

# A Women's World? Contentious Politics and Civil Society in Okinawa

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## 1. Introduction

The year 1995 became known as a landmark year in contemporary Okinawan history. On September 4 that year, three U.S. military personnel raped an Okinawan schoolgirl, twelve years of age. This crime was one of the events that initiated a newly revived island-wide protest movement of Okinawans against the continuous U.S. military presence in the prefecture, which for many years had gone hand in hand with crime rates above national average (Johnson 1999: 116–119; Vogt 2003: 54). I have previously argued that the September gang rape was the one event it took in a series of developments to once again spark a mass-based protest movement in Okinawa (Vogt 2003: 52–57). What makes this movement of the late 1990s so special – compared to, for example, the island-wide protest movement (*shimagurumi tōsō*) of the 1950s or the reversion movement (*fukkikyō*) of the late 1960s – is its character as a multi-issue movement. As such it was able to bundle the mobilizing power and resources available not only to the anti-military and peace groups but also the environmental activists, neighborhood associations and in a most central position the Okinawan women. The accessibility of a contentious policy issue to a broad group of allies, and the sustainable and potentially transnational character of activism around this issue are central features of the so-called new social movements (Melucci 1988: 335–338; Vogt 2006: 289–291). Once contention “produces collective action frames and supportive identities” (Tarrow 1998: 23) new social movements may reach a whole new quality of activism. They may be able to successfully push for their policy goals, and beyond that bring about change in the identity formation of its activists.

In the piece at hand I will show that the Okinawan women's groups stood at the center of the newly emerging protest in the late 1990s and served as key actors when it came to call for policy change based on identity formation within the prefecture. This might seem surprising given the general role of women in Japanese social movements, most often confined to far less contentious policy issues such as, most prominently, food safety (LeBlanc 1999). How then did Okinawan women manage to take on center stage in the mass movement of the late 1990s? What were their goals of activism and how successful were they in

pursuing them? I argue that Okinawan women in particular succeeded in two forms of activism: First, they managed to produce “a collective reality” among protesters that went beyond immediate women's issues “by the convergence and integration of the many elements” (Melucci 1988: 338) the anti-base movement was and to this day is composed of. They, secondly, did so by applying recent forms of activism including the transnationalization of their actions, which allowed them to form a broad support basis and to some degree gain independence from the narrow political opportunity structures Japan's political system grants to non-traditional political actors.

## 2. The Year 1995 in Okinawan Politics

In the summer of 1995, the Okinawan public had already been highly politicized. That year numerous events were held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Okinawa<sup>1</sup> and its many thousand victims. Once again the Okinawan public was being confronted with questions of life and death, war guilt and Okinawa's role as host to US military personnel in the decades to follow. One of the central questions of the public discourses that year was how the victimization of Okinawans during the war should be portrayed and remembered. Another one was to what degree Okinawans – willingly or unwillingly – in the years to follow the war supported warfare by providing the land and infrastructure for U.S. soldiers to be trained in combat.<sup>2</sup>

Both lines of thought received an additional contentious dimension by, firstly, the opening of “Cornerstone of Peace” (*heiwa no ishiji*), a peace park and museum at the Southernmost tip of Okinawa Island, in Mabuni, where the Battle of Okinawa came to an end (Kerr 2000: 471). The peace park's central commemoration area consists of numerous memorial stones taking the shape of ocean waves. Inscribed in the memorial stones are the names of all affirmed victims of the Battle of Okinawa regardless of their nationality or military respectively civilian status (OPPM 2007: 10). By taking this inclusive approach the Okinawan peace park not only serves as a place of commemoration of the sufferings of the war, but also as a place to demonstrate “Okinawa's enduring commitment to peace” (Weiner 1994, quoted in Saaler 2004: 116), that is Okinawa's commitment to condemn all actions of war

regardless of their protagonists. It should not go unnoticed, however, that “the fact that the names of Japanese combatants stand alongside those of local Okinawans has been criticized by Okinawans” (Yonetani 2000). This little footnote may serve as a glimpse into the contentious dimension of the representation of history in contemporary Okinawa, which unfolded so virulently in the mid-1990s.

It was in particular the portrayal of Japanese soldiers as the protagonists of war against Okinawan civilians in the museum’s exhibits that turned into an unprecedentedly heated political dispute among politicians and intellectuals from Okinawa and Japan as well as the concerned public. Pictures and scenic portrayals with life-size figures suggesting that mass suicides in the caves of Gama during the final days of the Battle of Okinawa were in fact forced suicides by Japanese soldiers were at the center of the debate. While the exhibition in its current form refrains from actually showing guns of Japanese soldiers pointing at Okinawan civilians, the wording it uses is unmistakable and clearly names the atrocities of Japanese soldiers: “Inside [the caves], at the hands of Japanese soldiers, civilians were massacred, forced to kill themselves and each other, and starved to death [...]” At the center of the dispute thus stood and to this day stands “the tensions between a Japanese national commemorative history [of being a war victim itself, G.V.] and the many ways in which Okinawa’s history contradicts it” (Yonetani 2000).

Wartime atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers and directed against Okinawan civilians strengthened the central line of identity representation among the diverse groups of protesters in the mid-1990s. Ōta Masahide, known peace activist and former Okinawan Governor (1990–1998) continuously stresses that the days of the Battle of Okinawa shaped what is now known as *Okinawa no kokoro* (Spirit of Okinawa), the image of Okinawans as a peace-loving and anti-war island people (Ōta 1981 and Ōta 1996). Governor Ōta thus set the tone of how to politically frame the gang rape as yet another chapter in what appears to be a continuous victimization of Okinawa by Japan, in particular the central principle of Japanese foreign policy, which relies on the security alliance with the United States.

While the connection between the 1995 rape and the wartime atrocities to some degree created and strengthened the protesters’ common identity, it was a comparatively straightforward and mundane event that delivered yet another political reason for 1995 to turn into a year of heated debate on Okinawa’s role within the Japanese nation state: In February 1995, Joseph Nye, Professor for International Relations at Harvard University and then Assistant Secretary of Defense, published a study on the future of the United States’ East-Asia policies. This study, which became known as *Nye Report*, proposed a continu-

ous deployment of at least 100,000 U.S. soldiers in East Asia, predominantly in Japan and South-Korea, for an additional twenty years, that is until 2015. Nye confirmed this stance during a public lecture at the Tokyo Foreign Correspondents’ Club in September that year. He argued that in light of a rise of China Japan’s position as a close ally to the U.S. in East Asia would gain in importance; the military alliance between the two nations therefore needed to be strengthened (Johnson 1999: 120; Vogt 2003: 56). Article VI of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the U.S. states that “for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan” (MOFA 2011). Okinawa, with 0.6 percent of Japan’s landmass one of the nation’s smallest prefectures, is host to some three quarters of U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan, and relocation of U.S. forces to other prefectures within Japan has proven next to impossible over the past decades (Norimatsu 2011). In fact, due to its prominent role in the implementation of Article VI of the Security Treaty, Okinawa has become known as “an American colony located on Japanese soil” (Johnson 1999: 109). The *Nye Report* made it perfectly clear that an immediate substantial change to this situation – and therefore a change also to the realities of day-to-day life of Okinawan people and their self-perception as de facto contributors to the United State’s global military strategy – was more than unlikely.

The friction between Okinawa and Japan over the deployment of U.S. soldiers was not a new issue in 1995. Yet while the *Nye Report* confirmed that this will remain a contentious policy issue for some time, the reemergence of wartime memories and the question of their portrayal in contemporary Okinawa once again put Japan-Okinawan relations onto the prefecture’s political agenda. Both events produced the grounds for what political scientist Sidney Tarrow (1998: 23) calls “collective action frames and supportive identities” and what sociologist Alberto Melucci (1988: 338) coined “a collective reality”; they did so by ensuring the Okinawan people that politics and policies will not change unless they push for change, and by providing them a strong common identity of being a victim to Japanese militarism – then and now – thereby morally authorizing the Okinawan people to engage in political protest in the name of Okinawan pacifism. The September gang rape then served as a catalyst helping this protests to frame, solidify and emerge.

### 3. The Boomerang Pattern

The character, strength and prominence of this new protest movement was to a large degree shaped by Okinawan women, some of whom would consider themselves

feminists, members of the local women’s movement, or simply concerned citizens. One can observe an exchange between local, national, and transnational levels of contentious engagement by women. Following contemporary literature in social movement research, this vital exchange is a crucial factor that determines the degree of impact a social movement can have on society and politics, and thereby its ultimate success. The theoretical model for this line of argumentation is the so-called *boomerang pattern* by political scientists Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink. I will briefly introduce this pattern, before applying it to my case study of Okinawan women’s participation respectively their leading role in the prefecture’s post-1995 mass movement.

How can new social movements or more generally civil society organizations (CSO) become successful political actors?<sup>4</sup> How can they shape policies against state pressure, which is inevitable once the CSO addresses contentious issues? Recent social movement literature calls our attention to the transnationalization of CSO activism as one way to overcome the seemingly predestined downfall of a contentious movement in response to state pressure.<sup>5</sup> Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink argue that transnationalization of CSO activism “can amplify the demands of domestic groups, pry open space for new issues, and then echo back these demands into the domestic arena” (Keck/Sikkink 1998: 13). They call the process by which a CSO intensifies its pressure on the national government via transnational alliance building a *boomerang pattern*. The *boomerang pattern* can prove particularly useful to CSO in so-called strong states, that is in states with a restrictive political opportunity structure. For CSO in a setting where they are blocked from direct lobbying of state authorities, information exchange and cooperation with CSO in other states may open up new ways of putting pressure on the targeted government. Demands for responsiveness from this state can be expressed by other states or by intergovernmental organizations – either way, CSO in other states can initiate this process of interaction. Figure 1 shows this *boomerang pattern* – developed by Keck and Sikkink (1998: 13) and modified in wording for this paper. For the purpose of this paper, the Japanese state takes up the position as “State A,” that is a state with a tight political opportunity structure, which CSO within this state try to bypass by forming transnational alliances with formal and informal political actors in the transnational realm.

#### 4. Women’s Protest in Okinawa: Evaluating Effectiveness

The year 1995 brought along a new wave of empowerment of women, in society and politics alike. This holds true for a global level and for Okinawa in particular. In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women, initi-

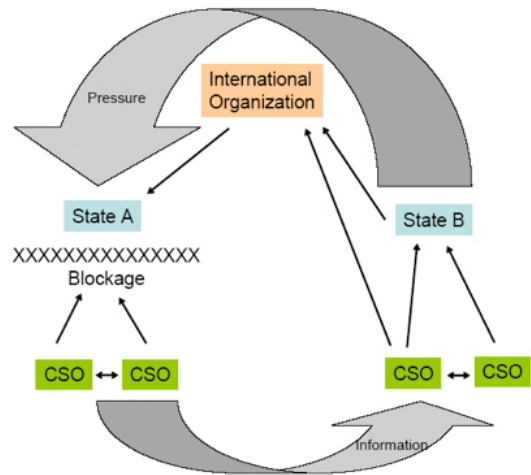


Figure 1: Boomerang Pattern (drawing on Keck/Sikkink 1998: 13)

ated by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs was held in Beijing, China. This conference addressed issues such as women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women in armed conflict, and many more.<sup>6</sup> Women from Okinawa participated in this conference with a delegation of more than seventy members. They organized and held eleven workshops dealing with, for example, environmental issues and issues of discrimination against women in patrilineal societies. The workshops organized by the Okinawan delegation also explicitly addressed issues of structural military violence against women in Okinawa (Bowen Francis 1999: 190). The leading members of the Okinawan delegation to the Beijing Conference also became leading figures in Okinawan women’s activism in the fall of 1995 and thereafter. The following subsections aim at tracing the effectiveness of their engagement by placing special focus on its transnational dimension. Following Keck and Sikkink’s (1998: 16–25) model it is in particular four categories that need to be studied when aiming at measuring the degree of effectiveness of transnational contention of CSO: information politics, symbolic politics, leverage politics, and accountability politics.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1. Information Politics

Information that flows in advocacy networks, respectively in civil society organizations in general, not only provides *facts* but also *testimonies* of people whose lives have been affected. This information needs to meet two criteria in order to serve as a successful political tool. It needs to be timely and dramatic, in order to gain attention. It also needs to be reliable and well documented, in order to be credible.

The information about the 1995 gang rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl did not make the big news initially.

Instead, it was the Okinawan delegation of participants in the Beijing Conference, who upon return to Okinawa learnt about the crime, held a press conference and deliberately invited the international media to it. It was only then that the crime got international coverage. The group also held a central position in organizing the prefecture's largest post-reversion mass demonstration against the U.S. military presence, which took place on October 21.<sup>8</sup> The up to then so called Beijing Delegation, in late November 1995 constituted itself as a social movement group called Okinawan Women Act Against Military Violence (OWAAMV, Okinawa kichi guntai o yurusanai kōtō suru onnatachi no kai). Two of its four mission statements deal with providing information, namely spreading information about Okinawa in other Japanese prefectures, and spreading information about structural military violence against women in Okinawa in the U.S. (Bowen Francis 1999: 189–203; Vogt 2003: 63). In order to achieve these goals, OWAAMV used a broad variety of methods of contentious engagement including a thorough mobilization of local civic groups.

Already on September 23, 1995, the group initiated the Rally of Okinawan women, children, and islanders against military violence (Bowen Francis 1999: 190). Participants to the rally could deliver one-minute statements each sharing their thoughts on women and military violence in Okinawa. The rally thus put forward personal testimonies of its participants, providing a forum for solidarity and for the creation of a common identity and common reality that served as bond throughout the coming weeks of activism. Also, by explicitly mentioning “islanders” in the title of the rally, what started as a women’s group opened itself to the general public. The two central figures of the mass protest in its early days, Takazato Suzuyo and Itokazu Keiko, with this September rally managed to strengthen the internal identity of the group and at the same time broaden its appeal to Okinawan citizens in general. The expansion of their scope of activism was made possible in particular by the prominent status of the two leading figures. Both women were and to this day are known activists for women’s rights and key members of the Okinawan progressive political block. In 1995, Takazato served as a member of the Naha city assembly and Itokazu as a member of the Okinawa prefectural parliament.<sup>9</sup>

Another outstanding initiative in information politics shall be highlighted here: In coalition with Japanese women’s groups such as the New Japan Women’s Association, OWAAMV supported a full page bilingual advertisement in *The New York Times* which was run in January 1996. The English title and subtitle read: “The Women of Japan Appeal to The Peace-Loving People of The World. The only way to prevent another rape case of an Okinawa girl is to remove all U.S. bases from Japan. Let us achieve a

conflict-free, peaceful 21st century” (*The New York Times* 1996/01/29: A11). This advertisement brought enormous publicity to the group and paved the way for two trips of OWAAMV activists to the U.S., which took place in 1996 and 1998. These so-called “Okinawa Women’s America Peace Caravans” not only served to spread information on the issue of structural military violence in Okinawa, but also extended their effects into the fields of leverage and accountability politics: National U.S. newspapers such as *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post* reported on the Okinawan women’s delegation’s trips and their meetings with U.S. activists, researchers and assembly men and women. During their second trip, the Okinawa Women’s America Peace Caravan delegation also participated in a grassroots meeting of women’s groups from the U.S., the Philippines, Korea and Puerto Rico on military and environmental devastation (Bowen Francis 1999: 195–196; OWAAMV 1999: 2; 61–76).

## 4.2. Symbolic Politics

The political usage of symbols foremostly serves two goals. Symbols help constructing a collective identity among activists and potential supporters, thus strengthening the internal structure of a CSO. They also assist the process of issue framing. Through symbols the rights and wrongs of an issue are often defined respectively shaped. Symbols thus serve as catalyst for the growth of a CSO.

The year 1995 not only brought a significant strengthening of Okinawa’s women’s movement respectively its female CSO activism, it also reshaped the nature of the CSO coalition that carried and still carries out the so called Okinawa Struggle, that is the protest against the ongoing U.S. military presence in the prefecture. The central agenda of the Okinawa Struggle after 1995 shifted from issues such as access to land or environmental protection to human rights, in particular to women’s rights. This line of thought – women’s rights being human rights – is the essence of all the issues central to Okinawan women’s activism of that time. This activism generally evolved around three issues: violence against women (*josei e no bōryoku*), human rights (*jinken*), and peace and war (*heiwa to sensō*). By stressing the importance of women’s rights, in particular their right to bodily security, Takazato Suzuyo, a former phone counselor to women in need of psychological and/or practical assistance after falling victim to sexual crime, utilized the September gang rape as a symbol powerful enough to serve as a catalyst to the contentious political atmosphere of 1995. It needs to be noted that Takazato did so in a most humble and cautious way, always putting the girl’s right to anonymity and the immediate needs of the victim first (Takazato 1999). As – next to OWAAMV – second spin-off to the Beijing Delegation, in late October 1995 the Rape Emergency Intervention Counseling Center Okinawa (REICO) emerged.<sup>10</sup>



Takazato founded this group, in order to provide immediate assistance to victims of rape stressing the hands-on responsibility CSO in Japan so often take up more vividly than political advocacy.<sup>11</sup>

The year 1995 gang rape became a symbol to the quickly mobilized masses. During the October 21 rally in Kaihin Park, Ginowan-city, which drew some 85,000 participants (*Ryūkyū Shinpō* 1995/10/22), Governor Ōta in his speech also made a reference to the issue of women's rights being human rights when he opened his speech with an apology. He apologized for having failed to protect the human rights of the girl who was raped on September 4, 1995.<sup>12</sup> Numerous politicians of all political blocks and nationality followed suit, and in their speeches – obviously pursuing divergent political goals – continued to refer to the 1995 rape as a more general symbolic rape of Okinawa. Most recently Tanaka Satoshi, head of the Okinawa Defense Bureau, was quoted saying: “Would you give a prior warning when you are about to rape someone?” (*The Wall Street Journal* 2011/11/29). He was answering to a question of why the Bureau had not set a formal deadline for an environmental assessment report on the relocation plans of Futenma Marine Corps Air Station from Ginowan-city to the less densely populated areas of Northern Okinawa Island, apparently himself understanding this political decision to in fact be a criminal act.

Cultural anthropologist Linda Angst in her research puts the political dimension of the frequent references to the September 4 rape as follows: “the rape of a child is transformed into the rape of the body politic.” (Angst 2003: 138). The rape moreover became a symbol for Okinawan subjugation within the Japanese nation state. Ironically it thereby strengthened Okinawan CSO engagement, which embraces the concept of identity politics and positions itself in resistance towards state pressures.

### 4.3. Leverage Politics

Measuring the political effectiveness of a CSO includes tracing some policy change by so-called target actors of a CSO. That are mostly governments, financial institutions or private businesses. In order to gain influence, CSO seek material and moral leverage over their target actors. Material leverage links the issue in question to money and goods; moral leverage includes the so-called *mobilization of shame*.

The above mentioned one-page advertisement in *The New York Times* which OWAAMV initiated in cooperation with Japanese women's associations, offered statistical data on crimes committed by U.S. military personnel in Okinawa. It concludes the presentation of this data with the following question: “Is it a right thing to station armed forces in foreign countries and make other people suffer?” (*The New York Times* 1996/01/29: A11).

OWAAMV is putting moral leverage on its target actors, that is the United States' and Japan's national governments who both support the current system of forward deployment of U.S. soldiers in Okinawa. By doing so both governments willingly accept the fact that the national security of both nations, although in particular of Japan, comes at the price of human security, in particular women's security in Okinawa (Takazato 1999). During mass demonstrations co-organized by OWAAMV and human chains around military bases in Okinawa, which they helped to stage media-savvy, as well as in meetings with U.S. politicians during both Peace Caravans, the women activists of OWAAMV made fervent use of moral leverage politics as the *The New York Times* advertisement might have exemplified.

On the other hand, they had no access to material leverage politics. There was no monetary good OWAAMV could have threatened to withhold from one of its target actors. They did, however, strongly support Governor Ōta Masahide when in late September 1995 he decided to engage in material leverage politics by withholding his signature on the land lease contracts. While Article VI of the Japan–U.S. Security Treaty grants the right to the U.S. to use Japanese soil for forward deployment of their military units, how this soil is being acquired is a domestic policy issue in Japan. The Land Acquisition Law (*tochi shūyō-hō*) stipulates that the Japanese government can ask local land owners to rent their land for military purposes; in case the individual land owners do not comply, the duty lies with the local executives and ultimately the prefectural governor to sign on their behalf. On September 28, 1995 Governor Ōta announced that he would no longer carry out his duty to sign land lease contracts on behalf of the Okinawan citizens (Vogt 2003: 68–79). He argued that it was not right to force the peaceful Okinawans, even 50 years after the end of the war, to continue living with this kind of overwhelming presence of military personnel and facilities in the prefecture. In his explanatory note Ōta clearly referred to the Okinawan Pacifism – in his words the *Okinawa no kokoro* (Spirit of Okinawa) – as a philosophical guidance for his political actions. Two years later, after he had lost to the national government in Tōkyō in 1996, while reviewing the struggle he fought he commented on the rape of September 4 saying that: “I didn't particularly want to use this issue to raise local people to oppose the presence of US military bases on Okinawa but it has helped us mobilise people.” (Ōta 1997: 79). While the Okinawa women's movement did not have access to material leverage politics themselves, they had a powerful ally in Governor Ōta who did not shy away from making use of material leverage when he refused to sign the land lease contracts thereby temporarily illegalizing U.S. military usage of Okinawan soil.

#### 4.4. Accountability Politics

Accountability politics is a follow-up on leverage politics. CSO try to put moral and material leverage on target actors, strong enough to have them make public statements on certain policy changes. Governments under pressure may try to save face by closing the distance between discourse and practice.

One of the most difficult tasks in social science is to track down in a credible way which factors trigger which outcomes. When I argue that OWAAMV and the women in Okinawan CSO in general played a central role in revitalizing and reshaping the prefecture's contentious politics in the mid- to late-1990s, I also argue that some of the political impacts this island-wide protest had, find their origin in OWAAMV's activism. And while it is hard to argue that one particular statement of a target actor was made in response to one particular doing of OWAAMV, what can be identified is that the pressure on the U.S. government and Japan's national government to *somehow deal with the protests in Okinawa* over the course of the fall and winter of 1995/96 had risen significantly. OWAAMV managed to create a tightly knit network of activists and general public in which information flew freely. This is quite remarkable for social activism before the times of wide-spread use of new media technology, when CSO were confined to the usage of so-called *mini media* such as pamphlets and speaker trucks, while the existing mass media were controlled by those who most often were the actual target actors of CSO activism (Groth 1996). The women activists furthermore were successful in strengthening the internal coherence of the movement by enabling citizens to fully take part in it with their own individual testimonies. They also managed to broaden the movement's appeal to other groups within the prefecture such as environmentalists, and to transnational actors such as women's groups in the United States. Holding and using a powerful symbol – the “rape of the body politic” (Angst 2003: 138) – was most valuable and created the basis for a strong moral leverage the group was able to put on the political elites in Japan and the United States. Their lack of access to material leverage was compensated for by a close alliance to Governor Ōta who not only had the means of material leverage at his hand, but was more than willing to utilize them and early on in the struggle decided to refrain from signing any more land lease contracts on behalf of the Okinawan citizens. It is fair to argue that this overall pressure scenario triggered a public statement, which – from a CSO perspective – must be understood as a huge success in accountability politics.

On April 12, 1996 then Prime Minister of Japan Hashimoto Ryūtarō and then US-ambassador to Japan, Walter Mondale, held a joint press conference, which was broadcasted live on Japanese television. They announced

that Futenma Marine Corps Air Station in Ginowan-city was to be closed down in order to ease the burden on the local people. Military units were to be relocated to a place outside the densely populated Ginowan area. This announcement came as a preview to the intermediate report of the so-called Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO), which was released on April 15, 1996. SACO is a U.S.-Japan committee launched as early as November 1995 in order to propose measures of how to reduce the burden on Okinawan people that they bear under the bilateral security treaty. The SACO final report was published in December 1996, but the main issues were already released in the intermediate report of April that year. SACO's proposals comprised of four main points: return land, adjust training and operational procedures, reduce noise, and improve Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)<sup>13</sup> procedures (Vogt 2003: 247–253). All proposed measures were direct answers to some of OWAAMV's and other Okinawan CSO's demands on how to improve the living conditions for local Okinawans. A causal connection between these demands and the target actors' response seems likely.

And yet, the story told is only one of partial success. Okinawan CSO ever since the April 12 press conference and the subsequent release of the SACO report have tried to make a push for accountability politics by pointing their fingers onto the still existing difference between discourse and reality, that is the action goals SACO formulated in great detail on the one hand and the continuous forward deployment of massive military units in Okinawa, including the usage of the contested Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, on the other. In other words, Okinawa's so-called base problems (*kichi mondai*) still exist. It is in particular the issue of Futenma Marine Corps Air Station, which has taken up the role as a new symbol of Okinawan contentious politics and civil society's engagement around it. Any attempt of relocating the facility so far has been stopped by fierce political protest from local governments and civil society activists in the proposed areas of destination, most prominently in Henoko, Nago-city (Vogt 2005b). A 2006 Roadmap plan which is based on the original SACO report stipulates “that eight thousand Okinawa Marines and their nine thousand family members would be moved to Guam by 2014, and V-shaped runways would be built on Henoko, as a replacement base for Futenma” (Norimatsu 2011). In February 2009, only months before the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was elected out of office, the Roadmap plan was finalized and made a binding contract to the successor in office, Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). The failure to solve this so-called Futenma issue – although prominently announced during the election campaign in summer 2009 – triggered Hatoyama's resignation in June

2010 and marked yet another deep disappointment for Okinawans who had placed their hopes for policy change in this first non-LDP coalition government since the mid-1990s.<sup>14</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The case study at hand on OWAAMV's effectiveness as central actor within the Okinawan mass protest movement of the late-1990s showed that this particular CSO indeed succeeded in two ways: Firstly, it portrayed the September 4 gang rape of an Okinawan schoolgirl as a symbol of Okinawa's so to say unjust subordination within Japan's political system and of the continuous suppression of Okinawa's Spirit (*Okinawa no kokoro*), that is to say its peacefulness, by two military powers, namely Japan and the United States. By framing the crime against a local girl this way, a political dimension beyond the level of day-to-day politics became inherent in the CSO's activism. This dimension was powerfully played out in moral leverage politics, in material leverage politics through the alliance with Governor Ōta, and ultimately contributed to the island-wide pressure for accountability politics. Secondly, OWAAMV, a group of local women who gathered around Takazato Suzuyo and Itokazu Keiko, two prominent female local politicians, lifted their activism beyond the local and the national level aiming at creating alliances with formal and informal political actors abroad. This transnational alliance building contributed to the strong standing of the group within Japan's domestic policy arena of the late-1990s, and by doing so contributed to the partial success of the larger protest movement. It will not be over the top to argue that OWAAMV had a share in the two national governments' decision to appoint the Special Action Committee on Okinawa and have it propose measurements of easing the manifold burdens on the local population.

Yet, this study also laid open the limits of CSO activism in Japan, representative for many strong states with a tight political opportunity structure that limits the scope of action of informal political actors ("State A" in Figure 1). A solid coalition between citizens and substate level politicians in Okinawa managed to pressure Japan's national government to a degree that surely could not have been in the state's interest. While this unlikely local coalition may also have succeeded in forming various transnational alliances, this does not yet allow any conclusions as to the degree of responsiveness of strong states toward pressure. Strong states might just "sit it out," and wait for the national and transnational pressure to subside. This is in particular a likely scenario as long as the transnational pressure is not proposed by an actor, which "State A" would deem a highly important one. In the case at hand, the only actor of a relevance high enough for the Japanese government to change their policy would probably

have been the U.S. government, which, however, had no intention to side with the anti-military movement in Okinawa. Other actors, such as CSO or local politicians, and intellectuals in "State B" proved not influential enough to change "State A's" policies.

However, not even once "State A" changed its government parties to an administration sympathetic with Okinawa's anti-military struggle, and would therefore have been likely to soften the "A" domestic blockage between the state and its citizens – and to some degree was about to do so –, did policy change occur. If Prime Minister Hatoyama in his above mentioned reflective assessment was indeed right, the reason for his failure to bring about policy change in the Okinawa issue was that he as Prime Minister was not a political actor powerful enough to fight the bureaucracy's political will. If that was indeed true, the study at hand had contributed another piece to the puzzle about where policy making in Japan actually occurs: either within the Nagatachō bureaucracy or in Washington.

## Notes

- \* An earlier version of this paper was presented and fruitfully discussed at the 5th International Conference on Okinawan Studies (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, September 2006).
- 1 Ōta Masahide (1999: 13) understands March 26, 1945, the day U.S. forces landed on Kerama Island, as the beginning of the Battle of Okinawa, while generally April 1 and the landing of U.S. troops on Okinawa Island is given as its start day. The Battle came to an end with the suicide of General Ushijima Mitsuru on June 23, 1945.
- 2 Since the reversion of 1972 this has included members of Japan's Self-Defense Forces.
- 3 In Japanese: "*Kō no naka de ha, Nihon hei ni yoru jūmin gyakusatsu ya, kyōsei ni yoru shūdānshi, gashi ga ari, [...]*". Both the English and Japanese quotes are taken from the bilingual museum guide (OPPM 2007: 86).
- 4 In the following I will use the more inclusive term "civil society organizations" (CSO), which includes not only well-organized groups such as new social movements but also the broad variety of less organized, informal groups, which are of vivid importance to Japan's non-state non-market sector (Pekkanen 2006).
- 5 This is a reference to Sidney Tarrow's model of "cycles of contention" which states that every social movement undergoes a mobilization phase inevitably followed by a demobilization phase (Tarrow 1998: 141–160).
- 6 Official documents of the conference can be accessed from a website hosted by The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (2011).
- 7 The introductory paragraphs of the following four subsections provide explanatory remarks on the political dimensions of these categories. They are drawn from Keck and Sikkink (1998: 16–25).
- 8 See 4.2. for more detailed information on this particular rally.
- 9 Both women still are active in politics: Takazato Suzuyo in 2004 ran for mayor in Naha city, but was defeated in what turned out a close race. These days she devotes herself to CSO activism for women's rights and the Okinawa peace movement (Vogt 2005a). Itokazu Keiko has served as a member to Japan's House of Councilors since 2004; in 2006, she (unsuccessfully) ran for governorship of Okinawa Prefecture.

- 10 Next to OWAAMV and REICO a third group emerged out of the original members of the Beijing Delegation. Tengan Mayumi and three other activists founded Young Voices, a group that provided a forum to Okinawan women in their 20s and 30s aiming at discussing sociopolitical issues of contemporary Okinawa (Keyso 2000: 122).
- 11 See Pekkanen (2006) for an elaboration of this observation, which only partially holds true for the prefecture of Okinawa.
- 12 In Japanese: “*Mazu gyōsei no sekininsha toshite taiseisuna osanai kodomo no ningen toshite no sonken o mamoru koto ga dekinakatta koto ni tsuite, kokoro no soko kara owabi shitai*” (Okinawa Mondai Henshū linkai 1995: 37)
- 13 The SOFA procedures define the legal status of the United States Forces Japan (USFJ) and their relatives, and the so-called host nation support Japan provides to the USFJ.
- 14 Hatoyama himself accused Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense to have sabotaged his plans for policy change: “MOFA and MOD, while they should have been thinking through the base transfer issue with me, instead chose to give priority to what had been agreed with the US (a new base in Okinawa).” (Norimatsu 2011).
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