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# Rebooting Asia: Conflicting Agendas

**Gavan McCormack**

## **Agendas**

The Obama administration ‘pivots’ to Asia, reinforcing its regional alliances, shoring up its hegemony and putting pressure on its allies to shoulder more of the costs.<sup>1</sup> By 2020 it will have 60 per cent of its navy — six aircraft carriers plus ‘a majority of our cruisers, destroyers, littoral combat ships and submarines’ in the Pacific, that is, primarily with China in its sights.<sup>2</sup> A stepped-up Indian Ocean role is also currently on the drawing board.

Despite the fact of US defence spending being over 41 per cent of the world total (and at least eight times that of China),<sup>3</sup> US defence planners insist they are responding to a threat posed by a Chinese build up. They say China has adopted a strategy of ‘A2/AD’ (Anti-Access/Area Denial), drawing a First Island Defence Line from the Korean peninsula through Jeju island, the Okinawan islands, Taiwan and the Philippines (the Yellow, East and East China Seas:

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1 This is a revised and expanded and footnoted version of the paper that was published in *Arena Magazine*, no. 121, in December 2012.

2 L. Panetta, US Secretary of Defense, ‘The US Rebalance Towards the Asia-Pacific’, keynote presentation to the First Plenary Session, The 11th IISS Asian Security Summit, the Shangri-La Dialogue, Singapore, 2 June 2012. <<http://www.iiss.org/conferences/the-shangri-la-dialogue/shangri-la-dialogue-2012/speeches/first-plenary-session/leon-panetta/>>, accessed 25 February 2013.

3 M. Fraser, ‘Australia–US Relations in the “Asian century”’, *Arena Magazine*, no. 120, 2012, p. 19.

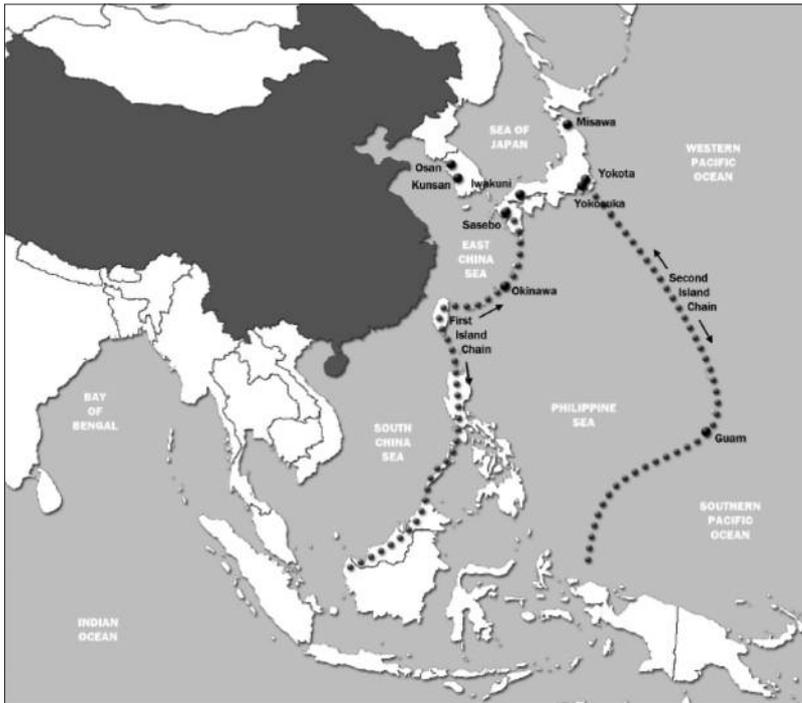


Figure 1: First and second island chains

Source: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010

China's 'near seas'). They believe China is concentrating on developing the capacity, in the event of hostilities, to deny hostile access within those seas while also building significant capacity within the seas bounded by a second line — through Ogasawara, the Marianas, Palau to Indonesia — with the long-term aim (by 2050 or thereabouts) of extending naval operational capacity to the 'far seas'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, China by then would approximate the United States in strategic and military terms, although surpassing it economically by 2018 (according to *The Economist*).<sup>5</sup>

To counter China's presumed A2/AD designs, and to maintain its own strategic and tactical superiority, the United States has developed what it refers to as its 'Air Sea Battle' concept and a 'Pacific Tilt' doctrine. Under the former it works to develop the capacity to coordinate military actions across air, land, sea, space

4 See, for example, J. Van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept*, Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessment, 18 May 2010, pp. 11–13.

5 'Rise and Demise of an Empire — the New World Order', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3–4 November 2012.

and cyber space to maintain global pre-eminence and crush any challenge, and under the latter it shifts its global focus from the Middle East and Africa to East Asia. The word 'pivot' is too delicate to convey the grandeur of the design.<sup>6</sup>

Australia is well-known for its support of US wars, no matter how remote from its own interests or how fragile the legal basis. It hosts major US bases (especially intelligence, spying and missile target-related), has just opened its Darwin door to a US Marine contingent, and is considering substantial US naval expansion in Western Australia (an 'Eighth' or Indian Ocean carrier fleet).<sup>7</sup> But fiscal pressures in 2012 led to a cut in defence spending from 1.8 per cent of GDP to 1.56 per cent,<sup>8</sup> and just days after the Obama re-election the US government signalled to Australia that such a cut was unacceptable; if anything, military spending should be expanded.<sup>9</sup>

Japan too has done much but likewise is expected to do more. In 2012 the United States cautioned Japan to think carefully as to whether or not it wanted to remain a 'tier-one' nation.<sup>10</sup> To hold such a position would entail taking necessary steps to 'stand shoulder-to-shoulder' with the United States: sending naval groups to the Persian Gulf and the South China Sea; relaxing its restrictions on arms exports; increasing its defence budget and military personnel numbers; resuming its commitment to civil nuclear power; pressing ahead with construction of new base facilities in Okinawa, Guam and the Mariana Islands; and revising either its constitution or the way it is interpreted so as to facilitate 'collective security', that is, merging its forces with those of the United States without inhibition in regional and global battlefields. Under the overarching principle of the Air Sea Battle doctrine, there would be much more 'interoperability' — sharing training and base facilities — of Japanese and US forces (in Okinawa, Guam, the Marianas and Darwin). Prominent Washington figures urge Japan

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6 For a very cold eye on evolving US military and strategic doctrine, see A. McCoy, 'Beyond Bayonets and Battleships — Space Warfare and the Future of US Global Power', *ZNet*, 9 November 2012, <<http://www.zcommunications.org/contents/189602/print/>>, accessed 25 February 2013.

7 Fraser, 'Australia-US relations', p. 20.

8 'Australia Should Be Spending 2 per cent of GDP on Defence: Fitzgibbon', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 November 2012.

9 P. Hartcher, 'US Alarm at Defence Budget Cuts', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 November 2012.

10 R. Armitage and J. S. Nye, 'The US-Japan Alliance: Anchoring Stability in Asia', Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 2012, <<http://www.csis.org/>>, accessed 25 February 2013. This report, published months before the 2012 presidential election, lays out the position expected to be the kernel of East Asian policy for the incoming administration.

to buy new weapon and missile systems, including F-35 stealth fighters and Aegis destroyers.<sup>11</sup> Any thought of possibly reducing the huge financial subsidy it paid the Pentagon (around US\$8 billion per year) by way of 'host nation support' (the *omoiyari* or 'sympathy' budget), such as briefly entertained in the early days of the Democratic Party government in 2009, should be set aside.<sup>12</sup> If Japan were to balk at any of this, Washington intimated, it would simply slide into 'tier-two' status, and clearly that would be beneath contempt.

The White Paper released by the Gillard government in October 2012 is on the whole very different in tenor, presenting a roseate picture of the benefits to be derived from maximizing engagement with the burgeoning Asian centres of economic growth. But it too notes that Asia rests on 'the United States' alliances and partnership with Japan, South Korea, Australia and other regional states', and its 'guarantee of extended deterrence' (that is, US nuclear weapons).<sup>13</sup> Together with the Noda (replaced in December 2012 by Abe) government in Tokyo, it follows Washington in combining a military role prescribed by the Pentagon and directed primarily at China with enthusiasm over the Asian century. However, neither the pivot nor the Asian century doctrines address the key question: how will the dominance of the region planned in Washington (and endorsed, explicitly or implicitly, by Canberra, Tokyo and other capitals) be reconciled with the emergence of Asia, and especially China, to centrality? The economic transformations so well outlined in the White Paper incline naturally towards a new set of autonomous political institutions, an Asian or East Asian commonwealth, but the dependent mentality fostered under the tilt, crucial to upholding US hegemony, blocks that process. Can Asia be simultaneously Washington dominated, nuclear secured, and Beijing centred? This article traces the contradictions of the two doctrines as evident in the US–Japan relationship and particularly in the crisis surrounding Okinawa.

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11 K. Mea (K. Maher), 'Amerika to kanada no kyokun', *Bungei shunju*, October 2012, p. 169.

12 G. McCormack and S. Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands: Okinawa Confronts Japan and the United States*, Maryland, Rowman & Littlefield, 2012, pp. 193–6.

13 Australian Government, *Australia in the Asian Century*, White Paper, October 2012, p. 225, <<http://asiancentury.dpmc.gov.au/>>, accessed 25 February 2012.

## The Servile State

In August 2012, a remarkable book was published in Japan under the title (if translated) of *The Truth of Post-War [Japanese] History*. By the beginning of October it had soared up the best-seller lists and sold 200,000 copies.<sup>14</sup> Its author, Magosaki Ukeru, the former head of the Intelligence and Analysis Bureau of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs (also one-time ambassador to Iran and Iraq and professor at the National Defense University), analysed the sweep of Japanese post-1945 history in terms of a crucial vector of contest between two groups at the head of the state: those who favoured an independent foreign policy (especially the reduction or elimination of US military bases in the country and closer ties to Asian neighbours) and those who simply followed US instructions. Those in the first group, including no less than eight post-1945 Prime Ministers, were eliminated, on instructions or under pressure from Washington.<sup>15</sup> Those in the latter category lasted longer, tended to thrive, and left by far the larger mark on the body politic.

Magosaki's book confirmed and reinforced my own book written in 2007: *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*.<sup>16</sup> At that time my term client state (in Japanese *zokkoku*) was a shocking deviation from mainstream Western and academic writing. Although translated and widely read at the time in Japanese, Chinese and Korean editions, the English original was paid little attention. Five years on, it is grim satisfaction to find my thesis confirmed in a best-seller by a senior figure from the Japanese bureaucratic establishment. For my *zokkoku* or client state Magosaki substitutes the essentially identical notion of the *tsuiju rosen* or servile line.

Magosaki also confirms one of the core arguments of my 2012 (co-authored) book on Okinawa to the effect that the Hatoyama Yukio government (2009–2010) was indeed attacked and destroyed by a combination of fierce Washington hostility and betrayal by his own bureaucrats (the servile faction in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defence). This was the most recent example of a govern-

14 Magosaki Ukeru, *Sengoshi no shotai, 1945–2012*, Sogensha, 2012. (Magosaki's Twitter account has over 50,000 followers.) For this author's discussion in Tokyo with Magosaki in September 2012, see Magosaki Ukeru and G. McCormack, 'Nihon wa itsu made Beikoku no zokkoku ni amanjite iru no ka' (How long can Japan be satisfied with being a US puppet state?), *Taidan* (discussion), *Shukan kinyobi*, 28 September 2012, pp. 18–20.

15 An even more recent book by Magosaki, published in September 2012, has the bold title *Amerika Ni Tsubusareta Seijikatachi* (*Politicians Crushed by the United States*), Shogakukan, 2012.

16 G. McCormack, *Client State: Japan in the American Embrace*, New York, Verso, 2007.

ment attempting to pursue an 'autonomous' line being overthrown and servility restored.<sup>17</sup>

Both books also agree in seeing Okinawa, the island prefecture off the China coast where US occupation has been unbroken for sixty-seven years and where three-quarters of US military installations in Japan are concentrated, as crucial. There the essence of the US–Japan relationship is to be observed. The fact that the Japanese national government is determinedly servile, and that all Okinawa policy is predicated on priority to US military interests, is the inescapable reality of everyday life. It makes Okinawa the point at which the contradictions of current programs are plainest. Located at almost the perfect centre of the booming economic region it is nevertheless effectively 'marginalized' by the role it is obliged to play. As the arch upon which the Asia-Pacific security system as a whole can rest, it is neither secure nor prosperous as a result, becoming instead an Achilles heel because it is denied the very values the alliance is supposed to uphold. Its people feel threatened, not protected, by the workings of the 'East Asian security' system that the tilt is designed to reinforce. At the heart of East Asia and in the early years of its century, the system that the tilt would reinforce has already the same kind of fault lines running through it as once proved fatal to the Warsaw Pact.

The year 2012 marked the fortieth anniversary of Okinawa's reversion in 1972 from twenty-seven years of direct US military rule, but the celebrations (in May) were muted; few Okinawans regret the fact of reversion but almost universally they resent the fact that the national government continues to insist the prefecture's primary *raison d'être* be the service of US military ends.

For Australia, apparently intent on following Japan down the path of 'deepening' and 'strengthening' its alliance with the United States while also turning to embrace Asia, the nature of the US–Japan relationship and the Okinawa experience are matters worthy of careful attention.

## **Okinawa: Rape and Bases**

In September 1995 the Okinawan problem in its present acute form originated from the rape of a twelve-year-old school girl by three US servicemen. The prefecture galvanised in fury and elicited a

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17 McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, pp. 91ff.

pledge the following year from the two national governments that Futenma Marine Air Station (once famously referred to by then Defence Secretary Rumsfeld as the 'most dangerous base in the world' because it sits in the middle of the bustling township of Ginowan) would indeed be returned 'within five to seven years'. Sixteen years on, there is no sign whatever of that happening; instead the runways are reinforced and the base's military functions upgraded.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the 1996 agreement to 'return' Futenma, the Japanese government's commitment to prioritize US military purposes over Okinawan aspirations did not falter. The two governments evaded their pledge by making it conditional on construction of a 'substitute', and the substitute turned out to mean an even larger, multi-service military facility that would be built in the northern part of Okinawa (at Henoko on Oura Bay). The prefecture's 1.3 million people took every democratic and non-violent means to protest, beginning with a Nago City plebiscite in 1997 that declared opposition to the base construction project, while the national government responded by adopting every means at its disposal to persuade, intimidate, or subvert these movements, pouring 'development' aid into projects designed to feed dependence and compliance on the part of local governments and appropriating special cabinet slush funds to ensure defeat of prominent figures who would not cooperate.

From August 2007 the environmental assessment (EI) process required by law was instituted on the substitute base project at Henoko. The designated area is one classified by Okinawa as requiring the highest level of protection because of its unique and precious marine and forest environment, and the idea that a large military base could be imposed on it as inherently improbable as if someone were to suggest the same for the American Grand Canyon or Australia's Kakadu. However, Japan had repeatedly and unconditionally promised the United States that the base would be built, so the EI process, conducted by nominees of its own Department of Defence, could not be anything but a formality, 'go-ahead' its only imaginable outcome.

Independent experts pronounced the EI 'the very worst in Japanese experience'. Despite being himself a conservative ex-

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<sup>18</sup> Details of this and other matters not footnoted in this article can be found in McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*.

bureaucrat, Okinawa's Governor Nakaima Hirokazu concluded that it would be a practical impossibility to proceed with the plan and that there was no way that the environment could be protected under it. As the *Japan Times* noted, 'the Japanese EIA has been hijacked and turned into a political vehicle with which the Okinawa Defence Bureau [ODP, the local branch of the Ministry of Defence] has forced the base construction plan forward'.<sup>19</sup> The legality of the process is currently under challenge in courts in Naha and in San Francisco but the governments of Japan and the United States show no sign of awaiting any judicial outcome.

### **Osprey: Unwanted Bird**

The government withheld from the EI study any mention of the possible impact of an entirely new type of aircraft that the Pentagon planned to introduce, the MV22-VTOL (vertical take-off and landing) Osprey, even though it had first learned in 1996 of the United States' intention to deploy it. Not till 2011, the EI processes essentially complete, did it issue a peremptory, one-page fax informing Okinawan local governments that the Osprey was coming. The Osprey is a significant upgrade on existing helicopters, twice as fast, able to carry three times as much load, with an operational radius four times greater and, most importantly, it has a bad safety record, including two crashes and one emergency landing just in 2012. Governor Nakaima declared that its deployment would be 'extremely impossible' (sic) and suggested that if the aircraft were really so safe they could be deployed in Tokyo's Hibiya or Shinjuku Gyoen parks. Any Osprey accident, he warned, would cause such a furore as to threaten the entire base system.<sup>20</sup> Naha City mayor, the conservative Onaga Takeshi, described it as the worst proposal ever and declared that he could not contain his fierce anger at the way the people of Okinawa and Naha were being mocked. Opposition to the planned deployment of the Osprey grew exponentially, by 2012 reaching 90 per cent and in Ginowan City 97 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

Tellingly, Prime Minister Noda told a television audience in July 2012 that on a matter such as the Osprey deployment on which the

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19 'Okinawa Accepts Receipt of Environmental Impact Report', *Japan Times*, 6 January 2012.

20 'Base-Hosting Governors, Mayor Opposes Osprey Plan', *Japan Times*, 2 July 2012.

21 'Osupurei haibi, Okinawa wa shokminchi de wa nai, gunji shijoshugi o aratameyo', editorial, *Ryukyū shimpo*, 28 September 2012.

United States had made a decision, there was 'no point in Japan trying to say let's do this or let's do that'. In other words the United States' will was paramount and it alone would decide what weapons systems would circulate through Japan's skies.<sup>22</sup> Uniquely among modern democratic and capitalist states, Japan neither controls nor apparently wishes to control its own skies.

## The Resistance

But servility at the centre feeds resistance at the periphery. Okinawa's history, especially in the forty years since its reversion to Japan, has been marked by the struggle to limit the bases and secure their return. The US–Japan refusal to return Futenma in accord with the 1996 promise and the effort to impose the much larger substitute base at Henoko, stirred an opposition movement that grew steadily, evolving into a fierce, prolonged, and still unresolved contest on land and in the sea. It saw, *inter alia*, the adoption of resolutions in the Okinawan parliament (the Prefectural Assembly) and in city and town assemblies, the issue of strongly worded statements of appeal against the base construction project, and the longest non-violent sit-in protest in Japanese history, launched in 2008 and still continuing. The movement reached a new level with the victory in national elections in August 2009 of a Democratic Party of Japan government headed by Hatoyama Yukio, which pledged to remove Futenma to 'somewhere outside Okinawa', and in the following year, the election of a Nago City mayor and City Assembly majority committed to preventing any such base construction. During 2010: in February the Prefectural Assembly adopted a unanimous resolution of opposition; in April an all-Okinawa mass meeting endorsed it; and in November the conservative candidate for re-election as governor made removal of Futenma base outside the prefecture a central plank in his agenda and, once elected, immediately declared 'there is no place in Okinawa to move Futenma'. The energy generated by these civil struggles dissolved the left–right divide in Okinawa, generating a consensus that Okinawan society's interests should be given priority over those of the US military.

On 9 September 2012, with the clock ticking down to the sched-

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22 'Haibi jitai wa Beiseifu no hoshin de, doshiro, koshiro to iu hanashi wa nai', quoted in 'Osupurei yonin shusho made beikoku tsuiju to wa', *Okinawa taimusu*, 18 July 2012.

uled Osprey deployment, and following adoption of resolutions of protest by the Prefectural Assembly and all forty-one cities and towns throughout Okinawa, an extraordinary 'All-Okinawa' protest meeting brought over 100,000 people to Ginowan City (a short drive from the capital, Naha). Medoruma Shun, the prefecture's pre-eminent novelist, spoke of a mood of desperation as all legal, democratic avenues to influence government policy were tried and exhausted.<sup>23</sup> Of the two Okinawan newspapers, the *Okinawa taimusu* (30 September) insisted that the Japanese government by its 'clinging to subordination to the US and trampling on the will of the Okinawan people is responsible for setting fire to the magma of popular anger',<sup>24</sup> and the *Ryukyū shimpo* (30 September) said 'Japan and the United States should look without blinkers at how the Okinawan people are driven by righteous anger and realize that a US-Japan alliance that does not enjoy the support of the people is a castle built on sand'.<sup>25</sup>

Late in September, the Okinawan movement resorted to direct action, gathering from the 26th at the Futenma camp gates to try to physically block the arriving Osprey. The ensuing 'Futenma siege' lasted for several days, and succeeded on the 29th in accomplishing something unprecedented, actually closing all access gates. On the 30th, the clearly rattled government mobilized a large force of riot police to crack down hard, physically seizing and dragging away members of the National Diet and of Prefectural, City and Town Assemblies, women and men, young and old, detaining them for hours without warrant in a makeshift roadside enclosure. Tokyo was determined to serve the Pentagon by imposing the Osprey irrespective of Okinawan objections. The twelve aircraft therefore arrived at Futenma early in October 2012 and began flying up and down the island exactly as planned.

## Okinawa: Bases as Rape

On 16 October 2012, while the prefecture was still seething with anger over the Osprey being thrust violently upon it, another rape was reported, by two sailors of a young Okinawan woman. It was reckoned to be the 130th rape or attempted rape by US servicemen

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23 Medoruma Shun, quoted in 'MV22 kyo hirai, min-i wa fumitsubusareta', *Okinawa taimusu*, 1 October 2012.

24 'Geto mae kogi maguma ga funshutsu shihajimeta', *Okinawa taimusu*, 30 September 2012.

25 'Haibi soshi kodo, hiboryokuteki shudan o tettei shiyo', *Ryukyū shimpo*, 30 September 2012.

in the forty years since Okinawa reverted from the United States to Japan.<sup>26</sup> As in 1995, US government and Pentagon officials bowed in apology, promised it would not happen again, and imposed an 11pm curfew. Unimpressed, the Prefectural Assembly adopted a resolution (the one hundredth such protest resolution in the forty years since reversion) declaring that measures to prevent such attacks or to 'educate' service personnel were useless, and that the Osprey deployment had tested Okinawans 'beyond the limits of their endurance'.<sup>27</sup> Just how little the curfew and the promise of good behaviour meant was clear in the early hours of the morning of 2 November, two weeks later, when a sailor who had been drinking heavily made his way into the third floor bedroom of a thirteen-year-old Okinawan boy, punched him, and then fell to the street below.

The Osprey imposition and the latest rape and violent intrusion incidents reinforced in Okinawan minds an understanding of the base system as one of violence, in which neither streets nor skies were safe. The politics of bases is the politics of rape and violence and the only way to stop crimes by American soldiers is by closing the bases. Even Japan's top Okinawan defence official, in 2011, had explained the government's delay in prosecuting the base construction by saying, 'When you are about to rape someone do you say, "Now I am going to rape you"?'<sup>28</sup> In other words, the forced imposition of the base on Okinawa was itself rape and those enforcing it, himself included, rapists.

## Deterrence?

Outsiders, including many mainland Japanese people, inclined to sympathize with Okinawa's plight nonetheless protest that the defence of Japan (or of the 'free world') does not come without cost and Okinawans should be more realistic about the burden required of them for the common good by reason of their geographic location. But there are problems with this: assuming there is a North Korean or Chinese threat to be deterred, it is surely the US Air Force and Navy, operating out of bases in mainland Japan and

26 Takazato Suzuyo, 'Sabetsu ishiki - guntai de zofuku', *Okinawa taimusu*, 21 October 2012. See also the accompanying table of all reported sexual crimes up to the end of 2009. This figure covers only reported assaults and the real figure is almost certainly much higher.

27 "'Kenmin no gaman no genkai" kengikai ga shudan josei boko chisho jiken de kogi ketsugi', *Ryukyuu shimpo*, 22 October 2012.

28 For discussion, see McCormack and Norimatsu, *Resistant Islands*, pp. 259–60.

Okinawa (Kadena) that deter it, not the Marine Corps, which is in any case a small detachment designed not for defence but for attack, deep in enemy territory. Furthermore, the concentration of such an attack force in Okinawa guarantees the island a high place on the list for pre-emptive (or retaliatory) attack by Chinese missiles. In other words, in the name of deterrence Okinawa is assigned a front-line role in a burgeoning confrontation with China that instead enhances its vulnerability. Yet, ironically, Okinawans have little sense of 'China threat' for the reason that, as the Ryukyu kingdom, their islands enjoyed close and friendly relations within the Chinese world order for 500 years until 1879. For most Okinawan people today China still represents the promise of shared prosperity, much increased exchanges of people and goods — all the things that were associated by the Gillard White Paper with the Asian century — not the threat to which the tilt is directed.

To the question: Why then Okinawa? there are essentially two answers. Firstly, Okinawa was taken by US forces in the summer of 1945, after fierce fighting and heavy casualties, and the bases were built during the seventeen years of occupation that followed when the United States enjoyed a free hand and could simply brush aside the rights of Okinawan landowners. Having retained an extraordinary degree of dominance and control over Okinawa, despite the reversion of the island to Japanese administrative control in 1972, as an omnipotent 'state within the state', the Pentagon is naturally reluctant to see its rights cut back. Secondly, the Japanese government has so internalized the client state or servility spirit that it clings to the United States' presence, insists it not be cut back and pays a huge subsidy (twice that paid by NATO to retain US forces in Europe) to maintain it. As the United States edges closer to the financial precipice the Pentagon digs in its heels, determined to resist any attrition to either its territory or its subsidies from Japan. Okinawa is assigned a contemporary role akin to that which it served in 1945, as territory to be sacrificed for the defence of Japan 'proper'.

### **Okinawa vs. Japan and the United States**

For sixteen years, therefore, Okinawa has been the scene of one of the most remarkable non-violent political protest movements in modern Japanese (or indeed world) history. Resistance — fierce, uncompromising, non-violent and popularly supported — has

grown to the point where the entire prefecture is at loggerheads with the Japanese state. Okinawa has blocked the concentrated efforts of the world's two most powerful democratic governments to foist a new base structure upon it, so that not one sod of the new base promised in 1996 has been turned, and despite efforts by successive governments to break or subdue the Okinawan opposition, it has grown stronger.

On the eve of the May 2012 reversion commemoration, newspaper opinion surveys found that 69 per cent of Okinawans believed they were the subject of inequitable and discriminatory treatment because of the heavy concentration of US military bases, and nearly 90 per cent took the position that the Futenma Marine Base should either be unconditionally closed or be moved away, to elsewhere in Japan or beyond. Soon afterwards, opposition to the Osprey deployment was also recorded at 90 per cent.

The nominally democratic but actually servile state in Tokyo plumbs new depths of obsequiousness (to Washington) and new heights of arrogance and insensitivity (to Okinawa) in its Okinawa policy. It is on Japan's frontier, perversely, that democracy flourishes as Okinawans and their elected representatives resist a system that prefers US military and strategic ends to democratic and constitutional principle, and that requires them to bear indefinitely the disproportionate burden of the US military presence.

The Okinawan movement — following the Okinawan mass protest of the 1950s against compulsory land acquisition for base construction and expansion, and of the late 1990s and early 2000s for reversion of Futenma, against base construction at Henoko, and against Osprey — has now expanded its focus from those large but relatively limited goals to securing the closure and return of *all* the Okinawan bases and the demilitarization of Okinawa.<sup>29</sup> Neither the Japanese state, in the hands of the servile faction, nor the Obama of the tilt is likely to yield. Likewise, the Okinawan movement shows no signs of yielding; rather the reverse. Furthermore, it seems that Okinawans have drawn from the siege of Futenma in September 2012 the lesson that it is in fact possible to stop the functioning of the bases. Greater numbers would have to be mobilized but henceforth, instead of passively responding to events by constantly

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<sup>29</sup> The call became explicit in the wake of the September rape: 'Okinawans Demand Closure of US Bases', *Japan Times*, 18 October 2012.

appealing and protesting, they would carry the attack (non-violently) to the base(s). Okinawan novelist Medoruma calls for a redoubling of effort. It is time, he says, to show the US forces that they are not welcome in Okinawa: indeed, 'I believe that with the strength of the Okinawan people the Futenma base can be liquidated'.<sup>30</sup> Okinawa is sometimes described, with good reason, as magma rising.

Unequal as the contest obviously is, the fact is that the people of Okinawa have successfully resisted the governments in Tokyo and Washington for sixteen years. It goes without saying that the super-states today have the force necessary to prevail, but to resort to force would be to expose the hollowness of their cause and undermine it, perhaps fatally. The Okinawan movement, were it to occur anywhere in a state not part of or affiliated to the Western world's major powers, would be acclaimed, given the name of a flower, and its proponents treated as heroes. But Okinawa's leaders are unknown, international solidarity is minimal, and the super-power 'proponents of democracy' in Washington and Tokyo concentrate on finding ways to neutralize or crush them. The weakness of the Okinawan case, as compared to that in states whose democratic movement is adopted by Western governments, is that Okinawa's story is little told in mainland Japan and hardly at all in the outside world, with some few exceptions — notably the *New York Times* which recently urged the withdrawal of the Osprey, describing it as a 'hugely expensive, dubiously useful', weapon whose deployment was 'salt in an old wound' for Okinawa.<sup>31</sup>

On the eve of the 2012 US presidential election, the *Ryukyu shimpo* posed a question for candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney: 'Why does the US that upholds the high ideals of freedom and democracy and respect of basic human rights and the rule of law not implement them in Okinawa?'<sup>32</sup> Later, announcing the election result, it repeated the question, 'Isn't it time now for democracy and human rights in Okinawa?'<sup>33</sup> It was shocking that this heartland of US–Japan cooperation and bastion of the free world

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30 M. Shun, 'Okinawa kenmin e no boryoku ni yotte susumerareta Osupurei haibi (2)' Uminari no shima kara, 14 October 2012, <<http://blog.goo.ne.jp/awamori777/>>, accessed 25 February 2013.

31 'Ospreys in Okinawa', editorial, *New York Times*, 14 September 2012.

32 'Bei daitoryo sen kanetsu, shomen kara Okinawa mondai ronjiyo', *Ryukyu shimpo*, 11 October 2012.

33 'Obama shi saisen, kichi mondai no "zenshin" nozomu, Okinawa ni mo jinken, minshushugi o', *Ryukyu shimpo*, 8 November 2012.

should have had thus to plead, almost desperately, for democracy and human rights from the two governments that represent themselves as avatars of those very principles.

The question applies too to Australia, which boasts of close ties with both the United States and Japan. Some would argue that it too is a servile, or client state and it is a question that deserves serious consideration though beyond the scope of this article. Within Asia, however, Japan is likely the country that Australia knows best, yet it ignores US interventions to deny Japan the right to function as a sovereign state, and the consequent denial of democracy and basic human rights in Okinawa. If, as this article argues, the US alliance system, as reinforced now by the tilt, deprives the people of a core region of their basic democratic rights how can it offer regional security? And if the US alliance system means for Japan the imposition of servility at the national level and the denial of democratic rights at the regional level, can it mean quite different things for Australia?