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"Kensei Yoshida’s *Democracy Betrayed: The U.S. Occupation of Okinawa* is easily the best history, analysis, and commentary we have on the United States’s domination from 1945 to 1972 over the unlucky people of Okinawa. It is written from an Okinawan perspective. Yoshida is of course aware that when the United States’s formal dominion over Okinawa ended in 1972 and it condoned a *pro forma* “reversion” of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty, the semicolonial conditions he describes did not end. In fact, they continued and persist to the present day in an often exacerbated form. For the past fifty-six years, and with no end in sight, the American military has dominated the territory and 1.3 million people of the islands in total disregard of the values and wishes of the Okinawans themselves.

“As Yoshida observes, the Americans, like the Japanese before them and the samurai of Satsuma even before imperial Japan annexed the Ryukyus, seem to value the territory of Okinawa and the comfortable living arrangements they have built for themselves there much more highly than the people whom they have displaced and whom they pretend to defend. In this study, Yoshida stresses the period 1945 to 1972, during which American imperial rule was explicit and responsibility for the welfare of the Okinawans rested squarely with the Pentagon rather than the period after 1972, when the realities of the currently thirty-eight American military bases were camouflaged behind a façade of Japanese administration. His book is indispensable reading for those interested in Okinawa today, a place where revolt against American domination and Japanese betrayal is endemic and which, when it explodes, is likely to unravel the entire fabric of American military enclaves in East Asia much as the breaching of the Berlin Wall in 1989 began the unraveling of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe.

“One of Yoshida’s most important achievements is his careful documentation of how well American leaders knew from the beginning that in imposing military colonialism on the Okinawans they were violating the United Nations Charter, their own proclaimed objectives in fighting World War II, and virtually all of the political ideals and values they have espoused as a nation. He quotes numerous high-ranking American officials that they perfectly well understood that in keeping Okinawa for twenty years after the 1952 Peace Treaty with Japan (and giving it up only under intense Okinawan and Japanese pressure), they were making a mockery of the pledge in the Atlantic Charter of August 1941 that the U.S. sought ‘no aggrandizement, territorial or other’ in World War II. Even as President Harry Truman in December 1945 was proclaiming as ‘fundamentals’ of American foreign policy that ‘We seek no territorial expansion or selfish advantage’ and ‘believe in the eventual return of sovereign rights and self-government to all peoples who have been deprived of them by force,’ the military establishment of which he was the putative commander-in-chief was making a hypocrite of him in Okinawa.

“During the height of the Cold War, the Pentagon turned Okinawa into its own private fortress and safehouse for clandestine activities, providing the Communists with material for anti-American propaganda at least as valid as American denunciations of the Berlin Wall. As Yoshida shows, some American officials recognized this and acknowledged the contradiction. …"