exacerbated rather than alleviated by the eventual U.S. offer of small lump-sum payments to landowners. Following island-wide protests in 1956, the islanders finally got the right to annual rentals in return for their ‘agreement’ to the land leases (Tanji, 2003: 169). After the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972 the U.S. bases remained and the rental payments continued, this time from the Japanese government at a rate six times that of previously (Tanji, 2003: 169).

As an anti-war pro-Okinawa protest a minority of landowners refused to sign leases for their property, the numbers rising to 3,000 as a result of the 1982 *hitotsuba* (1 tsubo = 3.3 square metres) movement (Tanji, 2003: 170). Nonetheless, 30,000 landowners agree to their land being leased by the U.S. military. Although relatively few in number, the anti-military landowners’ struggle has been played out most importantly in the law courts where, unsuccessfully, they tried to prove that the compulsory use of non-contract landowners’ private property by the U.S. military was unconstitutional (Tanji,

2003: 171; George-Mulgan, 2000). In 1995, Okinawa governor Masahide Ota refused to sign on behalf of those landowners who objected to the renewal of their land leases. Ota was sued by the Japanese government, and the Supreme Court ruled against Ota. In 1999, the U.S. Military Special Measures Law was amended by the Japanese government to make it the Prime Minister's responsibility to sign on behalf of landowners and to avoid Okinawan rebellion in the future (Tanji, 2003: 171).

In the formal political realm – the courts, committees and legislative – the Japanese state has repeatedly manipulated the system to maintain the status quo; 'The primary requirements of the U.S. – Japan Mutual Security Treaty, that U.S. troops be stationed in Japan, has constantly taken precedence over the constitutional rights of Okinawa citizens' (Tanji, 2003: 172). Though the legal battle ultimately failed, the Prefectural Land Expropriation Committee public hearings gave anti-war landowners a space to voice their harrowing experiences of the Battle of Okinawa and the subsequent occupation by the U.S. military, and their passionate commitment to the ideals of peace and democracy enshrined in the Japanese constitution (Tanji, 2003: 172). Thus, it is the citizens of Japan who are struggling to protect the constitution against a central government which should protect it (and them) but instead rides roughshod over the rights and interests of its people in the name of protecting Japan's 'national security' defined in military terms (Tanji, 2003: 172-3).

Next to the base economy, 'development' is the other sharp stake that keeps Okinawan dependence in place. In order to compensate the Okinawans for hosting the U.S. bases and to increase their standard of living, which had been far below the mainland at the time of reversion, the central government has invested huge sums of public money in the area¹⁰. The massive injection of funds has had its benefits, including much-needed infrastructural improvements and the establishment of five universities. Nevertheless, Okinawa remains the poorest prefecture (70% of national average per capita) with the highest unemployment (7.9% in 2000, compared to a national average of 4.7%) (Hein & Selden, 2003: 6). Furthermore, the application of modern Japanese style development has resulted in the decimation of Okinawa's important and fragile environment; 'riverways, beaches and land have been bulldozed and concreted. What is worse, air and water pollution, soil erosion and wider environmental degradation are ruining the

10. For a criticism of the 'construction state' at large, see Kerr (2001).

coastline, eating away at the coral and posing a danger to marine life' (Hook and Siddle, 2003: 5).

Okinawa bears the costs of this 'mal-development' but gains little from its profits. Work is created for local people in the construction and service industries but the large projects are carried out by and create profits for largely mainland companies (Hook & Siddle, 2003: 5). Tourism has become the main industry in Okinawa creating double the earnings of the U.S. bases (McCormack, 2003: 93). However, once again 80% of major resort hotels are owned by mainland interests (McCormack, 2003: 101) and the industry puts pressure on local water supplies while limiting or even denying access of significant areas of the main island to locals. Tourism has also been a double-edged sword for Okinawan identity. Brochures and package holiday itineraries deprive locals of the power to define what Okinawa is or could be. Okinawa is sold as a 'tempting island paradise' in which its people and environment are made into commodities; 'Put simply, Okinawans are inscribed as the non-threatening, laid-back and relaxed "exotic" islanders, ever ready to burst into song and dance, happily supporting of the status quo, and the "warm" relationship with the mainland' (Hook and Siddle, 2003: 6).

The '3-K' economy – bases (*kichi*), public works (*kokyo koji*) and tourism (*kanko*) – is distorted and externally dependent, but this does not explain or limit what Okinawa is or could be; there are pockets of resistance that show the alternatives that exist, and exist successfully. McCormack notes the efforts of Yomitan village, central Okinawa Island, to uphold its own priorities of grassroots development. Although home to U.S. military facilities, the villagers of Yomitan have actively limited dependence on subsidies and focus on local crafts and traditional agricultural products (McCormack, 2003: 107). The small island of Kudaka has also actively avoided resort development and has struggled against external pressure in order to maintain its traditions of communal ownership and management of agriculture, and sustainable use of the local environment (Asato, 2003: 239-240). In the environmental protest movements, first against pollution in Kin Bay, Okinawa Island, and later against the building of an airport at Shiraho, Ishigaki Island, Tanji sees the 'protection of local natural assets from *yamato* [mainland]-style industrialization' as the promotion of a distinct Okinawan identity and a reinterpretation of what 'affluence' means (Tanji, 2003: 174). This distinct identity is based on a lifestyle and local industry 'rooted in the

local environment' (Tanji, 2003: 175) and is key to Okinawan redefinitions of security.

Resistance to external definitions of and constraints on the economy, culture and security of Okinawa have culminated in the waters off Henoko. As mentioned previously, the decision to construct a sea-based military facility in the area was made by a U.S. – Japan committee, without local consultation, in 1996. The Nago City non-binding plebiscite in 1997, in spite of much pressure from Tokyo, came out against the plan. However, the close results of the vote showed the divisions within the local community. Governor Ota gave public support to the Nago plebiscite results and was subsequently cut off politically and financially by the central government. In the 1998 prefectural elections, Ota lost to the more conservative Inamine Keiichi, reflecting an Okinawan population worried about a future without government subsidies. On being elected, Inamine quickly accepted the plan for a Nago 'heliport' (the label downplays the scale and impact of the facility) with limits – a dual military-civilian runway and a 15-year maximum lease – that have been ignored by the central government. The May 2006 U.S. – Japan mutual security agreement sets out an expanded plan for the military facility near Henoko and Tokyo is now under pressure to sort out what Washington sees as a parochial issue.

For the opponents of the proposed Henoko base, what is at stake is more than the endangered dugong – an important Okinawan cultural symbol – and more than the dugong's rich marine environment; the struggle is over the future of Okinawa.

Having learned from the experiences of past local/environmental protests, the defenders of the dugong have gone international. At the 2001 IUCN (International Conservation Union) conference, anti-heliport representatives took the initiative to attend the meeting in order to highlight the dangers faced by the Okinawa dugong. As a result, the IUCN have strongly urged the Japanese government (without success) to set up a sanctuary for the benign marine mammals. The Futenma-Henoko Action Network, an Okinawa-based protest group, raised half the funds for the production of a documentary on the issue which was aired on BBC World Earth Report in 2005 (Simpson, 2005). Meanwhile, the Okinawa dugong is also being defended in the U.S. courts. To stop U.S. involvement with the new base, the American NGO Earthjustice, on behalf of a coalition of Japanese and American conservation groups, filed a

lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) in 2003. Citing the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act which states that the U.S. government must respect the cultural icons of other countries, the lawsuit requires the DOD to assess fully and publicly the effect of the project on the dugong. The US government has argued that the choice of site and construction of the base is entirely in the hands of the Japanese government. However, in March 2005 a federal judge in San Francisco denied the U.S. government's attempt to dismiss the suit, stating that the site would be built to U.S. specifications for U.S. use. The case is continuing.

In 1993, 'Stars and Stripes', the U.S. forces' newspaper, reported that there may be no more than a dozen dugongs left in Okinawa. This implies that the extinction of the dugong is certain so why resist the inevitable? One more species endangered, one more ecosystem threatened, one more example of Tokyo contemptuously dismissing the voices of Okinawan protest. The question now remains: how far is the Japanese government willing to go to enforce its definition of 'national security'?

Conclusion

'Any (local resident) would oppose (a plan to introduce a U.S. military installation) if asked. That's the difficult part of national security'

Prime Minister Koizumi's statement in response to the results of the March 2006 non-binding Iwakuni plebiscite, an overwhelming (87.4%) vote against the relocation of carrier-based airplanes to Iwakuni (Japan Times, 14th March 2006)

'our words do not work any more' (Booth, 1991: 313)

The May 2006 U.S. – Japan Roadmap on Realignment of forces was heralded by both Washington and Tokyo as marking a new phase in the security alliance. The rhetoric is new but the underlying assumptions are not. The defence policy of Japan is currently based on one specific construction of 'security' – defence of the state against external threats in which national security so-defined is placed above all. This particular Realist interpretation of 'security' is constraining the choices and opportunities of the people of Okinawa (Hook & Siddle, 2003a: 8) and is, therefore, counter to the emancipatory form of security advocated by IR critical

security scholar Ken Booth. The protests against and criticisms of Okinawa's subjugation are alternative ideas of 'security' in practice, notions that take the interests of individuals and the protection of the natural environment into account; that take Article 9 seriously as an ideal to live by and not a vague guideline to ignore at will.

Critics of the narrow definition of 'security' at work in Japan today urge a move toward an independent, credible foreign policy 'supported by a logic of its own that has the consent of its own people' (Gabe, 2003: 72) that is integrated with a stable regional peace rather than with the military force of the U.S. (Miyazato et al, 2006: 56). It is difficult to imagine the government and people of Japan voluntarily giving up the perceived protection of the U.S. military umbrella, but imagination is what is needed, the imagination to think differently and the courage to speak and act differently. 'Security' as currently interpreted in Japan is not a definition that works, for Okinawa or for the long-term stable peace of the country as a whole. If the word no longer works, it must be reworked.

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