

A Rhetorical Analysis of Political Statements over the Relocation of a U.S. Air Base — Current English and English Rhetoric —

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I. Introduction

The writer of this paper makes it a rule to listen to NHK English news every day and write down its headlines on a notebook. In this practice, one of the headlines which has interested him most is the issue of relocating a U.S. military base within Okinawa, focusing on an exchange of political statements between Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga.

As of September 1, 2015, there is no solution in sight to the standoff between the prefecture of Okinawa and the central government of Japan, but it should be remembered that there was one big change in a similar exchange between former governor Hirokazu Nakaima and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. When the conclusion of that exchange was announced, I was interested in the reason for that: a greatly increased amount of subsidy for the economic development of Okinawa. About one year after this announcement, however, a gubernatorial election took place in Okinawa and Mr. Nakaima was defeated and a new governor was elected: Mr. Takeshi Onaga. He was elected because he expressed opposition to the government's plan to relocate a U.S. military base

from Futenma to Henoko.

According to *The Rhetorical Act* by Karylin Kohrs Campbell and Susan Schultz Huxman (2009), rhetoric means what is persuasive. It seeks a rhetorical act in which some people were persuaded by others, tries to find out why those people were persuaded and why those who persuaded others were successful, and tries to examine all the processes of such a rhetorical success.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to describe as many rhetorical acts as possible by those involved in the issue of relocating a U.S. air station at Futenma to Henoko, to identify cases of influence or persuasion in the processes of trying to solve this Okinawa issue, and to make a rhetorical analysis of those cases.

II. Description of rhetorical acts

The NHK English news for August 29th starts as follows: “The Japanese government and the prefectural government of Okinawa remain apart over relocating a U.S. military base within the prefecture.” The meeting between Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga and Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga took place in Naha, the Okinawa capital. In the meeting, “Onaga recalled the situation that Okinawa has faced since the end of World War II in renewing the prefecture’s opposition to the relocation plan. Suga spoke about the background that led to the decision to relocate the base” What made this issue so controversial? According to the same article, “In 1996, the governments of Japan and the United States agreed to close the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station once alternative facilities were available. The Futenma facility is located in a densely populated area in Ginowan City. The relocation plan calls for building a replacement in the sparsely populated Henoko district of Nago City. Here the two important points to remember are: 1) once alternative facilities were available; and 2) building a replacement in the sparsely populated Henoko district

of Nago City.

Both Okinawa and the central government of Japan seem to have understood 1), for they agreed “on the need to remove the risks posed by Futenma and to suspend its operation”, but they have different opinions concerning 2). Okinawa wants alternative facilities to be outside the prefecture, while the central government thinks it the only option to relocate the Futenma air base to Henoko. The August 29 meeting ended with both sides having agreed to have intensive talks aimed at narrowing the gap.

Those “intensive talks” took place on September 7th in Tokyo, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s participation. The talks, however, ended two days later without any change in the stance of each side. In the NHK news dated September 8th, the chief cabinet secretary reiterated that the government would go ahead with a plan to relocate a U.S. air station from a densely populated area to a less crowded site within Okinawa Prefecture, while the governor of Okinawa seemed determined to block the relocation plan. As a result, the central government informed Okinawa that it would soon restart the suspended project, and the Okinawa governor was disappointed because “he spoke to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga about the feelings of the people of Okinawa, but to no avail.”

Why did not the “intensive talks” result in a better result? Some people may suspect that, from the beginning, the central government did not intend to resolve this issue, mainly because it just wanted to divert the attention of the public from the fact that the approval rating of the Abe administration is becoming lower over the national security bills (Asahi Shimbun, September 8), but we do not know the truth. This paper, therefore, starts some study of those involved in those talks in order to identify cases of persuasion. As mentioned earlier, Mr. Hirokazu Nakaima was persuaded by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe when Okinawa was offered a greatly increased subsidy for the economic development

of the prefecture. Mr. Takashi Onaga, however, is not persuaded yet even with that economic stimulus. Why?

III. Identification of Cases of Persuasion

In December 2013, Nakaima approved a landfill proposal by the Japanese government to permit the construction of new military facilities in Henoko to replace Marine Corps Air Station Futenma. The decision came two days after the central government earmarked 348 billion yen for Okinawa's economic development and despite earlier campaign promises by Nakaima to move the base outside of the prefecture all together. Here it is clear that Nakaima was persuaded by the central government of Japan with a large amount of subsidy for his prefecture. What has made this possible?

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Hirokazu Nakaima was born in Osaka on August 19, 1939. In 1945, during World War II, his family escaped from the air raids in Osaka and evacuated to Oita Prefecture. In 1946, he went to his parent' hometown of Naha, Okinawa, where he was educated in his school days. Nakaima excelled in math and science, earning grades that placed him at the top of his class.

Pursuing a dream of becoming an automobile designer, Nakaima sat for an exam to apply for the government-funded/ Self-funded Okinawa Student Program, a system established between the United States Military Government in Okinawa and the Japanese Government to allow students from Okinawa to attend university in mainland Japan. Nakaima passed the exam and matriculated at the University of Tokyo, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering degree in 1961. Directly after graduating in 1961, Nakaima joined the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITT).

In 1987, Nakaima took a Senior General Manager position with the Okinawa Electric Power Company. In 1990, he left the company to become

a Vice Governor in the administration of Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota. Nakaima returned to the Okinawa Electric Power Company in 1995, serving as the company's President and later Chairman of the Board of Directors.

In 2006 the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito gave him backing for his run in the Okinawa gubernatorial election on November 19. Nakaima assumed the office of Governor on December 10, 2006. He was re-elected for a second term on November 28, 2010.

As is shown clearly in the background of Kazuhide Nakaima, he was ready to listen to a strong proposal by the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito for the relocation of a U.S. military base from Futenma to Hennoko just because he was supported himself by those two parties for his run in the Okinawa gubernatorial election and he was strongly influenced by an enormous offer of subsidy for Okinawa mainly because his career was full of economic initiatives. Takeshi Onaga, however, was elected because of his strong opposition to the government's proposal.

IV. Interpretation of the rhetorical acts

As has been earlier mentioned, there is an important point to remember as to the relocation of a U.S. military base, which goes as follows:

In 1996, the governments of Japan and the United States agreed to close the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station once alternative facilities were available.

As far as this agreement is concerned, there is no mentioning of Henoko, so it must have come into the plan after the central government of Japan took into consideration as many options as possible, and the government says it "plans to continue discussions on measures to reduce Okinawa's base-hosting burden,

and steps to stimulate the prefecture's economy" (September 7).

One of the characteristics of rhetoric is "public," which means any rhetorical statement is addressed to others. In other words, that statement deals with issues and problems that one person alone cannot answer or solve; the solutions require cooperative effort. If this characteristic is translated into the issue in question; the relocation of a U.S. air base, what does "cooperative effort" mean? Both parties, the central government and the prefecture of Okinawa, are interested in measures to reduce Okinawa's base-hosting burden and steps to stimulate the prefecture's economy, but it seems that "others" their statements are addressed to are different. To Okinawa, these "others" seem to be the people of Okinawa, the central government and the people of mainland Japan, while, to the central government, they appear to be the people of mainland Japan and the United States.

As efforts were made to look for articles related to the U.S. base relocation issue in Okinawa, there was nothing but a response from the United States. In the September 15 article, "US State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters that both the US and Japanese governments are committed to the base relocation" and "Department of Defense spokesman Jeff Davis also indicated there have been no changes to the relocation plan." The central government of Japan may have felt relieved to know these responses.

On August 8, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said the government would discuss with the Okinawa governor the relocation of a US air station within the prefecture while suspending the landfill work for a month. One month later, when that discussion ended without any change in the stances of both parties, the Asahi Shimbun suspected that the central government wanted to use this suspension to prevent the approval rating of the Abe administration from further dropping, and sure enough, the approval rating did rise to 40-something after the controversial national security bills were enacted in the Upper

House. What does it mean? Is it possible that the central government says it understands the true feelings of people of mainland Japan over the Okinawa issue and used the suspension of the landfill work to make itself look “more thoughtful” about Okinawa? The same is true of the United States, whose spokesman said in the September 22nd news that “the United States will maintain good relations with local communities on Okinawa and remains cognizant of the impact of the US military presence there.”

The Japanese government also mentions “a plan to have the US military return part of a training areas in the northern part of the prefecture,” which it says is part of its efforts to reduce Okinawa’s burden of hosting US bases. This area accounts for more than 20 percent of the land occupied by US bases in Okinawa. This plan, however, was not mentioned at all by the prefecture of Okinawa, nor accepted as a benefit of any negotiation between Tokyo and Okinawa.

As the central government insisted on its own stance, what did the governor of Okinawa do? On August 4th, Chief Cabinet Secretary announced that the government would suspend the landfill work for a month, during which it would discuss with the Okinawa governor the relocation of a US air station within the prefecture, and 8 days later, on August 12th, a US military helicopter crashed onto a US transport ship off the city of Uruma, injuring 6 people. They included 2 members of Japan’s Self-Defense Forces who were undergoing training. This incident was not the first one, but it was clear that it should cause greater concern for people living near American military bases. Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga, however, accepted the government’s suggestion as he said he valued the opportunity to meet with Suga.

The number of meetings between Okinawa and Tokyo is 5, including the one in which Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took part on August 7th, but both parties did not find any change in the stances to the relocation issue. Which

party was to blame for that? It was the central government, for it has been in an advantageous position all the time but failed to use the five “intensive” meetings to bridge the gap. In fact, the meetings themselves seemed to have been far from intensive, for the government seemed to be confident of “success” in those meetings from the beginning. On August 4th, when he was “asked by reporters whether the government may change its relocation plan after the talks, Suga only said it hopes to explain its stance to the governor again” (underlined by the writer). Onaga, in the meantime, “said he will make his case while taking care not to let the talks break down” (underlined by the writer). Okinawa wanted to make the most of this opportunity to make itself understood, while Tokyo just used it to reiterate the same stance as before.

In a discussion with two parties on an equal status, no action is taken unless they reach agreement, but the talks in relation to the relocation issue are going in a totally different direction. “Construction work for the planned relocation of the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station has resumed in Japan’s southern prefecture of Okinawa.... Workers commissioned by the regional bureau of the Defense Ministry resumed construction off the coast of Henoko district in Nago City shortly after 6:30 AM on Saturday. They used heavy machinery to lower work boats into the water” (September 12, NHK).

As a result, the governor of Okinawa decided to revoke an approval for landfill work in an area where the central government plans to relocate a US military base and announced it on September 14, and more than 100 Okinawa people opposed to the relocation plan gathered in front of the US Camp Schwab and cheered at their governor’s decision. On September 15th, the Japanese government expressed its readiness to consider legal action to continue the land-filling work.

Takeshi Onaga, Okinawa governor, must have predicted such a result, so as planned, he went abroad to win support of the international community. He

addressed a meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva on September 21st. In his speech, he noted that “Okinawa accounts for only 0.6 percent of Japan’s total area, but hosts 73.8 percent of its US military facilities.... US military bases have been the cause of incidents, accidents and environmental problems in the prefecture for 70 years since World War II ended.... Could a country share values such as freedom, equality, human rights and democracy with other nations when it cannot guarantee those values to its own people?” (September 22, NHK). Then the Okinawa governor criticized the central government for ignoring local people’s will by pushing ahead with the relocation plan, and vowed to block the move using every possible means.

Listening to this speech, the Japanese ambassador to the UN office in Geneva responded with exactly the same words as people of the Abe administration, including Mr. Yoshihide Suga, Chief Cabinet Secretary. And from the United States, the same spokesman, Mr. John Kirby, responded in a similar manner.

Concerning what Mr. Onaga said in a UN meeting, the writer would like to join him in saying that it is the international community that will decide which party, Okinawa or Tokyo and Washington, is right in the definition of democracy.

V. Evaluation of the rhetorical acts

It is not yet certain which party will be successful in its insistence, but it is certain whether the central government will continue their landfill work despite a strong opposition by Okinawa has nothing to do with its rhetorical success. This may remind readers of this article of the fact that the controversial national security bills have been enacted in both the Lower and Upper Houses despite strong oppositions by much of the general public of Japan as well as the five opposition parties of the Diet. Even though Prime Minister Shinzo Abe himself

admitted that their insistence on the importance of the government-sponsored national security bills were not fully accepted by the whole nation of Japan yet, he and his administration succeeded in having those bills enacted. Rhetorically speaking, however, this state of affairs can never be called a success of the governing coalition in its rhetorical efforts. Rather, it was not based on reason-giving evidence, but merely on a greater majority of votes. The Abe administration heavily depends on a greater majority of votes in both Houses of the Diet and not on its rhetorical efforts.

Now it must be significant to know that the Obama administration of the United States has recently succeeded in securing enough votes, first in the Senate, then in the House of Representatives. The September 3rd NHK news says, “US President Barack Obama has apparently scored a major foreign policy victory by securing enough Senate votes to protect the Iran deal in the Republican-controlled Congress.” And John Kerry, Secretary of State, also made a speech in which he reassessed the significance of the nuclear agreement, saying that it will make the international community safer. In a disadvantageous situation, Obama and Kerry, both Democrats, made speeches in which they won the support of the whole Congress controlled by the Republicans. The same was true of the U.S. negotiations with Cuba, which led to the normalization of their bilateral diplomatic relations.

Unlike the United States, Japan failed in its efforts to make its position in research whaling understood by the international community, nor did it succeed in including the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the final statement of the Review of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty in the face of strong opposition by China and South Korea. The Japanese government may continue landfill work in preparation for the relocation of a US air base from Futenman to Henoko with a strong backup of the United States, but the writer cannot help evaluating more highly Okinawa Governor Takeshi Onaga and his prefectural

government in their rhetorical efforts at the United Nations to make the will of the people of Okinawa understood not only by many Japanese in mainland Japan as well as those in the international community.

VI. Conclusion

Rhetoric usually has much to do with speeches, but this time, as this writer listens to an English news program every day, he wants to make the most of what he writes down on a daily basis. Incidentally, he also teaches rhetoric in his seminar for third-year students, so he wants to show to his students how daily news can be used to make a rhetorical analysis of a certain issue. Traditionally, the writer himself has been familiar with a rhetorical analysis of a single speech, as he studied a method of criticism for a speech by a US president, but he also learned a recent trend in rhetorical criticism: a great variety of researches.

What this writer has been trying to analyze is the social controversy: the relocation of a US military base from Futenma to Henoko, and his conclusion is that, as far as the negotiations made between the central government of Japan and the government of Okinawa are concerned, the Japanese government has failed to make itself completely understood by the general public, while Okinawa governor is making good efforts to appeal to the international community.

The resources he has used for his analysis are mainly English news articles on the website of NHK, not the actual statements but statements introduced in the news articles, which suggests the limit of the present research. Although the study has such a limit, the writer hastens to add that this is just a beginning of his continued rhetorical study of the social controversy through news articles.

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9/3 Obama set to secure votes for Iran deal

9/7 Abe to join base relocation talks with Okinawa

9/9 Suga: Gov't wants to reduce Okinawa's burden

9/12 US base relocation work resumes in Okinawa

9/14 Okinawa to revoke US base landfill permit

9/14 People rally around Okinawa governor's decision

9/15 Govt. mulls legal action to allow Futenma move

9/15 US stands firm on Okinawa base

9/22 Onaga tells UN Okinawa's rights are neglected

9/22 US official defends Okinawa base relocation plan

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