Redefine and Practice Our Peace, Our Security, If They Do Theirs

Tuesday 23 December 2008, by MUTO Ichiyo (Date first published: June 2000).

Contents

- I. Between the Two Summits
- II. Globalization Processes
- III. Peace Movements and (...)
- IV. The Need to Redefine (...)
- V. The UNDP's Human Security
- VI. Some Thoughts About (...)

I. Between the Two Summits: The Japan Problem in a New Context

WE ARE GATHERED HERE IN OKINAWA (JAPAN) TO DISCUSS PEOPLE'S SECURITY, justice, and peace and to develop action across Asia and beyond to attain them. We feel that we are meeting at the right time and in the right place. This is the right time, sandwiched between the two summits. The first is the South-North Korean summit in Pyongyang, in June 2000. This initiated a historic process of a whole people taking upon themselves the task of settling one of the most crucial and difficult post-World War II issues of East Asia East Asia

The second meeting is the G-8 summit of self-appointed world leaders who will come here in July and meet in Nago, the precise location where the United States United States, with the willing support of the Japanese government, is forcing a brand new military base on the Okinawa people. The late Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi, who provocatively chose Nago as the venue of the 2000 summit, declared that the Okinawa summit would send out a "message of peace" to the rest of the world. President Clinton praised Obuchi's wisdom and welcomed this summit as the opportunity to demonstrate again the importance of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. Their message is clear: Bases equals Peace. The Okinawan people, however, are irrevocably against bases.

Thus, Okinawa is the right place for this gathering. Okinawa has been, and continues to be, a major site of sustained popular protest against the massive U.S. military presence. Due to their devastating experience of the Battle of Okinawa [1] in 1945, when over 160,000 civilians were killed, and in their ongoing struggle against U.S. bases, the people of Okinawa have developed an idea of peace and security that is clearly differentiated from the notion of peace as the product of military presence, and the notion of security as state security.

Strategically, Okinawa, as the single largest overseas U.S. military base in the world, is called the "lynchpin" of U.S. military strategy in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. It is where 75% of U.S. bases in the Japanese territory are concentrated, occupying about 20% of the best land of this small island. In the post-Cold War context, the role of Okinawa is being strengthened as the U.S.-Japan military alliance is redefined.

Let me briefly sketch the current state of the U.S.-Japan military alliance. Despite the end of the Cold War, the United States has adopted a military doctrine for the East Asian-Pacific region that justifies continued U.S. military presence and parcels out for Japan a heavier military role than even at the height of the Cold War. The landmark event in accomplishing this shift in Japan's role was the 1996 redefinition of the U.S.-Japan security alliance. This was followed by new U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines, adopted in 1997. This bilateral arrangement obliges Japan to mobilize its public and private resources, personnel, facilities, services, and its military force to join American military operations to be conducted in "areas surrounding Japan." The Guidelines define the concept of "areas surrounding Japan" not as geographical, but as situational. Although the surrounding "areas" certainly include Korea and the Taiwan Strait [2], they could also include any areas in the world. For the United States , keeping its bases in Okinawa is the key to this strategy.

One alarming development is that the redefined U.S.-Japan alliance has provided the momentum for Japanese ruling groups to free the postwar Japanese state from its constitutional constraints. The postwar constitution has a pacifist clause that bans the military and renounces the state's right to belligerency belligerency (bəlĭj`ərənsē), in international law, status of parties legally at war. Conservative forces have seized upon this redefinition of the U.S.-Japan military alliance to seek to delete this clause and to make Japan a fully-fledged war-capable state with a large army deployable overseas. Revision of the constitution has been placed on the mid-term political agenda. In this climate, right-wing intellectuals who have launched campaigns glorifying the Japanese imperial past have been making inroads into mainstream media and attracting a sizeable number of young people with calls for national pride. Curiously, the disregard of "national pride" that greater integration of Japan into U.S. military strategy entails and the fanning of crude nationalism are happening side by side. In fact, economic globalization and military integration with the U.S., which inevitably work to undermine the basis of the nation-state, generate the state's need for the artificial revival of nationalism.

All this shows that the redefined U.S.-Japan military alliance, with Okinawa as its strategic core, is a problem for the entire region. True, this is Japan's remilitarization, but not in the sense that Japan is going back to the past as an independent imperialist power poised to invade its neighbors. Though the danger of this possibility should not be foreclosed completely, the immediate problem is the emergence in East Asia of a new composite core consisting of a war-capable Japan faithfully integrated into U.S. hegemonic power. In this context, the issue of Okinawa is not just one of bilateral relations between the U.S. and Japan, or Okinawa and Tokyo. It is a matter of how we, as Asian-Pacific people, view this emergent formation and what position we should take vis-a-vis this whole power configuration. This Okinawa forum is an occasion to facilitate the formation of an Asian-Pacific people's resistance and intervention in this situation, which is becoming increasingly dynamic and offers greater opportuni ties of intervention for peace.

II. Globalization Processes and U.S. Military Strategy

What should be our basic stance in this situation? The Battle of Seattle in November 1999 dramatically laid bare to millions of people worldwide the destructive processes of "globalization from above." Moreover, it demonstrated the power of the people to resist it. Masquerading as the advocate of human rights and liberal democracy, the global economic and political order being imposed in the name of globalization and free markets seeks to establish a virtual monopoly of multinational corporations that are destructive to people and the physical environment.

The struggle against this destructive trend is still almost exclusively focused on its socioeconomic implications, leaving its military aspects insufficiently addressed. The nexus that certainly exists

between socioeconomic globalization and military globalization is still to be identified, exposed, and properly coped with. In particular, we need to analyze the nature of U.S. hegemony at the core of the globalization process, and situate post-Cold War U.S. global and regional military strategies in that context. In my view, U.S. military strategy is the bulwark of the economic, social, and cultural domination of the world by multinational corporations, whose interests are identified with the national interests of the United States.

The Pentagon itself supports this contention. Let me here go to the East Asia and Pacific strategy of the U.S. After the end of the Cold War, the U.S. redefined its global military strategy, introducing slogans such as "Shape, respond, and prepare," "presence plus," and "comprehensive engagement." U.S. motivations and goals are candidly set out in a series of Pentagon strategy publications. "Shape" means that the U.S. military is instrumental in shaping the world to maximize U.S. interests in the 21st century. Discussing U.S. national interests, a 1997 Pentagon report (U.S. Department of Defense, 1997a) states:

"We seek to create conditions in the world where our interests are rarely threatened, and when they are, we have effective means of addressing those threats. In general, we seek a world in which no critical region is dominated by a power hostile to the United States and regions of greatest importance to the U.S. are stable and at peace. The overall health of the international economic environment directly affects our security, just as stability enhances the prospects for prosperity. This prosperity, a goal in itself, also ensures that we are able to sustain our military forces, foreign initiatives, and global influence."

Another 1997 Pentagon report (U.S. Department of Defense, 1997b) explains the comprehensive nature of U.S. military strategy:

"Maintaining an overseas military presence is a cornerstone of U.S. National Security Strategy and a key element of U.S. military policy of"shape, respond, and prepare."In Asia, U.S. force presence plays a particularly key role in promoting peace and security in regional affairs. However, this presence, while serving a critical shaping function, is but one element of general U.S. overseas engagement in the Asia-Pacific region that includes everything from conventional diplomacy, to international trade and investment, to people-to-people contact in educational, scientific, and cultural exchanges. The diversity of U.S. activity reflects comprehensive U.S. overseas engagement to protect and promote security interests in Asia, or"Presence Plus.""

III. Peace Movements and the Cold War Context

When we discuss security of the people in the Pacific and East Asia, we must define our stance vis-a-vis the hegemonic structure that integrates economic, social, cultural, ideological, and military dimensions. This will require a new conceptual approach to the peace and security problematic.

Since the U.S.-led Cold War lasted over four decades, we tend to understand U.S. hegemony and its military aspects in the Cold War context. In hindsight, though, the Cold War situation can be seen as an aberration from what the U.S. originally wished to achieve. In assuming global hegemony toward the end of World War II, the United States dreamed of integrating the whole world, not just the "free world," within its specific system of global domination. The Bretton Woods system was designed accordingly, and the Marshall Plan was offered to East European countries. The Kremlin obstructed this scheme in 1947, however, and the Chinese Revolution frustrated it in Asia in 1949, forcing U.S. hegemony to remain flawed and incomplete. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition of Communist regimes to market economies removed this obstacle, allowing the U.S. to return to its hegemonic position, though the world in 2000 is greatly different than it was in 1947. Nonetheless,

what we witness is a spiral comeback of the U.S. to its original hegemonic logic.

We need to come to grips with this situation. The notion of peace and security, as well as the focus of peace efforts, must shift since the central problematic has shifted. During the Cold War, the world was haunted by the constant fear of a major nuclear war. Throughout this period, the leading ideology was anticommunism. Anticommunism had different implications in the West and in the Third World. In the West, it was rooted in the historical values of liberal democracy. The same ideology applied to Third World situations meant the opposite, however: “national security states,” dictatorial regimes supported by the U.S. and many of its allies. Our peace stance was formulated in response to this situation. We sought to mitigate the East-West nuclear confrontation through reconciliation and peaceful coexistence, and support for struggles of Third World peoples against dictatorial regimes and for human rights. Independent peace efforts were also undertaken in the 1980s to make linkages with human rights and peace activists inside the Soviet bloc.

From this stance, peace movements opposed the American war against Vietnam, as well as military interventions in Central America and elsewhere that blatantly violated human rights and people’s right to self-determination. In the early 198 Os, the danger of nuclear war came to a head, mobilizing multitudes of people in the North for a nuclear freeze, and against nuclear missile deployment. These represented the logic of people’s movements for peace and social justice in the Cold-War environment.

IV. The Need to Redefine Security

Most of the peace movements’ premises have been invalidated by the post-Cold War hegemonic regime. The crisis has not disappeared, it has become diffused. Issues of the past have not been resolved, they have multiplied and became more complex. Old problems, like nuclear armament, remain unresolved. Nuclear deterrence is still built into the core of the reasserted hegemony. The nuclear monopoly by a few powers is challenged by large and small nations - new aspirants for membership in the nuclear club. Yet neither the danger of nuclear annihilation of the whole human race, nor the likelihood of a major world war are perceived as the central issue.

Instead, freed from the stifling effects of the Cold War regime, violent regional and other conflicts have exploded in numerous places. They involve elite self-interests, ambitions, and identities, often expressed in various fundamentalisms, some religious and others not, whereby elites seek people’s support with false claims to solutions for their problems, which have become aggravated by processes of globalization. Nationalism has resurfaced precisely as the globalization process undermines the basis of nation-states.

The globalization process is rapidly widening socioeconomic disparities between the powerful and rich and the powerless and poor; it is also irreparably destroying the environment. Despite their differences, the Northern countries that dominate this system use their power to protect their collective interests against the vast majority of the world’s people.

All this heightens the risks to the everyday lives of billions of people, even in the absence of an apparent violent conflict. Chaotic situations have arisen in major regions, foretelling general chaos in the human community. It is a mistake to lay the blame for this tendency solely on “bad guys,” “rogue states,” or “fanatics.” Though their responsibility in specific cases should be clearly identified, the globalization process is the major destabilizing factor. Instead of uprooting this destabilizing force, U.S. strategy promotes destabilization as it seeks to “shape” the world in its interest and fashion. The firefighter turns out to be the arsonist.

V. The UNDP's Human Security

What, then, should our stance be on the question of peace and social justice? The United Nations Development Program's 1994 Human Development Report introduced the concept of human security in an effort to address the post-Cold War situation (UNDP, 1994). In an agenda item presented to the Social Summit, the UNDP proposed a "new concept of human security in the decades ahead." The report stated:

For too long, the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with the threats to a country's border. For too long, nations have sought arms to protect their security. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime — these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world.

As the Canadian government characterized it (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999), the UNDP's "human security" represented a "shift in the angle of vision...an alternative way of seeing the world, taking the people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or governments." This shift in the angle of vision is necessary and appropriate in the post-Cold War setting. As part of a new quest for "human development" and "sustainable development," the UNDP human security concept shifted the emphasis to personal, economic, and social security, which, given the destructive effects of the globalization process, certainly addresses the issues and aspects of people's everyday lives that are totally neglected in national security discourse. This was a significant leap forward.

However, I believe this approach overlooks crucial points and is consequently inadequate for us to reposition ourselves vis-a-vis the current situation concerning peace, security, and justice. An absolute limitation stems from the fact that the UNDP is a U.N. agency consisting of nation-states. The fatal weaknesses of the UNDP' s human security seem apparent:

(1) It is uncritical of, and thus fails to come to grips with, the dominant state-military structure as a possible and often major source of danger to people's security. If we approach the security of people in a series of countries and territories in Asia and elsewhere, we immediately find that the violence of national armed forces has been directed against their own people, particularly when the latter stood up for the fulfillment of legitimate demands — freedom, land, labor rights, and democracy. Parastate organizations struggling to violently seize state power frequently destroy the lives of the people whose interests they claim to protect. This is an extension of state violence. People have had ongoing traumatic experiences with their own state military in Burma, Cambodia, East Timor, Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, Okinawa, and Thailand, to name a few. The UNDP notion of "human security" is silent on this crucial issue.

(2) Similarly, the UNDP's definition of human security fails to address the global exercise of violence that turns on the U.S. military's policing role. It lacks any criteria whereby we can pass judgment on the Persian Gulf War, NATO's war against Yugoslavia, and other cases of "humanitarian intervention." Though the UNDP does not address this, the Canadian Foreign Ministry's interpretation (mentioned above) is worth quoting: "when conditions warrant, vigorous action in defense of human security objectives will be necessary. Ensuring human security can involve the use of coercive measures, including sanctions and military force, as in Bosnia and Kosovo" (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999). Are things so simple?

(3) Though the primacy of people's security in their everyday lives is declared, the UNDP concept of human security does not tell us where the basic power to guarantee human security lies. The

assumption seems to be that the state protects human security. In other words, the people themselves are not identified as the primary agents in ensuring their own security.

Overall, the UNDP's concept of human security does not properly address the problematic of military forces and societal militarization. Though the broadening of the definition of security to cover social and economic aspects is a significant contribution, it also serves to separate the military aspect from socioeconomic aspects of security. In reality, these aspects are integrated into a whole system of domination.

VI. Some Thoughts About People's Security

To overcome these weaknesses and integrate the positive aspects of the human security concept, we must define our own stance and discourse vis-a-vis the dominant structure and its logic. Let me call such a concept "people's security."

(1) Like the UNDP's human security, people's security means comprehensive security of the people as individuals and collectivities. People's security shares with human security a concern with the whole range of human life, but considers the military element to be ingrained in the structure that destabilizes people's lives. In short, people's security calls for demilitarization. To illustrate this idea, let me quote from an Okinawa-U.S. women's publication (East Asia-U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism Militarism, 1999: 1), resulting from feminist anti-militarist interchange since 1997:

"In the name of security, nations invest massively in militaries and ever more sophisticated weapons systems. War and war heroes are romanticized and glorified through movies, especially those made in Hollywood. They promote the idea that military service is a sign of true patriotism. Young people are drafted for military service in some countries, or volunteer for it in others. The idea that the military protects us is so ingrained, it is sometimes hard to imagine anything else."

Women's security, and for that matter people's security, is at peril unless this prevailing state of affairs is disintegrated. "Military security is an oxymoron," the authors of this publication argue in reference to the Okinawa situation where the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty that officially defines security in military terms "in no way protects host communities — especially women and girls — who have been harmed and abused by U.S. military personnel" (Ibid.).

The violence implicit and explicit in the military is heavily gendered. As Suzuyo Takazato, one of the most energetic leaders of the Okinawa women's peace movement, argued, women's security is not compatible with the military, whose essence is violence. She wrote:

A poet once described the base as the man and the town around it the woman. The base is an organized body internalizing sexual discrimination and racism, a mechanism aimed at threatening, dominating, and conquering others with the show of force of nuclear, chemical, and other ultra-modern weaponry, printing the mentality of violence into individual human beings through training, exercises, and real war.

Establishing people's security thus requires addressing the structural realities of global and local situations in an effort to get them to unravel in the direction of justice and peace. "Human security" in the UNDP descriptions simply and flatly enumerates desirable conditions.

(2) Who will exercise the power to bring about people's security? While the UNDP, understandably, looks toward the state, we take the position that people themselves are the prime actors to ensure their comprehensive security through their struggles, movements, and initiatives. The idea of

people's security is security "by the people," and not only "of the people and for the people." This has practical implications. Let me refer to only a few.

First, there should be people's alliances that cross the borders that divide them and set one group against another. This is not easy, of course, particularly when authoritarian regimentation of people makes free expression impossible. But people-to-people efforts to link up do work to promote democracy, and democracy creates conditions for alliances beyond borders. Yet even freedom of expression is not sufficient for the people in different nation-states to link together. Nationalism and chauvinism chauvinism, which appeal to narrow interests, are often fanned by state and nonstate actors who may trap entire peoples in blatant hate campaigns. People's security thus involves a struggle within society against such campaigns and tendencies. A people's discourse should be gradually introduced and consolidated as distinct from the state discourse.

Second, the formation of people's alliances as the guarantee of people's security is possible only in a process in which inequalities, domination of one group by another, and all other obstacles to social justice can be resolved through nonviolent means. Most conflicts have real grounds that misleaders exaggerate and exploit for their political ambitions. This should be a transformative process and not a process of merely imposing a compromise while retaining the dominating/dominated and exploiting/exploited relationships intact. Gender, ethnic, and other injustices should be brought into proactive processes of mitigation and abolition. The entire paradigm of development geared to neoliberal requirements should be addressed from this point of view.

Third, this process should involve both the present and the past — the rectification of historical legacies of injustice related, among others, to war and colonialism — as the basis of future relations. In recent years, future orientedness is an easy vogue word among state leaders (Japanese leaders in particular). Yet if this means we should simply forget and liquidate the past, alliances will be opportunistic, fragile, and short-lived. We need to settle the past if we wish to ensure people's security now and in the future. Yet national, ethnic, religious, and other chauvinisms always invoke a past that has been conveniently fabricated to justify their respective righteousness. The struggle over the interpretation of the past is a crucial part of the struggle for people's security as the basis of alliances that transcend borders that separate people.

People's security as a criterion enables us to effectively intervene in state, regional, and international politics. We live in a world in which the state system, although being undermined, is still the basic system of governance. Individual state policies, regional state-to-state arrangements, and international agreements matter greatly in promoting people's security. We welcome certain government policies (like the Korean South-North summit), oppose others (U.S.-Japan Joint Defense Guidelines, construction of a new base in Okinawa, deployment of the Theater Missile Defense system, and confrontational mobilization over the Taiwan Straits), and advocate new arrangements (military budget cuts and the resolution of territorial disputes).

In short, we engage rather than disengage. We do so not from the point of view of state security or national interest, but for the security of the people who are given little say in the dominant global, regional, national, local, and everyday life structures that, as a whole, are still organized in a highly undemocratic way.

Muto Ichyio

REFERENCES

Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, 1999, Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World. Ottawa, Canada: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

East Asia-U.S. Women's Network, 1999, Women Redefining Security. Gwyn Kirk with Rachel Cornwell (eds.), Reports from Two International Meetings for the Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace and East Asia-U.S. Women's Network Against Militarism.

UNDP, 1994, Human Development Report. New York New York, state, United States
New York, Middle Atlantic state of the United States. It is bordered by Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and the Atlantic Ocean (E), New Jersey and Pennsylvania (S), Lakes Erie and Ontario and the Canadian province of : United Nations.

U.S. Department of Defense, 1997a, A National Security Strategy for a New Century. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense. 1997b, The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region. Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense.

English-Language Resources on Okinawa

Johnson, Chalmers (ed.), 2000, Okinawa: Cold War Island. San Diego: Japan Policy Resource Institute.

Hanasaki, Moriteru (ed.), 2000, Profile of Okinawa. Tokyo: Techno.

Himeyuri Peace Museum, Okinawa, n.d., "An Oral History of the Battle of Okinawa." Welfare Department, Okinawa Prefecture.

Muto, Ichiyo, 1998, "Review the Past, Confront the Present, and Shape the Future: Some Critical Thought on the U.S.-Japan Relationship." Asia Tsushin (December 8-9). Tokyo: NCC-CCRAI.

P.S.

* From The Free Library.com. COPYRIGHT 2000 Crime and Social Justice Associates: http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Redefine+and+Practice+Our+Peace%2c+Our+Security%2c+If+They+Do+Theirs.-a075533460

* MUTO Ichiyo is a writer on political and social affairs, and has been engaged actively in the antiwar movement and other social movements since the 1950s. He is the author of more than 10 books, including Critique of the Dominant Structure (1970), Base and Culture (1975), Unmasking the Japanese State (1984), Reinstating Political Thought (1988). Visions and Realities (1998), and Problematizing the Postwar Japanese State (1999). He has taught in the Sociology Department of the State University of New York at Binghamton since 1983. He is the founder of the Pacific-Asia Resource Center and currently co-president of the People's Plan Study Group based in Tokyo. A version of this essay was presented to the International Forum on People's Security, June 29 to July 2, 2000, in Urasoe, Okinawa, organized by the People's Plan Study Group, Tokyo.

Footnotes

[1] The Battle of Okinawa, fought on the Japanese island of Okinawa, was the largest amphibious assault during the Pacific campaigns of World War II. It lasted from late March through June 1945.

[2] Taiwan Strait, Chinese Taiwan haixia, arm of the Pacific Ocean, between China’s Fujian coast and Taiwan, linking the East and South China seas. It contains the Pescadores. It is also called the Formosa Strait.