**PART TWO**

**3. Environmental impacts: The case of Japan**

**3.1 Political background**

Japan is the junior partner in the U.S. imperial alliance system. In 2001, Japan was fourth in the world in military spending ($38.5 billion) behind the US ($280 billion), Russia ($43.9 billion) and France ($40 billion) (“World military marketplace,” 2002).

Kan (2002) warns that “Under the Koizumi Administration, Japan is advancing headlong on a course toward militarization.” Given Japan’s astonishing record of war crimes in the past century, the present trend is frightening, as the U.S. nurtures those elements of indigenous fascism in the ultra right wing conservatives who govern the country. The “headlong” plunge into another century of bloodbaths is not an act of madmen, rather, it is a carefully calculated plan of action which began after the end of WWII. After patiently bidding their time and whittling away at Japan’s post war peace culture, today Japan’s rulers seek: to “activate military powers without restraint”; “the preparation of the legal, political, social background for ensuring” remilitarization; to create “social systems to punish, expel, and retaliate against opposition, resistance, and obstructive groups within and without Japan”; and finally, a xenophobic policy that harkens back to pre WWII fascist Japan. The recent policy of the U.S. of carrying out preemptive strikes against states (such as Afghanistan and Iraq) who it deems as potential threats bolsters Japan’s plan “to propagate the ideology that it is ‘just’ to eradicate the "enemies" of war, national security and the nation state.”

The re-militarization policy includes legislation that has been passed by the Japanese Diet since the mid-1990s: “revision of the Defense Guideline for the Japan- U.S Security Treaty; the Law for Military Emergencies in Areas Surrounding Japan, passed in August 1999; the Anti-Organized Crime Law, The Basic Resident Register Law; and the National Flag and Anthem Law.” All of these laws represent a strengthening of state power and a diminishing of civil liberties. According the the Japan Communist Party newspaper, the November election of the Liberal Democratic Party (the corrupt dinosaur party which has held power for the last fifty years) and the slightly less hawkish Democratic Party of Japan, will hasten the decline of Japan’s vaunted social safety net while plunging the nation into an uncontrolled arms race. The JCP notes that while the two parties are presented to the public as opposition parties, in fact, both parties are strongly supported by *Keidanren,* Japan’s most powerful association of business elites. The JCP has been one of the few parties to warn against sending American and Japanese troops to Iraq, stating that the U.S. war in Iraq is an “aggression” and that “If Japan dispatches SDF [troops] to Iraq, Japan will be dragged into hell” (“War of aggression,” 2003; “Who is defender,” 2003).

A crucial step toward remilitarization is to revise Japan’s famous peace constitution and once and for all rid itself of the pesky “Article 9” which prohibits Japan’s involvement in international war making. Article 9 unambiguously states: “The Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation...Land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained.” However, beginning as far back as 1951, the clause has steadily been eroded by military spending that exceeded reasonable requirements for defense.

Today, Japan has 240,000 men and woman under arms. Having spent nearly $50-billion (U.S.) a year on defense for each of the past five years, Japan has a force, at least in terms of funding, second only to the U.S. (Russia can no longer afford a modern military). Yet Japan does all this While preserving a constitution that states: “The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized” (Victoria, 2003).

Further evidence of Japan’s incoherent political system was the recent coalition formed between the Democratic Party of Japan, which has embraced progressive measures in past, with the leader of the now defunct Liberal Party of Japan, Ichiro Ozawa, who openly provokes feelings of xenophobia among Japanese voters by distorting the threats from China and North Korea. Ozawa and others in the Koizumi administration have called for Japan to arm itself with nuclear weapons. That the so called progressive Democratic Party of Japan could wed itself with a gangster war monger like Ozawa and still portray itself as an opposition party shows how misled the Japanese public have become. The DPJ received strong voter support in the last election.

The Tokyo Governor and right wing buffoon, Shintaro Ishihara is also well known for his racist and militaristic comments but continues to gain support from the public due to their widespread ignorance on foreign affairs and the largely manufactured threats from China and North Korea. For example,

Naoyuki Agawa, the minister for public affairs and director of the Japan Information and Culture Center at the Embassy of Japan, publicly endorsed the concept of "regime change" in North Korea as "ultimately the solution" for the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula” (Shorrock, 2003).

Shorrock cites Korean affairs expert, John Feffer, who believes that "The specter of a North Korean attack is the only thing that can uproot Japan's deeply seeded pacifism.” Thus, there are no immediate plans to restrict the activities of the U.S. military stationed in Japan which is thought of as a protector from the hordes of marauding Asian’s who are surely ready to descend upon Japan’s pristine shores from the mainland. The fact that North Korea admitted to (and publicly apologized for) kidnapping several people from Japan in the 1970s is repeated ad nauseam by the media to prove the North Korean’s inherent devilishness. On the other hand, the details by which Japan enslaved and killed several million Koreans and other Asians during the Pacific War, an atrocity which rivals any in human history in its level of barbarity, are not well known or are ignored by most Japanese (Seagrave & Seagrave, 2003; Asano, 2003). The hypocrisy is jaw dropping.

Despite the the lapdog media’s successful campaign to distort the facts and stir public hostility toward North Korea, on another issue, “Only 10 percent of Japanese support sending troops to Iraq while the current instability [there] continues...As the Iraqi security situation worsens with a series of terrorist attacks, the Japanese public has become increasingly dissatisfied with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's lack of an adequate explanation to justify the expected dispatch of Self-Defense Forces" (“Only 10 percent,” 2003). This ambivalence reflects public perceptions that regard the Iraq war as a distant matter whereas North Korea is a supposedly more immediate threat.

**3.2 Okinawa: “a great stationary aircraft carrier”**

Dower (2003), the authoritative historian of World War II in the Pacific region notes:

Okinawa and South Korea are instructive...reminders that where security concerns were paramount from the start, the United States turned its back on serious "democratization" of the sort initially introduced to the greater part of Japan. Coveted by military strategists as a great stationary aircraft carrier off the coast of Asia, Okinawa, Japan's southernmost prefecture, was immediately turned into an enormous U.S. military installation. Although the occupation of Japan formally ended in April 1952, Okinawa remained a U.S. colony until the early 1970s, when sovereignty over it was returned to Japan. The sprawling, grotesque complex of U.S. bases remains.

For the fiscal year 2003, Japan paid the U.S. government about $6 billion toward the costs of stationing U.S. troops in Japan. The Japan Communist Party maintains that 2.24 billion dollars of the budget are finagled from Japan in violation of the Status of Forces Agreement (SoFA). According to the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), 39,691 troops are stationed in Japan. In a recent report, the DoD praises Japan’s “host-nation support” as being the most generous of any allies. “Japan pays more than the top 25 U.S. allies combined...[and] 5.4 times what the second largest contributor, Germany, pays” (“Japan pays,” (2003). Not surprisingly, Okinawa has long been exploited by both Americans and mainland Japanese. Okinawa is:

...a culturally heterogeneous part of the country that Japan forcibly annexed in 1879 and that has long been subject to official and popular discrimination by mainland people and authorities. The Japanese press refers to...base-support payments as the *omoiyari yosan* (sympathy budget), meaning sympathy for the poor Americans who cannot afford their expansive foreign policy. The SOFA covering American forces in Japan says that the United States will cover all costs of the deployments (art. xxiv) but since 1978, when the *omoiyari yosan* came into being, the Japanese government has in fact paid more than half. No other nation offers such lavish “host nation support” to the United States (Johnson, 2003).

In addition to the Cold War aspect of U.S. bases, Okinawa and the rest of the South Pacific stretching from Guam to the Philippines have long offered U.S. air and naval forces strategic positioning to protect natural resources destined for U.S. markets or to threaten and potential competitors. Since the U.S is in for the long haul, they may as well get comfortable. Gerson (1991) found that U.S. bases in Guam just happen to occupy the “locations of the best farmland, fishing areas, and drinking water” (p. 19).

In my own travels to Guam and Okinawa in the 1990’s, I witnessed U.S. military helicopters “buzzing” the main tourist beach in Guam causing extensive noise and potential danger with their low flying passes. In Okinawa, I endured the noisy mechanized jet skis in use at the military base’s beach which was adjacent to a non jet ski Japanese resort beach. The resort beach preferred to prohibit jet skis so that visitors could relax and enjoy their vacations in peace and quiet. As if further anecdotal evidence was needed to prove the point of the unapologetic arrogance of U.S. military culture, a colleague who works in the computer industry in San Diego, California, noted that of the majority of San Diego’s spectacularly beautiful coastline scenery is occupied by military bases. How occupying beautiful scenery is more important to national security rather than occupying lesser beautiful scenery is not clear. Maybe it’s meant to keep troop morale up and civilian morale down!

In Japan, there are some 105, large and small, U.S. military installations. Since at least 1986 the unfortunate inhabitants in the town Zushi, near Yokohama, have been fighting the bilateral decision of the U.S. military and the Japanese government to build a housing complex for military personnel and their dependents in the Ikego forest, “one of the few remaining areas of greenery in the Tokyo-Yokohama megapolis” (p. 19). “Construction of housing units for the U.S. military at the Ikego district began in 1993. At that time the central government reached an agreement with the city of Zushi...that there would be no construction of additional...units” (“Mayor to quit,” 2003). In the last year the government has decided to build additional housing for the U.S. military claiming the new decision did not violate the 1993 agreement. The mayor of Zushi however claims that the central government “has snubbed my repeated requests for a meeting with the agency chief in this matter.” That the majority of citizens of Zushi oppose the housing units is of little consequence to the central government who change the rules as it suites them and ignore the concerns of democratically elected leaders.

In another example of an environmental threat originating from the military, a wildlife rich area targeted for use by the military was the case of Miyake island. The island is known as a bird refuge, yet the military wanted to convert it to a practice runway for night landings for fighter pilots. Only after international outrage were the plans questioned and compromises worked out (Gerson, p. 20).

One of the major worries of residents living adjacent to U.S. bases is the sheer amount of hazardous waste that is produced.

Because scientists in host nations have extremely limited access to U.S. bases, it has been difficult to monitor the environmental destruction they cause...with the US military generating more than 400, 000 tons of hazardous waste in the United States (much of it illegally), it should come as no surprise that U.S. overseas bases are heavy polluters...Acids, ammunition wastes, organic solvents, chemical warfare agents, industrial sludge, and PCBs are released into the environment surrounding U.S. bases. These wastes “migrate,” contaminating aquifers, poisoning soil, and threatening human and animal life (p. 20).

In addition to conventional pollution, there are nuclear blunders called “broken arrows” by the military. “In 1968, a hydrogen bomb was lost over the side of the USS Ticonderoga as the ship passed within 40 miles of Okinawa. The details of the accident, and the fact that the pressure of the ocean probably destroyed the bomb’s casing and dispersed its radioactive plutonium, were kept a state secret for more than 20 years” (pp. 20-21). One wonders how many other state secrets have covered up accidents in addition to the already published blunders which have contaminated our planet’s oceans and skies.

**3.3 Depleted uranium**

The illegal testing of highly toxic and radioactive depleted uranium (DU) munitions occurred in Okinawa prefecture in 1995 and 1996 when aircraft fired 1,520 rounds of DU ammunition on an islands located to north of Okinawa and to the west of Kume Island (“Nuclear Policy,” 2003; Ui, 2003).

This was a violation of the Law for the Regulation of Nuclear Power in Japan ...the Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not pass on this information to the prefectural government of Okinawa and the citizens of Okinawa prefecture only learned about the problem through an article in the Washington Times (Ui).

The military first denied responsibility, ignoring the violation until 1997, and only then apologizing that “they didn’t see any threat to the environment...[or] to people.” Later, only one percent of the discharged shells were recovered in a sloppy clean up operation (“Nuclear Policy”). Shishin & Wilkinson (2001) note the following occurrences from the year 2000:

Casings from DU shells were found in a private scrapyard in Okinawa; the owner had bought the metal from the US military. US officials claimed at the time that the casings were not from the Torishima firing, but might have come from shells used during the Gulf War...DU shells were still being stored at Kadena, a major air base (and munition storage area) on Okinawa...several Navy ships which dock at Yokosuka, a major naval base near Tokyo, [were] equipped with guns, called ‘Phalanxes,’ that fire DU shells.

The dangers to the environment in Torishima and elsewhere have not been adequately addressed by the U.S. military or the Japanese government, in fact, “The truth of this complicity might have remained hidden were it not for the efforts of Japanese citizen groups working to eliminate DU weapons.”

Another aspect of the problem is that “Japan may be very clearly, albeit indirectly, linked to the production of [DU] weapons.” Japan is a major producer of nuclear energy with about 50 power plants in operation. The U.S. and France are two of the main countries who process enriched uranium to sell to Japan. “When the Japanese uranium is enriched” for use as fuel in nuclear power plants, “it leaves a residue of DU. This residue is not shipped back to Japan, but is left in the country where the enrichment is done.” Therefore, the nuclear power industry in Japan is directly contributing to the accumulation of DU residue. Some of Japan’s DU residue may be manufactured into DU munitions by the U.S. and France.

**3.4 Ui Jun, fighter for environmental justice**

The issue of environmental pollution and destruction caused by bases should be seen within the broader context of the U.S. military’s continued efforts to exempt itself from environmental regulations in both the U.S. (see chapter 4) and abroad. Okinawa offers a stark example of environmental racism and class exploitation. This takes place due to the unequal alliance between the United States and Japan, and with the complicity of Japanese elites who benefit from the arrangement.

Since the 1970’s, Ui Jun (2003) has been one of Japan’s most well known fighters against industrial pollution. I will refer to his recent report in English which offers one of the most detailed studies available of environmental problems at U.S. bases in Okinawa.

Ui is one of the pioneers of the field of critical environmental science in Japan. Both on Japan’s main island of *Honshu,* where he delivered very popular lectures to the general public from the engineering department at Tokyo University (where he was never to gain tenure due to his exposing the dark side of industrial society), and now for the last sixteen years in Okinawa where he has worked with the *Okinawa Environment Network* (OEN). Ui was beckoned to relocate in Okinawa because it held “three of Japan's five most polluted rivers” and his expertise was valued by anti-U.S. base citizen groups there.

The U.S. military empire has not brought prosperity to Okinawa, Japan’s poorest prefecture. In fact, the “worst water pollution” in Japan has been caused by the military presence there (Ui). The U.S. military occupies “some 23,700 hectares or 19 percent of the choicest territory of the main island” (Johnson, 2003). Ui elaborates:

The overall picture is quite clear. Okinawa, which makes up just 0.6 per cent of Japan’s land, contains more than 70 per cent of the U.S. military bases. If the U.S. bases were spread out evenly, Okinawa would have more or less 0.6 per cent of them, but it has more than one hundred times that share.

The political economy of Okinawa is based on the money that the central government of Japan receives from the U.S. for leasing lands in Okinawa. Whenever a crisis emerges, such as the 1995 rape case (discussed above), the government subdues outrage by pouring money into public works projects. This solution serves the duel purpose in Okinawa of creating jobs while politicians arrange sweetheart construction contracts with their friends in the notorious *Doken Kokka*, the economically wasteful and environmentally destructive “construction state.” Throughout Japan, this system primarily benefits Japan’s top politicians, bureaucrats and construction companies and organized crime syndicates, the *yakuza* (Kerr, 2001; McCormack, 2002).

Not only is this an irresponsible way to deal with social problems created by the presence of bases, but it leads to the destruction of Okinawa’s subtropical coral reefs and primeval forests. The huge construction projects that are part of the “compensation” are inappropriate for Okinawa’s small, fragile and unique environment. Fighting the destructive “development” projects which are direct consequences of the political economy of the U.S. bases has consumed much of the time and effort of anti base activists such as Ui and OEN.

Ui complains that what happens on the bases themselves is a topic that has hardly been dealt with. Only when environmental problems spill over the border of bases onto communities can they not be ignored, such as “when waste oil flows outside a base as a result of accidents.” Decades after knowing about the dangers of synthetic substances released into the environment, there is still a dearth of data regarding the contamination of soils from U.S. bases. It seems obvious that foot dragging, incompetence, indifference and a lack of courage on the part of the Japanese government bears some blame since information has been withheld that would have helped community activists address this problem. Ui notes that the greater problem is the unequal relationship between the U.S. military and the Japanese government, with the former having the upper hand.

The following points raised by Ui are worth noting in detail as they highlight the political ecology of U.S. bases in Okinawa:

1) There is a dearth of data of “what goes on at U.S. military bases” and contamination of soils from “high concentrations of harmful substances including mercury, cadmium, arsenic and PCBs.”

2) Large amounts of unused munitions were abandoned in the forest surrounding the Fukuchi Dam where U.S. armed forces have run training exercises. “The dam provides most of the water to the main island of Okinawa.” To what extent toxic effluents from munitions may have reached the general population’s drinking water is unclear. What is clear is the profound disregard for the Okinawan people’s public health by the U.S. military and the Japanese government.

3) Ui notes that researching polluted sites takes “high-level experience in sample taking” and access to the appropriate maps in order to determine whether bases that have been to the government of Okinawa are contaminated or not. However, the U.S. military has not provided such assistance, making it very difficult for researchers to locate contaminated sites. The reason is simple: “Regarding the return of land that has been polluted, Paragraph 1 of Article 4 of the Status of the United States Armed Forces Agreement clearly states that the responsibility for the reestablishment of status quo ante does not lie with the United States...Article 4 as a whole is utterly unilateral and no doubt disadvantageous for Japan.”

4) “In cases where there is pollution, the Japanese government is burdened with the fees for its removal, and it already knows that removing pollution and restoring the land is no easy task from its experience with environmental pollution. If it does not admit the damage or underestimates it,” then the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can save money on budget expenditures.

5) Though “The Communist Party took a leading part in conducting empirical research on the problems of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty Status Agreement which was published in A Point by Point Critique of the Japan-U.S. Status Agreement...there is little mention of pollution in the analysis of Article 4.” Ui considered this to be an unfortunate oversight in the process.

6) The published joint statement of "Environmental Principles" agreed upon by the U.S. and Japan was not included in Okinawa’s Basic Environmental Regulations in 1999. Amazingly, the Bureau for the Environment and the Council for the Environment didn’t know of the joint statement. An Okinawan environmental law which does not address U.S. military pollution is like passing a law to prohibit larceny without including punishment for robbers!

7) “The Official Announcement of the 1973 Japanese-American Joint Council Agreement on the Environment” was kept unpublished for thirty years by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Had that document been available to Japanese scientists it “would have been possible to request for inspections and publication of the results, and...[to obtain] samples” to measure contamination at U.S. bases. Whether this document was kept secret intentionally, or, as Ui characterizes it, due to a “lack of sense of responsibility” on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the appalling results are the same.

8) For the purpose of comparing experiences, OEN is holding workshops with NGOs from the Philippines, Vietnam and South Korea. Currently South Korea suffers under the unequal status agreement similar to Japan’s, while the Philippines is hosting a renewed U.S. military presence after a respite in the 1990s after having closed down of bases there. This type of networking is important for understanding the political ecology of the bases. For example, Ui reported that “the defoliant Agent Orange containing dioxin that had caused huge problems during the Vietnam War had been transported from Okinawa and had caused serious injuries to both the Vietnamese people who were sprayed with it and the American soldiers who had carried out the spraying. Depending on where and how the defoliant was stored in Okinawa, there is a possibility of strong dioxin pollution existing today.”

9) The sad fact is that Japan’s ruling parties are perfectly happy to host U.S. military bases since it serves their interests, even while harming the public welfare. Although a “renegotiation of the unequal and unilateral status agreement was strongly demanded within Japan, among the Foreign Ministers and bureaucrats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs only former Foreign Minister Tanaka Makiko responded that she would look into the matter.” Ms. Tanaka was booted out of the LDP after challenging their corrupt, old boy network in the Diet.

**3.5 No nukes!**

As Ui notes, the urgent work that should have begun thirty years ago of addressing U.S. base pollution is now slowly unfolding thanks to the hard work of NGOs such as the Okinawa Environment Network. Meanwhile, groups such as *Peace Depot* based in Yokohama are addressing the danger of the U.S. “nuclear umbrella” which violates Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and in fact acts as a “nuclear magnet.” As the war in Iraq has shown, violent retaliation is being carried out against U.S. soldiers and U.S. allies in response to the occupation. U.S. bases in Japan are often located near densely populated urban areas. If such retaliation occurred against a U.S. base or civilian population in Japan it could result in catastrophe.

In response to this precarious situation, Peace Depot (“Report card,” 2002; Umebayashi, 2003) has made the following demands regarding the U.S.-Japan military alliance: “eliminate dependence on nuclear umbrella; work toward nuclear weapon free zone in NE Asia; press US and Russia for disarmament; enforce Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.”

Furthermore they call for “South Korea, North Korea and Japan to form the core of the zone as nonnuclear states.” This proposal relies on a sensitive understanding of the history of the region where many people are “painfully aware of what horrors” occurred when “several hundred thousand Japanese and another 100,000 ethnic Koreans mostly displaced from the Korean Peninsula ended up as atomic bomb victims in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” Peace Depot became the first Japanese NGO to be able to present it’s proposals to The Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons in Geneva in 2002. Unfortunately, the demonization of North Korea by hawks in the U.S. and Japan has disrupted the process toward creating a Northeast Asian nuclear free zone. Amidst such instability, Peace Depot felt it was “highly significant” that they were able to propose a “concrete vision for bringing peace” to the region “in the presence of the various government representatives.” Peace Depot’s position is bolstered by the International Court of Justice which stated in 1996 that the world’s nuclear nations have an “obligation to bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament.”

In addition, the *No Nuclear Weapons on Okinawa! Organizing Committee* (“No Nuclear,” 2003) recently sent a letter to the President of the U.N. Security Council. They requested that since U.N. weapons inspectors had finished with their work in Iraq they should proceed to Okinawa “to determine if there are any weapons of mass destruction, and in particular nuclear weapons, stored in any of the U.S. military bases.” Their letter highlighted the blatant hypocrisy of the Bush Administration’s policy to demand weapons inspections in Iraq when the U.S. government itself is the world’s largest holder of weapons of mass destruction. Some of the points they raised were as follow:

Of all weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons are the most devastating; It is common knowledge that before Okinawa was reverted to Japan, nuclear weapons were kept on U.S. bases here; Under the Japanese government’s ‘three non-nuclear principles’, nuclear weapons may not enter Japanese territory; Despite this, the United States Government has consistently refused to say whether it has removed its nuclear weapons from Okinawa. Few Okinawans believe they have been removed. The United States is the only country in the history of the world to have actually used these worst of all weapons of mass destruction.