

US-Japan Relations and the Media in the Information Age: Coverage of the American Bases Issue in Okinawa

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INTRODUCTION

It has become common parlance in academia and the media to talk about the “information age” that is profoundly affecting societies throughout the globe. While no one is likely to be able to predict the eventual outcome of these developments, one thing is certain—an information revolution is occurring and its impact on individuals and societies will require a broader and deeper understanding of the process underway in order to meet the challenges of these complex transformations. As a conduit for the flow of information, the media has an important role to play in this process. Journalists will have to understand the significance of the information that they report in order to transmit that information accurately and effectively.

The study of international media is particularly concerned with the effects that this information revolution will have on international relations.¹ In the case of US-Japan relations, for example, technological innovations and regulatory changes have spurred an increase in the mutual exchange of information between the two countries, particular-

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ly over the last decade or so. But the increased volume of information does not necessarily signify greater mutual understanding between the two nations. As we saw in the “Japan bashing” of the 1980s and the early 1990s, biased and sensationalized reporting in both countries can fuel bilateral antagonism rather than foster mutual understanding and a search for solutions.

From September 1995 to March 1996, I conducted research and interviews at the Shorenstein Center for Press Politics at the Kennedy School, Harvard University. My initial purpose for going to the United States was to research recent developments in media technologies and government/press relations, including the US presidential campaign and the media’s coverage of it. However, it was during this time that questions concerning the Security Treaty and the stationing of US troops in Japan became a pressing political issue after the rape of a young school girl in Okinawa by three American marines. The incident sparked a wave of protest in Okinawa against the American bases and spread to include debates about the future of US bases in Okinawa and the US-Japan security arrangements in the post-Cold War period.

I left for the United States just after the incident took place and thus was able to observe the unfolding of events in the Japanese and American media. I was impressed by how instrumental the media was in internationalizing the incident and bringing it to the attention of not only the general public in the United States and Japan, but also to the highest levels of government in both countries. Some argue that technological changes in recent years, exemplified by the spread of the Internet, will reduce the role of traditional news media like newspapers and television in our society, but if the case in Okinawa is any indication of what is to come, the role of the media in international relations has the potential to increase rather than decrease in importance.

I THE MEDIA IN US-JAPAN RELATIONS—A BACKGROUND

Former US ambassador to Japan Mike Mansfield was often heard saying that the most important bilateral relationship in the world was that between the United States and Japan. His words connote different meanings to each side of the relationship and it is through the mass media that messages like Mansfield’s are transmitted to wider segments of the population in both countries. On the one hand, they

appear as an attempt to get average Americans to realize that Japan is more important to the United States than most think, while at the same time Mansfield seems to be warning the Japanese that they must bear more responsibilities and not take US-Japan relations for granted.

While Mansfield's words were reiterated many times in the media in both countries,² in the exchange of information between the United States and Japan, it has often been considered a problem that a great volume of news about the United States is reported in Japan, but reporting on Japan in the United States has been very limited. According to a study by the Japan Newspaper Association Research Institute, Japan is a massive importer of information from overseas, especially of newspaper articles from the United States.³ As for television, a detailed study conducted by the Mansfield Center for Pacific Affairs, the NHK Broadcasting Culture Institute, and the Japan National Association of Commercial Broadcasters Research Institute indicated that the amount of reporting on the United States in Japan was about twelve times greater than the reporting on Japan in the United States.⁴

While it is clear that there is a gap when comparing the volume of reporting between the two countries and that in Japan there is a long history of importing information from other countries, it is also safe to say that reporting on Japan in the United States has progressively increased in the last 30 to 40 years. Looking back on my personal experience as a student in the United States at the beginning of the 1960s, it seems hard to believe the substantial changes that have taken place. During the month of September, 1961, for example, there was only one article on Japan printed in the *New York Times*—a scandal involving a Japanese politician. Nowadays, however, rarely is there a day when there is not an article concerning Japan in the major newspapers.

In addition, there have been changes in television reporting of international news in the United States. Television news reporting was until quite recently centered on the three major networks (NBC, ABC and CBS), but since the 1980s technological advancements in satellites and cable television, combined with deregulation of the television industry, have made possible the development of specialty news stations like CNN and other news channels like CNBC, MSNBC and Fox News. As a result of this propagation of specialty news stations, the opportunities for reporting on Japan have increased and the volume of coverage of Japanese news in the United States has expanded substantially in recent years.⁵

In the days when the three major networks dominated television broadcasting, the time allotted to news coverage was a mere 24 minutes a program,⁶ and the time allotted to international news was even more limited, especially news about Japan. Some would argue of course that there was a substantial number of news stories, but because the time was limited it was difficult to make anything more than shallow generalizations of important events. With the spread of specialty news stations, however, the opposite is true in that news material, including international news, is in demand to fill in the news broadcasts.⁷ It is questionable, though, if the demand for news about Japan has increased proportionately with the demand for news in general.

Another important development is the internationalization of information exchange. It is quite common in Japan to speak about *joho hasshin*, or the “transmission of information,” which refers to the recognized need in the information age to send more information from Japan in order to increase mutual understanding with other states and peoples, so we are likely to see an increase in information about Japan made available in the United States and elsewhere.

Undoubtedly, the development of information technologies has allowed the transmission of tremendous amounts of information between the two countries. Since the 1980s, news from Japan is receiving more coverage in American newspapers, magazines and television. For television in particular, programs from Japan have been made available through cable and satellite broadcasts, while American television networks commonly use Japanese footage of events in Japan.

Major Japanese newspapers have also been printing and selling satellite transmitted international versions of their Japanese news coverage in Japanese and English.⁸ In addition, although the growth of the Internet in Japan still trails the United States, many Japanese newspapers, research institutes and government agencies have bilingual home pages that are accessible from anywhere in the world. Reports of events in one country are often transmitted to another country and the coverage of news itself becomes newsworthy. This is by no means a new phenomenon, but the speed and volume of this flow has expanded tremendously in the last few years.

While these technological and regulatory developments have led to a greater flow of information, at times this exchange of information has not necessarily led to a greater understanding between the United States and Japan. The media on both sides of the Pacific spurred ten-

sions during the height of trade friction in the 1980s and early 1990s. In contrast, some of the changes in the 1990s have been described as a shift from “Japan bashing” to “Japan passing.”⁹ While originally the term “Japan passing” referred to disinterest in the Japanese market after the burst of the bubble economy in the early 1990s, it is applicable to some extent for media coverage as well. The attention directed toward Japan has decreased recently in all forms of media, whether printed or televised, and this was epitomized during the 1996 presidential election when “Japan bashing” and other issues concerned with Japan were almost nonexistent.

One of the reasons for the reduction in Japan bashing is that the 1990s have witnessed a resurrection of American confidence and the threat from Japan appears to have withered away. With the end of the Cold War structure, symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the United States is the only military superpower and gives the impression of seeing itself as the hegemon on the world’s stage.¹⁰ From a media perspective at least, the recognition that the threat from Japan has passed and that even economically the United States has regained its supremacy is exquisitely expressed by “Japan passing.”

II COVERAGE OF THE RAPE IN OKINAWA—A TRIANGULAR PERSPECTIVE

Despite the trend towards lesser coverage of Japan in the early 1990s, the rape of a young school girl by three American marines in September 1995 escalated into a huge media event in both countries. It sparked an intense opposition to the American bases in Okinawa that had been smoldering amongst the local population for quite some time. There was tremendous frustration resulting from the obstacles the Japanese police faced when investigating the rape, while the fact that the suspects were not handed over right away to Japanese authorities for prosecution further increased the people of Okinawa’s grievances. It was natural that the focus of the incident shifted to dissatisfaction about the American bases themselves.

Against the background of the renewed sense of confidence in America’s position as the world’s military, political and economic hegemon, and despite continued trade disputes and the volatile currency fluctuations between the yen and the dollar, the atmosphere surrounding the bilateral relationship before the rape in Okinawa was

relatively tranquil. It seemed that the Japanese in particular were indulging in a kind of peaceful dream. Despite some worries that Japan was being relegated to a position of lesser importance for the United States, there was certainly relief in many quarters that the emotional and sensational Japan bashing had subsided. In this dream-like atmosphere, who could have expected that a single event in the latter half of 1995 would raise questions about the very foundations of the US-Japan relationship?

Because the American bases are heavily concentrated in Okinawa (about three quarters of US forces stationed in Japan are located in Okinawa) and because there was little hope this reality would change in the future, the anger in Okinawa then shifted to the Japanese government and to the people in the rest of Japan. The strong response of the Okinawans led to heightened demands for revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty, especially the Status of Forces Agreement and reductions in, or complete removal of, the bases in Okinawa. Reporting of the incident reached its height when more than 65,000 Okinawans participated in a rally opposing the bases. The incident therefore moved from anger against three men who raped an innocent young girl to anger against US military personnel and the US bases themselves, and against the Japanese and US governments and the Japanese people on the mainland.¹¹

The media, especially the press in Okinawa, was instrumental in the escalation of the incident, and the unfolding of events demonstrated the important role the media plays in international relations in the information age. In analyzing the reporting of the rape in Okinawa, it is necessary to consider the interaction of three sources of reporting: the press in Okinawa, the Japanese national press (or for Okinawans, the mainland press) and the American media.

Local rivalry in Okinawa

The press in Okinawa played an extremely important role in politicizing the rape and bringing it to the attention of not only the press in Japan and the United States, but also to the highest level of government in both countries. There are two major dailies in Okinawa, the *Okinawa Times*, which has been circulating since before World War Two, and the *Ryukyu Shinpo*, established during the American occupation. While their handling of internal Okinawan affairs differs, they are

both critical of the American bases. The existence of two local newspapers of approximately the same size (they both have a circulation of about 200,000) and focus is quite uncommon in Japan where most local markets are monopolized by one regional paper. The fierce competition between the two papers in Okinawa encourages extensive coverage from various angles of all events, and this rivalry was an important element in the escalation of events.

The rape happened on September 4, 1995 and was first reported in Okinawa by the *Ryukyu Shinpo* in the evening edition of September 8 in a small article of only two paragraphs. The next morning, September 9, the *Ryukyu Shinpo* reported the incident again, but the coverage was only moderate, mentioning the three suspects as United States marines and the refusal by the United States military to hand over the suspects to Japanese authorities.

In contrast, on the morning of September 9, the rival newspaper, the *Okinawa Times*, ran extensive coverage of the rape with close to full-page coverage of the incident in its "Shakai-men" or city news page.¹² It also ran commentaries on the problems of the transfer of suspects to Japanese police and demands for the revision of the Status of Forces Agreement. It introduced the American argument that the rights of American citizens would not be properly guaranteed because of the Japanese judicial system, and the problem of the Status of Forces Agreement with South Korea which was taken up by the *New York Times* in May 1995.¹³

The coverage by the *Okinawa Times* sparked a huge media campaign in the two local newspapers. The *Ryukyu Shinpo* ran a story at the top of its front page on September 12 describing the incident, Governor Masahide Ohta's strong reaction, demands for a revision of the Status of Forces Agreement, problems surrounding the land that was leased for the bases, and the apology by the American consul general. It also ran related articles in the Society section and the second page of the newspaper. The same day, the *Okinawa Times* ran a story on its front page and related articles in its Society section, which included a demand for the revision of the Status of Forces Agreement.

As unfortunate as it may seem, cases of rape and murder by American servicemen in Okinawa are not unknown, so the extent to which the incident was taken up in Okinawa was remarkable. There are two possible explanations for why the Okinawan press took up this one incident so actively. One of course is that, as rivals, both newspapers did

not want to be outdone by the other and thus were keen on reporting as much as possible once the *Okinawa Times* ran its first extensive coverage. The second possible explanation, though, is related to a statement by the head of the prefectural education department, who suggested that this case could lead to calls for revision of the Status of Forces Agreement and demands to halt the renewal of leases for base land. It appears, therefore, that the press in Okinawa was quite aware from the beginning of the serious implications of the rape for the bases in Okinawa.

In effect, it was the combination of these two factors that led to such intensive coverage. The rivalry between the two papers meant that the incident received wide coverage throughout Okinawa and tapped into an anti-base movement that had been brewing for some time. In a referendum on the base issue a year after the rape, for instance, a vast majority supported Governor Ohta's demands for a reduction or even a removal of the bases in Okinawa, and this was representative of Okinawan feelings toward the bases in general that went far beyond the rape incident. The reporting set off a chain reaction that included both the rivalry of the two papers and the statements concerning the bases issue made by high officials in the Okinawan government.

US coverage

From the early stages of the incident, the media in the United States covered developments in Okinawa fairly and accurately, more than I had expected. While the events in Okinawa were being taken up extensively in Japan, reporting on Okinawa from the end of September into October, November and December also increased in the United States. The initial mention of the incident was later than that in Japan, but the first reports in the American media focused extensively on the political background of the incident. In the United States, the first major newspaper to take up the incident was the *Washington Post*, which ran extensive coverage of the Okinawan issue in its international section on September 20.¹⁴ The chief correspondent in Tokyo was sent to Okinawa to cover the story and an article of over 1200 words was dispatched from Naha, the capital city of Okinawa.¹⁵ The report was remarkable in its coverage of the major issues involved. It started with the apology from US Ambassador Walter Mondale to the Okinawan governor Masahide Ohta and reported on the total number of rapes by

US troops in Okinawa, the opposition movement in Okinawa, and the political background of the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty.¹⁶

The *New York Times* ran a similar story sent from its bureau in Tokyo in its international section the same day.¹⁷ In both cases the American reports recognized the main issues involved and the media was relatively quick in reporting the incident. American television networks, using materials from Japanese news programs, started reporting the incident around September 10, and the first news station to intensively take up the issue was CNN.

While reporting was not as extensive as in Japan, the incident continued to make the news in the United States and was followed by reports of the Status of Forces Agreement, the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty, the problem of the land appropriated for the bases, the police investigation, the hand-over of the suspects to Japanese authorities, and the trial. Not only the official reports by the US and Japanese governments, but also comments from Okinawan citizens and protesters were included, and of particular note was a long special story on Governor Ohta.

The Japanese press

The beginning of the reporting on the rape in Okinawa in the Japanese national press was nothing of great notice. The rape was first reported in the mainland press in the *Asahi Shinbun* on the morning of September 9, 1995, the day after it was first reported in Okinawa.¹⁸ Like the first Okinawan reports, the treatment of the incident was minimal and the *Asahi* ran only one paragraph of about ten lines in its City section. The *Mainichi Shinbun* ran a similar article of only two paragraphs in the evening edition of September 9, while radio and television reporting of the incident in Tokyo was also limited.¹⁹

Three possible reasons can be given for the minimal coverage of the rape in the Japanese national media. First, as mentioned above, crimes by American soldiers, including rape and murder, are not an unknown phenomenon in Okinawa, and perhaps the Japanese press did not feel this crime warranted any particular attention. Second, as is usual, reports of the incident were duly discouraged by authorities in the Japanese government hoping to prevent the issue from being politicized, and there is a tendency in Japanese journalism to take heed of

such political pressure.²⁰ Finally, Japanese journalists did not emphasize the connection between the bases in Okinawa, the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the United States' new global strategy, and they failed to foresee the complications that were sparked by the incident.²¹

After the incident had become a major news event in Okinawa, coverage of the incident spread throughout the Japanese national media like wildfire. The incident developed into a huge media event as television networks ran sweeping coverage daily, while newspapers throughout the country mobilized all their forces. Table 1 gives an example of the volume of coverage the incident received once it had been taken up by the mainland Japanese press. Articles and pictures appeared in all sections as well as in editorials, commentaries and columns throughout the newspapers.²² However, it took a surprising amount of time for the Japanese national media to take up the incident in full force. The minimal coverage by the Japanese media immediately after the incident can be attributed in part to the moderate treatment of the rape in the Okinawa media, and undeniably, the ensuing process from the rape to the calls for revision of the Status of Forces Agreement was a result of the extensive coverage by the two papers in Okinawa. Even after the two Okinawan dailies shifted emphasis from the rape to the Status of Forces Agreement and the leases for base land, however, the papers in Tokyo were slow to focus on anything concerning the SFA for nearly a week.

Interaction and reaction

In comparing the media coverage in Okinawa, the Japanese main-

Table 1. Volume of Reporting in the United States and Japan

1995	<i>Asahi Shinbun</i>	<i>New York Times</i>
September	88	3
October	227 + 7*	7
November	160 + 5*	20
December	44 + 6*	11
Total	519 + 18* (537)	41

* Special reports and feature articles.

land and the United States, there was a remarkable process of interaction and reaction between the three groups. The flow of information from the press in Okinawa to the people of Okinawa, then to the national media in both the United States and Japan, and then to the governments of both countries was a prime example of how public participation in the political process transmitted through the media can have repercussions on international relations. Not only did the press heed to the pressure from Japanese authorities, but also the incident did not really enter the highest level in the Japanese media until American newspapers had taken up the issue. Reporting on Okinawa reached the front pages of Japanese newspapers around the same time that it did in the United States and the reports in the American newspapers were widely covered in the Japanese press.²³

Okinawa and US post-Cold War strategy

The issues reported in American, Japanese and Okinawan media escalated from the original reports of a rape of a young girl to discussion of revising the Status of Forces Agreement, the renewal of the leases for base land, and then to the US-Japan Security Treaty, including the current discussions about the new guidelines for security cooperation, and to the larger questions of US-Japan relations in general. The reactive nature of the Japanese coverage was pointed out earlier, but the greatest shortfall of the Japanese media was its emphasis on only the rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl. What the Japanese journalists failed to adequately convey to the Japanese public was that the incident happened at a time when the presence of US bases in Okinawa was already being seriously questioned by the people of Okinawa. As Governor Ohta persuasively stated after the event, the issue of the American bases did not start after the rape in September, but rather in February of the same year when the United States released a report underlining its strategy in Asia. It is clear that the Japanese media failed to focus on the connection between the incident in Okinawa and the United States' global strategy, in contrast to their American counterparts.

The key to understanding the bases issue in Okinawa is the "East Asia Strategic Report" (EASR), which is the Pentagon's blueprint for its strategy in East Asia after the Cold War, including the role of US military forces in Japan, the US-Japan Security Treaty and the bases in

Okinawa. The central figure behind this report was Joseph Nye, whose views of US strategy and the American media's understanding of that strategy in the post-Cold War world are particularly important for highlighting the different coverage of the incident in Okinawa.²⁴ The report was made public on February 28, 1995 and widely reported in the media in Japan and the United States. Coverage in Japan was especially intense because the *Asahi* scooped its contents on February 23, five days before the official announcement and the *Mainichi* ran an exclusive interview with Nye around the same time.²⁵ The importance of the report and the reaction to it was not limited to the closed circle of officials and politicians involved, but received interest from a wide array of Japanese concerned with US-Japan relations.²⁶

The key point of the report was that, because of the fear of continued instability in East Asia after the end of the Cold War, the United States should maintain 100,000 troops, concentrated in Japan and Korea, to maintain stability in East Asia.²⁷ More importantly, because of the situation on the Korean Peninsula, US forces in Korea would have to be stationed there, whereas it became clear that the troops in Japan were to be "roaming" troops for strategic response to emergencies in the region and beyond. Therefore the maintenance of the US-Japan Security Treaty was essential for the stability of the entire region. The report implied that the most important issue for US-Japan relations is security, including an area that extends beyond the Japanese islands to include a more regional coverage.

In addition, two other important points stand out in the report. The first is that it dealt with the next ten years, and was premised on the belief that in order to maintain stability it would be necessary to keep the 100,000 US troops in the region for ten years. The second point was that the EASR was one part of a trilogy that included Europe and the Middle East. The significance of this is that the report was part of the US global strategy and meant that US troops in Asia, in particular in Japan and even more so in the bases in Okinawa, could be sent to the Persian Gulf. Therefore, the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty, including the maintenance of bases in Okinawa, has global as well as regional implications.

On the one hand, this type of report is just one of the strategic reports that are regularly issued by the Pentagon. After the end of the Cold War, reports and reevaluations of strategic frameworks were made in 1990 and 1992, and in principle these were made public. In

this sense, the Japanese media might be forgiven for not recognizing the true nature of this report. The EASR issued in February of 1995, however, was particularly important, especially from the point of view of the Okinawan base issue and US-Japan relations. This is so because the EASR was not just another strategic report, but was a completely new conceptualization of America's strategy for East Asia based on the actual and perceived changes in world politics. A cornerstone of the strategy, the US-Japan Security Treaty, was not just the maintenance of the bilateral treaty, but also was a new strategic framework fit into an old treaty. The form of the old treaty remained, but the treaty was transformed into something else as though a completely new treaty had been drafted.

The background to the Okinawa incident is important because, while the Japanese media were aware of the Nye report to a considerable extent and covered the new strategic plan of the United States, during the reporting on Okinawa they did not fully report the background connection between the opposition movement in Okinawa and American global strategy. For the American side, the rape in Okinawa had implications for the maintenance of the bases in Okinawa, the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty, US-Japan relations, the post-Cold War strategy in East Asia and the global strategy of the United States as the world's remaining superpower. This was recognized and clearly conveyed by the American media.

In contrast to the American media's logical treatment of the key issues, the Japanese media dealt with mainly emotional issues like the misfortune of the young girl and the unfortunate circumstance of Okinawa which has a history of being caught between both the US and the Japanese central government's policies. Undeniably these issues are very important for the media to take up, especially since they deal with the pain that Okinawans have had to endure in the past and the present. At the same time, however, the Japanese media did not focus on the broader implications of the event for the US-Japan Security Treaty, US-Japan relations and America's hegemonic strategy in the post-Cold War world. As a result of the EASR, Okinawa's fate as a cornerstone of US global strategy for at least ten years was sealed. The Japanese media became so involved in reporting mainly the victimization of the young girl and of Okinawa's disproportionate share of US bases in Japan that they failed to see that the Okinawan opposition also stemmed from the fear of being a pawn in America's global strategy.

Table 2 illustrates graphically the development of the coverage of the incident in the Japanese and American media and indicates that the American media made a much more focused analysis of the global implications of the American bases in Okinawa.

Table 2. Unfolding of Media Coverage in the United States and Japan

Japanese Media	American Media
rape	rape
Japanese police/ Status of Forces Agreement	military/ police/ Status of Forces Agreement
bases in Okinawa/ anti- base movement	anti- base movement/ threat to bases
pity for the Okinawans' pain	threat to redefinition of the security treaty
emotional reporting	logical reporting

III THE MEDIA IN THE GLOBAL INFORMATION AGE

The information edge

In addition to the EASR compiled by Nye, an article he co-authored with William A. Owens in *Foreign Affairs* entitled “America’s Information Edge” is of interest for what it suggests about the background to the EASR.²⁸ Nye and Owens’ central argument is that the information revolution has changed the nature of international security, where we can potentially speak of an “information umbrella” to replace the nuclear umbrella. In addition, the American information edge will be a “force multiplier of American diplomacy including ‘soft power’—the attraction of American democracy and free markets.”²⁹ One of the points that Nye and Owens stress is that in order for the information umbrella to work it requires a certain amount of openness and access to information among allies.

The information umbrella thesis smells strongly of American attempts to dominate the world as the only truly global superpower. However, the recognition that we are moving into an age in which

information and knowledge are power in themselves is obvious, and this suggests some important aspects of the information age other than military affairs that will have an impact on international relations. The transmission and manipulation of information is likely to have profound repercussions not only on military security but also on a broader definition of security that includes economic, environmental and individual security.

Undoubtedly, Okinawa will play a key role if an information umbrella is achieved, especially considering the military surveillance role that Okinawa presently performs and the importance of the US-Japan Security Treaty in East Asia.³⁰ However, the information umbrella thesis has contradictory implications for the Okinawan bases issue in particular. On the one hand, in order for the information umbrella to succeed, it will require a certain amount of openness, as Nye and Owens argue. However, openness of information in a more general sense will also permit the general public to make their views known. In terms of military security, for instance, US-Japan security cooperation will require the continued presence of the bases in Okinawa, but the Okinawans are likely to argue that their personal security would be better preserved if the bases were reduced or even removed from the islands. In this tension between the sharing of information between governments and the expression of citizens' demands in an open society, the media's role as a conduit and distributor of information is likely to increase.

The media and public participation in decision making

The media coverage of the events in Okinawa demonstrated how important public participation is in forcing governments to act. The incident in Okinawa escalated not because of initial high-level involvement of the American and Japanese governments but because the people in Okinawa and their local representative, Governor Ohta, were able to express their anger through the media. In Japan, the central government was forced to deal with the incident despite attempts to restrain the media's coverage. In the United States as well, President Clinton's radio address on September 23, 1995 spoke about the rape in Okinawa. It is likely that Clinton and his advisers felt it necessary to respond to the American people, and indirectly to the Japanese populace.

In the past, diplomacy between states was a very closed affair, with information hidden from the public view. However, in the information age, policy making is no longer solely the domain of politicians, bureaucrats and diplomats. Public participation, transmitted through the media via print, audio or visual means, has the potential to shape and change the course of international relations. Despite attempts to the contrary, governments are no longer able to suppress all pertinent information and the media has an important role in the transmission of the public's will. Policy is no longer the domain of the power elite, even in Japan where the government has historically tended to control the press.

Manipulation of information through the mass media

While governments are forced more and more to gain approval for their policies and to respond to public demands that are transmitted through the media, it is quite clear that they are also capable of manipulating information internationally for their own purposes. What this suggests is that in the information age governments, with the United States being a prime example, are increasingly utilizing a two-edged strategy of disclosure and concealment to achieve their foreign policy goals. When diplomacy was a matter for diplomats behind closed doors, the emphasis was on preventing information from reaching the public in general, whereas we are increasingly witnessing the selected disclosure of information to manipulate the general public.

The redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty is an example of this trend. Throughout the process of "redefining" the security treaty, much emphasis has been placed on the "maintenance" of the treaty despite the fact that the role envisioned for Japan in America's post-Cold War global strategy is a major redefinition of the treaty's initial purpose and is actually an attempt to restructure the security relationship within the skeleton of the existing treaty. It is clear that the United States had a schedule and an agenda in mind when it was drafting the EASR and reconsidering US-Japan security relations. The Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Osaka in November 1995, when the American and Japanese leaders were scheduled to meet, was supposed to be the highlight of that schedule.

Already in January 1995 President Clinton spoke of the reaffirmation of the commitment to maintain the US-Japan Security Treaty. In a

meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama in the same month the United States proposed a redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty and the maintenance of bases in Okinawa. When the two leaders met, the Japanese side seemed to agree to all the proposals. Many Japanese had doubts as to why the United States wanted to maintain the US-Japan Security Treaty, the *raison d'être* of which was based on Cold War thinking, even after the Cold War had ended, but there is no indication that Prime Minister Murayama expressed any reservations about the American proposal. In fact, having recently renounced the long-standing opposition to the US-Japan Security Treaty of his Socialist Party, it must have seemed to the Americans that everything would go as planned.

In early 1995, Nye released a memo of the "Nye Initiative" to US politicians, high-level bureaucrats, diplomats, journalists and others outlining the ideas of the EASR before its official announcement. Such action is commonly used to break the ground before proposing an important policy and can be called US-style *nemawashi*.³¹ After this instance of *nemawashi*, the "Nye Initiative" was written and the EASR was unveiled. It is evident that APEC and the scheduled summit meeting between the US and Japan would have been an ideal occasion to present to Asians the concept of a renewed US-Japan security alliance and a new security strategy for Asia, especially because of the high media coverage that APEC would receive in Japan.

After the rape in Okinawa, and Clinton's sudden cancellation of his trip to Japan to attend the APEC meeting because of problems with Congress over the next federal budget, the Americans failed to accomplish their media triumph in Osaka. By selectively manipulating the release of information, it seemed as though the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty along the lines the US had envisioned would have progressed smoothly had the incident in Okinawa not occurred.

A partially successful example of media manipulation was the announcement in April 1996 of the return of the Futenma Base in Okinawa in five to seven years. 1996 was the year of the presidential election and during the primaries, Clinton's top aid George Stephanopoulos, while campaigning in New Hampshire, stopped off at Harvard and had a discussion with a small group of professors and researchers. I was in attendance at the meeting, and I asked Stephanopoulos about the tendency in the United States towards "Japan passing" and if the President had any plans regarding the bases issue to present to the

Japanese side at his scheduled meeting with Japan's new Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto in April of that year.³² Although he did not mention anything in particular at the time, about a week later an announcement was made that Prime Minister Hashimoto would fly to Santa Monica and meet with President Clinton. The previously unscheduled meeting was only for about 30 minutes, but it was an important media event that helped to show the American support for the new Prime Minister and attempted to demonstrate the top-level concern about US-Japan relations and the bases in Okinawa.

At the official meeting in April in Washington D.C., the American side announced that, with some conditions, it would return the Futenma Base within five to seven years.³³ The announcement was taken up by the Japanese press, but again the major focus was on the emotional reactions to the issue in Okinawa rather than on the fact that Okinawa was a cornerstone of American global military strategy. The announcement of the return of one base was an impressive media event, but the apparent American concession was not a revision of the American global strategy. Some time after the meeting in Washington, there was a proposal made to create a floating heliport offshore, but, more than one year after the return was reported, there are still no concrete plans for where the site will be moved. On the surface, it seems like the government's manipulation was successful, but the underlying cause of the disenchantment in Okinawa still remains and it may take more than a few good media kudos to address Okinawan concerns.

In Japan it is more common for the government to control what information is made public than to purposefully release bits of information to promote its agenda. This control does not always succeed, however. In addition, there is the danger that this manipulation may increase the declining confidence in democratically elected governments.³⁴ Sometime after the media coverage of the rape, a conservative politician in Japan, Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama of the Liberal Democratic Party, was very critical of the Okinawan press and was quoted as saying that the rape would never have become a political issue in US-Japan relations had the two Okinawan papers made attempts not to sensationalize the incident.³⁵ What is clear is that Kajiyama did not understand that the pent-up frustration among the people of Okinawa was only transmitted through the media rather than being created by the press' treatment of the incident. While Kajiyama would probably have liked to suppress the voices of the people of

Okinawa, he was unable to, and the government was forced to take political action to address the people's demands.

CONCLUSION: US-JAPAN RELATIONS IN THE INFORMATION AGE

The mass media is undergoing a major transformation as we approach the twenty-first century. In the past, the media reached only a small group of educated elite, but as a result of education and technology, the media spread throughout national societies and beyond national borders. At present we are witnessing a globalization of the media in which the exponential growth of information—accelerated by technological advances in satellite broadcasting of text, video and audio—not only transcends borders, but is also part of an interactive process that breaks down those boundaries.

There are some who argue that in light of the globalization of information and the spread of new means of transmission like the Internet, traditional media and the journalism that it produced will become obsolete. Undoubtedly, traditional media like newspapers and television will have to compete with, or at least incorporate, these new means of information transmission. However, the press in general and individual journalists in particular will have a greater, more challenging social and political role to play in the information age. This is because the massive volumes of information are often transmitted in bits and pieces and do not reveal the background, the hidden agenda or the purpose for which those bits and pieces of information are being used. Journalists will therefore be required to analyze the massive volumes of information, while understanding the meaning, the true agenda and the purpose of the information that they transmit to the general public in order to make some sense of the exponential growth of all sorts of information.

The role of journalists is particularly important when considering US-Japan relations in the new millennium. With the redefinition of the US-Japan Security Treaty that is underway, Japan will become an even more vital cornerstone of the United States' global strategy, and developments in the bilateral relationship, good or bad, will have global consequences. It will therefore require a greater mutual understanding between the two countries if the challenges of the next century are to be met.

In recent years, the massive flow of information has meant that

basic information about each other is available in both countries, but the quality of information has not matched the quantity. The elite media in the United States seems to have taken a more balanced view of Japan, but the popular media is still full of stereotyped and often negative images. On the other hand, the Japanese media is for the most part only able to see things from a narrow Japanese view and they are often unable to transmit a broad, global view of events at home and abroad. Journalists in both countries, therefore, will have to work on these weaknesses if we are to overcome the barriers that still separate the two peoples.

I am convinced that journalism can play a very positive role in US-Japan relations in the coming century. The media is probably the best means to promote an open and lively debate on the common values of democracy, free markets and individual freedoms that both Americans and Japanese alike share. At the same time, however, it is clear that governments on both sides of the Pacific will whenever possible manipulate information for their own purposes. In the United States, in particular, there is a realization that not all information can be suppressed, so the government tries to selectively disclose information in order to hide some ulterior motive. In Japan on the other hand, as Kajiyama exemplified, the government still believes that it is best to suppress information to control the flow of events. As the case in Okinawa showed, this manipulation is not always successful, but this was in many ways an exception. The ability of the Japanese government to control the information that the media transmits gives credence to the argument that Japan is still only a quasi-democracy and lacks a press that is more than just a tool for the power elite.

The dawn of a new millennium and the global spread of the information society will undoubtedly induce a combination of hope and anxiety for all segments of American and Japanese societies. The manipulation of information will continue to be a powerful social and political force that will be used by those who are able to control that information—both the power elite and the general populace—and that control will ultimately influence the future course of the bilateral relationship. The time has come for journalists in the United States and Japan to seriously consider their role in the information society and play their part in guaranteeing that information is accessible, accurate and balanced in order to foster mutual understanding between our two peoples.

NOTES

* I would like to extend my appreciation to many people at Harvard University who assisted me during my stay from September 1995 to March 1996, with special thanks to Professor Marvin Kalb, director of the Shorenstein Center, and to Mr. Bill Kovach, curator of the Nieman Foundation.

¹ "International media" is not a separate discipline in itself, but rather it is concerned with the technological and sociological implications of the interaction between the mass media and international relations. The author was a journalist for over thirty years and is now a professor of international media concentrating on the transnational impact of media in the information age.

² Many Japanese, however, did not realize that he was implicitly criticizing the Japanese for not fulfilling their international responsibilities.

³ See inter alia Kondo Ken and Saito Makoto, *Tokyo Hatsu Joho Senso* [The Reporting Wars from Tokyo] (Tokyo: Toyo Keizai Shinpo Sha), 1994.

⁴ NHK Broadcasting Culture Institute, "A Comparison of Television Reporting in the United States and Japan: How Television is Shown in the Other Country," 1996.

⁵ Based on interviews with representatives at the CNN head office in Atlanta and the Atlanta bureau of TV Asahi.

⁶ The evening news programs of the three networks usually lasted 30 minutes, but because of commercials only about 24 minutes was actually devoted to news.

⁷ Although there are indications that there has been a tendency in the last two to three years to put more emphasis on domestic rather than international news. See, for example, Garrick Utley, "The Shrinking of Foreign News," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1997): 2-10.

⁸ International versions of *Asahi*, *Yomiuri* and *Nikkei* printed from satellite transmissions are available throughout the United States. I was able to obtain these from a store called "Out of Town News" at Harvard Square.

⁹ The term "Japan passing" is now commonly used but the author first learned the term from Clay Chandler of the *Washington Post*, formerly the Tokyo Correspondent of the *Wall Street Journal*.

¹⁰ This sense of supremacy has led to a return of confidence in the United States and perhaps even has some connection with the steady economic expansion America has been experiencing in recent years.

¹¹ "Mainland" here refers to the four main islands of Japan that are viewed from Okinawa as the Japanese mainland. In addition to the written newspaper reports of the rally, photographs and televised audio-visual broadcasts played a major role. As the tempo of the demonstration and the rally picked up, it was undoubtedly a prime topic for television news programs. I watched the events on the three major networks and news specialty channels like CNN and New England Cable News from my apartment in Cambridge. I was able to see the news from Fuji Television and listen to NHK short-wave broadcasts. NHK international television services are technically available, but require a satellite dish so they are not available as readily as the cable broadcasts.

¹² The "Shakai-men" or city news page in Japanese newspapers is in some ways similar to the "City" section in western newspapers, but it incorporates not only local affairs, but also major news stories that do not fall into the International, Politics and Economy sections. The "Shakai-men" is located on the second to last page, and in

Japan is considered second in importance only to the front page, as many people read this section first or immediately after reading the front page.

¹³ A similar incident occurred in Korea, sparking the same kind of opposition to the US bases there. Interestingly, in July 1996 when Japanese police requested that an American serviceman stationed at Sasebo in Nagasaki Prefecture suspected of theft and attempted murder be handed over for questioning, the American authorities were very quick in handing him over in order to prevent another outcry like that in Okinawa. See *Mainichi Shinbun*, July 20, 1996, morning edition, p. 2.

¹⁴ "Rape of 12 Year-old Fans Okinawans' Anger at US Military Presence," A15.

¹⁵ Considering that its Japan bureau is in Tokyo, dispatching the report from Naha was representative of the seriousness with which the newspaper viewed the incident.

¹⁶ The word "redefinition" is used rather than revision because there was no actual revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty (UJST) itself. Rather, new "guidelines" are being formulated to stipulate what Japan can and cannot do to support the United States in the event of a regional military emergency. Thus, the original UJST is being "redefined" to meet the international situation of the post-Cold War era, but the actual treaty has not been revised.

¹⁷ "Rape Case in Japan Turns Harsh Light on US Military—An Apology from the US to Ease Tensions over its Troops' Behavior," A5.

¹⁸ *Asahi Shinbun*, September 9, 1995, morning edition. Two paragraphs covering the incident were in the evening edition.

¹⁹ In Japan the major newspapers run a morning and an evening edition. They do not run the same articles in both editions and should be thought of as one day's newspaper divided into two sections.

²⁰ In Japan there is a press club system where small groups of reporters are invited by politicians or ministries to cover specific topics. What often happens is that these groups become self-contained, with the reporters reporting what the bureaucrats and politicians want reported and thus reporters are easily manipulated by the authorities. Karel von Wolferen has made a fairly thorough review of the press club system. See his *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

²¹ These issues will be discussed in detail in section III.

²² The increase in sheer volume of reporting is exemplified in the *Asahi* from mid-September onwards. See Table 1.

²³ Reporting of what has been reported in the American media is common because the American media is viewed in Japan as an authority on what is considered newsworthy.

²⁴ Coincidentally, after the rape incident occurred in Okinawa and the bases issue was becoming a pressing issue in US-Japan relations in September 1995, Nye—then Undersecretary of State—was announced as the new Dean of the Harvard Kennedy School.

²⁵ The coverage in the *Asahi* was made on the front page, with other related articles in the international section and in the editorial.

²⁶ All the major newspapers in Japan reported the outline of the report after it was announced.

²⁷ This was particularly important considering that the United States lost its bases in the Philippines in the early 1990s.

²⁸ Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and William A. Owens, "America's Information Edge," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1996): 20–36. This was published right after Nye returned to Harvard from his post as Undersecretary of State.

²⁹ For an example of "soft power," see also Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The*

Changing Nature of American Power (New York: Basic Books, 1990): 107–112. Although Nye and Owens stress the ideological importance of democracy and free markets, I feel that the attraction of American culture and the American way of life in general should be included as well.

³⁰ Coincidentally, Governor Ohta mentioned in an interview with Japanese newspapers that knowledge and information is more important in the post-Cold War period.

³¹ *Nemawashi* is a Japanese term that literally means to “turn the roots” and is commonly used to refer to the custom in Japan of sounding out ideas with important people before any concrete proposals are made and actions are undertaken.

³² Prime Minister Murayama abruptly resigned in January of 1996 and was replaced by Ryutaro Hashimoto, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party. The coalition between the LDP, the Socialists and the Sakigake did not change, but it is important to note that an LDP member was back in power as Prime Minister.

³³ The *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* was the first to report this proposal to return the base and received an award from the Japan Newspapers Association for its reporting. However, it appears that the report was intentionally leaked to the *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* as a public relations move to smother the opposition to the US-Japan Security Treaty.

³⁴ For an example of the declining confidence in government, see Joseph S. Nye, Jr., “The Media and Declining Confidence in Government,” *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* (Summer 1997): 4–9.

³⁵ The two papers responded by arguing that their reporting was fair and accurate, and that while their reporting was highly emotional at times, their treatment of the rape was very representative of what most Okinawans were feeling.