

Overestimating the “Power Shift”: The US Role in the Failure of the Democratic Party of Japan’s “Asia Pivot”

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In 2009 the Democratic Party of Japan came to power promising a foreign policy shift, aiming for a more equal relationship with the United States and improved relations with Japan’s Asian neighbors. The policy shift was explicitly designed as a response to a perceived regional and global power shift from the United States to China. However, within nine months the new prime minister, Hatoyama Yukio, resigned, and his successors jettisoned the foreign policy shift. Conventional explanations cite the weak leadership of Hatoyama, the inexperience of his party, and the lack of realism behind the proposed policy shift itself as key factors in the shift’s failure. In this article I provide an alternative perspective. Drawing on the concept of discursive power, I demonstrate how Washington turned the Futenma base relocation and other issues into a major crisis in Japan-US relations in order to discredit Hatoyama and the policy shift. What was arguably a modest and pragmatic policy shift was narrated as a grave threat to the very cornerstone of postwar Japanese security. By focusing on the US exercise of discursive power over Japan, I suggest that talk of an East Asian power shift is premature. KEYWORDS: discursive power, US-Japan relations, foreign policy analysis, Futenma base, Democratic Party of Japan, power shift.

IN 2009 THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF JAPAN (DPJ) CAME TO POWER following a landslide victory over the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the Lower House elections. After over half a century of almost unbroken LDP rule, the DPJ promised to reform the political system and “return political power to the people of Japan” (DPJ 2001). The DPJ policy platform was not only domestic in scope; it included a foreign policy shift that would rebalance Japan’s position vis-à-vis the United States and East Asia. Specifically, the DPJ sought a more “equal” alliance with the United States while developing “relations of mutual trust with China,

South Korea, and other Asian countries" (DPJ 2009, 28)—in short, an "Asia Pivot."

In practice, this proposed policy change meant reexamining the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) on US bases in Japan and developing a nascent regional economic bloc, referred to as the "East Asian Community." The shift was to be implemented while maintaining the Japan-US alliance as "the foundation of Japan's foreign policy," as stated in the very first sentence of the foreign relations section of the election manifesto (DPJ 2009, 28). The election results were heralded as "historic" both domestically and internationally, and given the global outpouring of joy that followed the election of Barack Obama on a platform of "hope" and "change," comparisons between Obama and the new Japanese prime minister, Hatoyama Yukio, were inevitable (Auslin 2009; *Wall Street Journal* 2009). Yet their relationship was sour and short-lived. Washington faced down the Hatoyama administration on the first issue of the foreign policy shift: an attempt to relocate a controversial US Marine base in urban Okinawa to a location outside of Japan. Hatoyama's failure to keep his promise of finding an alternative location for the base resulted in his resignation in June 2010, after only nine months in office.

In an article published in the *New York Times* days before the election victory, Hatoyama identified the rationale for the foreign policy shift in the dilemma facing Japan, "caught between the United States, which is fighting to retain its position as the world's dominant power, and China, which is seeking to become dominant" (Hatoyama 2009). This reading—a rising China on the path to overtake a declining United States—is shared not only by politicians and policymakers but also by scholars and commentators, as well as international media (Jacques 2009; Layne 2012). The notion is so widespread that even a majority of Europeans and 47 percent of US citizens believe that "China either already has replaced or eventually will replace the US as the top superpower" (Pew Global Attitudes Project 2013). However, such views raise a number of issues. Michael Cox critically assesses the components of the power-shift narrative and considers it to be "empirically dubious"; the United States is and will remain dominant in economic and military spheres for the foreseeable future

(Cox 2012, 380). Moreover, Cox argues that the narrative “misunderstands the complex notion of what constitutes power.” Similarly, Steve Chan (2008) notes that the literature on the power shift uses vague and empirically unfounded specifications of power, while Hagström (2012) points to the effects such power-shift narratives can produce, such as Japanese remilitarization.

In this article I draw on the power literature, utilizing a concept of power that resists simple material quantification in favor of a contextual, relational understanding. I show how Washington was able to deploy discursive power to create the appearance that the foreign policy shift was directly responsible for creating a major crisis in bilateral relations, thus threatening the foundation of Japanese foreign policy. The prime minister and the policy shift were discredited, and subsequent DPJ administrations reverted to tried and tested LDP policy. Hatoyama was premature in referring to a US decline. My analysis does not correspond to the narrative of a power shift. If anything, it indicates a power continuation.

Domestic and international media accounts of the policy-shift failure find fault in Hatoyama's handling of the Futenma issue and the Japan-US relationship. Japanese daily *Asahi Shimbun* (2010a) described Hatoyama's approach as “waffling and dithering,” condemning his “betrayal” of the Okinawan people and blaming him for making Washington “distrustful” of Tokyo. US media accounts were even more scathing, perhaps the most famous being *Washington Post* columnist Al Kamen's description of Hatoyama as “hapless” and “loopy” (Kamen 2010). Scholarly accounts of both the foreign policy shift and Hatoyama's brief tenure as prime minister have cited a number of domestic factors that contributed to the failure, including the manner in which the shift was implemented (Shinoda 2014), the content of the shift itself (Green 2011), and Hatoyama's own leadership skills (Klausen 2013). Conversely, Christopher Hughes has argued that the policy shift represented a “remarkably coherent” and “sophisticated and realistic” grand strategy, “potentially capable of promoting Japan's national interests and role as a key international actor” (2012, 111–112). As for its failure, Hughes points out that while a number of domestic factors can be identified, the “greatest obstacles” to the shift—and indeed to any Japanese strategic

shift—were “international structural pressures,” notably the “brick wall of US resistance” (Hughes 2012, 137).

My analysis builds on Hughes’s assertion of a “brick wall of US resistance.” I do not argue that the US response to the policy shift was the sole cause of its failure. Rather, I aim to problematize two popular narratives: first, that a global or regional power shift from the United States to China has taken place; second, that the failure of the policy shift was primarily due to the ineptitude of the DPJ and its leader, Hatoyama. In the next section of the article I discuss the concept of power in social theory and international relations (IR) theory, formulating an understanding of power for application to the following case study. The case study outlines the content and implementation of the policy shift and analyzes the US response, showing how Washington closed off any possibility of negotiation or compromise while top US scholars and officials deployed discursive power to create the appearance of a major crisis in bilateral relations. The Japanese media picked up the “crisis” and contributed to Hatoyama’s domestic unpopularity. I conclude by suggesting that more than one form of power was at work in the US response to the policy shift and consider the repercussions of its failure.

Power and International Relations

Faces of Power

Saying at this stage that power is a “contested concept” (Guzzini 2005; Lukes 2005) is perhaps banal. Indeed, while there has certainly been vigorous debate, we seem no closer to an agreed understanding of what power is now than fifty-plus years ago, when Robert Dahl wrote that even some scholars of the subject “think the whole study of ‘power’ is a bottomless swamp” (Dahl 1957, 201). Dahl himself believed that a coherent “theory of power” was unlikely, and that power would be defined according to either the theory or research context at hand. Stefano Guzzini has since developed precisely this idea, arguing that a neutral or universal conception of power cannot exist in a world of multiple

theories, as an understanding of power necessarily reflects the theoretical context of the explanatory framework from which it is drawn (Guzzini 1993; 2005). To further accentuate the difficulties involved in operationalizing and employing power as a conceptual tool, Steven Lukes warns that the very deployment of power as a concept is itself a political act (Lukes 2005). Perhaps one of the few things that most power theorists can agree on is that power is not a material capacity, but rather rests on the production of effects (Morriss 2002 [1987]; Barnett and Duvall 2005; Guzzini 2005; Lukes 2005). In this section I situate the concept of power used in the analysis of the DPJ's foreign policy shift in the context of the power debate.

The conceptual study of power has largely revolved around the "faces of power" debate that took place in the second half of the twentieth century. The first face of power was famously formulated by Robert Dahl as the ability of *A* "to get *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do" (Dahl 1957, 203). Bachrach and Baratz argued that this conception missed the ability of *A* to create or reinforce barriers to *B* doing what *B* wanted to do. Thus, *A*'s power is also located in its ability to "limit the scope of the political process to public consideration of only those issues which are comparatively innocuous to *A*" (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, 948). While not rejecting outright these two views of power, Steven Lukes asserted that they were "highly unsatisfactory" in that they only saw power in observable conflict, either in decisionmaking (the first face) or in nondecisionmaking (the second). The third face of power focuses on how *A* can influence *B*'s interests. Lukes asked, "Is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have—that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires?" (Lukes 2005, 27).

The fourth face of power is largely derived from the work of Michel Foucault, and looks not at how *A* may or may not have power over *B* but at how both *A* and *B* are constituted as subjects (Digeser 1992). Peter Digeser characterizes this fourth face as rejecting the idea that either *A* or *B* can be taken as given (1992, 980); instead, power is located in the formation of these subjects, which themselves are social constructions "whose formation can be historically described."

Despite the faces-of-power debate, power in IR is often reduced to capabilities, as in the conceptions propounded by structural realists such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer. In this view, power is regarded as a tangible, quantifiable asset, such as military or economic strength. The enduring influence of this approach to power, sometimes referred to as the "elements of national power," is patent in the preceding discussion of the power shift from the United States to China. This understanding of power has endured in spite of the fact that the power debate highlighted the contextual, relational, structural, and eventually productive nature of power. Indeed, as early as 1964 Kalevi Holsti argued against the study of power as "the quantification of raw materials," pointing out that *A* might fail to influence *B* despite having an overwhelming military superiority due to "such intangibles as personality, perceptions, friendships, traditions, and customs, all of which are almost impossible to measure accurately" (1964, 187). He posited instead a Dahlian approach to power with a focus on the act of influencing as a process and a relationship. Yet the "vehicle fallacy"—power as resources—remains influential in IR, especially in realist and large-N approaches.

Compulsory and Discursive Power

Barnett and Duvall's work develops the constructivist understanding of power. Drawing on the power debates sketched here, their practical taxonomy of power has served in some ways as a clarion call for the conceptually informed study of power in IR. They put forward a conception of power as the production of "effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate" (2005, 42). The taxonomy mirrors the four faces of power, though it systemically integrates them based on the specificity and type of social relations involved. Direct interaction is rendered as compulsory power (first face), indirect interaction becomes institutional power (second face), direct constitutive relations result in structural power (third face), and finally indirect constitutive relations produce productive power (fourth face). The taxonomy provides a "framework for integration" for the four types of power,

and “points to connections between them,” rather than forcing the researcher to pick one or the other (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 44).

In this article I focus primarily on compulsory power, which is enabled by the productive power that underlies the Japan-US relationship. Compulsory power is essentially Dahl's notion of power—that is, the ability of *A* to get *B* to do what *B* would otherwise not. Power can be achieved through the deployment of material or nonmaterial resources. Various attempts have been made to pin down the nonmaterial aspects of power, such as soft power (Nye 1990), ideational statecraft (Hagström 2005), and normative power (Manners 2002). The case of Japan-US relations, however, does not involve attraction (Nye 1990), negotiation or propaganda (Hagström 2005), or the power to define what is “normal” (Manners 2002). Rather, what we see is the exercise of discursive power. A *discourse* is “a cohesive ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations about a specific object that frame that object a certain way, and therefore, delimit the possibilities for action in relation to it” (Epstein 2008, 2). The focus of power here “is not so much on what power is . . . but on what it does.” Discursive power is not a “fungible entity,” yet it has “very real effects” (Epstein 2008, 3).

Discourse analysis in IR generally utilizes a historical, genealogical methodology, tracing the formation and constitution of given subjects and the effects these constructions have. Such studies thus invoke a form of productive power, yet the power of words lies not only in their constitution but also in their deployment within an existing discourse. The deployment of words also produces effects, after all. In order to identify this discursive power, we must identify the authors—those “*subjects authorized to speak and to act* (e.g. foreign policy officials, defence intellectuals, development experts)” (Milliken 1999, 229, emphasis in original). Through discourse, subjects can “define and enable” as well as “silence and exclude” by determining what counts as expertise and by “endorsing a certain common sense” (Milliken 1999, 229). In the case of the foreign policy shift, US actors used discursive resources—that is, they drew on and developed existing narratives in which the Japan-US alliance was reified and the possibility of a Japan without the United States became unthink-

able. Simply put, the United States gave Japan what Mattern describes as a "non-choice": comply with its demands or risk the annihilation of its subjectivity (2005, 602). In this way, discursive power is primarily a resource deployed in the exercise of compulsory power.

Japan's "Asia Pivot": The DPJ Foreign Policy Shift

The Indian Ocean Refueling Mission

The DPJ's foreign policy shift got under way a full two years prior to the first actual DPJ administration, after the party gained a majority in the Upper House following an election in 2007. During the administration of Prime Minister Koizumi Junichirō (2001–2006), Japan stayed closely by the United States, passing a law in 2001 that enabled support of US and coalition operations in Afghanistan. This took the form of a Maritime Self-Defense Force refueling mission in the Indian Ocean, controversial due to its questionable constitutional legality and claims that the fuel provided was also being diverted to operations in Iraq, which did not have a UN mandate. After the 2007 election, the DPJ, then led by Ozawa Ichirō, used its majority in the Upper House to veto renewal of the law. As an alternative to its complete cancellation, the DPJ and the LDP struck a deal to resume the mission, with the provision that it would be restricted to refueling vessels on antiterrorism and antismuggling missions. This deal was rejected by the United States, and the LDP was eventually able to force the law through the Diet in January 2008. However, when the DPJ finally did take power, it did not renew the law, instead allowing it to expire in January 2010. The move to cancel the deal had public backing, as a *Yomiuri Shimbun* opinion poll found that 56 percent of respondents supported it while 32 percent said the mission should continue (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2009a).

Milliken (1999) raised these important questions: Who controls the public discourse? Who has the authority to define an issue? My analysis focuses on the public statements of top US Japan experts with backgrounds both in academic circles and the highest levels of government. Their influence on the Japan-US

relationship has been incalculable. Even before the DPJ came to power, these modern-day “scholar-officials” (Jerdén 2013) sought to undermine, and ultimately reverse, the DPJ’s foreign policy shift. As early as 2007, after the DPJ managed to suspend the Indian Ocean refueling mission, Kurt Campbell and Michael Green published an article in *Asahi Shimbun* (2007) criticizing the move and warning Japan of the consequences. With long careers in government and Washington think tanks, the pair was highly influential in terms of US policy in East Asia: Green had served on the National Security Council as senior director for Asian affairs in the George W. Bush administration, while Campbell was made assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in 2009 and had previously held a variety of high-level defense and security government positions.

Their article described the DPJ move as leading to “inevitable and unfortunate questions . . . about Japan’s reliability as an ally.” They warned that Japan’s regional and global reputation would suffer, affecting “Japan’s future leadership in arenas such as the Group of Eight, the Asia-Pacific Economic Forum, and the United Nations Security Council.” They also warned that “it can take a nation years to recover a reputation,” adding for good measure that North Korea would be “delighted” by the move.

In order to maintain perspective, bear in mind that the refueling mission consisted of two vessels stationed in the Indian Ocean thousands of miles from the conflict zone, and that the DPJ had suggested alternatives. Moreover, the Japanese public backed the move. As it seemed increasingly certain that the DPJ would defeat the LDP in the coming Lower House election, Joseph Nye, another seasoned scholar-official who had guided US policy on Japan and East Asia for much of the post-Cold War period, entered the fray. On a trip to Tokyo in 2008 he issued a warning to the DPJ, stating that, were the DPJ to cancel the mission altogether, or to otherwise seek to alter the status of the alliance, it would be considered as “anti-American” by the US Congress (*Shūkan Kinyōbi* 2009).

In terms of power analysis, these comments had no direct effect on DPJ policy. As we saw, the DPJ did what it could to stop the refueling mission in 2007 and 2008 before allowing it to expire after assuming power in 2010, yet there were important

affects. That US scholar-officials of high standing were already directly criticizing the DPJ and issuing stark warnings should it continue on its intended path was of major significance in and of itself. The effects here lay in the use of discursive power to frame the DPJ foreign policy shift as a major threat to Japan-US relations, and thus by extension to the alliance itself. As outlined below, this framing would play an important role in the demise of the shift and the return to LDP-style foreign policy.

"A New Path for Japan" and the DPJ Election Manifesto

The DPJ won a landslide victory in the August 2009 Lower House election. Although its manifesto focused on domestic issues, ranging from reform of the bureaucracy to increasing social spending, it also included a section on foreign relations. The very first sentence of the foreign policy section stated the desire to "build a close and equal Japan-US alliance to serve as the foundation of Japan's foreign policy" (DPJ 2009, 28). It went on to propose revision of the controversial Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)—which afforded a measure of extraterritoriality to US forces in Japan—as well as reexamination of "the alignment of US military forces in Japan and the role of US military bases in Japan."¹ Alongside was a proposal to develop a US-Japan free trade agreement (FTA) that Washington had long requested. Subsequent to the section dealing with the United States was a discussion of an East Asian Community (EAC). Although not defined in any concrete terms, the manifesto stated the importance of developing "relations of mutual trust with China, South Korea, and other Asian countries," which could be achieved by establishing regional cooperative mechanisms, FTAs, and economic partnership agreements (DPJ 2009, 28). The rest of the manifesto outlined the importance of dealing firmly with North Korea and playing a leading role in UN attempts to build peace and prosperity, and included a nod to the nuclear disarmament movement.

Days before the election victory, a number of global media outlets, including the *New York Times*, published an abridged version of an article written by Hatoyama (or an adviser—either way it carried his name) titled "A New Path for Japan." Originally

printed in the Japanese-language magazine *Voice*, it contained a critique of globalization and market fundamentalism, including a swipe at the LDP and former prime minister Koizumi. Instead of neoliberalism, Hatoyama called for *yuai*, or fraternity, the basis of a system where people are treated as ends rather than means (2009). Taking *yuai* beyond the domestic sphere, he referred to the EAC as an outcome of the concept and reiterated the DPJ election manifesto's call for regional economic and security frameworks for integration. Importantly, he argued that Japan faced a dilemma, "caught between the United States, which is fighting to retain its position as the world's dominant power, and China, which is seeking to become dominant." By adopting the perspective of other Asian nations, Hatoyama was able to describe both the Chinese "military threat" and the need to "restrain US political and economic excesses."

The article tapped into the argument that US power was waning due to imperial overstretch, describing the "failure of the Iraq war and the financial crisis" as ushering in a new "era of multipolarity." As we saw, this view was relatively common, even in the United States itself. Still, Hatoyama argued that "no country is ready to replace the United States as the dominant country," and that while "the influence of the US is declining, it will remain the world's leading military and economic power for the next two to three decades." Moreover, he echoed the first sentence of the DPJ manifesto's foreign policy section, reiterating that, "of course, the Japan-US security pact will continue to be the cornerstone of Japanese diplomatic policy."

The Futenma base issue became the keystone of the DPJ's proposed foreign policy shift in terms of the Japan-US relationship and the construction of a "more equal alliance," while the EAC proposal was part of the plan to improve Japan's relations with its immediate neighbors. Thus, the two policies complemented each other in terms of dealing with the perceived power shift, rebalancing Japan's position in the Japan-US-China triangle—a "dual hedging strategy" (Sahashi 2010). The plan was not the simple turn to Asia that was widely depicted in the US and Japanese media, since China was actually labeled a threat. The EAC, together with the Japan-US alliance, was designed to miti-

gate that threat (Yang and Lim 2009). As I have mentioned, the "New Path for Japan" and the DPJ election manifesto were explicit in reaffirming that the alliance remained fundamental in Japan's new approach. Furthermore, given the likely allergic reaction the United States would have to a concrete proposal that excluded it, the EAC was deliberately vague, with the understanding that it would develop through interaction and not by fiat. Indeed, in the *New York Times* version of the article, the EAC was not even capitalized; it was written as the East Asian community (Sahashi 2009).

The two key pillars of the policy shift, the EAC and a more equal relationship, were subject to the same kinds of attacks as the refueling mission from authoritative Japan hands. In a Center for Strategic and International Studies paper, Michael Green stated that the policies "would provoke a bilateral crisis if implemented," and suggested that if the left wing of the DPJ was not "whipped" into the center, "it might be better for the DPJ to fall apart" (Green 2009a). He also referred to DPJ calls for an investigation into allegations that the United States maintained nuclear weapons in Japan—a violation of Japan's three nonnuclear principles—as "noise." The subsequent investigation showed that US vessels carrying nuclear weapons had regularly used bases in Japan with the full knowledge of the Japanese government. Joseph Nye, in reference to the DPJ's call for a more equal alliance, improved relations with China, and the EAC, wrote that "it is far from clear what any of this means" (Nye 2010).

The Futenma Base Relocation

The primary source of Japan-US conflict and the eventual catalyst for both Hatoyama's resignation and the abandonment of the attempted foreign policy shift was the relocation of the Futenma marine base in Okinawa. The base, located in an urban area of Ginowan City on Okinawa, had been the subject of countless protests by locals who complained of noise and air pollution. They also pointed to the risks posed by having a major training base located so close to residential areas—such as in 2004 when a helicopter from the base crashed into a local university building.

The parties agreed to a basic plan in 1996 to relocate the base to Henoko Bay, an area of undeveloped rainforest and coral reef in the north of the island, an agreement that was finalized in the 2006 “road map.”

The relocation from Futenma to Henoko was a precondition for another agreement, the Guam Treaty, that provided for the repatriation of thousands of US Marines from Okinawa to Guam at a cost to the Japanese government of \$6 billion. The Henoko alternative ran into difficulty as locals, as well as Okinawans more broadly, called for relocation of the base outside of Okinawa. Although not specified in either “A New Path for Japan” or the DPJ manifesto, the issue became part of the DPJ’s attempt to reexamine SOFA and the forward troop deployment in Japan. Moreover, while the DPJ had won a clear majority in the Lower House, it did not enjoy the two-thirds majority in the Upper House required to protect against vetoes. The decision to renegotiate the Henoko move was popular: An *Asahi Shimbun* opinion poll in November 2009 cited 28 percent of respondents as believing that the original deal should be implemented, whereas 54 percent were in favor of the review and renegotiation (*Asahi Shimbun* 2009). These results were echoed in a *Mainichi Shimbun* poll (2009) in the same month, in which only 22 percent of respondents stated that the deal should go ahead as planned.

However, from the outset the United States point-blank refused to countenance any solution to the Futenma problem that did not involve Henoko. For example, in June 2009, while the DPJ was still in opposition, US undersecretary of defense Michele Flournoy told the then DPJ secretary-general, Okada Katsuya, that attempts to change the road map would lead to losing “all realignment plans” and that “our alliance will be seriously damaged” (*Telegraph* 2011). She made it clear that the United States would not reconsider the plan, and that if it did agree to a review, “Only minor revisions will be made, such as laying electric lines underground.” Yet only a few weeks after the DPJ’s election victory, US ambassador John Roos told the Japanese media that his government viewed the United States and Japan as “partners, equal partners,” and that “as partners, we

want to listen to what they have to say and work with them on this issue" (*Japan Times* 2009a).

Later in October, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates visited Japan. Prior to the visit, Hatoyama had publicly stated that "our new government has its own thoughts" and that he hoped to "spend time and reach a good result" (Reuters 2009). However, Gates told his new alliance partners that "without the Futenma realignment . . . there will be no relocation to Guam"; that the other alternatives had been investigated and were found unworkable; and that Henoko was "the best alternative for everyone, and it is time to move on" (*Japan Times* 2009b).

A month later it was Obama's turn to visit Japan as part of a tour of Asia. The Obama team made it clear again that the move should take place as planned and without negotiation, a sentiment echoed a month later in a meeting between Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Fujisaki Ichirō (Pomfret 2009). Although a bilateral group had been set up to review the issue following the Obama visit, its mission was unclear from the start. Hatoyama described its purpose as being to "review" the base agreements, while Obama stated that it was to "implement" the agreements (Cha 2009). Either way, the group's activities were suspended on December 9, marking the end of any attempts by the United States to outwardly entertain discussion or renegotiation. Under increasingly severe pressure from Washington, Hatoyama told Clinton in a meeting in Copenhagen later in December that he would resolve the issue by May 2010, although he later admitted that he had already realized the impossibility of his plans (Norimatsu 2011).

With the renegotiation door shut, Hatoyama struggled to find an alternative location within Japan but outside of Okinawa. Opinion polls showed his ratings sinking continuously as the media became increasingly critical of his efforts and of what they described as the damage he was causing to the alliance. Starting out with approval ratings of 71 percent in September 2009, his ratings dipped to 41 percent by the following February (*Asahi Shimbun* 2010a). By May they were down to 21 percent (*Asahi Shimbun* 2010b). Moreover, although the polls continued to show that the public did not support the Henoko plan (*Mainichi Shim-*

bun 2010), with only 16 percent in favor of it, belief was widespread that if Hatoyama did not fulfill his pledge to have the issue resolved by May 2010, he should resign (*Asahi Shimbun* 2010c). Unable to find an alternative location, Hatoyama announced in May that the original Henoko plan would be maintained. In reality, local opposition to Henoko had hardened, meaning that Ginowan City residents would be left with the Futenma base. Hatoyama subsequently resigned on June 2, and his successor, Kan Naoto, stated very clearly that he had no plans to change Japan's foreign policy and would instead focus on domestic issues.

Given that the United States clearly refused to countenance the proposed relocation of Futenma, it is interesting to note that the Obama administration publicly agreed to "discuss" and even to "review" the issue—on the private understanding that the discussions would not change the outcome beyond the question of where to put the electricity lines. Compare Roos's comment ("we want to listen . . . and work with them") with Flournoy's ("only minor revisions will be made") and Gates's ("it is time to move on"). Despite Roos's outwardly friendly and open attitude, the fact was that the United States had no intention of allowing Hatoyama to follow through on his promise to find an alternative location for the Futenma base, regardless of the feasibility of the Henoko plan. In 2011 Nye himself openly admitted that the Henoko plan faced such serious local opposition that it would never be implemented, and instead suggested a move to Australia (Nye 2011).

Regardless, the Futenma relocation represented the keystone of the DPJ's proposed foreign policy shift. Forcing the Hatoyama administration to back down while simultaneously framing the issue as causing a serious, potentially even fatal, rift in the Japan-US relationship would seriously undermine Hatoyama's position, eventually leading to his resignation and the resumption of business as usual. Michael Green openly articulated this strategy in an article published shortly after Gates's visit to Japan (Green 2009b). Green described Gates as a "shrewd judge" who "knows that a crisis in the US-Japan alliance would split the DPJ and turn much of the media against Hatoyama," ending in his resignation.

Green went on to observe approvingly that the next generation of Japanese leaders was made up of realists who were not afraid to stand up to China—business as usual, in short.

Remember that Washington analysts and policymakers—the scholar-officials—were already talking of a crisis in Japan-US relations even before the DPJ came to power. And again, the proposals for the policy shift, although certainly inconvenient from a US perspective, were hardly revolutionary. Both key texts—“A New Path for Japan” and the DPJ election manifesto—were careful to emphasize that nothing would or could take the place of the Japan-US alliance. Moreover, the Henoko plan was deeply unpopular in Okinawa, and given that the prefecture has borne the brunt of the US forward troop deployment in Japan for decades, one might expect that keeping the Okinawans happy would also be in Washington’s long-term interests. Yet looking back at the US response to Hatoyama’s call for a renegotiation, the impression is that the DPJ was, in the words of one Washington analyst, questioning “virtually every aspect of the fundamentals of the alliance” (Klingner 2010, 1). Richard Armitage, a prominent member of the Bush administration with a long history in East Asia policymaking, told a group of US and Japanese officials and academics that the alliance was “adrift” and that while he had read the DPJ manifesto, he was “shocked” that the party had actually attempted to implement it (Armitage 2010). Joseph Nye dismissed the DPJ as “still in the thrall of campaign promises,” while Victor Cha, another former director of Asian affairs for the National Security Council and influential Washington academic, described Hatoyama’s approach as “cowboy diplomacy” (Cha 2009).

The Attack on Hatoyama

Hatoyama himself was vilified and described as a dangerous prime minister when it came to foreign policy and especially to the Futenma issue. He was regularly described as “wavering,” “dithering,” “indecisive,” “amateurish,” “unable to make up his mind,” and even “loopy” by US media, policy analysts, and US officials (Cha 2009; Green 2009b; Fackler and Landler 2010; Kamen 2010). Yet the criticisms seem to have deliberately over-

looked some important facts. From the outset it was clear what Hatoyama wanted to do on Futenma: relocate it outside of Okinawa, and ideally outside of Japan. It is also clear that US talk of reviews and open discussions were for show; the United States simply refused to negotiate. Thus, while Washington gave the appearance of flexibility, Hatoyama was left with no choice but to “waver.” The Hatoyama administration was presented with a non-choice. If it did not accept the Henoko plan, Japan would supposedly suffer great harm. The cornerstone of Japan’s foreign policy, the Japan-US alliance, was narrated into a grave crisis by the scholar-officials.

The concerted effort to undermine the DPJ outlined thus far is hardly the only factor that contributed to the failure of the policy shift and Hatoyama’s eventual resignation. But the fact is that, just as Michael Green had predicted, the Japanese media did turn against the Hatoyama administration, and much of the criticism focused on his handling of the Japan-US alliance. Green, Richard Armitage, Kurt Campbell, and other US scholar-officials were regularly quoted, interviewed, and published in the Japanese press. As early as 2007, Campbell and Green had published a highly critical article in *Asahi Shimbun* on the DPJ’s suspension of the Indian Ocean refueling mission, suggesting among other things that it raised serious questions about Japan’s status and reputation as an ally. Countless other examples—such as an article in *Yomiuri Shimbun* (2009b) in the run-up to the election—cited Green’s warning of trouble for the alliance if the DPJ won and praised the LDP for strengthening the alliance. A couple of weeks later, the same newspaper published a full interview with Green in which he was highly critical of the DPJ and of Hatoyama in particular, warning that if the new Japanese administration did not show a “clear diplomatic direction”—in other words, change its policies—it would precipitate a serious decline in US trust toward Japan (*Yomiuri Shimbun* 2009c). The Japanese media echoed such sentiment—for example, in an editorial in *Yomiuri Shimbun* warning against the cancellation of the Indian Ocean refueling mission on the basis that the “war on terror” affected Japan’s peace and security (2009d).

Both Nye’s and Gates’s autumn trips to Tokyo regarding the base issue were also well covered in the domestic press, and grad-

ually the domestic criticism of Hatoyama's handling of the Futenma issue began to mirror the US criticism. For example, *Yomiuri Shimbun's* New Year editorial (2010a) referred to Hatoyama's "indecisiveness," emphasized that the Japan-US alliance had been the foundation of Japan's peace and prosperity since 1955, and described Hatoyama's "intention" to "separate Japan from the US" as "extremely dangerous." The opinion piece further stated that it was "obvious" that the Japan-US relationship was already equal. Shortly before his resignation, *Yomiuri* criticized Hatoyama for damaging the alliance and stated that the decision to stick with the original Henoko plan came much too late (2010b). The paper repeated that Hatoyama's intention was to separate Japan from the United States and described him as lacking in wisdom, experience, and insight. Meanwhile, Funabashi Yoichi, the editor of the more liberal, left-leaning *Asahi Shimbun* described the DPJ government as "ill-prepared" and "ill-equipped" to adequately deal with foreign affairs (Funabashi 2010). *Asahi Shimbun* (2010a) vilified Hatoyama as "waffling and dithering," and blamed him for making Washington "distrustful" of Tokyo. Put simply, in the words of Yoshisuke Iimura, the "Japanese media fell hook, line and sinker for the White House's media strategy" (2010).

This account risks oversimplifying the situation. Many in the Japanese security establishment, from the media to the ministries, opposed the idea of the foreign policy shift just as much as their counterparts in Washington. Even Hatoyama's own bureaucrats worked against him. For example, the director general of the foreign ministry's Asian and Oceania affairs bureau, Saiki Akitaka, told Kurt Campbell that he could not understand the equal relationship idea, since the relationship was already equal. He also described the DPJ's attempt to wrest control of policy from the bureaucrats—one of the key manifesto promises—as "stupid" and said the party "will learn" (*Asahi Shimbun* 2011). Crucially, on October 12, 2009, Takamizawa Nobushige, director general of the defense ministry's policy bureau, told Campbell and other US State and Defense Department officials that the United States "should also refrain from demonstrating flexibility too soon in the course of crafting an adjusted realignment package to the DPJ government" (*Asahi Shimbun* 2011). Similarly, on December 16

a group of Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials told the US embassy that Washington “ought not to be overly accommodating to the DPJ government.” Hatoyama himself later claimed that the day after an explicitly confidential meeting with foreign and defense ministry officials, he found the details all over the Japanese press (Norimatsu 2011). Even members of Hatoyama’s cabinet made public statements questioning the new foreign policy: Minister of Defense Kitazawa Toshimi and Foreign Minister Okada Katsuya both publicly voiced doubts that an alternative could be found (*Asahi Shimbun* 2012).

The domestic response in Japan indicates that the foreign policy shift was not supported by either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Defense, and it is likely that certain elements of the media would have remained critical regardless of the US response. This assertion does not contradict the foregoing analysis, however. As Mattern points out, “In order to construct a threat credible enough to be . . . effective on its victim,” one must have in-depth knowledge of the victim’s subjectivity, enabling one to “locate the contradictions and inconsistencies in her victims and exploit them meaningfully” (2005, 603). Michael Green openly stated that the reification of the Japan-US alliance provided the ammunition with which to target Hatoyama and the foreign policy shift. Finally, the whole so-called crisis suggests another form of power, one operating on a much deeper level than the US compulsory power analyzed thus far. We saw that productive power involves the constitution of subjects in systems of knowledge and power through discursive practices, and that these practices “define the social fields of action that are imaginable and possible” (Barnett and Duvall 2005, 56). The response of the Japanese media and bureaucracy points to a form of productive power, whereby Japan’s identity and role in the context of the Japan-US alliance have been constituted and reified through the decades of the alliance. In this way it may be suggested that productive power had already conditioned the social relations of the two states and determined Japan’s situation. A comprehensive analysis providing conclusive evidence for this productive power is beyond the scope of this article, but my analysis tentatively points to its underlying role.

Conclusion

In this article I question two narratives—the power shift from the United States to China and the ineptitude of the DPJ and its leaders—as the causes of the failure of Japan’s “Asia Pivot.” I do not argue that the Obama administration and US scholar-officials were singularly responsible for the failure of the DPJ’s foreign policy shift. Nor do I argue that Hatoyama’s handling of the issue was skillful. The failure has multiple causes. Thinking counterfactually, there is little doubt that the DPJ, and Hatoyama himself, could have managed the policy shift better. Indeed, it is hard to imagine a worse outcome for the foreign policy shift than its complete rejection by the very party that spawned it. Only a very brave, or very foolish, prime minister would use the words “East Asian community” or “equal alliance” today. Reading “A New Path for Japan,” Hatoyama seems to have underestimated US power, to his own detriment. Rather, the idea that a power shift is under way in East Asia is highly problematic, both on its own terms (Chan 2008; Cox 2012) and in its equation of power with resources. The United States was able to play an important role in preventing the DPJ’s foreign policy shift without employing any of its material resources. Instead, my analysis shows that Washington deployed discursive power to great effect.

Returning to the end of the Hatoyama administration, the US media coverage of his resignation, while quick to pinpoint him as the cause of the Futenma failure, paid scant or no attention to the US role in the issue. This approach mirrors the public side of US diplomacy: recall Ambassador Roos’s comment that “we want to listen . . . and work with them.” The scholar-official commentary is also revealing: Robert Kagan, a high-profile academic with close ties to the Obama administration, praised US policy as “firm but engaged” and noted that it “deserves credit for *helping to steer [Japan] in the right direction*” (Kagan 2010, emphasis added). The *Wall Street Journal* described how US officials considered the “past few months a process of *educating Japan’s new leaders about the importance of the alliance*” (*Wall Street Journal* 2010, emphasis added).

Subsequent DPJ administrations completely abandoned the foreign policy shift, choosing instead to maintain the previous policy of staying close to the United States in order to hedge against the rise of China. Michael Green's words were prescient: Only a few months after Hatoyama's resignation, Maehara Seiji became foreign minister. Maehara, well-known for his hawkish views on China and his advocacy of close ties with the United States, was surely one of those realists whom Green suggested were waiting in the wings. Just then, the collision incident between a Chinese fishing boat and the Japanese coast guard plunged Sino-Japanese relations into a deep freeze. Hagström (2012) has pointed out that this incident helped Washington and Tokyo frame Futenma as a "China issue," linking the deployment of US troops in Okinawa with defense of the disputed islands in the East China Sea, pushing the base issue off the agenda and stabilizing Japan-US relations. With the return of the LDP to power under Abe Shinzō, Japan-US relations remain relatively strong, while Sino-Japanese political relations remain frozen—almost as though the foreign policy shift never happened.

Notes

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1. In 1995, three US marines gang-raped an Okinawan schoolgirl, and the subsequent three-week delay in their handover to Japanese authorities contributed to a mass protest against the bases.

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