Was the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Agreement a Legacy of Protests?

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Abstract

This paper reassesses the impact of protests on the 1971 Okinawa Reversion Agreement, spanning the period from 1952 to 1972. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature, three previously unexplored dynamics emerge: a) certain protests exhibited correlation, yielding cumulative synergistic effects over time; b) decision-makers responded by quelling protesters; c) internal conflicts among Okinawans diminished the efficacy of protests. Some protests proved counterproductive, hindering the restoration of Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa and complicating the assessment of their overall contribution to reversion. The 1971 agreement, ostensibly signaling Okinawa's return to Japanese control, retained provisions enabling continued American military presence, adding complexity to the evaluation of protest impact. This ambiguity may explain the concurrence between Washington and Tokyo on the Okinawan reversion. Notably, geopolitical instability in East Asia during the early 1970s, coupled with financial challenges faced by the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) in maintaining Okinawa bases, contributed to the conducive climate for reversion. Concurrently, Tokyo's assistance, driven by domestic electoral considerations, further facilitated the Okinawan reversion process.

Keywords: 1971 Okinawa Reversion Agreement, Protesters, United States military bases

Introduction

Christopher Aldous argued in 2003 that the study on Okinawa's struggle for sovereign restoration to Japan was a neglected topic in English-language academia where there was a tendency to overlook the internal dynamics in Okinawa (2003a, p. 485). His argument was justified by Calder's emphasis on the significance of "[disaggregating] the nation state, and [examining] the incentives and structural relationships that prevail within individual nations" (2007, p. 81).

Although the pre-reversion Okinawa was not a nation-state, slightly different from Calder's framework, actors from different levels within it did influence the policy-making process by protesting. Thereafter, Yuko Kawato wrote a monograph to analyze the politics of bases and protests, in which she proposed a "causal process" to analyze how policy-makers react to protesters (2015). According to Kawato, "base policy is a part of 'high politics'" that the policy-making process is not accessible to the public. The only way for them to influence the decision is to protest (2015, p. 3). She believes protests contributed to the Okinawan reversion but also stresses the significance of Washington's need for maintaining the US-Japanese alliance (2015, p. 63).

Masamichi Inoue's book *Okinawa and the U.S. Military: Identity Making in the Age of Globalization* discusses the role of identity and interaction between the Okinawan identity and the US military presence (2007). Although Inoue does not specify clearly, it is worth noting that formation of the Okinawan identity is a product of internal political dynamics and international dynamics. Therefore, if Okinawan identity persuades the Okinawan protesters to protest, it is necessary to consider how the international setting shapes the Okinawan identity.

By exploring the pre-reversion Okinawan history of protests from 1952 to 1972, I find three scenarios not explored by scholars who emphasizing the influence of protesters (Takizawa, 1971; Mendel, 1975; Egami, 1994; Aldous, 2003a; Figal, 2007; Tanji, 2006; Kawato, 2015), that is, (1) some protests were corelated and the synergistic effects of them were cumulative over time; (2) some protesters exited voluntarily and involuntarily from the protests; and (3) the solidarity exhibited by protesters was ostensible.

The three scenarios made the task of assessing protesters' influence difficult because they proved that not all protests facilitated the reversion of Okinawa. Also, it is worth noting that the 1972 Okinawan reversion was nominal and the US could continue to use its bases in Okinawa, therefore, the US had an incentive to agree on the nominal reversion. Then I explore

factors irrelevant to protesters and find that the finance provided by Tokyo to Washington and the changing geopolitics in East Asia in the early 1970s facilitated the Okinawan reversion, again, albeit nominal. In other words, the works (besides the works mentioned before, see also: Miyazato, 1975; Kim, 1973) that contribute the reversion to protests are partial in not giving the international influence enough attention, while the works (besides the works mentioned before, see also: Komine, 2013) that analyze the Okinawan reversion from the perspectives of US-Japanese relationship or international relations fail to take into consideration the influence of Okinawan protesters. They also do not explicitly connect the Okinawan reversion to the changing setting of the East Asian geopolitics during the Cold War. That is, this article provides a synergistic framework in analyzing and explaining why and how the Okinawan reversion happened.

Background

After the Second World War, Japan's territory Okinawa was occupied by the United States. In 1950 in response to the outbreak of the Korean war, to permanently use Okinawa as a military base, the military government of Okinawa was reorganized into United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands (USCAR) (Toriyama & David, 2003, pp. 403-405). Although the USCAR founded later the Government of Ryukyu Islands (GRI) which was headed by an Okinawan Chief Executive, the Chief Executive was not popularly elected but appointed by Americans until 1968. Moreover, to cut down the connection between Okinawa and Japan, the legislature of GRI passed to law to prevent Okinawa from receiving aids from Japan (Toriyama & David, 2003, pp. 405-406).

Although Okinawa was originally constructed as a showcase of democracy (Yoshida, 2001, pp. 70-90), since the occupation, the USCAR expropriated lands from local people to construct military bases for the US armies. The construction and usage of military bases were accompanied by high crime rates of servicemen, environmental pollution, and so on. To alleviate Okinawan people's hostility, USCAR even adopted policies of instilling English into the local people (Ishihara, 2004). In response to protests against military bases, since 1952, the USCAR started to compensate landowners with a scanty lump-sum payment, which was unacceptable to landowners (Sarantakes, 2000, pp. 92-93). To make matters worse, the USCAR did not even realize protesters' infuriation. They perceive protesters' requested amount of compensation as credible or desirable and rejected them (Kawato, 2015, pp. 4-5).

Since landowners did not accept the compensations and protests happened intermittently, Washington appointed a committee chaired by Melvin Price, who had a mission to investigate the land situation in Okinawa. The committee released the Melvin Price Report that recommends some ways to compensate local landowners but also justifies the forced expropriation of lands (Ryukyu-Okinawa History and Culture Website, 1955). The Melvin Price Report further irritated local Okinawans. The conflict between the USCAR and local people escalated in 1956 and caused an island-wide protest but it faded in 1958 when the USCAR permitted limited elections and suspended the lump-sum payment.

In the 1960s, the demands of protesters became diverse. They included but were not limited to (1) reforms vis-à-vis the increasing crime rate of American servicemen; (2) making Okinawa a neutral area in the context of Cold War; and (3) denuclearization (Tanji, 2006, p. 77). Whatever demands Okinawans had, they unanimously did not want the US militaries to stay in Okinawa. The political pluralism brought by the political liberalization, though limited, as well added more pressure to the US (Tomohisa, 1968). Then, reacting to the protesters and the changing East Asian geopolitics in the late 1960s, US president Richard Nixon and Japan prime minister Satō Eisaku signed an agreement in 1969 on the reversion of Okinawa to Japan. However, the Nixon-Satō Agreement did not stipulate the removal of bases from Okinawa. Nor did it meet other demands of protesters. Okinawans were dissatisfied with the agreement. From 1969 to 1972, the political situation was volatile in Okinawa. Koza Riot, the largest-scale protest in pre-reversion Okinawa, outbroke in 1970. In 1972, Japan restored its sovereignty over Okinawa, but America continued to use bases in Okinawa.

A Diversity of Protests Rather Than a Monolithic Protest

Although the major protests in the 1950s were to express Okinawans' grievance about the USCAR's policy of forced land appropriation, it is problematic to regard the protesters as having the same appeal unanimously. Most major protesters did want more compensation from America for the loss of their lands, but when the protests escalated to a full-scale protest in 1956, many protesters' pursuit was to return Okinawa to Japan to solve the problem caused by the USCAR (Tanji, 2006, pp. 72-73).

In the 1950s, some protesters were forced to exit by the USCAR. For example, the so-called pro-communist politician Senaga Kamejirō was arrested in 1954. On the other side, the USCAR responded to the protesters more than once in the 1950s because different protesters

caused different trouble to the USCAR. The USCAR adopted measures including arresting protesters, exerting pressure on the Chief Executive of GRI, releasing the *Melvin Price Report* to justify the lump-sum payment, imposing economic sanctions on Okinawan businessmen, and compensating Okinawans in 1958.

As a retaliation to the USCAR, Koza Riot, the most serious protest in pre-reversion Okinawa, outbroke (Aldous, 2003b, p. 148). Furthermore, the protests since 1960 were more diverse. Different groups of people protested at that time. Their arguments included not only reversion but also removal of nuclear weapons in Okinawa, and judicial reforms vis-à-vis the high rate of crimes committed by the US military personnel (Tanji, 2006, pp. 77-78). In sum, the protests that happened in Okinawa were too complicated that it was an oversimplification to treat different protests as one monolithic protest.

Three Unmentioned Scenarios

In addition to the lump-sum payment made by the USCAR in 1954 and the suspension of it in 1958, America also responded to Okinawan protesters by eliminating protesters from protests and imposing economic sanctions on local people.

From 1955 to 1956, the USCAR adopted a series of policies to deal with the protests. The responses from the USCAR were interwoven with protests, i.e., the protests and responses were connected and cumulated over time. Consequently, the protests and responses from 1952 to 1958 constructed a circulation. Also, among Okinawans, there were some groups of people who did not share the same demand as protesters. Sometimes, these people could counteract the efforts of protesters.

Scenario One: The Protester-Policymakers Interaction is a Circulation

Kawato treats a diversity of protests in the 1950s as one protest, starting from protesters' opposition to the forced appropriation of lands in 1955 and ending with the suspension of the lump-sum payment in 1958 (Kawato, 2015, pp. 45-53). However, the interaction between protesters and policy-makers was cyclical. Before suspending the lump-sum payment, the USCAR adopted many measures to deal with the protesters. In addition to the lump-sum payment made in 1954, the measures included eliminating the protester Senaga Kamejir**ō**, forcing the then-Chief Executive of GRI Higa Sh**ū**hei to help pacify discontented protesters, and imposing economic sanctions on local people like prohibiting American military

personnel from consuming in Okinawa. As argued by Morin and Paquin, problems related to foreign policies cannot be settled permanently by just one action (Morin & Paquin, 2018, p. 44), it is problematic to assume that one response can pacify protesters forever.

Having said that, it does not mean that all protests in the 1950s constructed one circulation. In this part, I regard the USCAR's starting compensating Okinawans with the lump-sum payment in 1952 as the starting point of the circulation. The ending point is 1958 when the USCAR suspended the lump-sum payment and permitted Okinawans to elect their legislators and mayors.

The USCAR started to compensate Okinawans for their expropriated lands with the lump-sum payment in 1952, but the limited number of compensations was unacceptable to landowners (Sarantakes, 2000, pp. 92-93). The order of magnitude of protests increased in 1955 when the USCAR expropriated a fertile land called Isahama and continued to pay landowners with a lump sum (Tanji, 2006, p. 70). Reacting to the forced acquisition, the angry Okinawans protested but were responded by America with the *Melvin Price Report* that did not increase the amount of compensation but justified the permanent lease of the expropriated land (Tanji, 2006, p. 70). The circulation did not end with the *Melvin Price Report*. A more serious protest broke out in 1956 involved participants from almost every class, including even the then-Chief Executive Higa Shūhei. This protest finally evolved into a demand of returning Okinawa to Japan to solve the land disputes caused by the USCAR (Tanji, 2006, pp. 72-73).

The USCAR rejected the demands of protesters. It warned to abolish the institutions run by local Okinawans to force Higa to change his stance. As a pragmatist, Higa was converted and helped the USCAR to placate the discontented protesters (Tanji, 2006, p. 73). But Higa passed away abruptly during the protest and the USCAR failed to terminate the circulation. Meanwhile, the USCAR prohibited the US military personnel and their families from entering central Okinawa, which seemed to use the economic sanctions to force local people to exit from protests (Tanji, 2006, pp. 73-74).

It is debatable whether the prohibition was retaliation because Yamazaki argues that the USCAR forbid those US militaries from entering central Okinawa to avoid further conflicts between the servicemen and local people (Yamazaki, 2007, p. 191). Whichever is true, we cannot deny that the protests and responses were connected and cumulated over time.

At that time, the economic sanctions and lump-sum payment failed to deal with the protests, but America still did not agree to pay landowners on the basis of an annual rental because

they believed the rental payment would only give impetus to a new protest (Sarantakes, 2000, p. 93). The situation got more serious because the continued opposition in Okinawa since the 1956 Struggle forced the US army to retreat from Okinawa (Sarantakes, 2000, p. 94). The crisis of protests faded in 1958 after the USCAR compromised. The first compromise the USCAR offered is to permit a full-scale legislative election in March and municipality-level elections in September (Sarantakes, 2000, p. 100). The second compromise is that in April, the USCAR suspended the lump-sum payment and invited the protesters to Washington to negotiate over the land dispute (Tanji, 2006, p. 74).

In sum, the lesson of this scenario is that protesters are not always satisfied with responses from policy-makers. An inadequate compromise can be a catalyst for a new protest. Before protesters and policy-makers reach a consensus, there is a great deal of toing and froing. Also, readers can find one reason for the USCAR's compromise in 1958, that is, the escalating protests had impacted the effective usage of bases in Okinawa.

Scenario Two: The Elimination of Protesters

It is worth noting that the protester could be eliminated by the policy-maker, i.e., USCAR. The term "eliminate" does not mean the protester is physically destroyed. It means that the protester is forced to exit the protest. In this part, I analyze the USCAR's erroneous decision to arrest Senaga Kamejir**ō** and the success to convert Higa Sh**ū**hei into an opponent to protests.

Senaga was a veteran in protesting against the USCAR. Early in 1952, in the ceremony of founding the USCAR, when other attendees stood up, Senaga was the only person who sat to protest silently (Sako, 2017a). He founded the Okinawa People's Party (OPP), a left-wing party that was active in protesting against the trusteeship of the United States in Okinawa (Yoshihara, 1973, p. 267; Aldous, 2003a, p. 490). Senaga was influential in organizing protests. Each time he gave speech, the audience could add up to tens of thousands of audiences, which strongly troubled the USCAR (Sako, 2017b).

Because of the strategic significance of Okinawa, Washington could not endure a leftist political figure who was against America's control over Okinawa. As a result, OPP was outlawed and Senaga was arrested in 1954 (Sako, 2017c). However, Senaga's being eliminated did not stop the protests. The protests and reactions once again constructed a circulation. To help Senaga, local people demonstrated before the police department of Naha (Sako, 2017c). After

the two-year sentence, Senaga was released and became more influential. He participated in the 1956 Protest and was elected as the mayor of Naha. Yet, Senaga was ousted from the post of mayor in 1957, just one year after the election (Cooley, 2008, p. 147).

Senaga's being imprisoned means that decision-makers have more choices to deal with protesters. However, the demonstration occurred after the USCAR arrested Senaga shows that arrests cannot always deter people from protests. Moreover, the increased influence of Senaga after the two-year sentence proves that being in jail can increase a protester's influence.

Different from Senaga, Higa Shūhei was not troublesome to the USCAR. As a pro-American political figure, the only major protest Higa participated in was the 1956 Protest. But when the USCAR warned to abolish the institutions run by local Okinawans, for fear that Okinawans would lose the only official channel to voice their discontent and negotiate with America, Higa exited the protest and helped the USCAR to deal with the angry protesters (Tanji, 2006, pp. 72-73).

In sum, not all protesters could remain steadfast in protesting against American rule, when the policy-makers adopt the correct policy, they can convert the protesters into supporters. Yet, the choice of eliminating protesters is not a panacea. When policy-makers eliminate protesters in a hardline way, the elimination can be counterproductive. Compromise is a better approach.

Scenario Three: Conflicting Stance of Protesters

Although protesters protested against the USCAR, they had internal conflicts. Their stances on the military bases were conflicting. Although they seemed to unanimously protest against America, they have different pursuits. Under some conditions, the pro-American local activists could counteract the efforts of other protesters. Also, some protesters seemed to protest against America but in fact did not want the removal of military bases, i.e., they protested to increase their economic gains from the existence of military bases.

The first case lies in Higa Shūhei. As already mentioned, Higa participated in the 1956 Protest but then was dissuaded from the protest. Moreover, he was persuaded to help the USCAR to convert Okinawans to support the USCAR, which counteracted the efforts of protests.

The second case relates to Higa. At that time, a group of schemers participated in the ouster of Senaga Kamejirō. Readers have read before that Senaga was ousted from the mayor of Naha in 1957. In fact, when the USCAR schemed to oust Senaga, some Okinawan locals, businessmen, and politicians assisted in the ouster because of the pressure from America

(Sarantakes, 2000, pp. 96-97). These people dependent on the bases also counteracted the efforts of protesters.

The third example is the anti-prostitution protest. Before reversion, some Okinawans were opposed to prostitution due to the belief that the immoral influence of prostitution would plague young Okinawans. However, their protests "were couched in pro-reversion rhetoric of equal protection under the Japanese constitution" because Japan passed and implemented anti-prostitution law in the late 1950s (Shimabuku, 2019, pp. 92-93). They seemed to support the reversion but they did not really care about the issue of reversion. Although they unintentionally helped bolster the influence of pro-reversion protests, there is no evidence that they wanted Okinawan reversion. If the USCAR were able to figure out their inner world, they could be persuaded to exit the protest.

In the fourth example, Arakawa Akira stands out. While the predominant protests in the 1960s centered on the reversion of Okinawa, Arakawa took an anti-reversionist stance. Rather than identifying himself as Japanese, he advocated for Okinawans to construct a distinct self-identity as Okinawans. However, it's important to note that he did not explicitly call for the secession of Okinawa from Japan. Due to his ambiguous stance, Arakawa unintentionally played a role in diverting some of the discontent from Okinawans towards the United States (Tanji, 2006, pp. 97-98).

The fifth example is the Koza Riot that happened in 1970. Since 1960, the protesters had been more diverse and they consequently had different or even incompatible pursuits in protests (Tanji, 2006, pp. 77-86). As the largest protest from 1945 to 1972, the Koza Riot was a very epitome of this phenomenon. Under the same objective of protesting against America, protesters had different calculations. Zengunrō protested because some Zengunrō members were thrown on the scrap heap just before the reversion (Tanji, 2006, p. 102). They were discontented with the unemployment. Some Okinawans protested because they did not accept the Nixon-Satō Agreement on the reversion, which did not meet their demand of removing all military bases from Okinawa (Sarantakes, 2000, p. 176). In the 1960s, they believed when Okinawa was returned to Japan, the problem caused by American occupation could be solved (Hateruma, 2019, p. 92). Therefore, when they were disillusioned, they became outrageous.

Having said that, the majority of protesters in the Koza Riot protested because of the high crime rates of the American militaries in Okinawa. When the United States was immersed in the Vietnam War, Okinawa became a transit area for American military forces. A lot of them

entertained themselves in Okinawa, drinking or taking drugs. But the military polices did not discharge the duty to supervise these soldiers (Tokyo Web, 2020). As a result, the crime rates increased rapidly. In the 1960s, American militaries and their dependents committed more than 1000 criminal cases every year (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2020a). Because American military personnel had extraterritoriality in Okinawa, they could violate local laws with impunity, which endangered Okinawans' safety and property (Aldous, 2003b, pp. 151-155).

Indeed, those who did not depend on the American bases for their livelihood naturally sought their removal, as they experienced the adverse effects with benefiting nothing from them. Conversely, individuals in the service sector, relying on the bases for economic sustenance, were opposed to their removal.

Take the service sector with *A Sign* as an example. The system of *A Sign* was created in the 1950s to protect American servicemen and their dependents. At that time, food shops and brothels working for servicemen should be assessed before getting the license. Only after they passed the evaluation can they get the *A Sign* (Yamazaki, 2008, p. 40). In an event of the Koza Riot, an owner of a food shop with *A Sign* tried to dissuade protesters from burning shops but the protesters warned to assault him. Ironically, many protesters were also owners of food shops. They protested and declared to carry out arson to air their grievance against the US militaries and the system of *A Sign* (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2000b).

When Okinawan protesters collided with America, businessmen and workers dependent on the American bases helped the US to deal with protesters. This is because the economic prosperity in Okinawa after the Second War was brought by the military bases. Okinawans acquiesced in the existence of bases because they did not want unemployment that might come after the removal of bases (Klein, 1972, p. 12). The economic ties between the US armies and local Okinawans made the existence of military bases inextricable part of Okinawans' lives daily lives. Okinawans had different stances on the bases, therefore, they had internal conflicts and the solidarity exhibited by them to an extent was ostensible.

Last Word on the Three Unexpected Scenarios

From the above analysis of the three unexpected scenarios, readers can once again find that the protests represented complicated landscapes. Although the analysis of the circular protester-policymaker interaction indicates that it was tricky for the policy-makers to deal with protesters, the other two scenarios tell readers that protesters were not as powerful as they

look. When policy-makers wanted, they could eliminate or dissuade people from protests, though some eliminated protesters would come back with popularity and become more influential among protesters.

The solidarity shown by Okinawan people was ostensible. At first glance, they seemed to unanimously object to the existence of bases. But in fact, some of them were critical of the problems brought by the bases, not the bases per se. Also, some people took the anti-base protests as a way to serve their own interests. When America could satisfy their real demands, the protests faded. For example, for the protests who protested against the high crime rate of the US military personnel, the policy-makers just needed to reform their police system (Aldous, 2003b, pp. 155-156). Removing the military bases was not what they really wanted nor could a removal satisfy them.

The last two scenarios indicating that protesters were ostensibly powerful are important for people to understand why the protests in the 1960s seemed to be less influential to policy-makers. When protesters did not have the full resolution in protesting for reversion or had different demands, it was easier for policy-makers to deal with them because policy-makers could dissuade those who are not loyal enough from protests. As protesters had a diversity of demands in the 1960s (Tanji, 2006, pp. 77-86), their internal conflicts worsened, which made their protests less influential.

Having said that, the ostensibly powerful protests could still cause trouble to the policy-makers. And policy-makers were sometimes ill-advised to adopt the wrong way to deal with protesters, which made a small protest culminate in a riot. In other words, it is difficult to assess the influence of protesters in the three unexpected scenarios. Their influence cannot be negated or overestimated. When it comes to the Okinawan protests in the 1960s, the impact on the reversion is the cumulative influence of a series of protests that include the three unexpected scenarios. It is more difficult to assess the influence of these protests.

Therefore, to figure out what contributed to the 1972 reversion and to what extent did the protests influence the reversion, it is necessary to consider some external factors that had a bearing on the reversion.

How the External Factors Influenced the Policy-makers

In addition to the theoretical call for examining international-level factors in Okinawan geopolitical situations (Komine, 2013; Kawato, 2015, p. 63), the preceding discussion also underscores that external influences on Okinawa are not negligible.

The external factors in this context are those not directly tied to the protesters but significantly impact the Okinawan geopolitical landscape. Specifically, these factors encompass compensations from Japan and shifts in the geopolitics of East Asia. The significance of the Nixon-Satō agreement, which did not mandate the removal of bases in Okinawa, is crucial for understanding why Washington agreed to the reversion of Okinawa. Considering these external factors alongside the influence of protests, it becomes apparent that the protests in the 1960s had limited direct impact on the Okinawan reversion. In essence, I argue that the three external factors discussed in this section played pivotal roles in the Okinawan reversion.

The first factor contributing to the reversion is that the Nixon-Satō agreement is a formality. The reversion did not remove military bases from Okinawa. After signing the agreement, America could still use the bases and store nuclear weapons in Okinawa. This argument is supported by the declassified documents from the then-U.S. Ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer. According to Rabson's analysis of the declassified documents, America's need to maintain its nuclear weapons in Okinawa and Japan's guarantee of America's "effective control of the [Okinawan] islands in time of military crisis" was stressed in the negotiation between America and Japan (Rabson, 2010). In fact, America did store nuclear weapons in Okinawa at least until 1971 (McCormack & Norimatsu, 2012, p. 58). Approval of a nominal reversion did not affect the usage of bases but could bring about benefits to America, which are to be discussed below, therefore it is not difficult to understand why Washington agreed on the reversion.

The second contributing element is that Japan paid America prodigious compensation for the nominal reversion when the USCAR was in financial difficulties. In the late 1960s when the geopolitics in East Asia was tempestuous, there was a growing need for effective usage of military bases in Okinawa (Higa, 1967, p. 151). However, when the costs to maintain the military bases in Okinawa increased, the USCAR failed to get the US Congress's approval on financial assistance (Miyasato, 1977, pp. 32-35). To maintain its rule over Okinawa, the USCAR had to seek help from Japan. Coincidentally, at the same time, the Japanese public was preoccupied with the sovereign restoration of Okinawa (Wakaizumi & Nilsson-Wright, 2002, p. 35). They were discontented with America's rule over Okinawa and supported the removal of American militaries (Watanabe 1977, p. 53). Moreover, Okinawa's reversion became a theme debated during the LDP presidential election in 1968 (Wakaizumi & Nilsson-Wright, 2002, pp. 37-38). Therefore, Tokyo was glad to pay America for restoring Japan's sovereignty over Okinawa. According to McCormack, the formally published amount of money Japan paid was 320 million

dollars, but it is estimated that Japan might pay the US 685 million dollars. The number is astronomical because the compensation Japan paid to South Korea in 1965 for Japan's colonial rule was $500 million, $185 million less than the one paid to America (McCormack & Norimatsu, 2012, p. 59).

The third factor is the changing geopolitics in East Asia. The dynamics of the Cold War played an important role not only in the 1960s but also in the pre-1960 period. With the advent of the Cold War, Washington had perceived the strategic significance of Okinawa in East Asia (Sandars, 2000, pp. 153-154). The USCAR's decision to oust Senaga Kamejirō from the post of the mayor of Naha was also based on the ideological struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Okinawa was constructed as a showcase of liberal democracy, therefore, a communist's being elected as the mayor of Naha indicated that people living in the capital of Okinawa chose communism (Sarantakes, 2000, p. 96). Senaga's influence over protesters was only one of the several reasons that finally led the USCAR to decide to remove him. The ideological discrepancy also catalyzed the ouster.

When the situation in East Asia was tempestuous, America became resolute in maintaining its bases and stressing effective usage of them. Okinawa is close to mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. During the Cold War, the bases in Okinawa were important for the US to protect its allies and send its troops to Southeast Asia. The strategic significance of Okinawa during the Cold War is stressed by the then-Commander in Chief of Pacific Command, Harry D. Felt, in 1959 that "as long as the communist threats exist in the Far East, the US would not plan to return Okinawa to Japan" (Okano, 2008, p. 10). The outbreak of the Vietnam War made the military bases in Okinawa further important (McCormack & Norimatsu, 2012, p. 90). When China succeeded in its nuclear bomb test in 1967, Satō Eisaku even pressed the Defense Secretary for a guarantee that the US would protect Japan with its nuclear weapons if Japan was attacked by China (Asahi Shinbun, 2021). At that time, Tokyo realized that the best way to protect both its residual sovereignty and national security was to provide economic assistance to increase Japan's influence in the base politics (Kim, 1973, pp. 1022-1023).

It is thought-provoking that the Nixon-Satō agreement was signed in 1969 because 1969 was the year the new Nixon administration relaxed the trade restriction on China, starting the process of rapprochement with China. As mentioned before, regarding the security of regions surrounding Okinawa, the threat posed by China was more serious than the Soviet Union (Sandars, 2000, pp. 153-154). Therefore, a question may arise: did the improved US-China

relationship contribute to the signing of the Nixon-Satō agreement? This question does not meet the principle of parsimony and it is problematic to credit the Okinawan reversion to the US-China détente in the early 1970s. Again, the nominal reversion did not affect the usage of bases in Okinawa. The Cold War continued to develop at that time. Whether China was reconciled with America or not, the threat posed by the socialist bloc including North Korea and North Vietnam still existed. The improved US-China relationship did not mean the end of the Cold War or guarantee that China would never go wars with America's allies in East Asia.

It was not precise to conclude that the dynamics of the Cold War forced Washington to return Okinawa to Japan because there were no fundamental changes. Precisely, it was due to the Cold War that Washington needed and approved a nominal reversion that could enable the American militaries to continue to use the bases effectively in Okinawa. Washington and Tokyo signed the agreement because they wanted to pacify protesters in Okinawa to use the bases effectively, though they failed to foresee that the Nixon-Satō Agreement would fuel sentiments in Okinawa and make the political dynamic more volatile from 1969 to 1972 (Cooley, 2008, p. 149). Nevertheless, at the time of signing the agreement, they both believed the nominal reversion could solve the problem.

The Cold War made the US-Japanese alliance important for America's strategies in East Asia, which further made it urgent for the US to renew the US-Japan Security Treaty that would expire in 1970. In addition, for America, it was better to negotiate with a pro-US Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rather than a leftist party. The aim to help LDP in elections gave Washington incentives to compromise on the reversion (Tanji, 2006, pp. 90-91). In other words, regional stability was the reason America signed the agreement with the Satō government. In the above discussion, readers can also find that the Cold War had a bearing on the compensation offered by America in 1958. The protests in the 1950s were influential because they impacted the effective usage of bases in Okinawa, which would endanger regional stability. Reaching an equilibrium among the US-Japanese alliance, usage of bases and protesters was always the guideline for Washington to contemplate the policies of bases.

As argued by Kawato, the reversion was a result of the need to maintain the US-Japanese alliance and help the Satō government (Kawato, 2015, p. 63). The consideration of the urgency to maintain the US-Japanese alliance, however, was based on East Asian regional security. Moreover, the Japanese government's efforts to alleviate the consequences of a formal reversion, particularly regarding the use of military bases, were pivotal. Without the compensations and

the guarantee of maintaining bases, Washington might not sign the Nixon-Satō Agreement. When considering the factors contributing to the Okinawan reversion, the two factors are not neglectable.

On balance, in terms of the role the Cold War played in the reversion, my argument is in line with the one of Sarantakes (Sarantakes, 2000, pp. 169-175). At that time, America wanted Japan to be responsible for the expenditures on military bases, and coincidentally, Japan was willing to pay America for a nominal reversion at that time. Also, signing an agreement on the reversion could help strengthen the US-Japan alliance and free Washington from dealing with protests in Okinawa, which was less pressing than the Vietnam War. Based on these considerations, Washington and Tokyo agreed on the Nixon-Satō Agreement. In sum, the Cold War had an indirect but significant bearing on the informal reversion.

Conclusion

Through this article, it is clear that protests happened in pre-reversion Okinawa should be analyzed case by case because they were not the same but connected and cumulated over time. However, the cumulative influence of protests does not necessarily imply that the pressure exerted by protesters on the U.S. was cumulative, leading to the eventual return of Okinawa to Japan. Again, some protesters detracted from the efforts of other protesters to restore Japanese sovereignty over Okinawa. Indeed, given that the influence of some protests was minimal or even counterproductive, treating all pre-reversion protests as a singular entity makes it challenging to accurately gauge the overall impact of protests on compelling the U.S. to return Okinawa to Japan.

Having said that, the protests from 1968 to 1972 did contribute to the Okinawan reversion. To mitigate the interference of protesters with American military operations in Okinawa and to spare Washington from dealing with continuous protests, the U.S. agreed to return sovereignty over Okinawa to Japan. Yet, the protests alone were not influential enough to convince Washington. They played a supplementary role. A nominal reversion that did not prevent Washington from using bases in Okinawa and Japan's prodigious compensation for signing a treatment within the context of changing East Asian geopolitics were the major reasons why Okinawan reversion happened in 1972.

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