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Representations of Okinawa in Major U.S. Newspapers (2016)

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Key words: Okinawa, U.S. military, U.S. newspapers

要旨

本論は、米国主要新聞2紙（ワシントン・ポストとニューヨーク・タイムズ）による2016年の在沖米軍基地関連報道に関する論考である。米軍人・軍属による性犯罪、殺人事件および普天間基地移設に伴う辺野古沖埋め立てをめぐる沖縄県と国の対立が主要なニュース・フレームとなった。特筆すべきは、それまで皆無に近かった、思いやり予算、米軍人・軍属による犯罪件数、地位協定の問題や、沖縄県経済の米軍関連収入への依存度が低いことに関する言及がなされたことである。米国大統領選挙候補者、ドナルド・トランプ氏の在日米軍撤退の可能性を示唆する発言への政府の反応や相次ぐ米軍関連事件・事故に対する沖縄の人々の反発、記者の問題意識が反映されていると言える。しかし、未だ、沖縄の歴史や経済、人々の心情などに関する重要な事実が欠けているため、読み手に誤解が生じている可能性を指摘した。

“For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.” — Walter Lippmann

1. Introduction

According to Robert M. Entman and Kimberly A. Gross, “news of the policy process” is characterized by such traits, which have an “overreliance on public officials, overuse of standardized story scripts and familiar stereotypes, and ‘pack journalism’ –the tendency of reporters from nominally competitive news

organizations to converge on the same framing” (Entman & Gross, 2008, 94 and 95). Their observations are keen enough to perceive the involute workings of individual journalists’ unconsciousness. One might include another trait, especially when journalists cover foreign affairs, which can greatly affect not only international but also domestic politics: conventional belief about national ideology and myths. It is likely that individual journalists share the national ideologies and values which influence their writing. No matter how hard journalists attempt to be “objective” or “neutral” to news they are reporting, their articles sometimes reflect the government’s or society’s side rather than opposing side. This is the case more so with regions like Okinawa, regions long colonized by a superpower. Furthermore, journalists’ data-collection can be insufficient, not merely because of an “overreliance on public officials” but also because of esoteric historical knowledge or inaccurate understanding of that region in question.

Newspaper articles on international affairs are immensely significant primarily because people heavily rely on information and knowledge about other countries gathered from foreign news coverage as Cavari et al assert (Cavari et al, 2017, 25). This reliance on foreign news coverage of inaccessible places makes readers tend to take it for granted that articles are true and trustworthy. Even if readers do not trust the coverage entirely, it will tend to greatly influence their understanding of foreign affairs and events with which they are scarcely familiar. Cavari et al also contend:

Considerations of historical-cultural heritage, international diplomacy, and national military and government politics often determine international news coverage. The manner in which the media describes and interprets foreign events shapes the recipients’ perceptions of reality, and thus public attitudes. (Cavari, et al., 2017, 26)

Hence, limited space for foreign reporting and scarce attention to foreign news articles may bring crucial consequences for unbalanced news reporting. This is almost always detrimental to U.S. readers because foreign news coverage is prone to being

both inaccurate and insufficient.

In this study I explore U.S. newspaper coverage regarding the U.S. military in Okinawa in 2016. My hypothesis is that slanted or biased coverage reinforces misunderstanding about the military-related issues in Okinawa and Japan. To test my hypothesis, I focus on two newspapers' coverage of these issues from 2016: *The New York Times* and *Washington Post*. I prove my hypothesis correct and discuss its implications. Simultaneously, I focus on correcting the misinformation or disinformation of the coverage in discussion.

II. Data Collection

I accessed the database Lexis.com to search Okinawa-related articles published by the *Washington Post* (WP) and the *New York Times* (NYT). Using the key term, "Okinawa," I collected 54 articles from the WP and 68 from the NYT published in 2016. After a preliminary analysis, I narrowed the collection of articles to U.S. military-related issues by excluding obituaries and weather reports mentioning "Okinawa" from the analysis. I have selected fifteen *Washington Post* articles and fifteen *New York Times* articles and one editorial about U.S. military presence in Okinawa. I have selected these two newspapers for my analyses for two reasons. Firstly, they are generally considered politically influential in the United States, especially in Washington, D.C. Secondly, they have correspondents in Japan who had visited Okinawa to report the issue in discussion of this paper.¹

III. Framing News

Entman explains the function of framing as "the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation" (Entman, 2007, 164). Mary Ann Weston mentions that news frames "impose order and make sense of the world, both for those who report on it and for their audiences" (Weston, 1996, 13). Moreover, Todd Gitlin contends that "... for organizational reasons alone, frames are unavoidable" since frames enable journalists to process large amounts of information and to

make decisions in news presentation: “recognizing it as information, assigning it to cognitive categories, and packaging it for efficient relay to their audiences” (Gitlin, 2003, 7). As frames are unavoidable, Gitlin suggests that we take news frames into considerations when analyzing journalistic work.

Any analytic approach to journalism . . . must ask: What is the frame here? Why this frame and not another? What patterns are shaped by the frames clamped over this event and the frames clamped over that one, by frames in different media in different places at different moments? (Gitlin, 2003, 7)

In these senses, examining frames is necessary to pursue in order to discover whether there are certain kinds of pattern when the U.S. media report events and accidents in relation to the U.S. military bases in Okinawa. Below I assess news framing in both WP and NYT articles on Okinawa to explore how they affect U.S. readers regarding the U.S. military issues in Okinawa since news frames “highlight certain aspects of news and downplay others through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration. News frames activate conducts, invite inferences (trait as well as other types) and cue stories in receivers as a function of the content and style of the news story” (Cappella and Jamieson 1997, 77).

IV. News frames in the 2016 coverage of the issues in Okinawa by U.S. Newspapers

In the 2016 coverage, rarely mentioned previously topics were reported: The number of crimes by U.S. military personnel, problems about Japan—U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), host nation support, Okinawa’s much reduced economic dependence on U.S. military.

News frames in both papers in 2016 reflect voices from Okinawa, a similar tendency from both papers in 2015 (Madomari-Tokuyama, 2018). Unlike the previous news frames of both papers between 2009 and 2014 (Madomari-Tokuyama

2012, 2017), the importance of U.S.—Japan security alliance has been toned down. This is especially true in the WP, which quotes local politicians, experts, activists, and ordinary citizens as a way to bring the core of the U.S. military-related issues to the fore such as host nation support from Japan.

In the NYT, American readers were offered articles regarding the significance of the U.S.—Japan military alliance. Moreover, when the topic about the alliance was brought up, the under-discussed topic regarding the SOFA, which most Okinawans see as unfair, came to be mentioned.² The SOFA is seen as problematic. It protects American military personnel, dependents and civil contractors from being legally tried in Japanese judicial court. Among the NYT articles, I also recognized differences in news frames depending on the article's authors.

Although the two papers' news frames were more or less sympathetic toward the plight of Okinawans, I found several missing facts in their coverage, which could lead to the disparity in the notion of U.S. military-related issues among U.S. readers; it could obfuscate the real plight of people living in Okinawa and have U.S. readers make false assumptions about these issues, which I will elaborate later.

I explore the possible reasons that affected the change and differences in both papers' news frames highlighted in their coverage.

(A) Crimes and accidents committed and caused by U.S. military personnel and a veteran

In 2016, there were three major crimes committed by U.S. military personnel and a veteran. In March of that year, a marine stationed at Camp Schwab in Henoko was arrested for the rape of a female tourist at a hotel in Naha. In April, a 20-year-old woman was killed by a former marine who worked as a U.S. civilian contractor at Kadena Air Base. It took this brutal murder of a young woman for both papers to finally cover the SOFA. In June, a drunk female navy sailor crashed into two cars and injured two locals while she was unhurt. Lastly, in December, an MV 22 Osprey crashed in the shallow water 200 meters away from Abu near Henoko in the northern part of Okinawa, but it was reported by newswire services and as a part of another

story.

A.1. Coverage of rape committed in March

The WP ran a 95-word-article by Reuters about the rape case in March. On March 13, a Navy sailor stationed at Camp Schwab sexually assaulted an intoxicated and sleeping female tourist, whom he had never met before, in a hotel in Naha. The sailor was arrested for incapacitated rape the next day. At first, he denied the charge (WP, 3/15/2016).

A.2. Coverage of the murder committed in April

The slaying of a 20-year-old in April was reported first on May 20 in a 95-word news by Reuters (WP, 5/20/2016). Subsequently, the case was reported in relation to Iseshima Summit in the WP (Fifield and Nakamura, WP, 5/26/2016). In the NYT, the case was reported on May 21, 26, and 27.

At the end of April, a 20-year-old woman was bludgeoned from behind while walking at night. She was dragged into a car and assaulted, strangled and stabbed to death by a former U.S. Marine and civil contractor. She was missing for more than 20 days until the suspect confessed dumping her body. Her body was found on in a wooded area in central Okinawa. The suspect confessed that he was cruising around the town to look for someone to rape, according to a local newspaper, the *Okinawa Times*. First, he was arrested for dumping the body. The suspect was arrested again for the murder of the woman in June. One day after the suspect was arrested, the local newspapers announced that they would not disclose the victim's name because of the gravity of the case and to respect the human rights of the victim. (*The Okinawa Times*, May 22, 2016, okinawatimes.co.jp/articles/-/31570)

A2.1. Referring to the suspect with the Japanese last name he adopted from his Japanese wife

The first news about the 20-year-old woman's murder in the NYT was written by Jonathan Soble, who reported the suspect as Kenneth Franklin Shinzato (Soble, NYT,

5/21/2016). The second and third article were by Rick Gladstone. He wrote that the suspect “goes by his Japanese wife’s family name, Shinzato” and further explains that “Mr. Shinzato, who is originally from New York and served in the Marines, was a civilian employee at Kadena Air Base, a major American military installation on Okinawa, and lived with his wife and child in the city of Yonabaru.” (Gladstone, NYT, 5/26/2016, 5/27/2016). The fourth story by Soble identified the suspect as “Kenneth Franklin Shinzato” without mentioning that he took his wife’s name.

On the other hand, the WP’s first report on the murder was from Reuters, which did not reveal the suspect’s name (WP, 5/20/2016). The second report from the WP was a story on the Iseshima Summit whose headline reads “Okinawa’s homicide dominates talks” and devotes most of it for the murder case (Fifield and Nakamura, WP, 5/26/2016). In this report, Anna Fifield and David Nakamura state the fact that Kenneth Franklin Shinzato “took his wife’s name when he married.” In the third news story that reported a female navy sailor’s accident, Fifield again mentions the fact that “Shinzato married a local woman and took her surname” (Fifield, WP, 6/7/2016), which Soble from the NYT did not.

Whether to refer to the suspect with his current name only or with his original name makes a considerable difference to readers’ impressions about the suspect. If the suspect is considered to be Japanese-American or Okinawan-American because of his surname, this murder case could be processed as a domestic issue in many people’s minds, instead of a serious case that involves U.S.—Japan security alliance, and the suspect could have a chance to avoid charges because of the SOFA.

Even in Okinawa and Japan, when this case was first reported, he was identified as “Shinzato,” living off base. I suspect that many, including Japanese government officials and media outlets, thought that the suspect was Okinawan-American because of his last name. Moreover, his first name was wrongly broadcast as “Kennef,” not “Kenneth” and it continued incorrectly for a while in some broadcasters while other media corrected to his original name. Okinawan local newspaper identifies the suspect as “Kenneth Gadson Shinzato,” for the record.

A.2.2. Reporting on the precise number of crimes committed by U.S. personnel, dependents, and civilian contractors

As for crime-reporting, the exact figure of crimes committed by U.S. military-related persons almost never appears even in articles of NYT and WP, except for a couple of cases in the past, which seems odd because crime data are often incorporated in articles to guarantee the authenticity and quality of the news report. A rare exception can be seen in the story covered by Anna Fifield from the WP. In reporting the car accident in which a 21-year-old navy sailor crashed into two cars and hurt a local man and a woman in June, Fifield showed the precise number of the crimes committed by U.S. military-related persons. It said, “5,862 U.S. military personnel and civilian employees were arrested between 1972 and 2014, 732 of them in serious crimes, including murder, rape, burglary and arson,” citing the *Okinawa Times* (Fifield, WP, 6/7/2019).

One can say that the WP highlighted this fact to convey the gravity of the issue while the NYT chose not to mention this fact in their news. Without such facts, the coverage of crimes committed by U.S. military-related persons obscures the stern reality endured by the people of Okinawa since the occupation of Okinawa by the U.S. military started. Moreover, it does not fulfill the responsibility of journalism not to report full facts especially in such heinous crime cases. Such important figures should be reported every time U.S. military personnel, their dependents, or civil contractors commit such heinous crimes in order to convey to the readers about the outrageous nature of such crimes committed by U.S. military personnel who claims to be in Okinawa to protect the Japanese people.

A.2.3. Reference to the SOFA

The murder of the 20-year-old woman triggered a review of a “contentious aspect of” the SOFA that “grants special legal protections to American civilians employed by the United States armed forces” in Japan (Soble, NYT, 7/6/2016). The media, the prefecture and the Japanese government all discussed whether to apply the SOFA to the defendant since he was a civil contractor at the time the crime was committed.

The WP ran a brief report that says, “the agreement will reduce the number of civilian employees working on American military bases who receive immunity from Japanese prosecution,” which was not a formal revision of the agreement (WP, 7/6/2016). On the other hand, the NYT reported in a 632-word-story about SOFA and unfair nature of the agreement for the Japanese citizens as follows:

Some Okinawans have complained for decades about what they see as unfairly generous legal protections enjoyed by Americans. Under an agreement governing the treatment of United States military personnel in Japan signed in 1960, American soldiers, sailors and civilian contractors suspected of committing crimes in Japan can sometimes be tried by American military courts.

If a crime was committed while the service member or employee was on duty—even in a Japanese civilian area—the United States can require the local police or prosecutors to turn suspects over to American jurisdiction. Critics say some Americans who have committed crimes have gotten off lightly as a result (Soble, NYT, 7/6/2016).

If the suspect’s senior officer decided that he/she was on duty and signed the paper, the suspect would easily be able to get away with the crime he/she committed. Governor Takeshi Onaga stated in a session of the Okinawa prefectural assembly that what’s needed was fundamental revision to the SOFA. Citing his comment reported in one of the two local newspapers, *The Ryukyu Shimpo*, the NYT took a further step to describe the essence of the problem as follows:

The deal announced on Tuesday does not go anywhere near that far. It does not alter the treaty itself, or affect the extraterritorial protections granted to active-duty military personnel.

Instead, it affects only civilian contractors, and many of its specifics remain to be negotiated. American and Japanese officials said it would

facilitate revoking protections enjoyed by some American civilian workers who are long-term residents of Japan and possess Japanese residency visas. (Soble, NYT, 7/6/2016)

Even a brief mention of the SOFA in relation to crimes committed by U.S. military personnel and civilians is a major change in the coverage of these issues in Okinawa. For many years, most U.S. military personnel and civilians have been protected by the SOFA and have evaded their duty and responsibility for the crimes they have committed in many cases even after the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. In this regard, the media frame of this article highlighting the unfairness of the SOFA was instrumental in making the readers understand the issue from the Japanese and Okinawan perspective. Nevertheless, more in-depth coverage of the SOFA are necessary in American newspapers as well as in Japanese newspapers.

A.3. The Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft crash in December

At almost 9:30 p.m. on December 13, 2016, a U.S. military osprey aircraft crashed into shallow water 200 meters off the residential area of Abu, near Henoko. The aircraft crashed after its propeller was damaged during refueling training. All five crew members were rescued and two of them suffered injuries. The U.S. Marine Corps grounded Ospreys for about a week and resumed flights without explaining the cause of the accident and assuring the safety of the aircraft, which infuriated people all over Okinawa.

Although it was high-profile news in Okinawa, it was not treated as such in the American newspapers analyzed. For instance, the WP put a 74-word-report of the accident from newswire services in its Digest section on December 15, 2016. In the NYT, the accident was reported as part of a story about the U.S. returning 10,000 acres of land on the northern part of Okinawa that starts as follows: “Amid rising tensions over the American military presence on Okinawa, the United States officially returned nearly 10,000 acres of land in the northern part of the island to Japan on Thursday. It was the largest transfer of land since the United States returned Okinawa

to Japan in 1972, at the end of postwar occupation” (Rich, NYT, 12/22/2016). It is important to note that even though nearly 10,000 acres of land was returned, which used to be a military training area, 70.4% of the total land exclusively used by U.S. Forces Japan is still in Okinawa. That is, only four percent of the total land area used for U.S. military bases in Japan was returned. Instead of reporting on the serious accident, the story highlights the land return as “a step forward shrinking the American military presence on the main island of Okinawa,” which, in fact, is the return of the military training area mostly covered by forests and suspected of being contaminated by military activities. However, the article points out the problematic nature of the land return in the fourth paragraph:

Like many encounters between the United States military and residents of Okinawa, however, the land handover has stirred controversy. In exchange for the return of about half the acres that the American military uses to train soldiers for jungle warfare, the Japanese government agreed to build six helicopter landing pads on the land that the United States will retain. A small but fierce group of residents has complained about increased noise from construction and expressed concern about possible accidents. (Rich, NYT 12/22/2016)

Then in the sixth paragraph, the reporter mentions the crash of Osprey aircraft:

In the north of the island, where the helipads are being built, the residents’ concerns were amplified this month after American Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft crash-landed near Nago. The United States military grounded its entire fleet of Ospreys for about a week, before announcing that it would resume flights, angering local residents and the governor of Okinawa, Takeshi Onaga, who boycotted Thursday’s handover ceremony. (Rich, NYT, 12/22/2016)

In the eleventh paragraph, Motoko Rich, the reporter, picked up the voices of the residents in Higashi village. She reported that the land transfer would do “nothing to improve their lives” and “It’s nothing but an intensifying of the bases.”³ “In addition to having to cope with noise, people lived in fear of crashes in their village,” the paper reported. One of the residents was quoted saying, “If more ospreys are deployed, we cannot live here anymore.” That resident actually moved to another island outside Okinawa with his family a few months later. The NYT introduces Higashi village as “one of the villages surrounded by the American helicopter landing pads that are also being used by the Osprey aircraft,” which is crucial information to convey. Without this information, the reason why the villagers are against the construction of helipads, which will actually be used as Osprey pads, in Takae, could not be fully understood by the readers.

A.4. A pattern in the news frame: from coverage of crimes and accidents committed by U.S. military personnel to reinforcement of the U.S.—Japan military alliance

As I observed, both papers’ coverage of U.S. military-related crimes and accidents have a news frame sympathetic towards the people of Okinawa. However, upon closer examination, I found a pattern in the NYT articles, which could cause misunderstanding among readers and alter their views negatively in virtue of missing essential facts in the stories. The pattern is as follows: Voices of Okinawans are highlighted and followed by a description of the “anti-American” sentiment of Okinawan people, which could disrupt the U.S.—Japan military alliance. A headline such as “Murder Case in Okinawa Threatens U.S. Ties” (Gladstone, NYT, 5/27/2016) and passages such as “Crimes by Americans . . . have chronically irritated ties between the countries” (Gladstone, NYT, 5/26/2016) do not necessarily reflect the true plight of Okinawa. Certainly, such heinous crimes threaten the overall safety of Okinawa residents and infuriate most Okinawans, if not most readers with a heart. But in the past, Okinawans’ call for the withdrawal of American military bases has been ignored to the degree that such accounts of their anger threatening U.S. ties

sound absurd. Moreover, the expression should not be “anti-American,” it should be described accurately as “anti-military” or “anti-U.S. military.” Secondly, because of the pattern or slant in the reporting of stories, American readers, with notions of their military protecting Japanese people from threats from China or North Korea, could also have anti-Okinawan sentiment without recognizing the history and current situation of Okinawa and how much Japanese taxpayers pay for the U.S. military presence on Japanese soil. In that sense, these recurring phrases in the articles about any U.S. military-related crimes and accidents should be corrected so that they would not promote anti-Okinawan sentiment which could hinder American readers from understanding of the issues from both sides.

There are other passages that are extremely problematic because the accounts about crime statistics are not verifiable.

Many Americans in Okinawa feel the military has been unfairly demonized. They point to crime statistics that show United States personnel are arrested at lower rates than locals. Still, some sympathize with Okinawans’ sense that the United States occupation of their island, which formally concluded in 1972, has never truly ended. (Gladstone, NYT 6/4/2016)

The above passage seems to be “balanced” presenting sentiment of the two opposite sides about crimes committed by U.S. military personnel. However, the second sentence does not clearly show what statistics the claim is based on. Unless the reporters can verify the interviewee and show the validity of statistics involved in the article, they should not reiterate such a claim. The number of crimes committed by locals are listed in the statistics in discussion, whereas the number by U.S. military personnel, dependents, and civil contractors on base was not counted in the list because the military police has not disclosed the number. Americans accused for crimes that took place on base are tried in most cases in U.S. courts, due to the SOFA. The next passage presents a more careful comparison between crime rates of U.S.

military personnel and locals:

Defenders of the military point to statistics that show American soldiers and sailors in Okinawa are charged with crimes by the Japanese authorities at lower rates than locals. The numbers are difficult to weigh, however, because United States personnel spend only part of their time under Japanese legal jurisdiction. Their bases are, in effect, American territory. (Soble, NYT, 6/7/2016)

The first and second passages have similar descriptions of the crimes committed by U.S. military personnel. However, as the second sentence of the second passage displays the fact that the numbers cannot be compared since the crimes committed by American military personnel on base are not disclosed and not counted in any statistics. Moreover, when U.S. military personnel and their dependents, and civil contractors go back to their base after they commit a crime, there is nothing the Japanese police can do about it. According to the statistics by the Okinawa Prefectural Police:

The crime rate committed by “locals” is 29.5 person per 10,000, whereas the rate of “US military-related persons” is 15.4 person per 10,000. These statistics show the crime rate of “U.S. military-related persons” is lower than that of the “locals.” However, when it comes to heinous crimes such as murder, robbery, rape, and arson, the crime rate of the “locals” goes down to 0.63 while that of “US military-related persons” is 1.33, twice as many as the rate of “locals.” (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2017, 142-143. Translation mine)

Many in Japan say that comparing the crime rate committed by ordinary Japanese/Okinawans to that of U.S. military personnel who are supposed to “protect” Japanese/Okinawans with high discipline is absurd in the first place. Not to mention the crime

rate committed by U.S. military-related persons could be held at zero if the bases were not in Okinawa.

The last point I should make is that there was a secret agreement between U.S. and Japan signed in 1953 about crimes committed by “U.S. military-related persons.” The presence of this agreement was divulged in 2011. In the agreement, which was recorded in a minute not open to public, Japan announced that it will abandon the first jurisdiction unless the incident is extremely important to Japan, unfortunately this continues to be the case to date (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2017, 144-145).

(B) Voices of protesters around Camp Schwab in Henoko

The NYT and WP have both reported from Okinawa interviewing locals, including ordinary citizens, social activists, politicians, and experts on U.S. military base issues. Covering the voices of locals contributed to illustrating the plight of Okinawa. For example, politicians such as Susumu Inamine, the mayor of Nago, a northern city where a new base is being built, presents powerful messages by acutely pointing out the concept of NIMBY in outsiders’ minds.

“Okinawa is isolated, physically and in people’s minds,” said Susumu Inamine, the mayor of Nago, where Camp Schwab is situated.

He does not want the base expanded and has rebuffed offers of subsidies from the government in Tokyo that are contingent on his accepting the plan. “For the government, it’s a faraway place where what happens doesn’t impose any pain on the mainland,” he said. (Gladstone, NYT, 6/4/2016)

The governor of Okinawa, Takeshi Onaga, has voiced messages that show the strength and endurance of the people in Okinawa regarding the issue of new base construction: “Okinawans will not tolerate another base, and their anger, confidence and courage have shown through,” Mr. Onaga said (Soble, NYT, 6/7/2016).

The NYT quotes Hiroji Yamashiro, one of the principle leaders of the protest

movement, who is showing a vision for Okinawa's future as a hub for tourism and how the US military presence has prevented such projects from being realized.

Hiroji Yamashiro, a retired local civil servant, said that he wanted Okinawa to become a tourist center, but that the base stood in the way. He spends most days protesting outside the gates of Camp Schwab, a Marine armory and firing range in the north that the Japanese and American governments want to radically expand by filling in a bay and building a pair of aircraft runways. (Gladstone, NYT, 6/4/2016)

The WP also interviewed Yamashiro in a 1145-word report on the protesters that explains the reasons why Okinawan people are against the construction of a new base.

Okinawans like Yamashiro want Futenma moved out of their prefecture entirely, rather than to the Henoko area. The plan calls for two long runways to be built out into Henoko Bay, which local residents say would destroy coral and kill off the dugong, an endangered manatee-like mammal. (Fifield, WP, 2/8/2016)

In the same article, another reason for Okinawans' rejecting the bases was emphasized through Yamashiro's accounts and writer's words about the Battle of Okinawa. Regarding the daily sit-ins in front of Camp Schwab in Henoko, Yamashiro explains, "the reason why everybody comes here is because everybody is worried that we will become involved if there is another war in this region." (Fifield, WP, 2/8/2016). The writer of the WP piece, Fifield, refers to the protest that "Only a handful of people come to protest every day, like Yamashiro, but many come once a week. On occasion, as many as 1,000 attend." The writer's choice of crucial facts about the deeply rooted resentment among Okinawans about war-related matters and military-related activities is evident in the following passage:

Most of the protesters are senior citizens, and a few can even remember the Battle of Okinawa, the bloody episode near the end of World War II during which a quarter of the island's population was killed at the hands of both U.S. and Japanese troops. On weekends and public holidays, younger locals and families attend. (Fifield, WP, 2/8/2016)

Yamashiro, who suffers from lymphoma, has been arrested twice during protests in Henoko and was detained for six months, something which was seen by many Lawmakers as suppression of the protest. After stating the fact of his arrests and lymphoma, Fifield quotes him as saying, "I'm angry with the Japanese government and the American government for trying to use Okinawa for war-related causes rather than using it for the Okinawan people. I want Okinawa to be freed of this and to become a peaceful island." To support his statement, descriptions of the protest site in Henoko and Okinawan towns by Fifield might convey to the readers a sense of being in Okinawa. She writes, "The shadow of war indeed hangs over daily life on Okinawa. Driving through residential and shopping districts in the island's crowded center, it's normal to pass huge military vehicles being driven by helmeted U.S. Marines" (Fifield, WP, 2/8/2016).

The complex reality in Okinawa was effectively disseminated through such description by the journalist. To be sure, a contributing factor to the accounts of Okinawa is strong leaders' powerful and accurate messages and statements which are quoted by journalists. In either case, one cannot deny the sensitivity of the journalist to the reported issue makes a difference in framing military-related issues in Okinawa.

(C) The court battle and a settlement between the Japanese and Okinawan governments regarding the "Henoko issue"

One of the misconceptions about the construction of the new base in Henoko is that MCAS Futenma will automatically be returned to Okinawa if a new base is constructed. However, this is not the case. This fact is missing in both newspapers'

reporting.

In April 2013, the U.S. and Japanese governments imposed six requirements on the return of MCAS Futenma to Okinawa. Unless those six conditions are fulfilled, MCAS Futenma will not be returned. Included among them is the condition that a long runway, which is not provided in the new base, should be secured in private facilities in the case of an emergency (Ryukyu Shimpo, 2017, 148-149). The fact was reported in an Okinawan newspaper, but seems to be omitted from both U.S. counterparts. That means that even when a new base whose runways are shorter than required is constructed in Henoko, there is no guarantee that MCAS Futenma will be returned or that dangers to the Futenma residents will be reduced. This seems like a crucial fact to be included so that readers understand why Okinawan people are against the new base construction. Thus, adding the missing fact, one better comprehends why the Okinawan government is striving to block the construction of the base by suing the Japanese government.

On March 4, however, the governments of Japan and Okinawa agreed to drop several lawsuits and renegotiate the issue out of court. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agreed to halt the construction until the renegotiation process finished.

As for the court battle and brief settlement between the Japanese and Okinawan governments regarding the “Henoko issue,” the coverage by the WP and the NYT basically conveys the voices of the Okinawans by reporting remarks by local activists and a local university professor of politics in addition to a quote from a Japanese researcher (NYT 3/5/2016). However, the limited background information reported behind the Okinawan protest can mislead the readers about the reason why the people and the government of Okinawa oppose the construction of a new base in Henoko.

Even with a seemingly sympathetic framing towards local residents, some key phrases in the news may lead readers to miss the point of protestors’ argument or contribute to misunderstanding of the Okinawa issues. This remained true in 2016 as it had been from 2009 to 2014. (Maedomari-Tokuyama, 2015). A passage such as “Tokyo and Washington decided on the relocation in the 1990s, but opposition in Okinawa has stopped the plan from being carried out” repeatedly appear in almost

every article. This simplistic line, however, does state the fact that the SACO decision on the relocation of MCAS Futenma was reached between the Japanese and U.S. governments but it does not specifically state the fact that the agreement was reached without the full consent of the Okinawan government.

Thus, this type of passage makes supporters of the construction attribute the responsibility of exposing Futenma residents to dangers derived from military activities to the opponents of the new base. The supporters hold the opponents accountable for delaying the construction of a new base because of their anti-base protest, which would result in the prolonged use of MCAS Futenma. Without the full explication of the process by which the U.S. and Japanese governments reached the agreement by generally disregarding the request of the Okinawan government, readers might assume that the Okinawan government has voided their previous agreement. Moreover, without acknowledging the fact that MCAS Futenma will not be returned even when the construction is completed (because the construction itself does not fulfill six conditions, forced upon Okinawa by the U.S. and Japanese governments), a reader is unable to clearly discern the core of such an impactful issue.

Such a straw man fallacy in attributing the responsibility of not removing the dangers of MCAS Futenma in the middle of Ginowan city to protesters against new base construction has been a formula often used by the Japanese government and promoters of the new military facilities in an attempt to enlist public support for the Henoko plan. The following is another example of such a line.

The deal is the latest twist in a 20-year effort by Japanese and American officials to move the base, which is in the middle of a crowded Okinawan city. National officials want to move the base to a less crowded part of the island, but Mr. Onaga and a majority of Okinawans oppose the plan because they want the Marines moved off Okinawa altogether (Soble and Ueno, NYT, 3/5/2016).

In 1995, a 12-year-old girl was gang-raped by three U.S. servicemen on her

way to go buy stationary. The people of Okinawa were outraged and called for the withdrawal of American military bases and an immediate revision of SOFA. In 1996, the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) was established by the then Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto from the Liberal Democratic Party. SACO formalized a plan based on Okinawa's Base Return Action Program, which specified the return of most of the 11 facilities. However, the final version of the SACO agreement was against the request of the Okinawan government because it subjected eight facilities including MCAS Futenma to several conditions that will relocate the functions of the bases to other existing bases in Okinawa.

In order for the readers to garner a better understanding of the Henoko issue and avoid misunderstanding, in-depth coverage of the SACO decision-making process is necessary. Sadly, this detail was missed in the reporting. Otherwise, this Henoko issue could be seen as just another issue within Japan, in which the U.S. government should not or could not be involved.

In an attempt to convey the sentiment of residents of Okinawa, Jonathan Soble and Hisako Ueno, contributors to the article, provided readers with the reasons for opposition to the plan right after the passage I just mentioned, which could be a helpful piece of information for the reader. It reads:

The small island hosts about half of the roughly 50,000 American military personnel stationed in Japan, and many residents want the number reduced, not simply redistributed. Environmentalists have also criticized the relocation plan, which calls for a pair of runways to be built in what is now a coral-filled bay. (Soble and Ueno, NYT, 3/5/2016).

From these examples, journalists and contributors reporting on these issues are attempting to use news frames inclined towards the side of the people in Okinawa and it could be close to the best reporting at the time. However, I would argue that even with this news frame, one omitted fact could lead to major misunderstanding of the Okinawa issue discussed in the article.

(D) The defense budget in both U.S. and Japan and the reference to “host nation support”

There is one notable difference in a WP article from previous articles concerned with the coverage of defense budgets of both the U.S. and Japan. The WP ran an article to clarify how South Korea and Japan are making large financial contributions to hosting the U.S. bases in their backyard. Donald Trump, during his presidential campaign, accused Asian countries in general, but namely, South Korea and Japan, of not financially supporting the U.S. military presence in their countries and showed his readiness to withdraw U.S. bases from the two nations. Trump said that the U.S. “pay billions, hundreds of billions of dollars, to support other countries that are, in theory, wealthier than we are” (Fifield, WP, 3/31/2016).

Trump’s claim is fact-less. Fifield offers information in her article about host nation support, which was a topic almost never mentioned in previous coverage of both the WP and the NYT. The article in question says, “Japan pays 1.7 billion dollars a year to support the stationing of American troops in the country, while South Korea pays almost 900 million dollars, about 40 percent of the total cost. Their contribution rises with inflation” (Fifield, WP, 3/31/2016). In fact, according to Hiromori Maedomari, economics professor at the Okinawa International University, Japan’s host nation support amounts to almost nine billion dollars if other U.S. military-related budget items are included.⁴ Furthermore, Fifield also mentions Japan’s financial burden in building two Marine Corps air stations in Japan, saying “The Japanese government is picking up 94 percent of the \$4.8 billion tab (480 billion yen) for construction at Iwakuni and taking on all of the \$12.1 billion (1.21 trillion yen)” (Fifield, WP, 3/31/2016).

Fifield cites the analysis on military maintenance cost overseas by Michael O’Hanlon of the Brookings Institution that “it costs the United States \$2 billion to \$8 billion a year to keep 200,000 uniformed personnel abroad.” O’Hanlon further states:

Even adding in annualized costs for new construction projects leaves the grand total well under \$20 billion—real money, to be sure, but a modest

fraction of America’s nearly \$600 billion annual defense budget, and a bargain if having bases abroad strengthens deterrence.” (Fifield, WP, 3/31/2016)

The article concludes with the remarks of Patrick Cronin, senior director of the Asia-Pacific program at the Center for a New American Security, that withdrawing U.S. bases from South Korea and rebuilding U.S. forces from scratch when conflicts occur in the region “would cost more than would be saved by closing bases.” He goes on to suggest that it would not be wise for the U.S. to withdraw military units from the region citing how the large financial contribution Japan and South Korea are currently making. That is exactly why the U.S. military has resided in Japan and South Korea even 70 years after the end of W.W.II.: to save costs for maintaining American bases in Asia. It is much less expensive for the U.S. to maintain military bases in Japan than it does in their own land because Japan shoulders the base maintenance costs from the utility fee of the military personnel to the salary of the workers hired on base. In countering Trump’s groundless claim about Japan’s free-riding the U.S. defense system, the WP helped reveal the real reason why U.S. Forces never leave Okinawa, Japan, and South Korea. However, at the same time, this revelation may strengthen the intention of U.S. public to keep U.S. bases overseas to maintain their defense budget low. H. Maedomari states in his book *Okinawa and Military Bases*, “We should not miss the point that the main purpose of the 2006 U.S. military realignment is the reduction of U.S. defense budget, not the redefinition of the U.S.—Japan Security alliance. We should not miss the point that the reduction of the defense budget, which has soared, is one of the important factors” (H. Maedomari, 2011, 57 translation mine).

In this regard, although the coverage divulges the reality of defense budget in both countries, this disclosure could be a double-edged sword for Okinawa, for those informed U.S. citizens may think it wiser to have Japan shoulder the large sum of defense cost in order to reduce their defense budget. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of a local media researcher, this revelation is indispensable to make the

situation in Okinawa understood among conscientious U.S. readers. These are the facts that had not been highlighted or had been excluded from the news frame in American papers until this article was published.

(E) References to the Okinawan economy

By citing Hiroshi Meguro, a former research fellow at the Institute of Okinawan Studies at Hosei University in Tokyo, the NYT has suggested the possibilities of Okinawan economy becoming prosperous without the base presence (Gladstone, NYT, 6/4/2016). Meguro asserts: “The bases never made Okinawans rich: The prefecture has the lowest per-capita income in Japan, one-third below the national average. Now dependence on them [the U.S. military] is in decline.” Statements that clearly deny the presence of sustainable financial benefits, which bases have never brought to Okinawa, as well as references to the current reduced economic dependence on the U.S. military bases have never been seen in news frames of the NYT. The denial subverts the claim that the Okinawan economy cannot do without the bases which U.S. and Japanese governments and pro-base Japanese citizens have used to justify the U.S. military presence in Okinawa. The claim is proven false in current Okinawan economic circles whose dependence on the revenues from U.S. military is only about 5%, which is 10% less than when dependence was at the peak before the reversion of Okinawa to Japan in 1972. If such statistics are included, the researcher’s argument would have been more convincing. (Okinawa prefectural government official web site: <https://www.pref.okinawa.jp/site/chijiko/kichitai/syogai/>).

Conclusion

For the most part, news frames in the NYT and WP in 2016 reflect the plight of Okinawa from the perspectives of Okinawan inhabitants. However, I found possibly misleading patterns in some news frames. Missing details, omitted facts, or non-standard narratives could use improvement for the better understanding of the readers.

Because of the continuous incidence of U.S. military-related crimes and accidents,

pent-up anger of people in Okinawa is often portrayed through the voices of ordinary citizens, social activists, and politicians. However, these voices are often associated with “anti-American” sentiment, which should be in fact rectified as “anti-U.S. military base” sentiment, and are often described as a source of threat to the U.S.—Japan security alliance. For instance, when Yukio Hatoyama, Japan’s former prime minister, made a political promise to move American bases out of Okinawa, it was played up in both papers as damaging to the alliance and resulted in the resignation of his cabinet. (Maedomari-Tokuyama, 2012).

Such a connection within the news frame could be problematic for the media to convey the facts about the U.S. military in Okinawa since it could also hinder the further development of a resolution to the issue. What the majority of people living in Okinawa and their local government want is to reduce the burden of the U.S. military presence to a significant degree, if not total withdrawal. Actually, Tomohiro Yara, the then free-lance journalist and U.S. Marine Corps expert, current House of Representatives member, contends that withdrawing MCAS Futenma could not destabilize the U.S.—Japan military alliance. If you take into consideration the change in the defense strategy and the role and declining impact of USMC, Kadena Air Base and other bases work as a deterrent even without MCAS Futenma. Therefore, simply associating Okinawans’ reaction to the murder and fatal accidents with the disruption of the U.S.—Japan military alliance could serve as a covert and violent way of silencing Okinawan people. Journalism does not serve the Okinawan public unless it explicates the Battle of Okinawa, post-war U.S. occupation and plight of Okinawan people displaced and deprived of basic human rights. It unexpectedly benefits the American and Japanese governments that want Okinawa to continue hosting 70.4% of U.S. bases exclusively used by USFJ. This also results, adversely, in reinforcing the notion that the U.S. military presence in Okinawa is more necessary than ever, both geographically and strategically, in those who vindicate the U.S. military presence within and outside Okinawa. Comprehensive issues—the history of Okinawa, namely the Battle of Okinawa, the post-war U.S. occupation, accounts of those who have been subjugated to unfair SOFA incidents and deprived of their

basic human rights under the occupation, environmental contamination derived from military activities, and of current military strategy—are necessary details to account for the source of many Okinawans’ anti-base sentiments. The inclusion of such details could be instrumental in helping readers understand the reasons why Okinawans have borne such sentiment, and to avoid jumping to the conclusion that the U.S. presence is still necessary for the military balance in East Asia.

One notable change in reporting is the coverage of defense budgets in both U.S. and Japan because of the remarks by U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump during his campaign regarding the possible withdrawal of the U.S. military from Japan. Trump’s claim that Japan is free-riding on U.S. defense deployment in Asia is a false assumption. In fact, both papers started referring to the relevant facts, which had been hardly mentioned: that Japan is paying 70 % of the U.S. deployment budget in Japan. Here, an interesting phenomenon is noted. In their coverage from 2009 to 2015, even the NYT, a paper considered liberal, almost never had articles about Japan’s host nation support, except for a contributed opinion by Joseph Nye, Harvard Emeritus Professor of politics. Similarly, the WP never mentioned the host nation’s economic support during the time period. In 2016, for the first time, both papers actively covered the topic of defense budget and Asian countries’ host nation support for the U.S. military presence in order to prove Trump’s statement false. As a result, the fact about host nation support, which has been pushed out of the news frame of U.S. military-related articles for at least six years, has emerged in public

Kaori Hayashi asserts that the journalistic role of reporting objectively, fairly and neutrally can no longer deal with the complicated reality in human society. According to her, the journalistic routine of reporting “facts” tends to eschew questioning the sources of power structures hidden behind those “facts” that journalists consider true. Adhering to objectivity and impartiality often confirms the present structure of power and capital distributions that journalists regard as a social premise, and therefore their excessive trust functions to conspire with authority and ends up contradicting journalism’s mission of monitoring power (Hayashi 8 and 9). In this regard, the coverage of U.S. military-related issues requires more than objectivity, neutrality and

fairness in order to capture the complex Okinawan reality. I have a conviction that an individual journalist's sensitivity toward the Okinawans as a minority group holds a crucial key to having American readers understand the postcolonial conditions to which Okinawans have been subjected for more than seventy years.

Notes

- ¹ Among the fifteen articles from the WP, six were written by Anna Fifield and one was written by her and David Nakamura. Among others are two from Reuters, two from the Associated Press and Four from other news services. As for the NYT, out of fifteen articles, seven were written by Jonathan Soble, one by Soble and Hisako Ueno, two about the murder case of a 20-year-old woman by Rick Gladstone, two by Motoko Rich, one by Motoko Rich and Jonathan Soble, one by Motoko Rich, Choe Sang-hun, Makiko Inoue and Hisako Ueno, one by Motoko Rich, Makiko Inoue and Hisako Ueno.
- ² As for public polling on the SOFA, 79.2% of Okinawa residents calls for the revision or abolition according to a phone survey conducted by *the Ryukyu Shimpo* and Okinawa Television Broadcasting Co.Ltd. from May 30 to June 1 among the residents of Okinawa over 18 years old. 501 persons answered out of 5775 residence called. "Beigun josei iki kenmin yoronchousa"*The Ryukyu Shimpo*. 6/13/2016.p.1).
- ³ "It increases our burden," said Ikuko Isa, 56.... "It's nothing but an intensifying of the bases." Gentatsu Ashimine, 56, the owner of a cafe and inn in Higashi, said that in addition to having to cope with noise, people lived in fear of crashes in their village. "If more ospreys are deployed," he said, "we cannot live here anymore" (NYT 12/22/2016).
- ⁴ Ministry of Defense
https://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/zaibeigun/us_keihi/keihi.html accessed 4/9/2018
https://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2017/DOJ2017_2-4-3_web.pdf,
Leland Buckley "The Omoiyari" <https://zaomoiyari.com/> accessed 4/9/2018

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