Peace on the Margins of Democracy: The Impact of Civic Activism, Identity, and Memory on Japan's Security Policy in Okinawa[1]

Geneviève Souillac

Summary

The southern Japanese island of Okinawa is host to a significant number of US bases. These continue to affect the local population, and have led to the establishment of a popular anti-base and anti-militarist peace movement on the island. In this article, I examine this movement's effective use of civic activism and locate this action within the Japanese democratic context. Though it has not achieved the return of the bases, the Okinawan peace movement has generated enough scrutiny of the Japanese government to challenge the legitimacy of its security policies from the perspective of social and democratic justice. In generating the public expression of principled values about human security and democracy, I contend that the movement establishes an important connection between peace and democracy. Overall, I argue that the movement's principled action on behalf of local demilitarization and democratization successfully applies radical principles of participatory democracy anchored in solidarist values of engagement to broader issues of peace.

Introduction

A multifaceted protest movement has emerged in Okinawa, a collection of islands to the south of Japan, over the several decades spanning the post-War US occupation of Japan to the present. Several studies of Okinawa have already been dedicated to the description and analysis of this movement, its victories and setbacks.[2] Okinawans' preoccupation with war, militarism and peace stems from a compounded historical experience of political and cultural marginalization, and victimization by war. Not only Okinawan activists but many Okinawan locals have taken a stand against both militarism and war in Okinawa, even in the absence of armed conflict. This is due, on the one hand, to the violence generated by the bases and their impact on the population, as the bases are a constant reminder of war and militarism in Okinawa. In addition, rather like in Hiroshima, Okinawans' traumatic experience of armed conflict during the Battle of Okinawa at the end of the Second World War legitimizes their stand against war, unifying the movement, and strengthening the support of the locals. Clearly, the direct collective historical experience of war, and decades of a highly militarized environment, add legitimacy to the peace movement. Finally, a specific Okinawan cultural and political identity has emerged through a rich layering of narratives about Okinawa's indigenous identity distinct from Japan. These layers have

[2] See for example Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military,* Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle in Okinawa,* Hein and Selden, eds., *Islands of Discontent*, and Hook and Siddle, eds., *Japan and Okinawa*.

contributed to the development of a spirit of resistance focused on demilitarization and peace, encapsulated in the term "Okinawa struggle" (*Okinawa no tatakai*).[3] The question of Okinawa's elusively coherent identity has been a significant source of scholarly preoccupation in the analysis of Okinawa's peace movement. Addressing the "Okinawa struggle" and its effectiveness in constraining state policy with regard to the bases in their territory, Glenn D. Hook and Richard Siddle make their central question whether Okinawa may or may not be considered "Japan,"[4] and in what ways this distinctiveness strengthens the movement. Miyume Tanji, for her part, analyses the relationship between the diversity of voices and protest groups in Okinawa, concluding that a unique identity or even "myth" about Okinawan resistance has given the movement its force and power.[5]

In this article, I do not focus on the intricacies of Okinawan identity with respect to Japan. Instead I test the hypothesis that peace activism and democratic activism are mutually reinforcing forms of principled action. I examine some of the ideational features structuring the movement, and the resources it has used to confront and challenge the Japanese government's security policies in Okinawa. On the basis of documented events and outcomes of the movement's activities, I consider how the movement has successfully constrained governmental policies, as well as raised awareness about the ongoing injustice to Okinawans perpetrated by the presence of the bases. Peace activism has historically been shaped by varied ethical and ideational contexts, and anti-war movements have consistently relied on a set of ethical principles to achieve their purposes.[6] The appropriation of democratic principles, especially the principles of participatory citizenship, and the critique of Japanese nationalism, are an important but overlooked dimension of the strength of the Okinawan protest movement as a peace movement. In particular, I highlight the critical function of the Okinawan peace movement and its success in drawing attention to the limitations of Japanese democracy, including the challenge to the connection between nationalism and security, and between nationalism and citizenship. The Okinawan peace movement's success, at least in terms of its longevity, I argue, contributes to our understanding of contemporary secular peace movements precisely by demonstrating the close connections between democracy and peace.

For the purpose of this study, I define anti-base activism as single-issue activism of which the goal is the removal of bases. On the other hand, I use the terms anti-war and anti-militarist activism to refer to a broader form of anti-base activism grounded in principled views both against militarism and war, and in defense of participatory democratic ideas. The movement's targets have consistently been the US and Japanese governments, and to a lesser extent, the mainland Japanese public, as the primary focus of the peace movement has been the removal of the military bases in Okinawa. The movement's strategies include mass protest, civil disobedience, the creation of NGOs and civic associations, and the active reframing of anti-militarist issues in terms of environmental protection. Activists have also self-consciously used delaying tactics to great effect, in particular with regard to the construction of one of the relocated bases. On the other hand, the Okinawan peace movement also exemplifies the relationship between the idea of "local" peace and "global" peace, showing that these are increasingly intertwined and mutually dependent.

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[3] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 4-5.
[4] Hook and Siddle, eds., *Japan and Okinawa*, 16.
[5] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 10.
[6] Barash and Webel, eds., *Peace and Conflict Studies*.

Indeed the globalization of democratic values, coupled with human rights, has marked the advent of a new era of international cooperation structured around ethical norms. This in turn provides a novel normative framework for local peace movements and their efforts to constrain governmental policies. While the movement has consistently framed the request for the removal of the bases within a principled anti-war and anti-militarist discourse, it is increasingly arguing for the economic, political and social transformation of Okinawa. As the Okinawan movement internationalizes, its activists are now also aiming for a global audience. Though the movement's goals in securing the removal of the bases may not have been achieved, nevertheless this multi-dimensional peace movement's achievement has been significant. In stressing in both action and principle the applicability of the global principles of participatory citizenship and human rights to the more general causes of demilitarization, peace, and social justice, the movement has successfully generated a sustainable platform for public contestation and the formulation of principled appeals for peace and democracy. In particular, it has effectively deployed radical participatory democratic action in the public scrutiny of the bases' impact on Okinawa and of governmental action.

In the first section of the paper, I present examples of the movement's conscious use of participatory citizenship for the purpose of principled resistance on behalf of peace, and for the creation of symbolic spaces of public contestation, in the period from 1955 and with special focus on the decade between 1995 and 2005. I consider the reasons for the success of the movement in terms of gathering mass support by the local population, and restraining the government's plan to relocate a military base to a pristine offshore site. I show how the movement appeals to the democratization of Okinawa by emphasizing the radical democratic function of a critical civil society, on the basis of existing solidarist community beliefs. I also discuss how the movement succeeds in generating a collective narrative of resistance across historical time, and capitalizes on symbolic events to become a "signifier" of Okinawan conscience. In the second section, I contextualize activists' calls for peace through democratization within Japanese democracy itself, and its specificity as a "peace democracy." I consider some of the policy responses of the Japanese government to the mass protests and civil disobedience campaigns of 1995-2005. I conclude that though these did not lead to the removal of the bases or even to their significant reduction, the Okinawan movement's sustained scrutiny of the government has revealed both its inability to secure the rights of Okinawan people, and to exemplify a "peace democracy," thus generating a coherent critique of the limitations of Japanese democracy and its current conceptions of security. I conclude by briefly drawing some theoretical conclusions about the applicability of the Okinawan peace movement's model, insofar as it combines principled participatory democracy with peace-oriented claims to generate a symbolic space of public conscience and contestation.

Identity, community, and civic activism in Okinawa

Okinawa's geographical, social and cultural marginalization has consistently posed a problem for the Japanese government. The Okinawan peace movement has evolved as a series of "waves" of activism from immediate post-war occupation to the present, with an initial focus on the single issue of the removal of the bases, and gradually expanding to include the causes of human rights, social justice, and antimilitarism.[7] This historical

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[7] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle,* 8-9. Tanji bases her analysis on Okinawan activist and historian Arasaki Moriteru's use of the concept of three "waves" of Okinawan struggle (*Okinawa tōsō*).

progression of the movement's activities has generated a solid foundation for the peace movement and given it its air of sustainability. The concern with the use of Okinawa, an island itself a victim of war, for the propagation of more war is seen as an intensely personal issue by Okinawans, who have insisted on a identity with their own history, culture, and language, different from that constructed hegemonically for Okinawa by the mainland Japanese.[8]

Okinawa, a frontier territory made up of a series of islands spanning the seas between Japan and Taiwan, was formally the Ryūkyū Kingdom, with tributary diplomatic connections with China.[9] Under increasing Japanese influence in the 17th and 18th centuries, Okinawa was finally formally annexed and assimilated into Japan as a prefecture in the early Meiji period in 1879. This constituted Okinawa's first experience of subordination. At the end of the Second World War, from March to June 1945, the Battle of Okinawa was a cataclysmic event, one of the most traumatic of the War, and further entrenched Okinawa's subordinate position vis-à-vis mainland Japan. The subsequent twenty-seven year long military occupation by the US reinforced the daily confrontation with military realities, and established a pattern of dispossession and marginalization of the people of Okinawa.

The double experience of marginalization and oppression by two national powers, namely Japan and the US, added a distinct sense of political marginalization to the existing feeling of victimization induced by war trauma and the subsequent militarization of the island. Anti-base claims have thus consistently been underpinned by demands for the public recognition of the distinctiveness of both Okinawa's local identity, and of its war trauma during the Battle of Okinawa.[10] Okinawa's environment and development were also affected by the presence of the bases and by increasing economic dependence on Japan[11] (McCormack 2003). Thus since reversion to Japan in 1972, and despite widespread hope for the return of the military bases, these islands retain 75% of the total number of US military bases in less than 1% of the landmass of Japan. Concomitantly, as a prefecture of Japan, Okinawa paradoxically occupies a central role in the geopolitics of the region and arguably in global geopolitics.[12] However, despite propaganda by mainland Japan about the return to the "motherland," and the service done to Japan's national security by Okinawa's hosting of the bases, Okinawa's reversion to Japan did not bring with it further recognition of the plight of Okinawans. Instead, an increasing feeling of betrayal by the mainland government prevailed.[13]

The Okinawan peace movement's influence is strong, and the movement relies on iconic events functioning as signposts in the construction of collective narratives of resistance. Activists in Okinawa come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, and include local fishermen, students, academics and intellectuals, architects, public administrators, and generally concerned citizens. The movement itself has not been consistently unified, but includes different groups of Okinawan citizens with overlapping

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[8] Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, Hein and Selden, eds., *Islands of Discontent*, and Hook and Siddle, eds., *Japan and Okinawa*.

[9] See Kerr, *Okinawa*.

[10] Yonetani, "Contested Memories", 189.

[11] McCormack, "Okinawa and the Structure of Dependence".

[12] Furuki, "Considering Okinawa as a Frontier", and Gabe, "It is High Time to Wake Up".

[13] Wakaizumi, *The Best Course Available*, Yoshida, *Democracy Betrayed*, Yamamoto, *Grassroots Pacifism in Post-War Japan*.

and complementary activities, including anti-base labor unions, landowners, women's groups, and local civic groups. The movement as a whole is not hierarchic, though it relies on the transmission and knowledge base of elders, particularly with regard to the experience of the war. It is the movement's fluidity and ability to undergo constant renewal which allows it to enjoy wide popular support in Okinawa. Concomitantly, the use of civil disobedience and mass protest developed in a unique direction in Okinawa. Okinawan civil disobedience strategies have capitalized on solidarist community traditions of participation and engagement, and have used the language of democratization with reference to the thriving civic culture already existing in Okinawa. Thus crucially, the evolution of the movement has consistently asserted and modeled the practice of democratic rights. It is widely recognized that military bases are not compatible with local civic life. Yet the process of alienation of citizens from decision-making, as well as the impact of the militarization of Okinawa on its economy and its environment, has paradoxically generated a keener sense of civic life in Okinawa. In addition, the concern with the use of Okinawa, itself a victim of war, for the propagation of more war is seen as an intensely personal issue by Okinawan activists. At the same time as the discourses of state security, military alliance, and the balance of power have been imposed on them, Okinawans have been subjected to various forms of direct and structural violence. The discrepancy between the power of the US military occupation and the vulnerability of the local population has thus been a key element of the anti-base movement's discursive framing as offering a principled, anti-militarist critique of the existing hegemonic forces.

The US army began their occupation by divesting the local population of their land for the purpose of the building of bases. The first "wave" of Okinawan activism thus saw the emergence of a multiplicity of political parties, labor union movements, and movements of landowners and farmers to protest against US land acquisition.[14] A brutal seizure of land in 1955, followed by the discovery of the rape and murder of a six-year-old girl, were some of the first dramatic events which galvanized indignation and were followed by mass protest.[15] As early as 1956, as many as 160,000 to 200,000 out of a total of about 800,000 local residents joined rallies against US land acquisition policies and to demand the departure of the US military.[16] Such early protest movements in Okinawa, such as the *Ie-jima* march of dispossessed farmers, though not explicitly predicated on pacifist principles, nevertheless communicated the need for principled action to confront the violence of militarism. As Miyume Tanji comments, the five-month nonviolent march in 1956, led by the farmers turned "beggars," "exemplifies collective action at its most desperate and symbolically powerful."[17] The *Ie-jima* march constituted nothing other than principled action aimed at highlighting the reality of the dispossession and humiliation of an already war-traumatized local population. This served as a model for later action, including the "anti-war landowners" movement (or "one-*tsubo* movement"), when a certain number of landowners consistently refused to sign lease contracts with the US military on the principle of opposition to war and militarism.[18] Though these "objectors" represented a minority among a majority of so-called "contract landowners" who entered

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[14] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 56-60.
[15] Ibid., 158-159.
[16] Ibid., 71.
[17] Ibid., 69.
[18] Ibid., 107.

into lease contracts with the US, their action gained momentum in 1971 after the Anti-War Landowners' organization was formed.[19] This movement has acquired iconic status as one of the main contributions of the Okinawan peace movement to principled resistance against militarism. Later, under Article V of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, the Japanese government became the subcontractor for the Okinawan landowners' leases to the US military, thus further entrenching Okinawa's subsidy economy and dependence on Japan, as Okinawans became reliant on the Japanese government for income from rent.

The movement's idealist expectations were also in severe contrast with the realities of ensuing militarization of the island. The wish of Okinawans was for the number of military bases to be radically diminished, and that this should be accompanied by the recognition of landowners' rights. However, militarization went ahead unimpeded, with a noxious increase in weaponry on the island, including B-52 bombers, and nuclear and chemical weapons. Moments of strategic involvement of the island's bases in external wars typically highlighted the sacrifice of the Okinawan people and of their living environment for the purposes of the US-Japan security alliance. The daily flying of B-52s from the US bases for the war in Vietnam added a global outreach to the presence of the bases and their direct implication in violence and war. It further angered Okinawans as they were reminded of their own experience of the Battle of Okinawa and felt complicity in the Vietnam War, leading to massive protests and strikes demanding the bases' removal.[20] By 1995, 85,000 Okinawans out of a total population of 1.4 million used mass protest to express "their unwillingness to endure any more of the abuse, outrage, insecurity, nuisance, or inconvenience imposed by this foreign military presence."[21]

In addition, post-reversion Okinawa further experienced the imposition of the public works model of Japanese development, coupled with increasing tourism, which had a devastating impact on the Okinawan environment.[22] As the Japanese government imposed its own version of development on Okinawa, it used extensive payouts to placate discontent with the bases, thus highlighting the links between Okinawa's economic dependence on Japan and the militarization of the island.

The third wave of Okinawan protest was thus initially framed by two iconic events which galvanized attention once again to the problem of insecurity generated by the presence of the bases. One was the rape in 1995 of a schoolgirl by American servicemen, and the other, in August 2004, was the crash of a US army helicopter on the campus of one of Okinawa's universities. Masamichi Inoue has convincingly evoked the way in which this event came to signify the idea of a "raped Okinawa," as the 12-year old girl and Okinawa itself came to be discursively represented as "*itaikena* (innocent), *kayowai* (helpless), and *kiyorakana* (pure)."[23] The event also came to symbolically represent the endemic sexual violence against women accompanying the military presence in Okinawa, including the prevalence of rape and prostitution. Today, however, it is the global appeal for the protection of the unique biodiversity around the area of Henoko, and in particular the dugong, which has become the icon of an anti-base movement, standing for the defense

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[19] Ibid., 108.

[20] Ibid., 79. Later, the fact that the US bases on Okinawa were used to deploy troops during the Gulf War constituted another reason for increased concern about the ongoing militarization of the island.

[21] Ibid., 1.

[22] Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, and McCormack, "Okinawa and the Structure of Dependence".

[23] Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, 39.

of the purity of Okinawa's environment. [24]

    The politicization of Okinawan identity is significant in having provided a framework for community participation, in which powerful bonds of solidarity are forged. It is reasonable to hypothesize that such existential belonging contributes to explaining Okinawans' concern for their environment, as well as activists' readiness for immersion in purposeful protest. Okinawan indigenous spirituality underpins the powerful experience of local attachment which binds Okinawans and ultimately inspires their motivation for social activism. Indeed the direct expression of grievance in Okinawa is linked to an intense form of spirituality articulated around nature and the environment and transmitted through oral traditions.[25] These bonds of solidarity in turn allow for the expression of common concerns and goals as communities of self-reflection and knowledge are progressively built. Local citizens, such as older people, have readily joined not only in peace marches but also in the creation of civic associations and in civil disobedience action. Several associations of concerned citizens upholding democratic associational rights, such as the "Society for the Protection of Life," the "Society of Nago Citizens Opposed to the Heliport," the "All-Nago Citizens' group against the Heliport," and the "Conference Opposing the Offshore Heliport and for the Peace and Democratization of Nago City" were formed.[26] In particular, when the Society for the Protection of Life began a daily sit-in on the site of Henoko beach, near the proposed site of relocation of the Futenma base, in January 1997, Okinawa's elders joined in, lending social legitimacy to their cause. This action by Okinawan citizens featured the involvement of Okinawan's very elderly people, including a 93-year old woman who was reported by the Conference Opposing the Offshore Heliport as saying, "It was because of the blessings from this sea that we could raise our children. It is our duty to pass on to our children the treasure that is the sea."[27] The most dramatic period of the sit-in on the sea off Henoko began in 2004 and was eventually made the object of a BBC documentary for "The Earth Report," as activists encouraged the growing presence of the international media. The activists, joined by fishermen, went as far as to swim out onto the sea in kayaks and climb onto the offshore construction towers to prevent surveyors sent by the Japanese government from carrying out drilling tests under the sea. As one account of the heroic sit-in explains, such action means that, "Ordinary life is sacrificed/The same process repeated over and over brings exhaustion/Physical and mental strength are stretched to the limit."[28] The daily, and eventually nightly sit-ins lasted until September 2005, when the Japanese authorities announced they would remove the offshore towers, thus sealing the activists' success in delaying the beginning of the construction of the new offshore base.

    The mythical Henoko sit-in illustrates the effectiveness of the movement's combined

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[24] One notable example is a current court action carried out in the United States to require the US government to consider the impact on the dugong of their intended construction of a new off-shore base at the pristine site of Henoko to relocate the base at Futenma which was located in the middle of a very densely populated part of Okinawa. See David Allen, "Suit Threatens Okinawa Air Station, Marines move to Guam," *Stars and Stripes*, 21 September 2007, and John Roach, "Rare Japanese Dugong Threatened by US Military Base," *National Geographic News*, 23 August 2007.

[25] See Rokkum, *Nature, Ritual and Society.*

[26] The 21 anti-base groups formed a coalition, the Nago Citizens Referendum Promotion Council.

[27] See the document "Henoko Action" issued by The Conference Opposing the Offshore Heliport and for the Peace and Democratization of Nago City.

[28] Ibid.

use of civil disobedience and community solidarity, while making use of the global normative language of democracy. The sit-in, which began in January 1997 and ended in 2004 with the effective postponement of the construction of a new offshore base to replace the airbase at Futenma, exemplifies Okinawan civil disobedience and its reliance on communal bonds of solidarity. The idea that citizens joined the movement without prior political affiliation became a positive attribute of the movement, both for progressive political parties and unions, and for the local people's associations.[29] These associational activities developed alongside a general appeal for citizens' rights and for the Nago City Referendum, held on December 21, 1997, on the relocation of the Futenma base in Ginowan city to Henoko village. In this referendum, despite threats and manipulative tactics by the government such as increased offers of monetary compensation for the relocation of the base, Okinawan citizens forcefully expressed their opposition to the relocation and construction of the new offshore US base and heliport in Henoko. The action surrounding the Henoko issue brought together anti-militarist and democratic groups to pressurize the national government, and highlighted the activities of newly globalized women's and environmental movements in Okinawa.[30] The integration of a critical gendered perspective thus not only transformed the "Okinawa Struggle" from "a struggle to protect specific local interests into a struggle to protect human rights,"[31] but further emphasized the principle of participatory democracy and the role of women in generating civic solidarity. In addition, environmental movements similarly drew attention to the universally relevant connection between military bases and the destruction of local environments, thus exemplifying the effective creation of alternative spaces for public knowledge by concerned citizens.

Principled action both on behalf of peace and on behalf of democracy, specifically redirecting attention away from notions of nationalism and national defense, had merged from the very beginnings of the movement in Okinawa. As Hook and Siddle suggest in their response to the hypothetical question of Okinawa's transcending of the category of the nation-state, "it is the 'guardians of Okinawa's conscience,' the anti-war landlords with their attachment to the 1947 constitution, who are bound most closely to conventional notions of citizenship"[32] in Okinawa. Indeed, it may be said that many such actors in Okinawa have exercised their citizenship rights with the view to being the "guardians of the Japanese conscience." All in all, the movement for the Referendum against the relocation of the base to Henoko achieved two things. First, it "brought the history of Okinawa's social movements to a new height by forming … a broader public sphere of discussion about the US military"[33] within Japan. Second, it transformed Okinawa's political and social self-representation from that of "a poor, oppressed 'people'" to "that of confident, affluent 'citizens' of diverse backgrounds awakened to globally disseminated ideas about ecology, women's issues, and peace."[34] Simultaneously, it helped further define

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[29] As Tanji writes, these civic associations "defined themselves as a "citizens" movement body" (*shimin undotai*) of free-willed individuals," emphasizing "the importance of solidarity among parties and unions," where s*himin* "signifies ordinariness, non-affiliation to any political organization, and a non-ideological position." Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle,* 167.

[30] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 169.

[31] Ibid., 183.

[32] Hook and Siddle, *Japan and Okinawa*, 249.

[33] Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, 157.

[34] Ibid.

the role of democratic citizenship for Okinawans, as a critical signifier of the ability of people to challenge the Japanese government and other powers-that-be. As Masamichi Inoue comments, "*shimin* [citizen/resident] became a metaphor for hybrid citizenship that was simultaneously grounded in locality, entangled in nationality, and involved in globality."[35]

The contribution of the Okinawan peace movement to Japanese democracy

The Okinawan peace movement has brought to public scrutiny the question of the role of civil society for participatory decision-making as an ethical issue within Japanese democracy itself. It has modeled the vital role of the local, grassroots dimensions of democracy in delegitimizing certain policies, within a national democracy where contestation is seldom heard or practiced. Okinawan activists' effectiveness in their use of strategies of participatory democracy between 1995 and 2005 can be attested by the Japanese government's response to the relentless pressure leveled at it regarding the presence of the bases. A series of attempts at establishing high profile consultative and representative processes between 1995 and 2000 indicated the pressure felt by the Japanese government faced with a protest movement that, significantly, became a signifier of the ineffectiveness and the undemocratic nature of centralized policy-making in Japan. On the one hand, sustained action on the part of activists, combined with the popular support this action has enjoyed, has highlighted the limitations of the Japanese government in encouraging the recognition of Okinawan people's views on the bases. Simultaneously, attention has been drawn to the structural impediments posed to the growth of local autonomy by a centralized Japanese bureaucracy, and to the need to restructure national–prefectural and especially national–municipal relationships.[36] The Special Action Committee for Okinawa – SACO – was established precisely as an international policy forum led by the Japanese and US governments as a response to the protest movement of 1995. As its cited objective was to include local people's voices, a consultative body was created to improve the capacity of the prefecture to represent local interests in communication with both the Japanese and the US governments.[37] In addition, a new type of governmental intervention was established, designed to respond to the economic and social needs of the municipal governments hosting the bases and "improve national–local relationships."[38] As Keisuke Enokido argues, these policy interventions demonstrated the fact that the "rise of local civil society in Okinawa manifested in the 1995 protest rally was a challenge to the role and capacity of the national Japanese government," as the Japanese "state's power to deal with regional and/or local problems was deeply questioned."[39] Indeed SACO and its associated bodies rapidly became the emblem of the Japanese betrayal of Okinawa, especially when it was discovered that as a result of the process, the Futenma base would be relocated to an offshore site in Henoko rather than returned.

Another example of Japan's efforts to contain Okinawan opposition was the "Okinawa Initiative," which in 2000 attempted to address some of the grievances aired

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[35] Ibid., 168.
[36] Enokido, "Okinawa After the Cold War", 86.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 87. This was known as the "Round Table on the Municipalities of Okinawa accommodating US military bases".
[39] Ibid. 100.

earlier by the people of Okinawa during the mass protests about the September 1995 rape.[40] Again, this policy backfired against the government and served to intensify public debate in Okinawa and the voices of the peace movement. This initiative, involving the conservative prefectural government of Governor Inamine, aimed at some form of recognition of the unjust burden placed on Okinawan citizens and of their sacrifices for the sake of national security and the Japan–US security alliance. However, the outcome of the Initiative was ultimately to undermine Okinawans' claims for the public recognition of the abuse and marginalization they suffered due to the bases. Instead, the Initiative attempted to redefine the social and economic purpose of the bases and their role in the maintenance of national security.[41] Such a stance underscored the ideological collusion between concepts of national security and the government's inability to deal with claims of difference, human rights, and recognition through appropriate democratic principles of governance.

The SACO and Okinawa Initiative debacles encapsulate the dynamics between the powers dominating policy making in Okinawa, including the US and Japan, and the antimilitarist movement which continues to maintain a posture of principled resistance, within the Japanese and even the global public sphere, with regard to the militarization of Okinawa. As Hideki Yoshikawa argues, with reference to the connection within the Okinawan anti-base movement between Okinawan political self-determination and environmental politics, "The dynamic interplay between Okinawans and the international community helps sustain and is sustained by the continued strong voice of the majority of the Okinawans who oppose the construction."[42] This dynamic can also be explained with reference to another factor unique to the Japanese context which has allowed the Okinawan peace movement to exercise the important function of "delegitimizing preparations for war and legitimizing norms," through the exercise of ideational power and principled action with global reach. This is the original connection between democracy, demilitarization, and peace in post-war Japan. As Mari Yamamoto argues, the link in Japan's modern collective political imagination between democratization and a national identity based on the principles of peace necessarily has implications for civic engagement within Japanese democracy.[43] The specificity of the Japanese peace movement, compared to Western peace movements based on religious and liberal traditions, is its secular interpretation of principled democracy, and its association of peace with what essentially amounts to human security principles. Indeed the Japanese people's main concern was with "better economic wellbeing and advancement of their human rights."[44] Significantly, for Glenn Hook, remilitarization came "to take priority over a number of constitutional and other principles meant to impede militarization," such as the important Article 9 of the so-called Japanese "Peace Constitution," which proclaims Japan's renunciation of war as a sovereign right.[45]

This has enabled the cognitive reframing of the Okinawan peace movement, within the triangular relationship between Japan, the US, and Okinawa, and governed by the discourse of state security, into a critical discourse defending progressive social

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[40] Yonetani, "Future "Assets", but at What Price?: The Okinawa Initiative Debate".
[41] Ibid.
[42] Yoshikawa, "Internationalizing the Okinawan Struggle", 12.
[43] Yamamoto, *Grassroots Pacifism.*
[44] Ibid., 10.
[45] Hook, "The Erosion of Anti-Militaristic Principles", 381.

values against the forces of hegemony. Okinawan's anti-militarist radicalism and focus on issues of social justice and well-being – in short, their redefinition of the meaning of security and their focus on human security – must be understood in the context of Japan's history of militarization, de-militarization, and re-militarization.[46] The disconnect between factual remilitarization and the constitutional discourse of peace has accentuated the importance of antimilitarist principles precisely as they were being threatened. This in turn has provided an appropriate framework within which Japanese peace movements could forge their normative and ethical legitimacy. Okinawa's unique geopolitical position as a frontier region in the Pacific has thus paradoxically led to the opportunity for Okinawans to construct a new form of political identity and discursive positioning as monitors of democratic, human rights, and human security principles in the region. As Masaaki Gabe suggests, the triangular relationship between Japan, the US, and Okinawa has been the defining feature of the political struggle which forms the basis of Okinawan peace activism.[47] The defeat of the nation-wide protest movement against the revision of the US-Japan Security Treaty (*ampo*) sealed Okinawa's unique geopolitical position within East Asia as the cornerstone of the US-Japan security alliance, but it also placed the spotlight on the treaty and its consequences. Masamichi Inoue goes as far as arguing that this triangle can be seen as a structural part of the "intimate society," "constructed at once economically, militarily, and ideologically, across the broader Asia-Pacific region."[48] under the distorted principle of "mutual benefit" relationships. As Toshiaki Furuki argues, Okinawa has become the seed for a new "fluctuation"[49] within the internationalized security structure. What essentially constituted an oppressive, neo-imperial policy for a minority population of a frontier territory also presented an opportunity to highlight the impact of traditional security policy and decision-making by alliances of powerful nation-states on the fabric of democracy itself. As the Okinawan anti-base movement participants surmised, the high level of legitimacy enjoyed by this security discourse eventually made it the ideal object of principled opposition, framed by the norms of democracy, human rights, and peace.

The instrumental nature of Okinawan identity in the anti-base struggle has been extensively documented.[50] I would argue that the contribution of the politicization of Okinawan identity lies precisely in showing how a local identity based on universal aspects of experience such as violent oppression and marginalization, can intersect with a global identity based on the common goals of humanity, peace and human security. Reframing the question of the bases in Okinawa as an issue of social injustice and (in)security for local Okinawans, within the national democratic context of a constitutional "peace" democracy, has paved the way for the movement's critique of the role of militarism in democracy on the basis of solidarist and community values, which paradoxically lead to a universal stance on global human rights and democratic values. Indeed the original link made by the US occupation between democratization and demilitarization made the subsequent alliance between the US and Japan particularly vulnerable to criticism on

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[46] Hook, "The Erosion of Anti-Militaristic Principles", 381. See also Hook, *Militarization and Demilitarization in Contemporary Japan*, and Hook and McCormack, *Japan's Contested Constitution*.

[47] Gabe, "It is High Time to Wake Up", 59.

[48] Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, 134.

[49] Furuki, "Considering Okinawa as a Frontier", 36.

[50] See for example Inoue, *Okinawa and the U.S. Military*, Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, Hein and Selden, *Islands of Discontent*, Siddle, "Return to Uchina", and Molasky, "Arakawa Akira".

the basis of shared historical memory. As Nikki Kersten highlights in her analysis of Japanese pacifism, disenchantment with "Occupation democracy" did not detract from the development of an "indigenous democratic philosophy" firmly connected with peace principles.[51] While Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution inextricably joined peace principles with democracy, this innovative normative design was to be put to the test during the unprecedented display of political activism around the revision of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty in 1960.

In effect, the various intellectual movements participating in the debate came to critique particularist notions of democracy as exemplified by the push for the replication of the American model, and to internationalize or universalize a unique, or indeed indigenous Japanese vision of a democratic peace rooted in Japan's unique experience of suffering under the atomic bomb in particular, and the consequent binding of the Japanese people into what the French would call *lien social*. Thus for Shin Chiba, "Japan's constitutional pacifism has implied a tacit social contract among the people themselves, as well as between the people and the government."[52] Paradoxically, the normative power of concepts hybridizing peace and democracy such as *kyosei*, or conviviality, would lie in their being firmly anchored within "indigenous" democratic and peace cultures.[53] As Tanji explains with regard to the original anti-base actors in Okinawa such as the anti-war landowners, their contribution was to demonstrate "their definition of 'Okinawanness' in terms of adherence to the image of an ideal, democratic and constitutional nation-state, conceived during the reversion movement."[54]

In addition, the Okinawan peace movement advocates a radical approach to citizenship, not only in modeling principled civic action, but also in fundamentally rethinking the role of identity within a globally conceived, cosmopolitan democracy. Indeed peace and democratic activists in Okinawa have emphasized the links between democratization and minority rights in Japan. Indigenous communal identity has been mobilized in Okinawa as a collective resource of shared experience from which to shape principled action on behalf of peace. A small group of Okinawans has taken the struggle for the recognition of Okinawa's unique indigenous identity to human rights bodies within the United Nations, offering, as Siddle writes, "a fascinating insight into the constructed nature of some ethnic categories, and the intricate and dialectical relationship between notions of identity and political strategies."[55] This movement is forging links with the Ainus' claims for self-determination on the basis of a shared experience of internal colonialism, oppression, and marginalization by the Japanese state.[56] In this perspective, "ethnicity is not something people 'have', but something that they 'do'," in that "they learn, articulate, negotiate and reinforce their cultural identities through participation in complex webs of social interaction."[57] The political strategy of the radical rejection of Japanese identity in favor of such a locally conceived identity is here accompanied by the appropriation of international norms. First, the connection with other indigenous movements legitimizes the expression of oppression at the level of international ethics, while associating peace with pluralism,

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[51] Kersten, *Democracy in Postwar Japan,* 171.
[52] Chiba, "Reflection on the Pacifist Principle", 231.
[53] Ibid., 238.
[54] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle*, 173.
[55] Siddle, "Return to Uchina", 134.
[56] Ibid., 138.
[57] Ibid., 133.

minority rights, and basic democratic governance. Second, as the issue of recognition is raised in the context of the ongoing oppression of Okinawa, it directly challenges Japan's designs for cultural homogeneity. This further contributes to deconstructing the necessary connection between national identity and citizenship. As Takashi Kibe argues with regard to Japan, claims for the recognition of difference by various minority groups have encouraged the critique of a "model of ethnocultural uniformity that is presupposed by the conventional concept of citizenship."[58] In so doing, activists have shown that local identity overlaps with a universal identity based on a global framework of norms, and that the quest for universal principles evolves from an active public sphere where the voices for peace are heard from the grassroots.

The politicization of Okinawan identity is also significant because it provides a framework for community participation, in which powerful social bonds are forged and the voices of the people and the voices of peace converge. These bonds of solidarity in turn allow for the expression of common concerns and goals as communities of self-reflection and knowledge are progressively built. Tanji notes the role played by the diversity of voices and actors in the movement, but also identifies the coherence of the movement in a powerful bonding, not only through shared communal identity, but also through historical memory. Compounded with the experience of direct battle, the added trauma of the Japanese Imperial Army's pressure on Okinawans to commit collective suicide added to the forging of communal traumatic memory. I would argue further that Tanji's reference to an "absolute pacifism"[59] evokes a community of knowledge built around the memory of war. A series of memorials and museums commemorating the Battle of Okinawa erected by the prefectural government and the object of peace education tours for schoolchildren, have contributed to the elaboration of an official anti-war discourse at the prefectural level in Okinawa. Significantly, these have also been the site of further contestation as the restitution of collective memory has been critiqued for not sufficiently reflecting grassroots experiences of the war. Julia Yonetani explores in detail the "contested narratives" of the war experience around the establishment of various museums to commemorate the Battle of Okinawa.[60] As the alteration of the "truth" of the Battle of Okinawa as experienced by Okinawans became the subject of controversy, the Okinawan peace movement produced another critique of nationalism and the enduring lack of acknowledgement of war responsibility by the Japanese government.[61] In another effective display of grassroots democracy claiming the right to information, a group of citizens and the Okinawa Historical Film Society, the "one foot" movement, successfully reclaimed footage of film from the US National Archive in Washington, DC.[62] Similarly, the question of the role of witnessing and "speaking truth to power" was publicly debated by Okinawan civil society in the 1980s as the national government "screened" Japanese school history textbooks, especially with regard to the role of the Japanese military during

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[58] Kibe, "Differentiated Citizenship", 420.

[59] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle,* 41.

[60] Yonetani, "Contested Memories". In this paper, Yonetani presents a detailed account of how the prefectural government became the object of vigorous critique as decision-making regarding the representation of the collective suicides in the exhibits became increasingly shrouded in secrecy.

[61] Ibid., 200.

[62] Tanji, *Myth, Protest and Struggle,* 45. One of the movement's commitment was to break the silence surrounding Okinawan's war survivors, and promote a form of oral history and retelling of survivors' experiences.

the Battle of Okinawa. The debate around revisionism in relation to the mass suicides of 1945 as reported in school textbooks has had substantial ramifications in mainland Japan, ultimately contributing to the strengthening of a public sphere of criticism of Japanese nationalism.[63]

Finally, the Okinawan peace movement's adoption of strategies of contention belonging to the more radical tradition of participatory democracy, as well as its reliance on patterns of community solidarity, distinguishes it from the liberal discourse which prioritizes tolerance, individualism and the protection of the private sphere, as emphasized by the Japanese government. Different historical contexts allow for peace movements to articulate the priority of values and norms that have particular resonance for a population. The history of the post-war democratization of Japan from the beginning of US occupation has been extensively documented.[64] In particular, the constrained development of an autonomous civil society within a system of government resting on centralization and bureaucratization has received considerable attention.[65] The origins of this approach to government in Japan may be traced back to longstanding traditions of political and administrative culture, which culminated in the centralized Meiji era.[66] Thus the relatively slow evolution of a functioning and vital civil society in Japan, despite the undeniable growth of labor unions and the existence of a definite challenge from the left of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, has attracted considerable attention.[67] While basic rights were guaranteed by the Constitution, the post-war focus on economic development and rapid modernization brought with it a significant increase in the Japanese people's enjoyment of a newly conceived private sphere. However it is generally acknowledged that while the Japanese government has encouraged the development of a private sphere through the emphasis on economic development and affluence, local traditions of democratic participation, particularly in their more critical and contestatory forms, remain underdeveloped.[68] Duncan McCargo is perhaps closer to the mark when he draws attention to the participatory approach to democracy which complements the liberal focus on the growth of the private sphere, with its concomitant ideologies emphasizing individualism and the market economy. He emphasizes the role of citizens' movements, however marginal, for the development of a public space based on the tradition and

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[63] The involvement of Nobel prize winner in literature Oe Kenzaburo in legal proceedings, as his anti-governmental stance and "truth telling" regarding the suicides in one of his novels on Okinawa was attacked by an ex-commander of the Imperial Army, and his recent statement, on 10 November 2007, have contributed to the high profiling of the debate around Okinawa's mass suicides. (*Le Monde* 30-31/12/2007: 6)

[64] Kersten and Williams, *The Left in the Shaping of Japanese Democracy*; Moore and Robinson, *Partners for Democracy*; Richardson, *Japanese Democracy*; Kersten. *Democracy in Postwar Japan.*

[65] Kingston, *Japan's Quiet Transformation,* Hirata, *Civil Society in Japan,* Tadashi, ed., *Deciding the Public Good,* and Iokibe, "Japan's Civil Society: An Historical Overview". See also Hasegawa, *Constructing Civil Society in Japan*, for a look at the growth of environmental movements.

[66] Iokibe, "Japan's Civil Society", 63.

[67] Jeff Kingston, applying a liberal framework to the assessment of recent developments within Japanese democracy, particularly in the area of the rule of law, sees in the growth of NPOs and various debates around judicial reforms a promising development for the challenge to centralized politics and the empowerment of a weakened Japanese citizenry. As he suggests, the most likely outcome of Japan's process of legal reforms is likely to be the forging of a "deeper, broader, and stronger civil society", though he does not elaborate on what forms such a civil society might take. Kingston, *Japan's Quiet Transformation*, 91.

[68] See McCormack, *The Emptiness of Japanese Affluence*.

principles of grassroots egalitarian democracy, and its role in holding governments accountable. For example, referring to the peace and labor movements in Japan in the 1960s and 1970s, McCargo finds that, while "these ad hoc movements do not appear to have been consolidated into lasting vehicles for political participation," "there is no doubt that the citizens' movements were effective in forcing the Japanese government to act."[69] As McCargo also argues however, while Japan is "rich in associational life, possessing a great abundance of social capital in the form of neighborhood associations and collective activities," the important question still remains whether this "rich community organization can also give rise to independent political life."[70] Indeed McCargo concludes that it is difficult to establish whether the existence of certain pockets of civic activism in Japan merely reveals the impotence of the Japanese citizenry and the lack of participatory democracy in Japan. In this view, the weakness of Japanese democracy is highlighted by the strength of a core group of leaders, and activists.[71]

As has been demonstrated so far, the hypothesis of the growth of civil society is not a framework of analysis that does justice to Okinawa's successful challenge to, as well as contribution to, Japanese democracy. Nor does it explain the successful connection within Okinawan peace activism between the quest for social justice and the contestation of hegemonic forms of political expression, such as those necessarily associated with the nation state, nationalism, and security. A key indicator of the ability of citizens and grassroots movements to challenge state hegemony in areas of policy making clearly also lies in whether a conception of civil society exists, or may be forged, which allows for critical and contentious voices to be heard. As I have argued elsewhere,[72] the other pillar of a healthy democracy is an active public sphere, however marginal, which relies on the more active and critical engagement with power. French republicanism is an expression of a democratic culture which developed historically over a significant period of time, revealing the intimate connections between active citizenship, social critique, and the deepening of democracy as a means of social transformation. Participatory democracy, while prioritizing solidarist values such as community, social cohesion, and critique, forms an equally important basis for effective and critical communication in the public sphere, or "speaking truth to power." This conception of democracy reveals the intimate connections between active citizenship, social critique, and the deepening of democracy as a means of social transformation, and centers on the role of the public sphere. The purpose of such a public space is the expression of a multiplicity of voices, including those of the most disempowered, and the ability to hold governmental policies to public scrutiny. In addition, movements of contention, civil disobedience, and spirited resistance are an important part of an "indigenous" democratic culture in France.[73] Thus a similar form of participatory democracy as that found in Okinawa can be briefly illustrated by the example of José Bové's *Confédération Paysanne* in France. Originally a pacifist militant who used civil disobedience to protest against the expansion of a military camp on the Larzac plateau, Bové has since devoted his energies to humanist environmental activism, and regularly has recourse to civil disobedience, in particular in his action against GMOs,

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[69] McCargo, *Contemporary Japan*, 173.

[70] McCargo, *Contemporary Japan*, 169-170.

[71] Ibid., 176-177.

[72] Souillac, *Human Rights in Crisis*.

[73] This type of participatory democracy is called *contestation*, and is often inspired by key philosophical texts and debates. See Crettiez and Sommier, *La France Rebelle*.

while anchoring his local voice in the global discourse of environmentalism.[74] For this type of movement, size or even popular support is not as important as radical visibility since such movements present themselves as the bearers of public conscience. In a totally different context, it can be said that the Okinawan peace movement has similarly relied on a more philosophical social and political critique for the framing of their more concrete claims for the reduction of the bases on the island. The establishment of the connection between Okinawans' local needs, with the universal discourse of human security as well as participatory, or "people's" democracy, is unique to the Okinawan movement as an example of indigenous manifestations of Japanese democracy.

Ultimately, the Okinawan peace movement's main characteristics, namely its diversity, complexity, and sustainability, challenge the view of peace movements as structurally marginalized and unsustainable. As peace researchers have commented, peace movements have typically been reactive and periodic, growing when the threat to peace is great and then receding, leading either to the accusation of "fickleness,"[75] or to "activism fatigue." [76] In addition, as is often argued, the pluralism of peace movements is not an encouraging sign in terms of the sustainability of modern peace activism.[77] Thus as Barash and Webel argue, since "the overriding goal of many peace movement activists is not so much the elimination of states as their transformation,"[78] peace movements should ideally communicate a coherent counter-discourse from which to confront hegemonic discourses of state security.[79] In other words, there is an urgent need for peace movements not to remain limited by conceptions of their own structural and normative marginality. Yet, our understanding of the deeper structural conditions for peace movements' creation of alternative social and political discourse remains limited. The idea of "enlightened participation" has been alluded to but not analyzed in depth.[80] I would argue it better encapsulates the Okinawan peace movement's distinct contribution to the modeling of peace movements. Enlightened participation indeed neatly conveys the interdependence between peace activism and principled activism on behalf of democratic norms as the best framework for the achievement of social justice. In addition, it communicates the idea that when community-based participatory democracy and peace combine in the creation of new public spaces and alternative communities of knowledge, this increases the normative power of peace movements. As Cecelia Lynch suggests, social movements "contest, legitimize, and delegitimize norms of behavior," particularly by "delegitimizing preparations for war and legitimizing norms."[81] The Okinawan peace movement's distinct contribution lies in its creation of such an enlightened and sustained space of democratic contestation on behalf of peace. The purpose of this space is independent from the more concrete goals of the return of the bases or the improvement of living conditions for Okinawans. Within such a space of public conscience, in which norms are upheld and supplemented by principled action, more intangible outcomes are also generated. These include the public identification of the broad political and social issues of which the

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[74] Ibid., 20.
[75] Barash and Webel, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 46.
[76] Ibid., 52.
[77] Ibid., 41.
[78] Ibid., 43.
[79] Ibid., 52.
[80] Alger, "The expanding Tool Chest for Peacebuilders", 42.
[81] Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, 19.

problems in Okinawa are but a symptom, the public critique and scrutiny of governmental security policies, and, ultimately, the building of communities of knowledge which offer alternative understandings of militarism and security, citizenship and nationalism.

Conclusion

The Okinawan peace movement undeniably has a universal resonance, notably in its appeal to peace oriented values such as social solidarity, the environment, human rights, and social justice. I have argued in this paper that it has succeeded in creating a public space of contestation and public conscience which has put considerable pressure on, and even delegitimized, Japan's security policies. The use of nonviolence, passive resistance and civil disobedience has allowed Okinawan activists to fully inhabit their role as truth-tellers and to appeal to community solidarity on behalf of local participatory principles. It has also allowed them to communicate to an increasingly wider audience, from the local people of Okinawa, to Japanese people, and even to a global audience of concerned citizens equally concerned with the impact of war and militarism on local communities and human security. As such, the Okinawan peace movement may serve as a model for other movements, especially those which are anchored in traditions of community solidarity or share similar bonds of historical memory. In the end, the Okinawan movement shows that peace activism is integral to the universal shift towards deeper democratization, and vice versa. Its effectiveness in highlighting the connections between peace and democratic solidarity attests to the importance of democratic renewal as a vital component of peace.

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