The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
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"Two Elections and Japan's Most Unwanted Base" and "A Democratic Victory in Nago, Okinawa" UPDATE 2/13 "Democracy, Do Not Die!" 選挙二つと沖縄の最もやっかいな基地、民主主義よ、死ぬな！

Feb. 09, 2014

Video by **Michael Penn**, Shingetsu News Agency

followed by essays by **C. Douglas Lummis** and **Shiohira Yoshikazu (trans. Hase Michiko)**

The embedded video is Michael Penn's report on the Nago, Okinawa mayoral election. Penn follows Inamine Susumu who was reelected after a fiercely contested race on January 19. Nago is the center of Japanese and American government plans to build a new military base on Okinawa and both Inamine and Penn highlight the significance of this election for Okinawa and for Japanese democracy.

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Two Elections and Okinawa's Most Unwanted Base

C. Douglas Lummis

Naha, Okinawa

The 2010 Governor's election in Okinawa was a game changer. Up to then the pattern of elections here had been, a progressive candidate clearly opposed to the US military bases on the island vs. a conservative candidate who was not positively in favor of them, but took the attitude, if we can't get rid of them we might as well make a little money off them.

In 2010 the issue on the table was not all the bases, but what to do with the US Marine Air Station at Futenma, in the middle of densely populated Ginowan City and the site of a 2004 helicopter crash into the adjacent university. In 1996 the US and Japanese Governments had announced that they would close it down, but only on the condition that the 1st Marine Air Wing, which it houses, be moved to a new base to be built offshore from the fishing village of Henoko in the less populated northern part of Okinawa. This construction has been fiercely opposed by Okinawans. Pacifists argue that the base should be abolished from the face of the earth; ecology-sensitive people point out that construction would be devastating to the coral-rich Oura Bay, habitat to the endangered sea-mammal the dugong and precious rare coral; Okinawans generally feel that the Government's insistence that the new base be located on their island amounts to discriminatory

treatment. Okinawa comprises 0.6% of Japanese territory, but just under 75% of all US bases in Japan are located here. More and more people are using the word "colonialism" to describe this. Thus since the 1996 announcement, the Okinawans, by means of rallies, demonstrations, lawsuits, petitions, sit-ins, and direct action civil disobedience, have so far prevented construction from beginning.

In 2010 the incumbent conservative Governor Nakaima Hirokazu who had been elected on the If you can't fight them, join them ticket, was advised that the electorate had changed, and that he could not be reelected unless he changed his position. This he did, saying that now he favored moving the Futenma base to mainland Japan. This enabled him to pick up the support of conservatives who are not ready to oppose US bases altogether, but who resent the unequal treatment they receive from Japan.

The result was an election in which both the progressive and the conservative candidates opposed moving the Futenma base to a different location within Okinawa, differing only on what should be done with it, the progressive candidate Iha Yoichi saying it should be moved out of Japan and hinting that Guam would be appropriate, Nakaima saying that mainland Japan would be appropriate. There was a third candidate, from the crackpot Happiness Realization Party, who supported the US-Japan plan to move the base to Henoko. The progressive and conservative candidates between them got 97% of the votes; the only party that supported the US-Japan plan got a little over 2%. It's not often that you see that kind of agreement on the central issue in a free election. In that election the US-Japan plan was supported only by the crazies. Governor Nakaima, supported by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and campaigning on the slogan Move the Base to the Mainland, was re-elected.

For three years after that, Governor Nakaima put on a pretty convincing performance. Again and again Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Defense Ministers came to his office trying to persuade him to accept the Henoko base plan, and again and again he sent them packing, sometimes after only a few minutes. (One of them, I think it was a Foreign Minister – these fellows have been changing like a game of musical chairs in recent years so it's hard to remember – was caught on TV looking at his watch to see how much time he had got, as the Governor walked out of the room.) During that period not only the governor, but many Okinawan Liberal Democratic Party politicians, defying their Party headquarters in Tokyo, came out against the base plan. People began to talk about an All Okinawa Anti-Base Movement. Increasingly anti-base activists, instead of appealing for sympathy, were calling the plan "impossible".

In 2012 the Tokyo Government, after completing a survey of Oura Bay, wrote up an environmental impact report and in the last days of December handed it to the Governor for his approval, without which they cannot legally begin reclamation work in the Bay. He set up a committee, and they fiddled with it for the next year. Many people believed, I among them, that Nakaima would reject it in the end: why would anyone want to put their name on a document that claims that dumping several million tons of dirt and junk into a coral bay will have no detrimental effect on the environment? But at the end of December last year, he approved it, which opened the way for construction to begin. Most people were stunned, though there was also a minor chorus of I Told You So. In exchange the Governor claimed to have gotten some major gifts and concessions from Tokyo, a mess of pottage that turned out to be mostly promises that won't be kept and aid money that Okinawa Prefecture was entitled to anyway. It continues to amaze me that a person presented with the opportunity to become a hero whose name would be passed on in Okinawan culture for generations, would instead choose to be remembered as a liar and a turncoat. The Prefectural Legislature has passed a resolution calling for his resignation.

It seemed that Okinawa was in danger of falling into despondency and resignation. But there was one more test coming up. Just a couple of weeks after Nakaima's collapse, on January 19, there was the election for Mayor of Nago City, of which Henoko is an administrative part. The incumbent Mayor, Inamine Susumu, had been elected on the public promise that he would oppose new base construction in the city. Two candidates declared against him, both supporting base construction. For the Abe Shinzo Government, this was a must-win election. First they sent down a gang of top Party and Government officials to persuade one of the pro-base candidates to stand down – a very unusual case of interference in local politics (of course, they were successful). Then when campaigning began they sent down Party and Government superstars to join in the electioneering. A lot of dubious money is said to have been passed around. Nago is the home of several of the construction companies which would likely get a share of the reclamation contracts, and which also have political clout in the city. Presumably a lot of pressure was put by those and other companies on their employees. In the last days of the campaign the Liberal Democratic Party's Secretary General Ishiba suddenly announced that if the pro-base candidate won Nago would be rewarded with 50 billion yen (about $500 million) in extra aid. It was the town of Nago, population 62,000, vs. the state of Japan, and to the last moment no one knew which side would win.

Inamine, running a campaign under the banner of an "Association for a Nago City to be Proud Of", won by a healthy margin. Okinawa's temptation to despondency ended after just a few weeks. This has got to be remembered as one of the great election victories in the history of democracy. Nago would not be bought; the voters took the aid offer as an insult. Immediately after the election, Inamine announced that he would use his powers as Mayor, not to appeal to Tokyo to reconsider its plan, but positively to prevent it from going forward. Concretely, he said he would prohibit any construction-related use of roads, harbors or rivers that are under the City's administration, and that he would not participate in any negotiations that presuppose base construction. Inamine, incidentally, is not a professional politician or an ex-movement activist. Before he ran for Mayor he was an official in the City's Board of Education. To this day he goes out every morning to work as a traffic safety volunteer at a corner where kids cross the street on the way to school. There is a good lesson in politics here: You don't need charisma; all you need is to be able to say "no". It's also a lesson in popular sovereignty. The Tokyo Government says, We will decide. The people of Nago reply, No, we have decided. Like they say, it takes a village.

The Abe Shinzo Government has painted itself into a corner. It continues to tell the US Government, and the world, that it will build the new base at Henoko anyway. It says it will "persuade" Inamine, but it looks like that can't be done. Will it rewrite the law to take away the Mayor's powers? Will it send in the Riot Police, or maybe the Self-Defense Forces? Will it revive the method used by the US military to get land for bases right after the Battle of Okinawa, the method known here as "bulldozers and rifles"? Of course all these are possible, but they will be made less possible the more the Nago situation comes to the attention of people around the world. That's why it's a good thing that some overseas supporters of the Okinawa anti-base movement, beginning with Oliver Stone and Peter Kuznick, who visited Okinawa last year, after the election drafted a letter of solidarity that has been signed by over 100 writers, scholars, movie makers and others from many countries. This has evolved into a general petition campaign on the internet. I have no illusion that submitting this petition to President Obama and Prime Minister Abe will have any effect on their consciences. What it will do is send a message to the people of Nago that they are not isolated. And by making clear to both heads of state that *the whole world is watching* it will make it difficult for them to use dirty tricks or violence to get their way in Nago.

The petition can be accessed at http://chn.ge/1ecQPUJ

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Democracy, Do Not Die![1]

Shiohira Yoshikazu

Translated by Hase Michiko

What could this be called but tyranny?

In the Nago mayoral election in Okinawa on January 19, 2014, the citizens clearly said "NO" to the planned relocation of U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Henoko [by re-electing the anti-base incumbent Inamine Susumu].[2] Just two days later, however, something unbelievable happened.

The Japanese government openly ignored the people's will and officially began the process of inviting bids from contractors to design the replacement base and to conduct environmental surveys. In so doing, the governing coalition [of the Liberal Democratic Party, or the LDP, and its junior partner, the Komeito Party] virtually declared, "We have no intention of applying democracy to Okinawa." I am outraged. This sad reality will leave a stain on the history of democracy not only in Japan but throughout the world as well.

The Komeito Party's Okinawa Prefecture headquarters, known for its emphasis on peace and the environment, has shown respect for Okinawan people's will, and I am encouraged by this. But the national Komeito leadership in Tokyo has failed to live up to its expected role of curbing the Abe administration's runaway politics.[3] What's wrong with you, Komeito, a party for peace? I hear such cries even from among Komeito supporters.

The majority of Japanese, one hundred and twenty million people, should not treat Okinawa's struggle as someone else's problem. But very few citizens recognize that it is not someone else's problem. It is fundamentally wrong to view Okinawans' protest as an issue of progressives vs. conservatives, the ideological left vs. the ideological right, the governing coalition vs. the opposition parties, or an anti-American campaign. Very few Japanese even try to understand Okinawans' basic concerns.

The origins of "the right to live in peace" can be found in Franklin D. Roosevelt's "four freedoms" (proposed in January 1941; freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear) and in the Atlantic Charter jointly declared by U.S. president Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (in August 1941).

The Atlantic Charter declares their hope "to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want." This declaration is considered to be the model for the "right to live in peace" recognized in the Japanese constitution.[4]

"All Okinawan people have the individual and concrete right to reside in peace without being exposed to fear, violence, want, poverty, oppression, or environmental destruction."

This declaration was made in the 2005 *Okinawa Autonomous State Basic Law Based on Article 95 of the Constitution of Japan (draft)*[5], which was drafted by the *Okinawa Jichi Kenkyukai* [study group on an autonomous Okinawa] comprised of Okinawan political scientists, constitutional scholars, younger politicians, and municipal officials. Okinawa, too, has the same right to live in peace as do the peoples of Japan and of the United States.

What is happening in Okinawa today concerns our dignity as human beings, our pride, our right to live in peace, and our right to self-determination, which is the right to decide our future for ourselves. Has democracy deteriorated in the 21st century to the degree that these concerns can be neglected? Absolutely not, I am convinced.

If we are labeled "naively simple" for persistently insisting on the ideals of true democracy, so be it. But I want to add one thing: We Okinawans take pride in drawing a line between us and the kind of "naïve simplicity" that is driving our democracy toward extinction every second.

I want to ask the Japanese people. Are the citizens of the other 46 prefectures going to keep pretending that they don't see the persistent systemic discrimination and unconscionable violence against Okinawa, or ignore them completely?

Or will they join hands with Okinawa and work together so that Futenma Air Station will be closed, removed, and relocated out of Okinawa or out of Japan? Are they prepared to take back democracy into their own hands?

Dear Ms. Caroline Kennedy, Ambassador of the United States to Japan: I would like to take this opportunity to ask you a question. You, too, should stop using the double standard. You oppose Japan's dolphin hunting and probably favor protecting the manatee in your own country. And yet, do you not consider the Okinawan dugong unworthy of protection? If not, please prove me wrong.

Ambassador Kennedy, I have another question for you, a lawyer. Do you not think that it is unjust and impermissible if U.S. citizens' life safety, dignity, and human rights are violated but that, when it comes to Okinawan people's life safety, dignity, and human rights, their violations are not unjust, cannot be helped, and are permissible?

The great African American leader, the reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "I have a dream." Okinawan people, too, have the dream of realizing a peaceful and prosperous Okinawa. We have the dream to hold small happiness in our own hands with our families, with our loved ones.

We will not allow the return of the nightmare in which Okinawa would be turned into a battleground where countless lives are lost, as in World War II. We will never invite or permit a nightmare in which this country goes to war with another country.

No citizen would intrinsically welcome war. What is the universal dream that many *uchinanchu* (Okinawans) can share? That would be for Okinawa to become a bridge to other countries and a cornerstone for peace, not for militarism.

Will the United States continue trampling this dream of Okinawa and etching dishonor in the pages of history? Is it not time for the United States to remind itself of the spirit of the Declaration of Independence and of the conscience of American democracy, and act accordingly? Does the United States have no intention of fundamentally changing the past mistaken policy toward Okinawa? It should be an easy decision for President Barack Obama.

It would be a great error to assume that there is no limit to the patience of the Okinawan people.

I believe that many Okinawans, deep in our hearts, hold the determination never to stop protesting. Not a few of us look to the future of Okinawa while thinking about Mahatma Gandhi. A day will come when greedy hegemonism and colonialism will be judged by history.

I appeal from Okinawa. Japan's democracy, do not die. American democracy, and democracies of the world, do not die.

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Hase Michiko is involved in Women for Genuine Security and worked on the Japanese subtitles for the award-winning documentary Living Along the Fenceline (2011), which tells the unheard stories of seven women and communities that live alongside U.S. bases.

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[1] The Japanese original is available here.

[2] Translator's note: The voters re-elected the anti-base incumbent in defiance of the central government and Okinawa governor Nakaima Hirokazu. At the end of December, the governor had approved the government's application for landfill work to build the base in Henoko and then actively campaigned for the pro-base candidate. See "U.S. base opponent re-elected Nago mayor as relocation plan rejected" (Mainichi, January 19, 2014).

[3] Translator's note: Initially, the Abe Shinzo administration, inaugurated on December 26, 2012, avoided controversial issues like constitutional revision. Emboldened, however, by the governing coalition's victory in the July, 2013 Upper House election, it has since aggressively pursued its "proactive pacifism" policy: it made a key appointment to pave the way to a reinterpretation of Article 9 of the Constitution to allow Japan to go to war by exercising the "right to collective self-defense" (in August); it pushed through a law that created a Japanese version of the National Security Council (in November) and a controversial state secrets protection law (in December); and it adopted through a cabinet resolution a new national defense strategy, which seeks more "proactive" roles for the Self-Defense Forces overseas and loosens the ban on arms exports (in December). For a critical response to the new national defense strategy, see EDITORIAL: Abe's national security strategy undermines Japan's postwar pacifism (*Asahi Shimbun*, December 18, 2013). On weapons exports, see Editorial: A Troubling Move on Arms Exports (New York Times, December 30, 2013). In November 2013 the LDP successfully pressured its Okinawa chapter to reverse their campaign pledge and support the plan to build a replacement base in Henoko. See Eric Johnston, Flip-flop: LDP Okinawa branch backs Nago base (*Japan Times*, November 28, 2013).

[4] Translator's note: The preamble to the Japanese constitution includes this sentence: "We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want." Also see the Japan Federation of Bar Associations' *Declaration Affirming the Current Meaning of the Right to Live Peacefully and Article 9 of the Constitution* (2008).

[5] Hamasato Masashi, Sato Manabu, and Shimabukuro Jun, eds., *Okinawa jichishu, anatawa do kangaeru?: Okinawa jichishu kihonho (shian)* [An Okinawa autonomous state: what do you think about it?: Basic law (draft) for an Okinawa autonomous state]. (Okinawa jichi kenkyukai, 2005).

Asia-Pacific Journal articles on related themes include:

Gavan McCormack, The Front Line in the Struggle for Democracy in Japan - Nago City, Okinawa

C. Douglas Lummis, The Great Betrayal

Hiyane Teruo (translated by McCormack and Norimatsu), LDP Okinawa Chapter Revokes its Electoral Pledge - History Repeats Itself in Punishment Drama

Ihara Katsusuke and Jin Pil-su, Former Iwakuni Mayor Ihara Reflects on the Problem of US Bases in Japan

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