

Democratic Accountability vs. Diplomatic Commitments

Reflections on the Okinawa Military Base Dispute

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The short-lived Hatoyama administration delineated possible tensions between democratic accountability and diplomatic commitments. The Japanese government had committed to relocating the U.S. Marine Corps Airbase from densely populated Futenma to less developed Henoko on the island of Okinawa. While the deal was already worked out between the U.S. government and the LDP predecessor, during the campaign for the general election that would end the 53 years of the LDP dominance, Yukio Hatoyama pledged to move the airbase to outside Okinawa. People in Okinawa formed a high expectation that the concentration of U.S. military bases in Okinawa could somehow be resolved. After Hatoyama's DPJ government was formed in September 2009, however, his Futenma pledge not only failed to deliver any meaningful change but resulted in termination of his own cabinet. Using various public policy and public opinion data, this presentation will clarify the nature of potentially conflicting relationship between Japan's domestic democratic accountability and the U.S. global strategy.

About the Presenter

Jun Saito is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Yale University. He received his Ph. D. of Political Science at Yale in 2006. He previously taught at Wesleyan University and at Franklin and Marshall College. His research focuses on the institutional determinants of representation and redistribution, in particular how choices of constitutional structures and electoral institutions translate into redistributive consequences. At Yale, he teaches courses on Japanese politics, international relations in East Asia, and comparative political institutions. His coauthored article with Yusaku Horiuchi won the 2004 Alan Rosenthal Award from the Legislative Studies Section of the American Political Science Association. He was once a member of the Japanese House of Representatives (2002-2003).