"Okinawa is a Beautiful Island"

The beautiful island narrative is relatively new, but it is widely shared. Okinawans see their natural environment as a source of pride. Okinawans probably expect that new base construction projects will be undertaken with high regard for the environment, and that returned US base land will undergo thorough environmental remediation measures. In this respect, Okinawan support for environmental preservation presents challenges to alliance managers.

"Okinawa is 'Chura Shima' (a beautiful island) surrounded by emerald green seas, blue sky, and white sands. We are responsible for preserving our natural environment and have an obligation to hand it down to future generations."

DESCRIPTION This narrative was largely shaped by societal and economic pressures following Okinawa's 1972 reversion to Japan. After the reversion, local and national leaders engaged in a concerted effort to redefine Okinawa as a resort paradise rather than a place of war and tragedy. Tokyo-funded projects to develop resorts, however, caused environmental harm and spurred affected communities to varying degrees of environmental activism. In its current form, the narrative emphasizes preserving the prefecture's natural assets for ecotourism and sustainable use.

• "OKINAWA IS A PARADISE WITH BLUE OCEANS AND SKY" The Okinawa International Ocean Expo in 1975 was the "virtual starting point" for the prefecture's rebranding as Japan's "tropical sea resort," according to Osamu Tada in a 2004 book. Tada is a sociology professor who has authored several studies on Okinawa's culture and identity.\(^\text{142}\) A report at that time by the Japanese Geotechnical Society said that the expo was integral to the "reborn Okinawa Prefecture."\(^\text{143}\)

• "OUR SURROUNDINGS ARE UNDER THREAT" One of Okinawa's outer islands, Ishigaki, provides the starkest example of outspoken public protest against the environmental harm caused by rampant development. As an editorial in the Ishigaki-based Taeyama Mainichi Shimpo put it in 2007, it is "well known in Ishigaki" that "environmentally damaging development was prevalent during the height of the economic bubble around the time of Okinawa's reversion" (4 August 2007).\(^\text{144}\) Ishigaki's case is particularly noteworthy because the island was the center of national attention during local residents' decade-long opposition to an airport planned near the...
Okinawa's environmentally sensitive Shiraho district. That plan was scrapped in 1989, and the airport is now slated to open in 2012 at another location on the island. Illustrating the bond Shiraho residents have with the ocean, a 93-year-old resident said, "The first wealth is the sea. We cannot thank the sea enough, as our ancestors well knew" (Kyodo, 30 July 2007). 145

• "OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IS PRECIOUS" The Okinawa Prefecture Government's "Outline of Okinawa" explains prized aspects of Okinawa's natural environment that distinguish the prefecture from other parts of Japan. Okinawa is "Japan's only prefecture in the subtropical latitudes. It enjoys a mild climate all year round. With schools of brightly colored tropical fish, the coral reef seas support a rich profusion of life. And in the forests of northern Okinawa Island and Iriomote Island live rare animals such as the Yambaru Kuina (Okinawa Rail) and the Iriomote Wildcat, known worldwide as rare and important creatures" (2008). 146

Contemporary songs by popular Okinawan musicians praise Okinawa's beauty for being something precious that should be protected.

- Okinawa folk-pop band BEGIN composed the song titled "Shimanchu nu Takara (Islander's Treasure)," which explains that the islands' unique nature and history are a different kind of affluence from material wealth. In 2002, NHK's Naha branch used it as the broadcaster's "image song," which commemorated the 30th anniversary of Okinawa's reversion. 149 BEGIN performed the song on national television as recently as 18 April 2011 on a Fuji TV variety show. 150

- Okinawan singer Cocco highlights the fragile beauty of Okinawa's environment in her 2007 hit song "The Hill of Dugongs" (Dugong no mieru aka). 151 152 The dugong is a sea mammal whose image is commonly used by anti-base activists and conservationists to represent the potential environmental impact of the relocation of MCAS Futenma to the northern part of Okinawa. Cocco has performed the song on national television as recently as 25 March 2011 on TV Asahi's "Music Station." 153
WHAT'S IN A WORD? "CHURA" In the Okinawan dialect, "chura" is an adjective meaning "beautiful." It is often used to describe the island, ocean, and people. Its prevalence in Okinawa indicates widespread familiarity with a theme of the narrative.

- OSC's survey of the comprehensive news archive Nikkei Telecom 21 found a strong upward trend in Okinawa’s major dailies' usage of the phrase "Chura Shima" (beautiful island). Use of the term went from 67 instances in 1997, to 298 in 2002, to 2,045 in 2010.

- Professor Osamu Tada, in a 2011 essay, said that the 2001 NHK television drama "Churasan" imbued the word "chura" with an imaginative power. "Churasan" propagated images of Okinawa all over Japan every morning for half a year. Its average viewership was 22.2% in the Kanto region, according to Japan’s leading provider of TV viewing metrics.

NARRATIVE IN ACTION Okinawa's political leaders use the beautiful island narrative in a variety of policy contexts that range from environmental initiatives to the relocation of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma to Nago City's Henoko area.

- Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima established the "Okinawa All Island Greening Project" in June of 2008. The charter, signed by Nakaima as the project's chairman, says that "green space is disappearing... This project takes a 100-year outlook on greening activities. We will prepare for natural disasters by creating windbreaks and tide barriers as well as green our roads, city parks, public buildings, and houses. We will create a lush, verdant, beautiful island." 

- Nago Mayor Susumu Inamine, during his 2010 election bid for the position, campaigned on a platform opposed to the relocation of Futenma to Nago City's Henoko area. According to a video clip uploaded to YouTube by the Asahi News Network on 22 January 2010, Inamine, when announcing his candidacy, said, "I will not allow the construction of a new base on Henoko's beautiful Oura Bay."

Okinawan activists opposed to development projects or US basing facilities frequently link their cause to larger environmental concerns -- as opposed to more localized ones such as noise pollution. In so doing, the activists have broadened their cause by appealing to national environmentalist organizations.
A Nago citizen's group used the slogan, "Protect Oura Bay!" to protest Japanese Foreign Minister Gemba's visit to Nago City Hall on 19 October 2011, and Defense Minister Ichikawa's visit to Camp Schwab on 17 October 2011, according to photographs posted to the website of the Japan-based civic group RIMPEACE.\textsuperscript{161} \textsuperscript{162} The Nago citizen's group, composed of members from the 10 communities north of Futami near Camp Schwab, says its mission is to "protect the natural beauty of Yanbaru (Northern Okinawa) and a way of life," according to its official website.\textsuperscript{163}

The Nago Municipal Council of Peace and Democracy Against Offshore Helicopter Base Construction, which operates a sit-in tent at Henoko from 0800 until 1600 daily, uses the slogan "No Base! Save the Dugong" in a banner hung on Camp Schwab's fence (23 July 2011).\textsuperscript{164}

The Japanese chapters of international environmentalist organizations appear to support Okinawan activists' environmental concerns. For example, the World Wide Web For Nature Japan lists "encouraging [residents] to be actively involved in conservation" as one of its objectives related to the preservation of Ishigaki's Shiraho coral reef.\textsuperscript{165} Greenpeace Japan made "preservation of the dugong's habitat" its central argument against Futenma's relocation to Henoko in a 2009 statement.\textsuperscript{166}

Okinawa media do not appear to make the beautiful island narrative central to their arguments against the US military presence. They do, however, pay close attention to and frequently report on specific environmental incidents related to US bases or suspected US military activities.

OSC surveyed the editorials of Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times for one year ending in November 2011. Of the 82 editorials that discussed "nature," 15 made claims about the US military's perceived negative environmental impacts. For example, a Ryukyu Shimpo editorial from 27 April 2011 -- in the form of an open letter to visiting Senators Carl Levin and Jim Webb -- described the location of the planned Futenma Relocation Facility as a "precious sea" inhabited by dugongs.\textsuperscript{167}

Okinawa's two main newspapers pay close attention to and frequently report on suspected base pollution. Ryukyu Shimpo has called for revising the US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement to make the United States responsible for environmental cleanup. Under Article 4 of the current SOFA, the United States is not obliged to restore returned areas to the condition received (30 May 2011).\textsuperscript{168} \textsuperscript{169} Okinawa Times urged US and Japanese Governments to probe into the suspected past storage and disposal of "highly toxic herbicides" like Agent Orange at US facilities in order to "dispel public unease" (16 August 2011).\textsuperscript{170}
Similarly, Okinawa's local television broadcasters pay attention to suspected pollution related to US military activities. Fuji TV-affiliated Okinawa Television reported that locals were opposed to the relocation of live-firing training to Ito-Torishima Island because of "fears over the destruction of the natural environment" (26 July 2011). The TV Asahi-affiliated Ryukyu Asahi Broadcasting Corporation, as part of its long-running series "Examination: Unchanging Base Situation," featured allegations that during the Vietnam War, Agent Orange was stored at Camp Schwab, and aired clips of Nago City residents who expressed concerns over health issues (9 November 2011).

Okinawa media also present the island's natural environment as a draw for tourism and thus an asset for economic development.

- *Ryukyu Shimpō* has asserted on multiple occasions that Okinawa's mainstay industry is tourism that "makes good use of [Okinawa's] beautiful and subtropical nature" (15 May 2011, 8 January 2011). The *Okinawa Times* praised Governor Nakaima's envisioned "Okinawa version of Green New Deal" for "making good use of Okinawa's precious nature" (1 December 2010).

**TOUR COMPANIES USE ‘BEAUTIFUL ISLAND’ TO SELL TOURS, PUT POSITIVE SPIN ON US BASES**

Mainland Japanese airlines operate tour packages to Okinawa and borrow heavily from the beautiful island narrative to advertise their tour packages.

- All Nippon Airways (ANA) advertised its Okinawa vacation package with the slogan, "Blue skies and ocean! Take ANA to 'Okinawa' -- the eternal summer paradise" (ANA website, 2011).

- Yuji Arakaki, professor of tourism industry at the Faculty of International Studies at Meio University in Okinawa, said in a 2009 essay that Japan's airlines have contributed to "Okinawa's enduring image as Japan's tropical resort island."

Travel guides about Okinawa that are published by Tokyo-based publishers often portray the US presence as a draw for tourists.

- Japan Airlines' electronic guidebook to Okinawa describes the island's central region as "an exciting area where many US bases and foreigners can be observed."

- A Tokyo publisher's 2010 *Walking Guide to Okinawa* describes the areas around US bases as an appealing combination of "old Okinawa" and "American retro town."
AUDIENCE RESONANCE. In surveys Okinawans say that they highly value their natural environment, which suggests that the narrative resonates widely.

- The Okinawa Prefecture Government polled Okinawans from six age groups living in the prefecture's five regions and found that 88% said that the "abundant natural environment (including the blue oceans and unique creatures)" is one of the most important "merits of Okinawa" that should be protected (2009). 182

- The Prefecture held an essay contest for high school students in 2009 in which students were asked to describe their "image of Okinawa in 20 years." According to the prefectural government's analysis of the responses, slightly more than 55% of students included "natural environment," "landscape and scenery," "animals," or "environmentally sustainable society" as important elements for Okinawa's future. 183

- Discussion on a popular Okinawa-based online message board also provides anecdotal evidence of the resonance of this narrative. Many users of Okinawa Uwasa Banashi said they oppose land reclamation projects because they would threaten Okinawa's natural environment and increase flood vulnerability in a tsunami. 184 185

IMPLICATIONS. Okinawan support for preserving the environment presents challenges to alliance managers.

- Okinawans probably will want new base construction projects to be undertaken with high regard for the environment. Likewise, they will want returned US base land to undergo thorough environmental remediation measures -- an issue likely to grow in relevance as the United States returns more land to Japan as part of US efforts to consolidate its forces on Okinawa.

- US actions demonstrating a policy of good stewardship of base land, such as quick and transparent responses to accidents that could be detrimental to the environment, could help assuage the public's concern.

- Any messaging about a policy of good stewardship, however, would possibly be viewed skeptically by the general Okinawan public and would almost certainly be met with suspicion on the part of Okinawa's news media. Only a few minority groups, like the Ornithological Society of Japan, have argued that US military land has helped preserve wildlife habitat by preventing Japanese development. 186

Okinawa may pressure Tokyo to expand environmental guarantees for base land -- including revision of SOFA provisions on environmental remediation.

- The 24 November 2011 bilateral agreement to amend the implementation of SOFA, which allows Japan jurisdiction over some accidents involving civilian staff at US
military bases, spurred Okinawa's governor and local media editorialists to reiterate their desires for "drastic" revision of SOFA.\footnote{For more, see the 1 December 2011, OSC Report, "Japan -- After SOFA Accord, Widespread Okinawa Demand for 'Drastic' Revisions" (JPP20111201215001).}

- In February 2011, Governor Nakaima visited Tokyo and requested that then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan make efforts to "improve the environment" of base land planned for return. Asahi Shimbun called this a "vital issue" for Okinawa, which regards returned land as "key to its economic development." The daily explained that Okinawa has been seeking SOFA revisions (21 August 2011).\footnote{Open Source Center This OSC product is based exclusively on the content and behavior of selected media and has not been coordinated with other US Government components.}
"Okinawa Can Again Become a Crossroads of Asia"

The Asia crossroads narrative has been advanced by Okinawan political leaders to envision a future identity for Okinawa that is not centered on the US bases and Tokyo's economic compensation for their presence. The narrative is loosely inspired by historical accounts that portray the Ryukyu Kingdom as a geographic crossroads for Asian trade and cultural exchange. The narrative resonates with Okinawans to the extent that it describes the origins of their distinct culture, but it is probably not deeply felt like the victimization or discrimination narratives. The narrative overlaps with aspects of the US message about the alliance, which presents positive opportunities for the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VICTIMIZATION</th>
<th>DISCRIMINATION</th>
<th>PEACEFUL PEOPLE</th>
<th>BEAUTIFUL ISLAND</th>
<th>ASIA CROSSROADS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Long ago, our ancestors travelled the ocean and prospered through trade with China and Southeast Asia. The memory of Okinawa as a bridge of peace and friendship still lives in our hearts. We have a future as a crossroads of exchange and trade in Asia.&quot;</td>
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DESCRIPTION  The inspiration for the narrative comes from historical accounts of the Ryukyu Kingdom's golden age of trade. In the narrative, Okinawa will prosper economically and culturally by acting as a bridge to the world and by playing a stabilizing role in the region.

- "BRIDGE TO THE WORLD" In 1458, Ryukyu King Sho Taikyu ordered the casting of the "Bell Bridging All Countries." The bell's inscription, which is displayed in the present-day Okinawa governor's reception room, describes how the Ryukyu Kingdom took advantage of its geographic location: "Our Ryukyu is located in a superb location in the South Sea. We have learned advanced Korean culture and built indispensable relations with China and amicable ties with Japan. Our country is like Horai Island [a legendary land where immortals live] amid the countries in East Asia. Through trade, we played the role of a bridge between countries."

- "REGIONAL HARMONY, PROSPERITY" Okinawan historian Kurayoshi Takara described the Ryukyu Kingdom's trade network as the "Silk Road of the Ocean" that tied China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia together in peaceful relations. Such connections between Okinawa's trade and regional peace are a common feature of historical accounts produced in Okinawa.

- "UNIQUE COMPOSITE OF INFLUENCES" A brochure produced by the

Open Source Center  This OSC product is based exclusively on the content and behavior of selected media and has not been coordinated with other US Government components.

Approved for Release: 2017/02/15 C06639870
Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau to introduce the prefecture to non-Okinawans says, "International influences melded with local traditions and inspiration to produce a unique and brilliant culture -- a rich harvest of a long history." 193

This narrative draws on historical images that are well known among Okinawans and the broader Japanese public. This familiarity is due, in part, to public broadcaster NHK, which has portrayed idealized versions of the Ryukyu Kingdom's golden age in widely televised dramas popular in mainland Japan.

- An NHK drama that aired in 2011, "The Tempest," takes place at a time when the Ryukyu Kingdom is attempting to balance the regional influences of China and Japan in the 19th Century. The program's opening explains, "The independent Ryukyu Kingdom existed in the space between two great powers: admitted as a kingdom under the authority of the Chinese emperor but at the same time subject to the control of Japan's Satsuma domain." 194

- Chief editor of the Okinawa-published art magazine EDGE explained in an online column for Yomiuri Shimbun that NHK's 1993 drama "The Winds of Ryukyu" -- along with other popularizations of Okinawan culture in Japan in the 1990s -- contributed to a mainland image of Okinawa as "a foreign country that speaks Japanese" and as an "Asia without the need for a passport." 195 196

**Narrative in Action** Since at least the late 1990s, the Okinawa Prefecture Government has cast its future vision for the island as a logical extension of the Ryukyu Kingdom's legacy as an economic and cultural crossroads of Asia. The idea of making Okinawa a regional trade hub emerged soon after reversion in the 1970s.

- In 2010, the Nakaima administration issued its "Okinawa 21st Century Vision." It highlighted Okinawa's crossroads history as a source of inspiration: "Okinawa, as a one-time maritime nation known as the 'Ryukyu Kingdom,' conducted exchanges with distant places like Japan, Korea, China, and Southeast Asia, propagating culture and creating new value [for the region]" (31 March 2010). 197

- In the late 1990s, the Ota administration released its "Blueprint for Creating a Cosmopolitan City." It similarly
recalled Okinawa's past: "In the Ryukyu Kingdom era, Okinawa was an important trading hub of Asia, actively trading with Southeast and East Asian countries. Okinawa has a richer and longer history of international exchange than any other part of Japan (1996)."

Okinawa's media, as well as left-leaning national media, use the crossroads narrative as a model for cooperative and mutually beneficial international relations based on economic trade.

- Okinawa Times, in an editorial criticizing the Kan administration's handling of the 7 September 2010 incident in which a Chinese fishing vessel rammed a Japanese Coast Guard vessel, argued that Tokyo should "utilize Okinawa's history as a bridge between nations to improve Sino-Japanese relations" and use dialogue to resolve the territorial dispute over the Senkaku islands (26 September 2010).

- The Asahi Globe, a bimonthly Internet magazine owned by the national daily Asahi Shimbun, ran an extensive four-part feature on "moving to a base-free economy" in 2010 that drew heavily from the crossroads narrative. "Many people in Okinawa feel pride in drawing concentric circles around Okinawa because it recalls, in their minds, the Ryukyu Kingdom's era of trading and helps them remember their forefathers who went abroad with great ambition" (20 September 2010).

AUDIENCE RESONANCE. The crossroads narrative probably resonates with Okinawans to the extent that it describes the origins of their distinct culture, but it does not appear to present a compelling alternative vision for the future of the island.

- Okinawa Prefecture's most recent polls in 2009 and 2005 showed that the public rates "Okinawa's distinct culture" as one of the prefecture's most important strengths.

- The Prefecture conducted a survey in 2009 that asked Okinawans to describe their vision for the future. Slightly more than 9% of respondents said that "international exchange," "international collaboration and contributions," "various exchanges," and "transportation" were important issues in the future. About 44% said "safety and security" (anzen/anshin) and "community issues -- such as, healthcare, child-rearing, disaster prevention, and US military bases" -- would be important.
Younger Okinawans seem to value a hybrid identity— one that combines the values of the Ryukyu legacy with current-day life. Indeed, they likely will reject the narrative's heavy emphasis on the past as the only source of Okinawa's present-day cultural uniqueness.

- Japanese anthropologist and professor at Kyushu University Yoshinobu Ota, who has conducted extensive research on indigenous cultural-political movements, contends that young Okinawans reject mass media images of Okinawa that only refer to the legacy of the Ryukyu Kingdom. Instead, they relate to a "hybrid identity" that incorporates elements of current-day life as depicted in Japanese mass media with their experiences gained from living around US military bases.\(^{203}\)

- According to a series of polls from 2005-2007 funded by the Foreign Ministry, respondents aged 18-25 identified most strongly as "Okinawan but Japanese," whereas the general population identified most strongly as "Okinawan" (Okinawa-jin).\(^{206}\)

The crossroads narrative tends to glorify a period when China was dominant in Asia. A depiction of such a romanticized past, however, probably does not translate into a present day cultural affinity toward China.

- Whatever affinity they have for China, Okinawans see their own culture as distinct from Chinese influences. Okinawa Prefecture's survey data suggest that people strongly value a "distinct" (dokutoku) Okinawan culture and history.\(^{208}^{209}\)

- A 2007 telephone poll found that fewer than 2% of Okinawan respondents said they would support a Chinese team in a hypothetical sports match, whereas almost 94% said they would support Japan.\(^{210}\)

In the long term, it is possible that Okinawans could come to have a greater affinity for China, depending on their experience with the growing number of Chinese tourists.

- According to numbers obtained from the Okinawa Prefecture Tourism Policy Division, there were 23,800 tourists from mainland China who visited Okinawa in 2010; this represents a 14% increase over 2009. Though trending upward, the overall share of PRC tourists to Okinawa remains a small percentage of both foreign tourists (8%) and overall tourists (0.4%).\(^{211}\)

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IMPLICATIONS Influential figures who use the crossroads narrative often implicitly, but sometimes explicitly, present the US bases as obstacles to a prosperous future. At the same time, most appear to be realistic about the prospects for finding a credible alternative to the bases, suggesting that the narrative does not present a near-term challenge to the political sustainability of the base presence. Conversely, the narrative might provide opportunities to highlight the role of the bases in fostering a stable environment for regional economic integration.

- The Okinawa Prefecture Government removed language from its March 2010 version of the "21st Century Vision" that explicitly called for a peaceful Okinawa without bases ("kichi no nai" Okinawa).

212 The most recent version from April 2011 called for achieving a peaceful Okinawa by "aiming to consolidate and reduce US military bases, solving the various issues caused by the bases, and smoothly promoting the appropriate use of former sites." 213 This change suggests that pragmatic elements within the prefectural government seek to preserve the economic quid pro quo with Tokyo over US bases.

- The Okinawa Prefecture Government has been unable to articulate a concrete funding source for a vision of Okinawa without bases -- a point highlighted by Okinawa's media. For example, in an editorial skeptical of the prefectural government's "21st Century Vision," Okinawa Times predicted that it would be "vital to secure the necessary budget from Tokyo in order to realize the vision" but noted that currently that budget "comes from the high subsidies founded on the concentration of US bases here" (30 September 2009). 214

Some of the narrative's themes overlap with the US message on the alliance, providing opportunities for the United States.

- By emphasizing Okinawa's role in a more internationally engaged Japan, for example, the United States would be reinforcing the notion that Okinawa acts as a bridge to the world. In the words of the Okinawa Prefecture Government's "Outline of Okinawa," Okinawans pride themselves on their "600-year history of international exchange" as a "crossroads of Asia." 215

- Okinawans might be receptive to the message that US forces in Okinawa provide security and stability if they saw a connection with Okinawa's goals of economic integration with and outreach to the rest of Asia.
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[OSC | OSC ID: JPP20080324023001 | 24 March 2008 | Masamichi S. Inoue | Changes in public awareness after the return of Okinawa | 1 March 1984 | 11-13 | 1 | In 1966, the Todai Okinawa poll found 88.4% of Okinawans preferred a complete reversion or gradual reversion to Japan. Ota compares this with a poll conducted by Ryukyu University with a grant from the Ministry of Education in 1982, which found 57.9% of respondents who either said reversion was "very good" or "somewhat good."

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