

Keynote Lecture

Memory and US Military Bases in Okinawa: the unending war

Glenn D. Hook

Emeritus Professor,

Toshiba International Foundation Anniversary Research Professor,

School of East Asian Studies, University of Sheffield, UK

Thank you. I am very happy to be here and I first of all would like to thank Hiroshima University for the invitation.

Memory and US Military Bases
in Okinawa: the unending war

Glenn D. Hook
University of Sheffield, UK

What I would like to do is to try to put memory of the war in comparative domestic context in order to try to investigate some of the common issues that are faced with trying to deal with memory, because forgetting is also part of living. One of our questions really to start with is the different levels of memory that can be thought of. Memory at the individual level that the story we have heard of the way that the Hibakusha pass on

their own individual personal memories. That process can then be thought of as having a collective level where that memory of individuals comes together and create, say collective memory or memory on the national level. So, what I would like to do today is to look at memory in terms of spatial scale moving from the national scale or the global scale, which we will hear about in a few minutes, and to move in to look at memory within Japan. The basic point I am trying to make today is that memory is contested. In other words, in societies where the legacy of war brings about different political approaches to that memory and how that memory can be used as a political resource to try to create different futures, Japan is a very good illustration of the way that as a result of those contestations of political vision, what kind of future a

country wants, what kind of future might be possible, then memory becomes within that political context a resource which act as a use to help them to try to create these different kinds of futures.

Contested Memory

Memory is contested in a range of ways:

Collective versus Individual

National (official) versus grassroots (popular)

AIM: focus on collective memory on different spatial scales in Japan:

Memory at the national level (main islands) versus memory at the subnational level (Okinawa prefecture)

National and subnational agents negotiate, construct, embed and disseminate memory on these spatial scales. Key actors of different levels of government as well as the citizens.

So, within that context I will try to say something about how subnational agents, that is, agents on the level of the prefecture or the city, villages, and towns. So the level below the state may struggle to negotiate and embed and disseminate their own particular memory so that it not only becomes part of their local memory but in some way impacts on the national level. So, this is where you get the contestation when a domineering or hegemonic national memory crowds out other memories. This is contest between the embedding on a national level of collective memory made up of individuals, subnational special memories which are vying for prominence within that collective memory. How do you contest with that problem? What I would like to do is to

show how that has been happening in Okinawa.

As we know, because Japan lost the World War, the naming of the war is contested. So, when I was asked to talk about this question, what name shall I use for the war? In Britain it's quite easy. We just say the Second World War and we all understand what it is but in the case of Japan, because Japan lost the war, there are even struggles over how to call the war. Is it the East Asia War, the Greater East Asia War, the Second World War, the Pacific War, the Asia Pacific War, and whichever of those titles you use creates a different sense of what the war was. So, I wanted to use Asia Pacific War because it brings together the Pacific and Asian side because, of course, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima can be seen in the context of the Pacific, the war with the United States whereas Okinawa brings it closer to the Asian part of the equation.

The atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is also contested. So even once we agree that it's an Asia Pacific War then the dropping of the atomic bombs becomes a question of whether it is part of that war or whether it is actually the start of the cold war or the use of the atomic weapons to be contextualized in the

sense of the ending of the Second World War or do we take a sort of more revisionist approach and think of it rather as a first strike in the cold war, which emerges just a few years later. So that is the first thing. The second of course is because Japan then signed an alliance with the United States that alliance is based upon the existence and potential use of nuclear weapons. So, you have on the one hand government policy, which is based upon the commitment to an alliance with the United States. That alliance has as its premise American nuclear weapons which may potentially be used, and you have that government policy against the attempt to embed memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as leading to or helping to promote the abolition of nuclear weapons. So, there is a tension there. And of course the third tension is the tension I am interested today.

Contested Memory

- Memory of the Asia Pacific War politically contested
- Nuclear War Memory:
 - Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as end of Asia Pacific War versus start of Cold War with the Soviet Union;
 - Atomic weapons as acceptable as nuclear deterrent versus inhuman weapons of mass destruction
 - Politically contested as US nuclear weapons are the premise of the US-Japan security treaty, a treaty supported by 70-80 per cent of pollees, but similar amount of pollees are opposed to the use of nuclear weapons.

The tension within the alliance arises from the fact that it's not only

nuclear alliance, but it also has the conventional aspect to the alliance and that conventional aspect leads to the deployment of foreign soldiers on Japanese soil. Most of those foreign soldiers are in Okinawa. So, you have the problem in Okinawa then of how you resolve that difference between wanting to utilize the memory of the war and government policy, which leads to American troops being in Japan. My argument is really developing from that. In essence Hiroshima has a problem in embedding its own memory as one which should in some way contribute to the reduction and potential elimination of nuclear weapons. The problem here is that nuclear weapons are essential to Japan's nuclear alliance. Then on the other hand Okinawa has a problem in embedding its memory because in the case of Okinawa that comes into tension with government policy, that is, the deployment of American military forces in Okinawa. How do you deal with those two tensions? I don't have time to address both, so I just want to focus on the Okinawa part of that equation.

Firstly, it's very difficult to promote the memory of Hiroshima Nagasaki in Okinawa because the Okinawan memory is of conventional

war and so the focus is very much on how that conventional war is linked into an unending protest and a sense that the war has never ended for Okinawa. When I was doing research in Okinawa I interviewed the landowners who under duress may be forced to lend their land to the American forces. Many of them when they talked about their land, viewed it as still being occupied because the war is unending for them. So, this is where I get this expression, ‘the unending war’ because from their point of view the war hasn’t ended because they haven’t got their land back. The US military installations are seen by the government essential for the alliance and that brings dissonance between the national level and the subnational level in terms of memory in Okinawa.

Memory of the Asia Pacific War

• Conventional War Memory:

- Mainland Japan: ending of the war in August 1945 and American Occupation in April 1952.
- Okinawa: ‘unending war’ and American occupation until May 1972.
- US military installations as essential part of US-Japan security treaty for security of whole nation versus the risks and costs of US bases being faced disproportionately in Okinawa.
- Politically contested as US bases are the premise of the US-Japan security treaty, but these are concentrated in Okinawa and other prefectures unwilling to support their relocation. Inequality at heart of alliance.
- *Divergence between NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL MEMORY IN OKINAWA*

We saw this in 2013 when Prime Minister Abe started for the first time to promote the idea that the war should be commemorated. So, sovereignty restoration day was

introduced by the Abe administration in 2013. The memory for political leaders in Tokyo is the memory of the occupation ending in April 1952. That would be the collective memory but of course for Okinawa it is completely different because they were still occupied by the American forces. In other words, once you include Okinawa something as “easy” as determining when the end of the war becomes much more problematic. In response to the Abe announcement, in Okinawa the governor, local political leaders, citizens, protesters etcetera talk about the idea that Japan’s sovereignty restoration day should not be celebrated in April, because Okinawa was still occupied until 1972. In Okinawa, until reversion to Japan in May 1972, driving on the other side of the road, using US dollars and having the ideal of wanting to become a part of Japan under the post-war constitution – that was all part of creating that post-war identity. That post-war identity really doesn’t start until the 1970s after Okinawa reverted to Japan. Memory differs between the national and the subnational.

Memory divergence: national and subnational

- Example: Abe Shinzō administration's 2013 decision to commemorate annually starting in 2013 Sovereignty Restoration Day (主権回復記念式典, 主権回復の日) on 28 April.
- 28 April 1952 commemorates the day the American Occupation of Japan ended. However, in the case of Okinawa the Occupation did not end until the reversion of Okinawa to Japan on 15 May 1972.
- Okinawa grassroots protests took place against the commemoration. The date was called in Okinawa, day of humiliation 「4・28『屈辱の日』」

From the perspective of Okinawa the memory at the collective national level can appear as forgetting. In other words, the celebration of sovereignty day on a date when Okinawa had not returned to Japan seemed to many people in Okinawa to suggest that the Abe administration had forgotten about them or didn't care about them. Opponents of the government in Okinawa are able to use that as a political resource to challenge the policies of the national government. The point I want to try to get across here is the idea that that memory is not something that is "dead." It is a living resource, which can be used by political agents to try to advance their own political vision.

Focus on memory of the war in Okinawa

- Okinawan civilians as victims of the American military as well as Japan's imperial military. *Dual victimization* embedded as salient memory of Battle of Okinawa in Okinawa – not mainland island of Japan
 - Pressure by military on local people to commit 'mass suicide' (集団自決)
 - Pressure by military on locals hiding in dugouts and caves (壕)
- Weaker sense of dual victimhood in case of atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as embedded in memory at the national level. Emphasis is on inhumanity of American atomic bombing and the two cities as victims.

This brings many in Okinawa to view themselves and as dual victims. Victims not only of the United States in the war, but victims as a result of government policy, which means that they have the disproportionate amount of American troops located in the prefecture. This sense of Dual Victimization is the embedding on the one hand of the American side of the equation, which I will go into in a moment, which is the battle of Okinawa and the conventional side of the war. Then on the other hand the victimization that Okinawans can feel as a result of a government policy, which means a disproportionate amount of American military bases, are located in the prefecture. In this way, the memory of the battle of Okinawa becomes central to their memory in the same way that an earlier talk showed how important the artefacts and other aspects of the dropping of the atomic bomb of Hiroshima was similarly important for that memory. Once you have the passing of older Okinawans with personal memory of the war then you are left with the choice of how to institutionalize that memory. Museums play a central role in promoting particular kinds of memories and I would just like to give you one example to show the

difference between political ideology of the governors in Okinawa and how this affected a museum exhibition.

Contested Okinawan memory and museums

Supporters of embedding Okinawan memory in contest with those supporting embedding national level memory - memory is political museums preserve memory based on political struggle when consensus on memory of the Asia Pacific war and Battle of Okinawa is lacking and the memory is contested

passing of older Okinawans with personal memory of the war increases role of museums as institutionalized memory – **which memory** is the political question museums face

Ōta Masahide was the progressive governor of Okinawa during the 1990s and he moved forward one of his goals as a governor, which was to create an Okinawa peace memorial museum. During his first term he was working hard to establish that museum and I was in Okinawa at the time and when the first museum was completed, I went to see the exhibition.

Example – contested memory in museum

- Displays in museum represent interpretation of Battle of Okinawa
- Controversy over exhibition in the Prefectural Peace Memorial Museum (沖縄県平和祈念資料館) in Mabuni, Itoman, Okinawa

• Progressive governor of Okinawa, Ota Masahide, moved forward with the new museum but was defeated in his third election in December 1998 before the exhibitions were all completed.

• A diorama (ジオラマ) became the focus of controversy between the museum exhibition committee set up during the period of the Ōta administration and the new, conservative administration of Inamine Keiichi.

One of the most striking parts of the exhibition was a diorama, which had a mother and child. They are in a cave and you have the mother and the child and then you have a Japanese Imperial soldier with his

rifle pointing at the mother and child. They were in a wartime situation and the implication is that American troops may hear the child crying and will find them and so the soldier was in a threatening posture towards the woman and child. In other words, depicting not the Americans as the threat to the Okinawans but actually Imperial Japanese soldiers as the threat. So, this was part of the memory that was being created through the museum at the time of Ota as the governor.

Diorama – scene of Battle of Okinawa

• The original scene of the battle in the diorama was of an imperial soldier together with a local woman holding her child. The soldier's rifle was originally pointed at the woman, suggesting the victimization of Okinawa by Japanese imperial forces, not the invading American forces.

• The implication is that the soldier may take action against them should the baby start to cry, potentially revealing their location to American forces.

The memory being constructed is of Japanese forces as a threat to the local Okinawan civilians.

• Oral history: evidence given to 2011 project of local newspaper of woman who recalled a similar event when she was hiding in a dug-out with her sibling and a Japanese soldier.

When he lost the election, under the next governor the diorama was changed so the rifle did not appear to be threatening the mother and child. The museum now represented the collective memory on the national level. In the process, there was a big debate between the committee, which had been appointed when Ōta was governor and the new governor who did not support the memory that was being created of the Japanese soldier pointing the gun at the civilians.

This happened a few years ago but I went last year and now the gun points outwards towards the potential American enemies outside the cave rather than putting the Japanese soldier as a threat as was the original idea in representing Okinawans as the dual victim, victim of the Americans because of the war but also victim of mainland Japan, in the sense that Japanese troops could also be a threat. The reconstructed diorama promotes a different kind memory, Okinawa in the collective memory of only America being the enemy not Japan. Here, I am not talking about right or wrong, whether I agree or disagree. I am just explaining the politics behind a museum exhibition in Okinawa, where the struggle over the representation of an imperial soldier in the diorama intimates that Ōta is a progressive governor, whereas new governor was not a progressive governor. He was a conservative political leader who wanted to embed the memory much more strongly that Okinawa is a part of the collectivity called Japan. It was in this way that a change from progressive to conservative governor changed the way in which the subnational memory was institutionalized in the prefecture.

Diorama – revised scene under new administration

- After the election the diorama was changed so that, instead of the soldier being presented as a threat (the rifle pointing at the mother and child), he was portrayed as a Protector – that is, the rifle was pointed in a way to imply he was shielding the mother and child.
- *Conservative administration's prioritization of national, collective memory of the Battle of Okinawa versus progressive administration's prioritization of subnational, popular memory of the Battle.*
- Memory is contested within Okinawa as well as between national and subnational levels.

The second example I want to talk about is the commemoration of the battle of Okinawa (Okinawa Memorial Day, Irei no Hi, “the day to console the dead”). This for Okinawans is extremely important because from the prefectural level the battle helps to nurture a separate identity and separate sense of memory. In Okinawa an annual anniversary and memorial service to commemorate the war dead, the dead of the Battle of Okinawa, which was held first during the American occupation. The date of the end of the Battle, 23 June, was established as a public holiday. However, following the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in May 1972, the holiday had to be abandoned because that wasn't accepted by the Japanese Government as a national holiday until the change in the local government law in 1991 and that memorial day was then reinstated as a distinct memory in Okinawa. The contestation over holding a public holiday to commemorate Okinawa

Memorial Day illustrates how politicians are using the institutions of the prefecture and the state to struggle over these different levels of memory.

Example – Memorial Day for Battle of Okinawa

- Subnational collective member for Okinawa dead, Okinawan Memorial Service to commemorate the fallen (沖縄全戦没者追悼式)
 - Held annually to commemorate the ending of the Battle of Okinawa on 23 June 1945. First held in 1952 after the main islands re-gained independence. Okinawan politicians make a 'peace declaration' (平和宣言)
- National and subnational difference:** with reversion in 1972 the day no longer accepted as a national holiday. Still a recognized holiday in Okinawa, day to console the spirits (慰霊の日). The day formally recognized in 1991 with the revision of the local autonomy law (地方自治法)

In other words, here we can see the contest there between trying to embed a specific memory on the prefectural level versus the memory on the national level. The Okinawa Memorial Day is celebrated in Okinawa every year and it has been really fascinating to see what happens every time Prime Minister Abe attends the memorial day as a representative of the national government. He does actually attend the memorial event, which is every June, and at that time we see, my third point, how this then gets linked to contemporary politics. The original purpose of the Okinawa Memorial Day is to memorialize the battle of Okinawa and the dead. I have gone through all of the data since Prime Minister Abe has been in power.

Memorial day for battle of Okinawa

- 23 June memorial day – local politicians link the memory of the Battle of Okinawa to present-day US military bases in Okinawa and the closure of Marine Air Station Futenma and the construction of a new base in Henoko, Nago City.
- Example: in the 2014 Peace Declaration Governor Nakaima Hirokazu called for the Futenma Base to be moved outside of Okinawa Prefecture. Made same call in 2011, 2012 and 2013, demonstrating how the link between subnational memory of the battle and present-day government policy can be used to oppose concentrating US bases in Okinawa.

It's very interesting, as every year the commemorations will start out about the battle of Okinawa and then after Prime Minister Abe finishes his speech, immediately the Okinawan politician start to talk about the military bases. In other words, this is the way prefectural politicians are able to use the past in order to try to talk about issues of the present, in this case the relocation of the Futenma airbase. The memorial event provides an opportunity for local politicians to oppose the Abe government's policy to build a new base in another part of Okinawa in Henoko.

Memorial Day for Battle of Okinawa

- Example: Kin Masaru, president of the prefectural assembly (県議会議長)
- 2103 memorial: called for the relocation of Futenma Base outside the prefecture.
- Opposition to the US deployment of the tilt-rotor aircraft, the Osprey in the prefecture

So, every year the local politicians use the fact that they are able to address the Prime Minister on Okinawa Memorial Day and they use

that opportunity to build up pressure on the government to try to change the policy to relocate the Futenma airbase to Henoko.

Memorial Day for Battle of Okinawa

- Peace declaration and speeches by Okinawan politicians often in front of Prime Minister
- 1994 – first PM to participated in the memorial. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki
- Ten PMs have participated, including PM Abe Shinzo (2007, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)

Historically, Prime Minister Kaifu was the first prime minister to attend the Okinawa Memorial Day in 1994. Prime Minister Abe has attended in 2007 as well as between 2013 - 2017.

Memorial Day for Battle of Okinawa

- The politics of the present are regularly linked to the memory of the past.
- In June 2017 PM Abe questioned about the relocation of the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma.
- Both sides agree on the return of Futenma: problem is the Abe government insists the new base is constructed in Okinawa. Governor and majority of Okinawa public opinion want base relocated outside of the prefecture.

In this way, the visit to Okinawa of national leaders is a political opportunity for local politicians: the politics of the present are regularly linked to the memory of the past and this is particularly important for trying to deal with the issue of the relocation of the base within Okinawa. The strong sentiment within Okinawa is that the alliance should be regarded

as a national collective good, something that all Japanese benefit from, so any cost associated with that collective good should be shared more equally throughout Japan. The Abe government's policy to build another base in Okinawa is a challenge to that sense of collective identity where Okinawa is included when it is convenient for the government and not included at other times. In essence, maintaining of this unequal distribution of US military bases is the central aim of the government, and the central aim of the Okinawans is to try to prevent them doing so. Anyone who has been following the standoff between the national and prefectural government over the relocation of the Futenma base and the construction of a new, expanded base in Henoko knows that the decision to build the new base goes back to 1996 and the base has still not been built as a result of the strong opposition at the local level.

Focus on memory and the war in Okinawa

- 1996 Agreement to relocate the Marine Corps Air Station Futenma has come to mean relocation within Okinawa prefecture, to the Henoko district of Nago city. Annual Memorial of Battle of Okinawa offers opportunity to link memory of battle of Okinawa to government's base policy
- Concentration of US military bases in Okinawa an outcome of defeat in the war as well as government policy to transfer or maintain bases in the prefecture
- **Maintaining the unequal distribution of US military bases in Okinawa is a central aim of the Japanese government**

The reason for the longstanding controversy is that US military installations in Okinawa are viewed very much by local people as a risk to their everyday security or risk to their everyday peace because of environmental pollution, military accidents, crimes committed by U.S. service personnel and other ways in which the existence of the bases are seen as a threat to their daily lives. These concrete manifestations of the risks and threats from US bases serves to link together the memory of the battle of Okinawa and the cost that Okinawans are paying now and consistently or regularly try to then use different means to embed these US military incidents and accidents as the memory at the local level in contrast to the collective or national memory which is pursued. The way in which the concentration of US military installations in Okinawa means there's an unequal distribution of the cost of the security treaty which leads local people to view themselves as a victim within the national collectivity which then links to this idea of Okinawans being the victim of Imperial Japanese troops as well as Americans during the war. Similarly, the construction of a new military base in Okinawa instead of in another prefecture of

Japan makes local opponents of the US military presence in the prefecture interpret their history in such a way that that unequal treatment is still continuing.

Example - Link to postwar military accidents and incidents

- American military accidents as a risk to the Okinawan population
- Link memory of past and present: another sense of **dual victimization**, Okinawans as victims of Battle of Okinawa as well as victims of the existence and operation of US bases in Okinawa
- Crash of US helicopter into Okinawa International University in 2004.
- Crimes committed by US military personnel

In this way, Okinawa as a victim becomes the premise of the criticism of the US-Japan alliance. What's really interesting about the way this idea of memory related to victim is how such a linkage serves to highlight what I see as the fragility or the vulnerability of the alliance when it is based on the sense of victimization instead of a collectivity where the costs are shared more equally and everyone accepts, both on the main islands as well as in Okinawa, that the sharing of the burden of US military deployments is the cost of this kind of security treaty which the government pursues. That's the message I want to leave you with. Memory is not something simply representing the past, or a facet of the past, or is embedded in history books. It's also a political

resource, which will be used by political actors to try to create their future rather than other futures.

Conclusion

- Memory of the past offers a political resource for use in contesting the politics of the present.
- The memory of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be used to link the inhumanity of these weapons to the promotion of nuclear disarmament.
- In the same way, memory of the battle of Okinawa can be used to link to contemporary politics on the US military presence and the government's security policy

We see that most clearly in the way in the two governors promoted different kind of memories through the institution of the museum, different memories of the past, as contested in the diorama of the imperial soldier. In short, remembering and forgetting are political resources of importance not only for the past, but also for the present and future.

Conclusion

- link to the concentration of US military installations in Okinawa
 - *Unequal distribution of security treaty meant to act as public good for all Japanese. Okinawa as a victim*
- Link to the construction of a new military base in Okinawa instead of in another prefecture or outside of Japan
 - *Unequal treatment of Okinawa compared with other parts of Japan. Okinawa as a victim*