

What's the story?

A cross-societal ecolinguistic analysis of digital newspaper articles reporting on the US military presence in Okinawa, Japan

Emma Suzuki

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Supervisor: Natalia Rubiano Rivadeneira, LUCSUS, Lund University

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Abstract:

Social and environmental issues associated with US military presence in Okinawa have adversely affected island residents for years and requires urgent attention. However, with actors with different beliefs and values involved, the search for sustainable solutions is elusive. An ecolinguistic analysis is conducted on digital newspaper articles published in four 'societies' – the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa – to examine how different societies report 'US military presence in Okinawa' and its societal implications. Two *stories-we-live-by* are identified: the *security story* and the *justice story*. The security story dominates reports in the US, while the US military and Japan report a mix of the security story and the justice story. Okinawa solely reports the justice story. Potential implications are cognitive lock-ins, hegemony and oppression, and antagonism, which could prevent societies from cooperating in finding sustainable solutions. The findings raise questions about the nature of reporting on military-related challenges across the world.

Keywords: *media studies; cross-cultural studies; environmental justice; pollution; geopolitics; security*

Word count: 11,997

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List of abbreviations:

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Asahi | Asahi Shimbun Digital |
| CDA | Critical Discourse Analysis |
| Japan | Mainland Japan |
| MIC | Military-Industrial Complex |
| MT | Military Times |
| NYT | New York Times |
| RS | Ryūkyū Shimpō Digital |
| SQ | Sub-question |
| SS | Stars and Stripes |
| US | United States (of America) |
| US-Japan SOFA | United States-Japan Status of Forces Agreement |
| WSJ | Wall Street Journal |
| Yomiuri | Yomiuri Shimbun Online |

A note on Japanese names and translations:

Throughout this dissertation, I follow the conventional Japanese name-order; in other words, the surname precedes the given name (e.g., Suzuki Toshie, in which Suzuki is the surname and Toshie is the given name). An exception will be when I am quoting or referring to English sources that use the conventional Western name-order, in which the given name precedes the surname (e.g., Toshie Suzuki). Macrons above a vowel (ā, ē, ī, ō, ū) indicate long vowels. Translations of Japanese sources into English were conducted by the author, and Japanese terms have been transcribed into Roman script based on Modified Hepburn romanisation.

A note on referencing and quoting:

This dissertation references using the APA referencing system: (author last name, publication year, page number if applicable). Exceptions are made for the direct quotes from newspaper articles that are included in the findings and analysis section (section 5.3); quotes are not put in quotation marks and are referenced as (*newspaper*, full date of publication). The reference list for the newspaper articles used in the ecolinguistic analysis and are referred to in the findings and analysis section (section 5.3) can be found in Appendix A.

1. Introduction

The US military presence on the islands of Okinawa is a hot topic in modern Japanese politics. Over the past 400 years, Okinawa and its residents have faced a long history of struggle. They witnessed the Japanese invasion of the islands in 1609, the Battle of Okinawa during WWII, the post-war US occupation of the islands, and now, the high concentration of US military bases in the prefecture. Okinawa prefecture is made up of 160 islands, which constitute around two-thirds of the Ryūkyū Islands, and is home to a population of 1.44 million (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2018). Despite the prefecture comprising 0.6% (2,281 km²) of Japan's total land area, 70.6% (186.09 km²) of the total area of US military instalments in Japan are located in the prefecture (Figure 1), which are home to 70.4% (25,843 individuals) of military personnel deployed to Japan (Okinawa Prefectural Government, 2017). The presence of the US military has shaped the lives of Okinawans. Of high concern are the array of social and ecological issues associated with the military – security threats, economic problems, pollution, aviation accidents, biodiversity loss, health issues, sexual violence, etc. – that disproportionately affect the residents of Okinawa. With the burden on civilians mounting, there is an urgent need to meaningfully address these issues and to search for sustainable solutions.

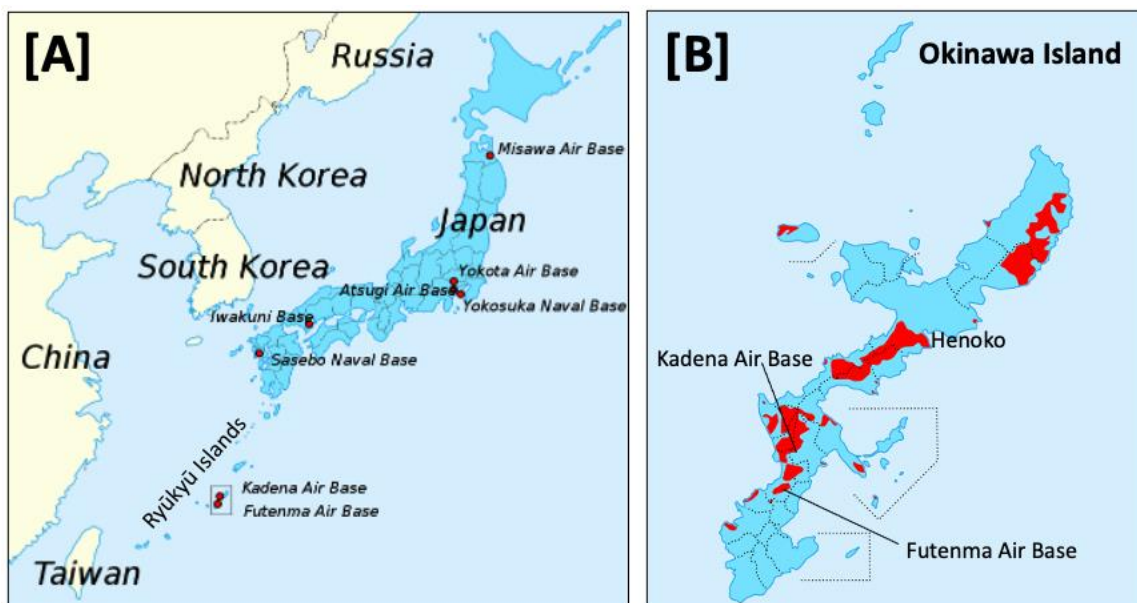


Figure 1. Maps of US military bases located in Okinawa, Japan. **[A]** Map of the major US military bases in Japan (indicated by red dots). The two main bases located on Okinawa Island (the main island in Okinawa prefecture) are Kadena Air Base and Futenma Air Base (Wikimedia Commons, 2021; image edited by author). **[B]** Map of US military bases on Okinawa Island. The areas in red are occupied by US military facilities. The map does not show designated military training waters, as well as US military instalments located on other islands located in Okinawa prefecture (Wikimedia Commons, 2010; image edited by author).

A web of social, economic, and environmental problems in Okinawa highlights the intricacies of tackling cross-societal challenges. The US military presence in Okinawa is a culturally, historically, and politically compounded topic involving four 'societies' – the US, the US military, mainland Japan (from here on 'Japan'), and Okinawa – that have a complex relationship with one another. Each of these four societies has its own unique set of beliefs, values, interests, and priorities, which influences its actions and decision-making processes (Ruston, 2017). These differences between societies can also be observed in the case of US military presence in Okinawa. The US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa display conflicting opinions regarding whether the US military should be located on the islands, and consequently, this results in high tensions among the four societies. A better understanding of these societally unique beliefs and values could potentially help avoid misunderstandings, bridge gaps between societies, and help identify socially and environmentally sustainable solutions to base-related issues.

News media form a key platform that *a)* provides insight into public discourse and societies' beliefs and values, and *b)* has the power to shape those beliefs and values (Fairclough, 1995). According to Richardson (2007), "*journalism exists to enable citizens to better understand their lives and their position(s) in the world*" (p.7). However, how an individual understands the world (or in this case 'US military presence in Okinawa') can vary depending on what news they are consuming. Through carefully curated language, news media has the ability to influence what messages are communicated to the public and can even cognitively shape the reader's ideas and beliefs that could potentially influence the public's actions (Fairclough, 1995; Lakoff, 2010). Thus, news media can be considered a powerful actor in society that can influence how a reader perceives the world. Analysing *what* is being communicated and *how* it is being communicated allows us to be more critical of news media discourse and helps us expose socially and environmentally destructive ways of perceiving the world (Richardson, 2007). Furthermore, studying language usage by news media can potentially uncover new ways of perceiving the world that could lead societies down a more sustainable path together (Eisenstein, 2013; Stibbe, 2015).

In this study, I conduct a cross-societal ecolinguistic analysis that examines the coverage and language use in digital newspaper articles reporting on US military presence in Okinawa that were published in the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa. *Ecolinguistics* is a field that studies how language can influence the interactions between humans, more-than-human species, and physical environments, as well as how language can be used to address ecological challenges (Stanlaw, 2020). I first determine the coverage of core themes in different societies and their newspapers. I use Stibbe's (2015) ecolinguistic framework to analyse the different *stories* (the mental models in an individual's mind

that shape how they understand the world) found in newspaper articles. I compare these findings against the *ecosophy* (ecological philosophy) of this study to determine whether the stories are socially and environmentally beneficial, ambivalent, and/or destructive. I then compare newspaper articles from the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa to determine which stories are prevalent in each society. Lastly, I discuss the potential societal implications of my findings.

This thesis differs from past studies on US military bases in Okinawa in the following ways. First, it acknowledges the US military as an individual actor, separate from the US government. Despite the US military being a major stakeholder, past cross-cultural studies on the topic tend to only focus on the US, Japan, and/or Okinawa (Hollstein, 2000; Hook & Siddle, 2003; Takagi, 2009). I decided to incorporate the US military as an additional ‘society’ because it is a group with a unique ‘military culture’ (Wilson, 2007) that is in direct contact with the issues that the Okinawan citizens face. Secondly, the ecolinguistic approach uses a wide range of theories across cognitive science, linguistics, and environmental philosophy. Previous studies tend to address the social and political aspects (e.g., security; see McCormack & Norimatsu, 2018; O’Shea, 2019) or utilise one theoretical approach (e.g., Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA); see Hollstein, 2000; Takagi, 2009). By extending the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the study into ecolinguistics, I attempt to draw closer connections between sustainability science and the challenges surrounding militaries.

All in all, the research question of this paper is,

What are the potential societal implications of how digital newspapers from the US, the US military, Japan, and Okinawa report on the presence of the US military in Okinawa?

To explore this overarching question, my research is guided by the following sub-questions (SQ):

SQ1. What are the societal differences in the level of coverage of core themes associated with US military presence in Okinawa?

SQ2. What are some of the stories presented in newspaper articles regarding US military presence in Okinawa? Are the stories ecologically and socially beneficial and/or ambivalent and/or destructive according to the study’s ecosophy?

SQ3. What stories are being told by each society and their newspapers?

1.1 Contributions to sustainability science

The detrimental impact of militaries on global sustainability is a seldom discussed topic. Although militaries are estimated to be responsible for approximately 5% of annual global carbon emissions (Parkinson, 2020) and war and military activities have the ability to drastically alter and destroy ecosystems (Lawrence et al., 2015), their destructive nature is overshadowed by discussions on the protection of national security, democracy, and global economies (Bialasiewicz et al., 2007; Delucchi & Murphy, 2008; Hermann & Kegley, 1998). Challenges associated with US military presence could be considered a 'wicked problem', a problem often seen in sustainability challenges, where the complex interrelationships of factors and stakeholders make it seem as though there are no adequate solutions (Rittel & Webber, 1973). The US military presence in Japan is tangled in a web of factors that influence one another (e.g., politics, history, culture, economy, environment, etc.). This situation becomes even more convoluted as stakeholders such as the US and Japanese governments, the US military, and Okinawa residents have conflicting stances on how to approach the issues.

To tackle this wicked problem, this study takes a sustainability sciences approach. It aims to understand the intricate interactions between society and nature (Clark, 2007; Kates et al., 2001) and is solutions-oriented (Jerneck et al., 2011). By examining news media, it attempts to understand how individuals from different backgrounds perceive the interactions between the US military, society, and the environment. What individuals perceive as 'important' and 'unimportant' (e.g., national security as 'important'; biodiversity as 'unimportant') could influence societies' decisions and actions on whether to support or oppose certain policies related to US military presence in Okinawa. By examining the values and beliefs inherent in different societies, I attempt to find ways to encourage societies to come together along more sustainable trajectories (Kates et al., 2001).

This study also applies a transdisciplinary approach, employing theories and techniques from multiple academic disciplines (Spangenberg, 2011). Ecolinguistics combines ecology, linguistics, and environmental philosophy. I then expand my study to include aspects of social sciences so that the study makes connections between the social and ecological issues that are associated with the US military, making it more applicable to sustainability sciences.

2. Background: the history of Okinawa

Looking at the history of Okinawa is crucial in understanding the unique position Okinawa holds, and the complex relationships and attitudes between Okinawa, Japan, the US, and the US military.

2.1 The Ryūkyū Kingdom (1300s – 1609)

The Ryūkyū Islands were once ruled by the Ryūkyūan people. In 1372, the Ryūkyū Islands became a tributary state¹ of China's Ming dynasty (1368-1644) (Kerr, 2000). The Ryūkyū Kingdom maintained political autonomy while benefiting from the lucrative international trade, which allowed the kingdom to thrive and cultivate a Ryūkyūan culture distinct from Japanese and Chinese cultures (Kerr, 2000).

2.2 Japanese colonialism and annexation (1609 – present)

In the late 16th century, Japan was eager to strengthen its power in the region and challenge the Ming-centred order in East Asia. One way the country attempted to do this was by invading foreign territories in East Asia – one of them being the Ryūkyū Kingdom (Jiadong, 2013). Japan launched a successful attack on the kingdom in 1609, and despite the kingdom nominally retaining its status as an 'independent state', it became a tributary state for both Japan and China simultaneously (Kerr, 2000). Japan controlled the kingdom's foreign and internal affairs, and took profits the kingdom made in the trade with China (Kerr, 2000). Ultimately, the Ryūkyū Kingdom was forcefully annexed by Japan to form Okinawa prefecture in 1879 (Jiadong, 2013; Kerr, 2000; Tashiro, 1982).

2.3 The Battle of Okinawa and US occupation (1945 – 1972)

In 1945, Okinawa was the site of the Battle of Okinawa during WWII. The battle killed 12,000 US troops, 110,000 Japanese troops, and at least 100,000 civilians – a fourth of Okinawa's population (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2019). The US took control over the islands, and even after Japan's surrender, continued its occupation.

As the Cold War began, the US was quick to realise the strategic location of Okinawa (Hook et al., 2015). In 1951, the Treaty of San Francisco and the US-Japan Security Treaty were signed, which ended US occupation of mainland Japan but ceded indefinite control of Okinawa to the US, and permitted

¹ A tributary state is a state subordinate to a powerful neighbouring state. The Ryūkyū Kingdom provided tributary goods to China as a token of submission to the dynasty in exchange for trade with China/Ming-controlled countries (Kerr, 2000).

US military presence on Japanese soil (Sakurada, 1998). In 1960, the current US-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was signed, which governs the US armed forces in Japan, their personnel, and the use of areas to which they are granted access (McConnel, 2006). From 1945 to 1972, Okinawa was governed by the US, which established a strong military presence (Fisch, 1988). The US military's 'Bayonets and Bulldozers' campaign forcibly removed residents from their homes, destroyed houses, and flattened farmland for the construction of new bases (Crissey & Rabson, 2017). The anger of the Okinawans grew as they were faced with military-associated crimes (sexual violence, armed robbery, drunk driving, drug crimes), accidents (aviation accidents, training accidents), and pollution (water, soil, noise, odour), which were often not dealt with fairly due to the US-Japan SOFA absolving the US military from many responsibilities and protecting military personnel from prosecution in Japan (Devaney, 2018).

2.4 The return of Okinawa and continued US military presence (1972 – present)

In 1972, Okinawa prefecture was returned to Japanese sovereignty. However, as promised under the US-Japan Security Treaty, US military bases remained on the islands. Prefectural anger erupted in 1995, when three US servicemen kidnapped, beat, and raped a 12-year-old Okinawan girl (Okinawa Prefectural Assembly, 1995). 85,000 Okinawan protesters gathered in Ginowan City, demanding the downsizing of bases and the revision of the US-Japan SOFA (Izumiya, 2016). This led to the US and Japanese governments creating the 'Henoko relocation plan', a plan to relocate Futenma Air Base from the centre of the densely populated Ginowan City to Henoko Oura Bay (Figure 2). However, the plan has been met with many challenges and opposition. The plan to construct an offshore landfill is thought to threaten the coral reefs, seagrass beds, and rich biodiversity that Henoko supports (T. P. Hughes et al., 2002). Furthermore, part of the seabed of the planned relocation site was discovered to be "soft as mayonnaise" (Japanese Government as cited by Kuniyoshi, 2021), requiring 71,000 pilings for support, which ballooned the construction cost to \$8.4 billion (2.7-times more the initial estimate). Although the construction is now well underway, the relocation will probably not be completed until the 2030s or later, and some experts even theorise that the project is unlikely to ever be completed (Kuniyoshi, 2021). Recently, the geopolitical importance of Okinawa has increased as tensions rise among the US, Japan, and China because of China's increased military capabilities, land dispute between Japan and China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and disagreements over the independence of Taiwan (Hook et al., 2015).



Figure 2. Futenma Air Base located in the centre of Ginowan City, Okinawa. As indicated by the arrow on the map, the Henoko relocation plan plans to relocate Futenma Air Base from Ginowan City to Henoko Oura Bay (Sonata, 2010; Wikimedia Commons, 2010; images edited by author).

3. Theoretical framework

This study is grounded in the theories of ecolinguistics. Here, I will elaborate on the aim of ecolinguistics (3.1), the ecolinguistic framework (3.2), the concept of ecosophy (3.3), the ecosophy of my research and my positionality (3.3.1), and the conceptualisation of power in the context of news media discourse (3.4).

3.1 Ecolinguistics

Ecolinguistics is a discipline that connects two areas of life: ecology and language. It investigates how certain language use can influence how people relate to and act towards their physical world, challenges language use that contributes to ecological destruction, and searches for language use that encourages people to protect the more-than-human world (Stibbe, 2015). It attempts to do this by studying *stories* and the *stories-we-live-by*. A *story* is defined as the mental model in an individual's mind that shapes how they perceive the world, while the *stories-we-live-by* are defined as the shared stories in the minds of multiple individuals across society (Stibbe, 2015). Stories-we-live-by are of particular importance because they shape how groups of individuals think, talk, and act in the world. For example, the 'business-as-usual' story is a story-we-live-by. It has become so ingrained in many cultures that the ideas, values, and actions associated with economic growth and technological advancement have become the 'natural way of things', while all too often disregarding the wellbeing of ecosystems and humans (Macy & Johnstone, 2012). These ideas and values are reflected in the language used to form these stories, which we are unknowingly exposed to every day. They "exist

behind and between the lines of the texts that surround us” (Stibbe, 2015, p.2) such as news articles, conversations, textbooks, and political speeches. Ecolinguistics analyses these texts with the goal of identifying and exposing the stories-we-live-by and assessing them from an ecological perspective. These stories-we-live-by are then either promoted or resisted or used to find new stories-to-live-by.

3.2 Ecolinguistic framework

Ecolinguistics draws on multiple linguistic theories and can be approached in several ways. However, the shared goal is to unearth the underlying stories that are found between the lines of text – those that may not be explicitly stated but are hinted at throughout. To do this, this paper uses the ecolinguistic approach by Arran Stibbe (2015). Stibbe’s ecolinguistic framework looks at the following types of stories: *ideology, framing, metaphor, evaluation, identity, conviction, erasure, and salience*. Table 1 outlines Stibbe’s ecolinguistic framework with descriptions of each story and its manifestation in language. This framework is based on linguistic theories including CDA (Fairclough, 2003), frame theory (Lakoff, 2010), metaphor theory (Müller, 2008), appraisal theory (Martin & White, 2007), identity theory (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, as cited in Stibbe, 2015), fact construction (Potter, 1996), and theories of erasure and salience (van Leeuwen, 2008). It is important to note that the categorisation of stories in this framework is not definitive; there is often overlap between stories and there are many other linguistic theories that could have revealed and/or categorised stories differently. After revealing the stories and stories-we-live-by, the ecolinguist assesses them to see if they are either ecologically destructive, ambivalent, and/or beneficial. However, to do so, the ecolinguist must first establish their *ecosophy*.

Table 1. Stibbe’s ecolinguistic framework. Framework adapted from Stibbe (2015, p.17) and examples adapted from findings by Norton & Hulme (2019).

| Type of story | Description | Manifestation in language | Example |
|--|--|---|---|
| Stories-we-live-by | Stories that are shared in the minds of numerous people in a culture, which can influence how they think, talk, and act. | As ideologies, framings, metaphors, evaluations, identities, convictions, erasure, and salience. | ‘Ecoactivist story’: humans are destroying the world’s ecosystems and will experience catastrophe unless radical action is taken. |
| Ideology | A story about how the world <i>was, is</i> and <i>should be</i> , in the minds of members of a group. | Discourses. Characteristic linguistic features (syntax, vocabulary, intertextuality, etc.) used by a group. | Anti-capitalist discourse: there are limits to economic growth; society needs to move away from the norm that ‘growth is good’. |
| Framing | A story that uses a source frame (a packet of knowledge about one area of life) to structure another area of life. | Trigger words that evoke particular frames to mind. | Source frame: problem Target area: climate change “Climate change is <i>a problem</i> that requires us to stop burning fossil fuels”. |
| Metaphor (a type of framing) | A story that uses a frame from a <i>distinctly</i> separate area of life to structure another area of life. | Trigger words that are often specific and familiar to daily life, which bring a <i>distinct</i> frame to mind. | Source frame: bomb Target area: climate change “Climate change is a time bomb.” |
| Evaluation | A story about whether an area of life is good or bad. | Appraisal patterns (Language patterns that consistently represent an area of life positively or negatively) | Limiting consumption is good: “you can save money and the planet by buying second-hand!” |
| Identity | A story about what it means to be a certain type of person. | Forms of language that characterise/label people (e.g., behaviour, appearance, values). | “We are a small-scale organic farm, committed to reducing our carbon footprint.” |
| Conviction | A story about whether something is true/false and how certain/uncertain an individual is about the story. | Facticity patterns (Linguistic patterns that represent a description as true, certain, uncertain, or false; calling on authority) | “Experts say it is <i>very likely</i> that humans are the dominant cause of climate change. Action <i>must</i> be taken immediately.” |
| Erasure | A story that an area of life is unimportant or unworthy of consideration. | Erasure patterns (Language patterns that erase, mask, distort, diminish, or background an area of life) | Referring to pigs and cows as ‘livestock’, which commodifies farm animals. |
| Salience | A story that an area of life is important and worthy of consideration. | Salience patterns (Language patterns that depicts things concretely, emotively, vividly, and specifically). | Non-human animals are important: “pigs are emotional and intelligent creatures that like to socialise with other animals.” |

3.3 Ecosophy

Whether a story is determined to be ecologically ‘beneficial’ or ‘destructive’ or ‘ambivalent’ is greatly dependent on the *ecosophy* of the ecolinguist. *Ecosophy* (ecological philosophy) is defined as a unique set of philosophical principles regarding ecological consideration and the interrelationships between humans and more-than-human entities (Næss, 1995, as cited in Levesque, 2016). Ecolinguists carefully study a wide range of philosophical perspectives such as ecocentrism, neoliberalism, libertarianism, ecofeminism, and deep ecology to combine and create a set of principles that is unique to them (Stibbe, 2015). The ecosophy must also be scientifically plausible; for example, the idea of bringing extinct species back to life is not possible with our current scientific advancements so it cannot be put in an ecosophy. Ultimately, this unique set of values, priorities, and rules are then used to judge the stories found in texts. For this reason, ecolinguistics is considered a discipline with normative goals. Ecosophies are continuously updated as the ecolinguist is met with new ideas and evidence and is the basis to how ecolinguists assess their data (Stibbe, 2015).

3.3.1 Ecosophy of this study and positionality

The ecosophy of this paper draws on the ecosophy shared by environmental philosopher Arne Næss, and weaves elements of deep ecology, social ecology, environmental justice, capability theory, sustainable development, feminist theory, and more (Banerjee, 2014; Drengson, 1999; Schlosberg, 2004; Sen, 2001; Stibbe, 2015). Table 2 outlines this study’s ecosophy using seven phrases: *valuing ‘life’, valuing ‘living’, equity and justice, recognition and involvement, empathy and gratitude, the present and the future, and resilience*. Since the topic of my study is heavily intertwined with sustainability sciences and human wellbeing, this ecosophy is also concerned with social considerations and the interrelations *within* human societies. As I analyse the stories-we-live-by regarding US military presence in Okinawa, I refer to this ecosophy to determine whether they are ecologically and socially beneficial, destructive, and/or ambivalent.

Table 2. Ecosophy of the study.

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Valuing 'life'</i> | All life is valued and respected. All living beings – no matter what species – have an inherent worth regardless of their usefulness to humans. The same principle applies within human societies; all human lives are valued and respected regardless of factors such as race, colour, nationality, income, class, gender, and age. |
| <i>Valuing 'living'</i> | Value is not only put on 'being alive' but also on 'living life'. The goal is for all species to have the capabilities to live a fulfilling life with high wellbeing. This includes factors such as having enough habitat, access to clean water, and being part of supportive communities. The high wellbeing of humans is a must, as ecological measures that harm human wellbeing are unlikely to be embraced by society. |
| <i>Equity and Justice</i> | Both the costs and benefits of life (e.g., natural resources; pollution) are shared fairly amongst the ecological and human communities. The goal is to address the root causes of these inequities so that all living beings can live a life with high wellbeing. |
| <i>Recognition and Involvement</i> | Different individuals, cultures, and species are recognised and affirmed. A lack of recognition of an individual can lead to its devaluation by those around, leading to negative perceptions of the individual and/or direct damage being inflicted on the individual. All living beings are to be acknowledged and meaningfully involved in the ecological and social community. |
| <i>Empathy and Gratitude</i> | The exchange of life is inevitable in order to stay alive and to live life. Although all life is valued, it is impossible to avoid hurting and ending some lives in order to guarantee our own wellbeing. This fact should not be dealt with by diminishing those we harm as inferior but instead through empathy and gratitude. We are aware of our own impact on others' lives, we attempt to minimise harm, and we strive to give back to the systems that support our lives. |
| <i>The Present and the Future</i> | Living beings can live a life of high wellbeing in the now and in the future. Future generations will have the ability to live lives with high wellbeing. |
| <i>Resilience</i> | There are unavoidable impacts of ecological degradation that are currently happening and those that will happen in the future. We must adapt to these changes and increase the resilience of social and ecological systems to be able to face both current and future challenges. |

Although this ecosophy is used to guide the normative arguments made in this study, it is important to note how my positionality – my own values, interests, and background – also influence these judgements. To start, I chose to utilise Næss' ecosophy instead of other ecosophies because I have the normative goal to shine light on and to find potential solutions to the injustices Okinawans face. However, I am also a Japanese/British national who was brought up in Tokyo with no direct contact with Okinawa. This may result in me subconsciously having a 'Japanese' and 'Western' perspective, which could influence how I interpret articles. Furthermore, although I am fluent in both English and Japanese, I am neither a translator nor a linguist who may be able to provide a more nuanced and accurate translation and analysis of the articles. The choice of ecolinguistic framework and ecosophy also departs from Western ontologies and philosophical traditions, which will also make me approach analyses from a 'Western' perspective.

3.4 Power in and between news media discourse and society

Power is a highly contested concept. Steven Lukes (1974) theorises that there are three dimensions of power: 1) decision-making power, 2) non-decision-making power, and 3) ideological power. Decision-making power is the ability of an actor (an individual or organisation) to consciously determine specific outcomes and achieve compliance through the exercise of direct power (e.g., governments reinforcing the law). Non-decision-making power is the ability to set the agenda – what is included but also what is *not* included – in public discussions (e.g., who decides what stories are in the press). Ideological power is the ability to shape the psychology of people – their attitudes, beliefs, wants, and values – which can lead to accepting biased decisions without question, even decisions that oppose their own self-interest (e.g., women supporting a patriarchal society). Lukes adds that ideological power is not only sustained by individually and deliberately chosen acts, but also by socially and culturally constructed behaviours and practices of groups and institutions.

In this paper, *discourse* is defined as ‘language in use’ (Schiffrin, 1994). Power – especially ideological power – can be established and exercised through discourse, while simultaneously influencing the conditions in which discourses are produced, consumed, and understood (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Gee, 1999; Richardson, 2007; Titscher et al., 2000; Willig, 2014). This process is especially apparent in news media discourse. Richardson (2007), adapting Fairclough’s method of CDA, depicts this *circular* process between texts (news articles), consumers (readers), producers (news media and journalists), and society (Figure 3).

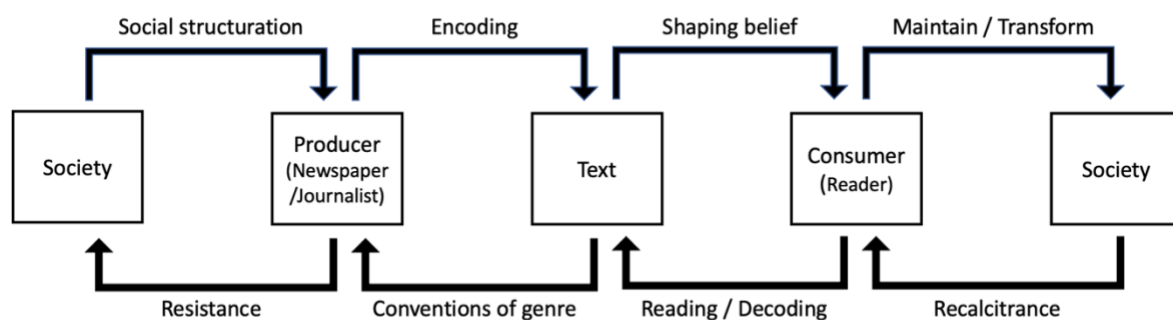


Figure 3. Analytical framework showing the relationship between text, producers (newspaper/journalists), consumers (readers), and society. Figure created by author and adapted from Fairclough (1995) and Richardson (2007).

In this study, I deconstruct and compare the language in newspaper articles from different societies to see “*what and how* language communicates when it is used *purposefully* in particular instances and *contexts*” (Cameron, 2001, p.13). It is beyond the scope of my methodology to examine every relationship between text, producer, consumer, and society (i.e., every arrow in Figure 3). However, using Stibbe’s ecolinguistic framework, I attempt to see what ideas and values producers *encode* into texts and how they do this, and from the findings, analyse how the text could *shape the beliefs* of consumers and *maintain/transform* greater society (Figure 3).

4. Methodology

This study takes a mixed-method approach. The quantitative portion (news coverage analysis) attempts to determine the coverage of three core themes on US military presence in Okinawa: *security*, *development*, and *burden*. The qualitative portion (ecolinguistic analysis) uses Stibbe’s ecolinguistic framework to analyse how the stories of US military presence in Okinawa are being told in different societies and their newspapers. I will now explain my text selection process (4.1) as well as my coding and analyses process (4.2).

4.1 Newspaper and text selection

As the world becomes increasingly digitised, newspapers are moving away from print media and toward online publishing. Thus, I chose to analyse digital newspapers. Newspapers were chosen based on their familiarity and reach in each of their cultures (Table 3) because a greater audience size potentially indicates a greater influence on society (Fairclough, 1995). Two newspapers were chosen per society as an attempt to account for the different political biases between newspapers, except for Okinawa, for which I chose one newspaper. The selected newspapers were the *New York Times* (NYT) and the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) for the US; *Military Times* (MT) and *Stars and Stripes* (SS) for the US military; *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* (Yomiuri) and *Asahi Shimbun Digital* (Asahi) for Japan; and *Ryūkyū Shimpō Digital* (RS) for Okinawa (Table 3). Only one newspaper from Okinawa was chosen to be analysed because a) time constraints due to the large number of articles RS publishes on the topic, b) RS and the other candidate newspaper (*Okinawa Times*) have a similar political bias, and c) the *Okinawa Times* occasionally shares its articles with *Asahi* regarding the topic.

Table 3. Descriptions of the digital newspapers used in the news coverage analysis and ecolinguistic analysis.

| Newspaper | Description |
|-------------------------------|---|
| New York Times | - Emphasis on good coverage of international news |
| | - 5.9 million digital subscribers across 200+ countries |
| | - Governed by the Sulzberger family |
| | - Audience: cultured; intellectual; international/US citizens (NYT, n.d.; Tracy, 2022) |
| Wall Street Journal | - Provides news through the lens of business and economics |
| | - 2.9 million digital subscribers |
| | - Owned by Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp (via Dow Jones & Co.) |
| | - Audience: wealthy; intellectual; international/US citizens (Stenberg, 2022; WSJ, n.d.) |
| Military Times | - “[T]he premier, dedicated, independent news source for the active-duty military, their families, veteran and retirees.” |
| | - Owned by Regent |
| | - 417,000 newsletter audience; 3.7 million social audience (Sightline Media, 2019) |
| | - The only Department of Defense authorised news outlet that is guaranteed First Amendment privileges |
| Stars and Stripes | - In addition to the website, 500,000 digital editions distributed per year (Stars and Stripes, n.d.) |
| | |
| Yomiuri Shimbun Online | - The largest daily in Japan; largest print circulation in the world (7.9 million) but does not provide online-only subscriptions |
| | - Owned by Yomiuri Shimbun Holdings |
| | - Audience: all genders, ages, professions, socioeconomic groups (Sawa & Saisho, 2022) |
| Asahi Shimbun Digital | - One of the ‘big three’ dailies in Japan; 200 million page views and 30 million users per month |
| | - Privately held family business owned by the Murayama and Ueno families |
| | - Audience: upper and middle classes (Asahi Shimbun, 2020; Tikkanen, 2018) |
| Ryūkyū Shimpō Digital | - Largest print newspaper in Okinawa |
| | - Founded by Shō Jun (former prince of the Ryūkyū Kingdom) in 1893 |
| | - Audience: Okinawa citizens (RS, n.d.) |

The initial search for articles was conducted on each newspaper website using the terms ‘Okinawa’ and/or ‘US military’ (‘beigun’ in Japanese) and/or ‘base’ (‘kichi’ in Japanese). The timeframe was limited to the previous 12-months (01/04/2021 – 31/03/2022) to collate the most recent articles regarding the topic. Articles from the initial search were manually sifted through, and articles that had a focus on the US military in and around Okinawa were saved into an Excel spreadsheet. Articles that discussed the US military in the Indo-Pacific region were also kept if they indirectly referred to the military bases in Okinawa. ‘Opinion’ pieces were excluded to focus on the ‘neutral’ articles. This totalled 1521 articles for the news coverage analysis – 11 from US American newspapers (4 from *NYT*; 7 from *WSJ*), 83 from military newspapers (4 from *MT*; 79 from *SS*), 415 from Japanese newspapers (100 from *Yomiuri*; 315 from *Asahi*), and 1012 from the *RS*. This initial corpus was further narrowed down for the ecolinguistic analysis. All articles from *MT*, *NYT*, and *WSJ* were kept. However, I selected 33 articles from *SS*, 31 articles from *Yomiuri*, 32 articles from *Asahi*, and 36 from *RS*, making sure the selected articles covered an array of themes (e.g., security, accidents, pollution, etc.) and spread across the time frame. This resulted in a final sample of 147 articles (Appendix A).

4.2 Data coding and analysis

News coverage analysis [SQ1]

Mason (2019) identifies three mainstream narratives regarding Okinawa in Japan’s public discussions – *security*, *development*, and *burden* – which have become buzzwords used by the public and the Japanese government to depict Okinawa and to shape Okinawa’s policy trajectories. I was interested to see the coverage of these three mainstream narratives (or what I term ‘themes’) in the initial corpus of 1521 articles. Each article was coded as to whether they contained elements of either *security* and/or *development* and/or *burden* (Table 4). Each article was coded with more than one code if it referenced multiple themes, but the number of times the theme was mentioned within the article was not noted. This coding system was used to simply determine what themes were of interest to the newspapers, not to deconstruct the language use, which is done in the ecolinguistic analysis. It is acknowledged that this is a broad categorisation of themes associated with US military presence in Okinawa, and other detailed themes were noted if they appeared throughout analysis.

Table 4. Coding system used to analyse what narratives were covered by each article.

| Theme/Code | Description |
|--------------------|--|
| Security | Reports on foreign threats, regional security strategies, deterrence embodied by the US military presence, etc. |
| Development | Reports on the economy, jobs, and prefectural development in relation to the US military presence. |
| Burden | Reports on the burdens associated with the US military presence that are disproportionately put on the prefecture. This includes social and environmental burdens such as military-related accidents, pollution, crime, health issues, biodiversity loss, etc. |

Ecolinguistic analysis [SQ2 & SQ3]

Using the qualitative analysis software NVivo-12, I combined a ‘concept-driven’ coding technique (coding based on previous knowledge, literature, theory, and intuition) with a ‘data-driven’ coding technique (coding based on observation during analysis) to code the 147 articles (Gibbs, 2007). Through reviewing academic literature on the US military presence in Japan (e.g., Chen & Shimizu, 2019; Hollstein, 2000; Kohatsu, 2021; Kumamoto, 2008; Mason, 2019; O’Shea, 2019) and findings of the news coverage analysis, I first established a basic idea of what stories are being portrayed in newspapers and assign codes to the stories. I then read through the selected 147 articles in detail to find additional stories and assigned codes to them. This resulted in a total of 30 codes (Appendix B). From this process, I identified two stories-we-live-by: the *security story* and the *justice story*. I organised the two stories-we-live-by using the ecolinguistic framework, which were then referenced

against the ecosophy of this study (section 3.3.1) to determine whether they are socially and ecologically beneficial and/or ambivalent and/or destructive. The coded articles were compared to find patterns between societies and their newspapers. Importantly, the ecolinguistic frameworks were continuously updated as I examined new articles and gained new information. Furthermore, although these two stories-we-live-by form the basis of my analysis, it is recognised that other stories-we-live-by and stories likely exist. Therefore, stories that did not perfectly fit into these two categories were noted throughout the coding process.

4.3 Limitations

Having a text selection timeframe of one year has its limitations, as it results in the sample size of articles from the *NYT*, *WSJ*, and *MT* to be small. It could be argued that the lack of coverage by these newspapers is a form of ‘erasure’ because it is a sign that they do not consider ‘US military presence in Okinawa’ a topic worthy of public consideration. Nevertheless, the lack of articles from these newspapers may have affected the ecolinguistic analysis of the study. I also could not fully access all digitally published articles by *Yomiuri* because they did not offer online subscriptions to those living outside Japan. This was a major limitation in the study, as *Yomiuri* likely has a large influence on Japanese society because it is the world’s best-selling daily, has an evenly spread readership across Japan, and has ties with Japan’s leading conservative Liberal Democratic Party (O’Shea, 2019). Finally, as mentioned in section 3.3.1, the ecolinguistic framework and ecosophy may not accurately analyse Japanese language articles because they are based on Western ontologies and philosophical traditions. Therefore, future cross-language analysis will likely benefit from the ecolinguistic framework and ecosophy to be adapted to encompass linguistic and philosophical theories from both Western and Eastern societies.

5. Analysis and findings

In this section, I start by outlining the coverage of the core themes associated with US military presence in Okinawa by the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa and their newspapers (5.1). I then describe the two prevalent stories-we-live-by found in the newspaper articles – the *security story* and *justice story* – using the ecolinguistic framework and compare them against the ecosophy of this paper (5.2). Lastly, I showcase how certain stories are used by different societies and their newspapers (5.3).

5.1 News coverage of core themes [SQ1]

The news coverage analysis shows that out of the three core themes surrounding US military presence in Okinawa – *security*, *development*, and *burden* – the most referenced theme is *burden* across all four societies. *Burden* is referenced by a total of 1368 articles, followed by *security* (n=242) and then *development* (n=175) (Figure 4). *Burden* is also the most reported theme in the US military (n=57), Japan (n=349), and Okinawa (n=958), while *security* is the most reported theme in the US (n=8).

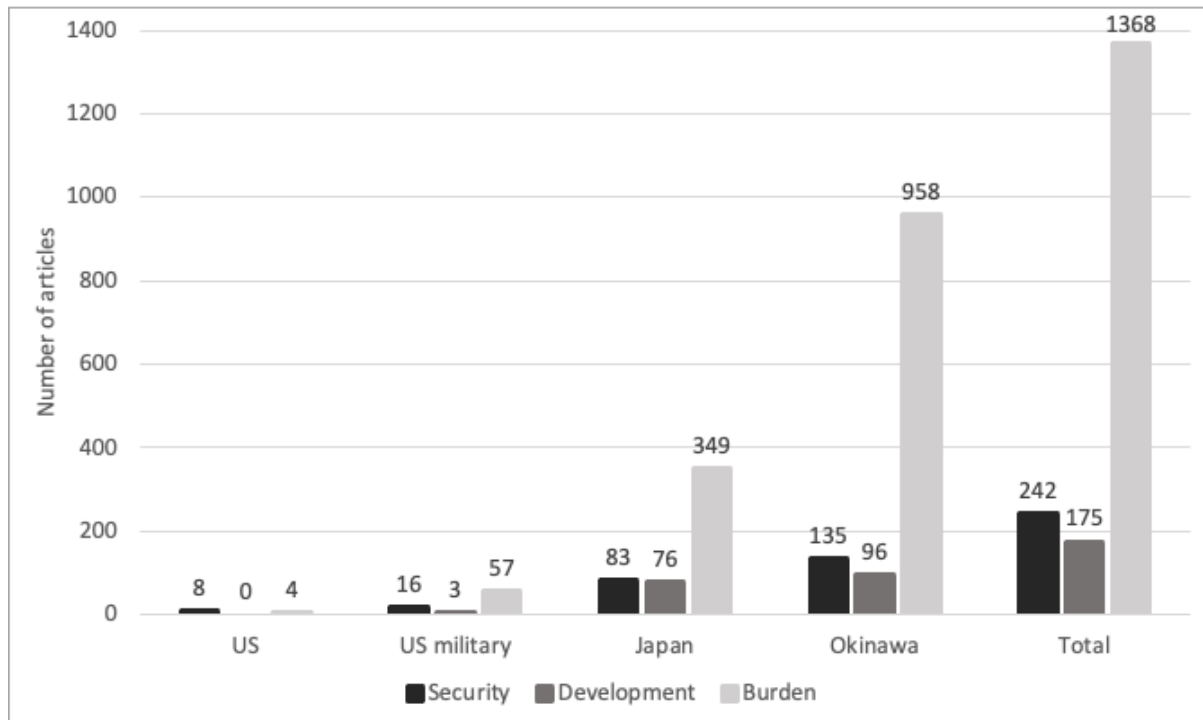


Figure 4. A cross-societal comparison of the number of digital newspaper articles that referenced the themes of *security*, *development*, and/or *burden* in relation to US military presence in Okinawa, Japan. The numbers do not directly translate to the number of times the theme was referred to within each article.

Okinawa has a noticeable focus reporting on *burdens*; out of the 1012 articles published in a year, 95% (n=958) reference *burdens*, especially military-related noise pollution, water pollution, and aviation accidents, as well as the Henoko relocation plan. As for Japan, out of the 415 articles, 84% (n=349) reference *burdens*, with many reporting on the Henoko relocation plan and base-related COVID-19 cases. 36% (n=4) of US American articles and 69% (n=57) US military articles reference *burdens*; the US American articles reported on COVID-19, local safety, and local land rights, while the US military articles has a greater focus on military-related crimes (drug crimes; sexual violence against civilians), COVID-19, and pollution.

Security is referenced by 73% (n=8) of US American articles, 19% (n=16) of US military articles, 20% (n=83) of Japanese articles, and 13% (n=135) of Okinawan articles. Articles from the US, the US military,

and Japan often report on the increasing tensions between China and the US-Japan alliance in the region and China's increasing military capabilities. On the other hand, Okinawan articles often link *security* and *burden* by highlighting how US military presence and the tensions between the US, Japan, and China could pose a safety risk to the prefecture.

Development is the least referenced theme across all four cultures. However, Japanese newspapers have a higher coverage of *development* compared to newspapers from other cultures; 18% (n=76) of all Japanese articles touch on the theme, while it was 0%, 4% (n=3), and 9% (n=96) for US American, US military, and Okinawan articles, respectively. Moreover, *Yomiuri* was the only newspaper that referenced the topic of *development* (24% of *Yomiuri* articles) more than *security* (21% of *Yomiuri* articles). Most articles on *development* discussed how and why the bases and the Henoko relocation plan could benefit or burden the local economy and development of the prefecture.

5.2 Stories on US military presence in Okinawa [SQ2]

Through preliminary research and the coding process, I identify two major stories-we-live-by: the *security story* and the *justice story*. These two stories-we-live-by are deconstructed using the ecolinguistic framework (Table 5 and Table 6), which is continuously updated throughout the study. The security story acknowledges that the US military bases are a source of social and environmental burdens on the prefecture but supports the belief that regional and global security should be prioritised. On the other hand, the justice story is interested in the local issues that civilians face due to US military presence, with a focus on the problems that directly affect human wellbeing rather than the environment.

5.2.1 Security story

The security story contends that the presence of the US military in Okinawa as a necessity for global and regional stability, and although it acknowledges that the bases are associated with numerous social and environmental issues, it is justified because regional security is a priority. The US military bases are believed to be indispensable for regional stability, especially because of the recent tensions between China and Japan regarding the territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, China's increased military capabilities, and China's 'aggressive invasions' into disputed waters (Hagstrom, 2012; Hook et al., 2015; O'shea, 2019). There is also an increased perception of the threat posed by Russia, as Russia tends to side with China's claim regarding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (Brown, 2015), and there are rising tensions between the Japan-US alliance and Russia amidst the recent developments of the war in Ukraine (C. W. Hughes, 2009; Johnson, 2022; Kafura, 2022). North Korea is also viewed as a threat since North Korea conducts missile tests in neighbouring seas (C. W. Hughes,

1999; Kyodo News, 2022). In regard to the controversial Henoko relocation plan, this story sees it as the only viable option in alleviating the local problems associated with US military presence while still providing regional security (Japan Ministry of Defense, 2020; Mason, 2019; O'shea, 2019).

This story frames China and other potential foreign forces as a 'security threat'. The security threat frame evokes a sense of fear and urgency, strengthening the idea that positioning the US military in Okinawa is the solution (Mason, 2019; O'shea, 2019; Stibbe, 2015). The Henoko relocation plan is framed as a 'necessity', a 'solution' and even an 'opportunity'. It is presented as the only way for Okinawa, Japan, and the US to move forward together to solve the currently existing socio-ecological problems, and suggests that the plan could generate new economies and development opportunities for the prefecture (Asahi Shimbun, 2019; Koyama, 2019; The Cabinet Office, n.d.).

Those who support this story tend to identify pro-base individuals as well-qualified, rational, and stable individuals compared to anti-base individuals who are portrayed as emotional and radical individuals (Kohatsu, 2021; Yahoo! Japan News, 2022). Military personnel are also often portrayed as being selfless, honourable, and loyal warriors and heroes (Burke, 2021; Stars and Stripes, 2021; U.S. Army, n.d.).

There are several issues associated with US military presence that are diminished and distorted by the security story. First, the direct impact of the US military on ecological systems is greatly ignored, despite the bases being a source of pollution and biodiversity loss (Mitchell, 2015; Miyagi & Tomoyose, 2013; Mori, 2022). There are reports on aircraft noise pollution and contamination of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in waterways, but the discussion is focused on the effects on human health rather than the effects on other species and the ecosystem. There is also some fact distortion when addressing the Henoko relocation plan. Instead of acknowledging the irreversible damage the construction will have on the coral and marine life of Henoko, the Defense Ministry's coral transplant plan is presented as an equitable and valid solution to the biodiversity loss (Mitsuzumi & Matsuyama, 2021). There is also limited recognition of the critically endangered Okinawa dugong, whose feeding grounds are thought to be greatly reduced due to the landfill construction (Yoshikawa, 2012, 2020). Secondly, the history and culture of Okinawa is greatly diminished. Historically, there is an ahistorical framing that ignores the colonial history of Japan and instead portrays Okinawa as the victims of WWII and US rule, despite the Japanese invasions having direct links to the prefecture's current economic situation and rule by Japanese authorities (Mason, 2019). Culturally, the Okinawan culture and lifestyle have often been overlooked. Many residents have a close relationship with the ocean, and species such as the Okinawa dugong have been a cultural icon to many (Yoshikawa, 2020). Lastly, the interests and worries of the local Okinawan population are often ignored. The security story does not

completely ignore the fact that there is a disproportionate burden put on Okinawa. However, it does justify prioritising national security by stating that it is in line with national interests and that there is understanding and cooperation from Okinawa (Takeshita, 1988 as cited in Mason, 2019, p.201).

According to the ecosophy of this study (3.4.1), the security story can be considered both ecologically and socially destructive. It does not value and acknowledge all species and is inherently focused on the lives of humans. Although it recognises the disproportionate burdens put on Okinawa and its residents, the fact that it prioritises security prevents civilians from living a fulfilling life with high wellbeing, free of pollution, accidents, and crimes. Although the Henoko relocation plan is presented as an attempt to 'fix' the unequal burdens put on Okinawa, not only is the plan detrimental to local biodiversity, but it is also questionable whether constructing a new landfill and moving Futenma Air base within the prefecture is targeting the root cause of the problem with the end goal of equity and justice. Furthermore, the worries and opinions of Okinawans are ignored, which is not allowing civilians to meaningfully be involved in the decision-making processes that impact their own daily lives. The promotion of the Henoko relocation plan is also contentious because some experts believe it is an unsustainable option that might not ever be completed (*Yomiuri*, 2022).

The security story is outlined in Table 5.

Table 5. Ecolinguistic analysis of the security story and its assigned codes.

| Type of story | Descriptions and Examples | Code |
|--|---|------|
| Stories-we-live-by | <i>Security story:</i> The US military is fundamental for global peace and stability. It is acknowledged that there are base-related issues. However, the US military is necessary in providing peace, freedom, and security for Okinawa, Japan, the region, and the globe. | --- |
| Ideology | The US-Japan alliance and US military presence in Okinawa is indispensable for the protection and stability of Japan and the region. | SI1 |
| | The Henoko relocation plan must go forward. It provides the necessary facilities for regional protection while also solving many base-related issues. | SI2 |
| | Regional security is a priority, even if the bases are a source of base-related burdens. | SI3 |
| Framing | China and other foreign forces are a <i>security threat</i> to the region. | SF1 |
| | The Henoko relocation plan is a <i>necessity</i> , a <i>solution</i> , and an <i>opportunity</i> – it addresses the conflicts and issues between the US military and the locals and could lead to prefectural development. It is a <i>relocation</i> , not a <i>construction</i> of a new base. | SF2 |
| Metaphor (a type of framing) | Personifying metaphors: - The US and Japanese governments described as ‘friends’ - The US military described as the ‘neighbours’ to Okinawan people. Infrastructure metaphors: cornerstone, keystone, foundation. War metaphors: Taliban, Sputnik moments | SM |
| Evaluation | Good: the presence of the US military in Japan; the Henoko relocation plan; economic growth and development; control and stability; ‘freedom’ and democracy etc. | SEG |
| | Bad: the removal of the US military from the region; Chinese/North Korean/Russian threats; etc. | SEB |
| Identity | Pro-base individuals – rational; well-qualified; motivated; intelligent; emotionally stable; etc. | SID1 |
| | Anti-base individuals – emotional; radical; protestors; etc. | SID2 |
| | Military personnel – heroes; warriors; selfless; honourable; loyal. | SID3 |
| Conviction | The US has the strongest military in the world. The US and Japan must be ready for potential conflict to protect democracy and stability in the region. | SC |
| Erasure | - Ecological systems (the ocean, coral, dugong, etc.) - History and culture of Okinawa. - The worries, complaints, and opinions of civilians. | SE |
| Salience | The threat of China is imminent. The safety of Japan and the globe is important and needs to be prioritised. | SS |

5.2.2 Justice story

The justice story asserts that the US military in Okinawa is a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Okinawans and the local environment and argues that there needs to be either an increase in regulations or the complete removal of military bases from the islands. The US military is seen as the source of both social and environmental issues – socially, for a multitude of health problems (pollution-related illnesses; the spread of COVID-19), accidents (aviation; training), crimes, sexual violence, financial burdens, and human rights abuses (Feifer, 2000; Kimura et al., 2022; Kohatsu, 2021; Ryūkyū Shimpō Digital, 2021a), and environmentally, for pollution (noise/water/soil/odour), biodiversity loss (e.g., loss of coral reefs; potential extinction of dugong), and other forms of environmental degradation (Kohatsu, 2021; Kumamoto, 2008; Yamashiro, 2005). This story also believes that there must be fair treatment and meaningful involvement of Okinawan people in the development, implementation, and enforcement of regulations associated with the US military presence in Okinawa (Kumamoto, 2008). As for the Henoko relocation plan, this story tends to argue that the plan should not go forward because it will not solve the prefectural burdens and will not ensure regional security (Kumamoto, 2008; Mason, 2019).

This story frames the US military as a ‘burden’ because it is a source of social and environmental problems that disproportionately impact Okinawa (Kohatsu, 2021; Kumamoto, 2008). It frames the US military, China, and other foreign forces as a ‘threat’. The bases are a security/safety threat because numerous accidents and crimes are committed by military personnel, while both the US military and foreign forces (e.g., China) are seen as a threat because the presence of bases on the islands could result in Okinawa becoming the prime target of military attacks (Okinawa Times, 2021; Shimbun Akahata, 2021). The Henoko relocation plan is also framed as a ‘burden’. The story sees the plan as a waste of tax-payers money; it is sceptical of the plan’s ability to address the current burdens and believes that it would instead create more problems in the future (Mitsuzumi & Itō, 2022; RS, 2021).

Those who support the justice story tend to identify civilians and Okinawans as emotional individuals. On the other hand, US military personnel are portrayed as uncontrollable and inconsiderate individuals who are associated with drunk driving, littering, and sexual violence (Yamazaki, 2022; *Yomiuri*, 2021).

Those who support this story believe that the wellbeing of civilians and the environment must be prioritised. Many are in support of updating the US-Japan SOFA; this includes changes such as allowing Japanese officials to conduct on-base environmental checks, holding the US military financially responsible for cleaning up their own environmental pollution, and assuring military personnel who

commit crimes on Japanese land are tried in Japanese courts (Mitchell, 2016). They also are in favour of increased local involvement in decision-making processes and the promotion of local economic growth and development (*Yomiuri*, 2022).

There are also aspects that are diminished by the justice story. First, the potential military conflict between China and Japan is diminished. The story does not address how Okinawa and Japan would defend themselves if they were to remove military bases from Okinawa or sever ties with the US military, despite framing China and other foreign forces as a potential ‘threat’. Secondly, this story tends to view military personnel not as individual people but rather a group of troublesome people (e.g., Tsukazaki, 2022).

According to the ecosophy of this study (3.4.1), the justice story can be considered both beneficial and ambivalent. It is beneficial in that it acknowledges the life of all beings – both human and more-than-human – and the quality of life of those beings. It strongly promotes equity and justice because it promotes the belief that the burdens created by the US military should be distributed more equally (potentially with other prefectures and the US). Furthermore, it believes in tackling the root cause of base-related issues by updating the US-Japan SOFA or completely removing bases from the prefecture, rather than relying on ‘fixes’ such as the Henoko relocation plan. It believes that the civilians must be more involved in the decision-making processes regarding the bases and so that Okinawa can build their own resilient community. The lives of other species are also acknowledged and considered but there is greater interest in the direct impact on human health and wellbeing. And although there is a belief that the local environment and biodiversity must be protected, there is also strong support for local economic development. This could potentially lead to conflicting interests between environmental protection and prefectural development.

The justice story is outlined in Table 6.

Table 6. Ecolinguistic analysis of the justice story and its assigned codes.

| Type of story | Descriptions and Examples | Code |
|--|--|------|
| Stories-we-live-by | <i>Justice story:</i> The presence of the US military in Okinawa is a threat to the safety and wellbeing of Okinawans and the environment. Either more regulations should be imposed on the US military, or they need to leave Okinawa. | --- |
| Ideology | The presence of the US military in Okinawa is a source of social problems, including health issues, crime, violence, sexual violence, financial problems, human rights, etc. | J11 |
| | The presence of the US military in Okinawa is a source of environmental issues, including pollution, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, etc. | J12 |
| | There must be fair treatment and meaningful involvement of Okinawan people in the development, implementation, and enforcement of laws, regulations, and policies regarding the presence of the US military in Okinawa. | J13 |
| | The Henoko relocation plan should <i>not</i> go forward because it is not the solution to Okinawa-US military conflicts, and it will not ensure regional security. | J14 |
| Framing | The US military is <i>a burden</i> to Okinawa – its presence results in most of the issues associated with the military being put on Okinawa. | JF1 |
| | The US military is <i>a security threat</i> to Okinawa – having the US military in the prefecture could make Okinawa a target of foreign attacks. | JF2 |
| | China and other foreign forces are a <i>security threat</i> because they could target the US military bases in Okinawa. | JF3 |
| | The Henoko relocation plan is a <i>burden</i> – it does not address the current problems and will result in more problems for the prefecture. It is a <i>construction</i> of a new base, not a <i>relocation</i> of the old base. | JF4 |
| Metaphor (a type of framing) | Personifying metaphors: Okinawa as an ‘orphan’ separated from the mainland. Nature metaphors: The anger of Okinawans described as explosive ‘magma’. The sea and its ecosystems as a ‘cradle of life’. Historical metaphors: The coral transplant plan as an ‘indulgence’. | JM |
| Evaluation | Good: changing the SOFA; protests; economic growth; local involvement in governance; etc. | JEG |
| | Bad: the current US military presence; the Henoko relocation plan; the current SOFA; Chinese/North Korea/Russian threats; environmental degradation; etc. | JEB |
| Identity | Civilians; Okinawans – emotional; angry; sad. | JID1 |
| | US military personnel – uncontrollable; selfish; immature; inconsiderate. | JID2 |
| Conviction | - The presence of the US military in Okinawa does not guarantee peace. - The Henoko relocation plan is not a solution to base-related issues. - The US and Japanese governments do not have Okinawa’s best interests at heart. | JC |
| Erasure | - The possibility of foreign attacks. - Military personnel as individual people. | JE |
| Salience | The environment as well as the livelihoods and physical/mental wellbeing of Okinawans are important and need to be protected. | JS |

5.2.3 Overlapping stories between the stories-we-live-by

Although the two stories-we-live-by may seem different, analysis shows that there are some overlapping stories. First is the framing of China as a ‘threat’ – both the stories agree that it is a security issue that needs to be addressed (SF1, JF3). The security story’s solution is to position the US military in Okinawa, but the justice story supports either keeping the US military in Okinawa with stricter regulations or completely removing the US military from Okinawa to avoid being a target of potential attacks. Another overlapping story is that economic growth and development is good for Okinawa (SEG, JEG). This is concerning in terms of sustainability because it could come into conflict with the promotion of environmental protection. Lastly, both stories present Okinawans as angry and emotional individuals (SID2, JID1).

5.3 Stories in newspapers from the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa [SQ3]

5.3.1 Stories in US American newspapers

The security story dominates the sparse number of articles published by US American newspapers. The main ideologies put forward are that the protection of regional stability should be a priority (SI3) and that the presence of US military in Okinawa is a fundamental component in keeping stability in the East Asia region (SI1). Take, for example, this passage reporting on US-Japan military training in response to the growing tensions in the region between the US, China, Japan, and Taiwan:

“These [US-Japan military] training opportunities [in the south of Okinawa] are *indispensable* to ensuring maritime security and a free flow of commerce in the Indo-Pacific,” a spokesperson for the U.S. Seventh Fleet said in a statement. (WSJ, 24 January 2022, original emphasis)

The tensions between the US, China, Japan, and Taiwan are reported as a global-level security and economic issue. Presenting the US-Japan alliance in Okinawa as ‘indispensable’ accentuates the importance of military deterrence in the region (SS). Furthermore, both the *NYT* and *WSJ* quote authority figures, which encourages readers to believe that these statements are true (SC), thereby strengthening the ideologies.

To emphasise these two ideologies, China is constantly framed as a ‘threat’ to the stability, freedom, and democracy of the region (SF1). Not only do articles directly state that there are “Chinese threats” (WSJ, 6 October 2021), but many articles also use descriptive language to emphasise their salience (SS):

“[Washington] has urged [Japan] to confront Beijing’s rising military aggression around the region.” (NYT, 13 July 2021)

Taiwan’s foreign minister said Beijing’s goal of controlling the island showed it wanted to “emulate the Taliban.” (WSJ, 27 August 2021)

China is portrayed as ‘violent’ and ‘aggressive’. Comparing China to the Taliban is especially effective for a US audience, as it recalls feelings and stereotypes that are associated with the war in Afghanistan that are widely shared amongst members of the US community (SM). This sort of language could cultivate a sense of fear in the reader, strengthening the idea that ‘they’ (China) are the enemy that ‘we’ (the US) need to be wary of.

Metaphors associated with the Security story in US newspapers tend to anthropomorphise Japan and the US as if they are real people with real human relationships (SM). For example, the NYT quotes a statement made by President Nixon when the US pledged in 1971 to return Okinawa to Japan:

“The friendship and mutual respect which enabled our negotiators to resolve the many difficult issues will, I am sure, enable us to work together for the continued progress of our two countries and for that of the entire world.” (NYT, 18 June 2021)

This implies that the US-Japan alliance has a strong bond, like one between two loyal friends, in which one supports the other in times of crisis. This strengthens the belief that the US-Japan alliance is indispensable, and that US military presence is necessary in Okinawa.

The justice story also briefly appears in several articles, but with a focus on the social and security issues rather than the environmental issues that stem from the military in Okinawa (JI1). One article vividly describes the livelihoods and worries of civilians in Okinawa (JS), but this is an anomaly amongst other articles that tends to brush over the impacts on civilians (SE). This article also, unlike the framing which solely frames China as the ‘threat’ (SF1), frames both China and the military as a combined ‘threat’ to Okinawa (JF2, JF3).

5.3.2 Stories in US military newspapers

US military newspapers includes elements of both the security story and the justice story. It repeatedly reports that security in the Indo-Pacific region is a priority (SI3) and that the US-Japan alliance in the form of military presence in Okinawa is fundamental for stability in the region (SI1). For instance, SS quotes 31st MEU commander Col. Michael Nakonieczny saying,

“With the potential for an unstable security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, an alliance that’s built on shared security interests and shared values is more important and relevant than ever,” (SS, 16 March 2021)

By quoting an authority figure, they strengthen the conviction of the statement (SC). Furthermore, China is framed as a ‘threat’ to said security and stability (SF1), as shown in both the *MT* and *SS*:

China’s military is rapidly modernizing and represents a “pacing threat,” (*MT*, 17 February 2022)

Slotkin, a former CIA analyst, said something must be done, short of war, to maintain order in the region following China’s repeated “Sputnik moments.” (SS, 23 November 2021)

Here, China is likened to Soviet Russia by calling its military actions ‘Sputnik moments’ (SM). This potentially conjures the emotions and beliefs that were associated with the Cold War, such as fear of communism and the fight for ‘freedom’ and democracy. However, despite framing China as a threat, there are no articles talking about the direct threat it will have on the livelihoods of people in Okinawa (JF2).

A noticeable feature in US military articles is the way the military and its personnel are described as loyal heroes and caring neighbours to the community (SID3). Articles report on military personnel saving civilians from dangerous situations such as drowning and suicide attempts (SS, 3 September 2021; SS, 16 June 2021). One article reporting on base-related water contamination quotes Marine Corps Installations Pacific spokesman Lt. Col. Matthew Hilton stating,

The Marine Corps shares the concern of locals regarding the pollution... The service is cooperating with local authorities to identify the pollution’s source. (SS, 14 October 2021)

US military newspapers emphasise the good character of the US military members and the notion that they are part of the Okinawan community. There is a ‘personal’ rather than ‘bureaucratic’ nuance, suggesting that the US military is composed of individuals who care about the wellbeing of civilians.

The justice story is also present, with many articles being critical of the military. Articles do not shy away from stating that the bases are a source of social and environmental concerns that affect the local Okinawan community (JI1, JI2). They often quote Okinawa Governor Tamaki Denny criticising the military:

“Aircraft-related accidents could lead to serious damage to people’s lives and properties,” ... “I cannot help having strong doubts about the U.S. military’s safety management system.” (SS, 26 November 2021)

[Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki] said the situation was handled poorly by the U.S. military and “[its] not about whether a smaller [reading of water contamination] is good or bad.” (SS, 26 August 2021)

Several articles vividly describe the impacts of the US military on the health and emotional wellbeing of civilians, especially the detrimental consequences of noise and water pollution, as well as explicit descriptions of sexual violence by military personnel against Okinawan women (JS).

5.3.3 Stories in Japanese newspapers

Both the security story and justice story are prevalent in Japanese newspapers. Many articles showcase the ideology that the US military is indispensable for the protection of Japan and the region (SI1), and that regional security is a priority (SI3). North Korea, Russia, and China are all framed as a security threat to the region (SF1). Many articles reflect the opinions of authority figures, such as this quotation from Lieutenant General Herman Clardy:

“We are doing our best to reduce the burdens on the community as much as possible. However, the *most important* fact that we *must* not forget is that the US military is in Okinawa to defend Japan under the US-Japan Security Treaty... *Our power is strongly required in an emergency.*” (Yomiuri, 1 July 2021, original emphasis)

Quoting an authority figure saying ‘the *most important* fact that we *must* not forget...’ increases the perceived authority of the statement. Furthermore, Lieutenant General Clardy expresses his confidence in the power of the US military, which may also make the reader feel they can rely on his statements (SC).

The Henoko relocation plan is a prominent discussion topic in Japanese newspapers. Articles claim that the Henoko relocation plan is necessary to reduce the burden on citizens while still maintaining deterrence in the region (SI2, SF3). In one article Lieutenant General Herman Clardy states,

The relocation to Henoko will reduce the burden on the densely populated areas in central and southern parts of Okinawa Island, while also meeting the operational and training needs of the Marine Corps. Politically, it is also a more sustainable option than keeping the current Futenma base. (Yomiuri, 1 July 2021)

Thus, the relocation plan is put forward as a ‘sustainable option’ and removing the military from the region is out of the question. In fact, a key phrase found in articles is “the Henoko relocation is the only solution” (e.g., *Asahi*, 12 April 2021) (SC). Furthermore, several articles also frame the relocation plan not only as a sustainable option but also as an ‘opportunity’ for development of the prefecture (SF2) (e.g., *Yomiuri*, 17 January 2022).

On the contrary, there is also the belief that the Henoko relocation plan is not the solution to the burdens put on the prefecture (JI4). One article reports on the controversy over the soil being used for the Henoko landfill, which contains human remains from the Battle of Okinawa:

“It seems legally inconsistent to continue the construction while claiming ‘the Henoko relocation is the only solution’ even if it means using soil that still contains the remains of people. Is there no ‘equality of dignity’ when handling people’s remains? I feel strong resentment.” (*Asahi*, 16 July 2021)

Not only does this quote criticise the use of the phrase “the Henoko relocation is the only solution” as dismissive, but it also shows the emotions that Okinawans have regarding these controversies (SID2, JID1).

Many articles express the belief that the US military is a source of social and ecological burdens that disproportionately impact Okinawa (JI1, JI2). Notably, numerous articles state that the current US-Japan SOFA is the cause of the social and ecological burdens put on citizens, and that an update or abolition of the treaty is needed (JEG; JEB):

Governor Tamaki Denny argued, “Omicron strains derived from the US military have spread. This constitutes structural discrimination caused by the US-Japan SOFA.” (*Asahi*, 20 January 2022)

Under the US-Japan SOFA, the US military is not obligated to clean up or compensate, and in many cases [soil or water] contamination is only discovered after digging up the returned land. (*Yomiuri*, 17 December 2021)

The US military is also described as inconsiderate and dangerous to the local community (JID2), and articles showcase the built-up anger the community has towards the military bases (SID2, JID1). For example, regarding an incident where the Marine Corps released water contaminated with PFOS and PFOA into public waterways, one article writes,

The prefectural government and Ginowan City... asked the Marine Corps to stop the drainage [of contaminated water into the waterways] ... [Governor Tamaki] expressed his anger, 'I feel intense anger at the fact that the US unilaterally made the decision to drain the contaminated water while negotiations were proceeding between the US and Japan.' (*Asahi*, 28 August 2021)

Several articles such as this one highlight how the US military would make decisions and break promises behind the backs of Okinawa and the US and Japanese governments (JC).

Japanese newspapers also often state that the current political processes are unjust and not inclusive of the Okinawan people (JI3). Articles report on the 2019 referendum that was held in Okinawa, which asked residents whether they supported or opposed the Henoko relocation plan:

[T]he government continued with the Henoko landfill works even the day after the referendum in which 70% of prefectural voters opposed the landfill plan. What we hear are the words: "Okinawa has Okinawa's democracy, the country has the country's democracy" ... [Okinawa resident] Kyan-san says, "If conditions are unbearable, anyone would speak up. But why do we have to keep on raising our voices?" (*Asahi*, 11 January 2022)

As can be seen, there is doubt about whether the current Japanese government is truly democratic and inclusive of Okinawa. This question has been asked since the annexation of the islands and many residents feel that they are still under occupation by Japan and the US.

Several metaphors are used by Japanese newspapers. Metaphors associated with the security story (SM) often refer to 'infrastructure', describing the US-Japan alliance as the "foundation to peace, stability, and freedom" (*Asahi*, 4 April 2021) and the "cornerstone to the region's safety, stability, and peace" (*Yomiuri*, 1 July 2021), and Okinawa as "the keystone of the Pacific" (*Yomiuri*, 18 March 2022). However, an infrastructure metaphor is also used to describe the US-Japan SOFA as a 'wall to pollution checks' on bases (*Yomiuri*, 17 December 2021) (JM). Okinawa is also personified and described as an "orphan of the Pacific cut off from their homeland" (*Yomiuri*, 19 March 2022). Lastly, the explosion of anger by Okinawan citizens after the 1995 rape incident was described as an eruption of "magma" (*Yomiuri*, 24 March 2022).

5.3.4 Stories in the Okinawan newspaper

The central ideology in the Okinawan newspaper is that the US military bases are a social and environmental burden on the prefecture (JI1, JI2). A wider range of burdens are reported in the Okinawan press and there is increased attention on the environmental impact of the bases, especially biodiversity loss, extinction, water pollution, and noise pollution. An issue that is often mentioned in Okinawa but rarely in other societies is the *tochi kisei hou*, a potential new law that will violate rights to privacy and to protest (e.g., RS, 9 May 2021; RS, 16 June 2021). Overall, the language used in articles are emotive and aims to make the readers' care about these issues (JS). Many articles have headlines that express the fear and sorrow of Okinawans (JS):

Headline: "Stop destroying nature" "Don't bury life" – 50 people protest in canoes. 3 years since the start of soil and sand being dumped at landfill site" (RS, 15 December 2021)

Headline: "Run" – The fear of windows falling from the sky... A child who was on the playground testifies. Falls ill due to shock. 4 years since the fall of a US military helicopter window. (RS, 13 December 2021)

Articles also use numbers and statistics to increase the validity of their claims (JC, JS). For example:

Noise pollution over 100 decibels was recorded five times in Kami-Ojana, Ginowan City... with a maximum reading of 115.8 decibels being recorded at 5:30 PM. [T]he city received seven complaints from citizens who made claims such as "it's making me go crazy" ... 110 decibels is equivalent to hearing a nearby car horn, and 120 decibels is said to be approaching the limits of human hearing. (RS, 14 April 2021)

The Marine Corps discharged 64,000 litres (equivalent to 320 barrels) into the public sewage systems, claiming that they had reduced PFAS levels using their own treatment method. Immediately after, high levels of PFAS were detected in the water sampled from the sewage system in Ginowan City... [R]eadings of PFOS and PFOA, which have been pointed out to have carcinogenic risks, reached 670 nanograms, 13.4 times the government's provisional guideline value. (RS, 18 September 2021)

Another central belief is that the US military and its personnel are uncontrollable and inconsiderate (JI2), and that the Okinawan prefectural government and its citizens are angered by the US military's actions (JID1):

Headline: “They take us for idiots”. Government officials are irritated. The US military forcibly releases PFAS contaminated water. (RS, 27 August 2021)

Amid the intensification of training, there is a large gap between the attitudes of the US military, who prioritise training and belittle the safety of residents, and the attitudes of the Okinawan people. (RS, 25 November 2021)

The Henoko relocation plan is also a central topic in Okinawan articles, and the common belief is that it is a burden on the prefecture (JI4, JF4). Unlike Japanese newspapers, the RS calls the constructed base in Henoko the '*shin kichi*', which directly translates to the 'new base' (e.g., RS, 28 August 2021). This phrasing is used by anti-relocation actors who believe that the Henoko relocation plan is, in fact, not a 'relocation' of the old base but a 'construction' of a new one (JF4). Those who support this story believe that the relocation plan is distorting the reality of what is actually happening (SE).

Along with articles on the Henoko relocation plan, there are also reports about the impact of the landfill on coral and its ecosystem, as well as the government's plan to transplant coral around Henoko bay. The main belief is that the relocation plan is destroying the seabed and that the coral transplants are ineffective (JI2). Articles describe the destroyed seaweed beds and seagrass as 'a cradle of life' (RS, 15 December 2021) and that the coral transplant plan is used as an 'indulgence'² that excuses the government to continue with construction work (RS, 28 August 2021) (JM).

Regarding security, the US military is framed as a burden and a security threat to Okinawa (JF1, JF2):

[T]he US foreign strategy has shifted from counterterrorism to counter-China. However, the real purpose of the US military bases in Okinawa is left as an 'afterthought', and both the Japanese and US governments are justifying the burden created by the bases. The residents who live adjacent to the bases continue to be at the mercy of changes in the US military's national strategy, and the dangers are left as they are now. (RS, 11 September 2021)

The RS is sceptical of the efficacy of US military presence in Okinawa and express concern about the shifting US military focus from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific. Overall, they are critical of the prioritisation of regional stability over the daily lives of Okinawans.

² An indulgence is a certificate that is given by the Catholic Church in exchange for good deeds (such as donations) that reduces or exempts a follower from the temporal punishment one is supposed to undergo for their sins (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

5.3.5 Overlapping stories in newspapers across societies

The four societies – the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa – and their newspapers share linguistic patterns in how they cover US military presence in Okinawa (Table 7).

Newspapers serving the US, US military, and Japan all report the security story, especially the ideologies that regional security is a priority (SI3), and that the US military in Okinawa is fundamental to the stability of Japan and the region (SI1). They strengthen this message by framing China as a ‘threat’ that can impact the democracies and economies in the Indo-Pacific region (SF1). The US and US military newspapers also use metaphors associated with past wars that the US was involved in – the Afghan War and the Cold War – likening the current situation with China to wars that were fought for ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ (SM).

Japanese and Okinawan newspapers focus on undemocratic political processes, the Henoko relocation plan, and the attitudes of the US military toward Okinawa. Both societies comment on the unfair treatment and lack of involvement of civilians in the decision-making processes regarding the US military in Okinawa and Japan (JI3). The main concerns are the current US-Japan SOFA, which does not hold the US military accountable for actions that impact the social and environmental wellbeing of Okinawa, as well as the continuation of the Henoko landfill work by the Japanese government despite opposition by 70% of Okinawan voters. Japanese newspapers showcase both beliefs regarding the Henoko relocation plan – the security story ideology that the plan must go forward because it is a solution for regional security and prefectural burdens (SI2, SF2) and the justice story ideology that the plan must not go forward because it does not resolve prefectural burdens (JI4, JF4). On the other hand, the Okinawan newspaper reports the belief that the Henoko relocation plan should not go forward (JI4, JF4). Both Japanese and Okinawan newspapers express angry reactions to US military personnel, who are perceived to be inconsiderate and active contributors to the burdens placed on Okinawa (JID2).

The Okinawan newspaper does not actively report the security story and instead focus on the justice story. Even when reporting on potential security issues, the US military bases are framed as the ‘threat’ that makes Okinawa a target for potential foreign attacks (JF2, JF3). Notable linguistic features in Okinawan articles are the use of vivid descriptions and emotive language to emphasize people’s anger and the importance of these issues to the residents of Okinawa (JID1, JS), compared to the US, US military, and Japan, which use more ‘neutral’ language. They also use more numbers and statistics to increase the impact of their statements (JC).

Table 7. Notable stories found in newspapers in different societies.

| Story | US | US military | Japan | Okinawa |
|--|------------------------|-------------|---|----------------------|
| Regional security is a priority. (SI3) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| US military presence in Okinawa is fundamental to the stability of Japan and the region. (SI1) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | - |
| China and other foreign forces are a security threat to Japan and the region. (SF1, JF3) | ✓ (SF1) | ✓ (SF1) | ✓ (SF1) | ✓ (JF3) |
| There must be meaningful involvement of civilians in decision-making processes regarding the US military in Okinawa. (JI3) | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| The Henoko relocation plan should go forward. It is a necessary solution for Okinawa. (SI2, SF2) | - | - | ✓ | - |
| The Henoko relocation plan should not go forward. It is a burden to Okinawa. (JI4, JF4) | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| US military personnel are selfish, immature, and/or inconsiderate. (JID2) | - | - | ✓ | ✓ |
| Vivid descriptions and emotive language (SS, JS) | - | - | - | ✓ (JS) |
| Use of numbers and statistics (SC, JC) | - | - | - | ✓ (JC) |
| Metaphors (SM, JM) | Personification War | War | Personification Nature Infrastructure | Historical Nature |

6. Discussion

6.1 Possible implications: reflecting and (re)constructing (un)sustainable societies

Section 3.4 points out that texts and news media can both reflect and (re)construct how societies perceive the world, and thus, could play a major role in how societies understand and act upon the issues surrounding US military presence in Okinawa. My analyses found that there are notable linguistic differences among newspapers in the four societies, highlighting the discrepancies in how the four societies perceive the challenges linked to US bases on the islands. I argue that these findings lead to the following pernicious consequences, which could be a roadblock when trying to find sustainable trajectories to military-related issues in Okinawa: i) cognitive lock-ins, ii) hegemony and oppression, and iii) political antagonism.

6.1.1 Cognitive lock-ins

Newspapers, being the messengers of their respective societies, have the power to influence what information is given to the public as ‘fact’. Therefore, newspapers that predominantly publish one story – such as the US American newspapers that mainly report the security story and the Okinawan

newspaper that mainly reports the justice story – are more likely to consolidate their society’s perception of the topic. Without any access to opposing stories, a society may end in ideational path dependencies, otherwise known as a ‘cognitive lock-in’ (Forestiere & Allen, 2011; Louah et al., 2017; Weituschat et al., 2022). For example, US society may resist any decrease in military capability because the potential attack from China is accepted as a greater threat than noise pollution, even if there is proof that many suffer physically and emotionally from noise pollution daily. On the other hand, Okinawan society may resist any form of US military presence because the military is accepted as nothing but a nuisance, even if there is some truth in that they could potentially provide security. These cognitive lock-ins influence decision- and policy-making, often resulting in societies maintaining a particular status quo, and impeding the search for and adoption of alternative solutions (Forestiere & Allen, 2011; Geels, 2019). Studies suggest that the level of public knowledge is key to the cognitive ‘unlocking’ process and to public acceptance of new ideas (Louah et al., 2017; Pellizzone et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, reporting a wider range of stories in all newspapers is crucial in increasing public knowledge on the topic, allowing the public to be more critical of stories and more flexible when considering sustainable solutions to the issues surrounding US military presence in Okinawa.

6.1.2 Hegemony and oppression

Not all newspapers have the same power over society, resulting in certain stories being more commonly accepted over others. Fairclough (1995) states that audience size underlies the potential influence of media. Compared to print media, it is difficult to determine the reach of digital materials (Pew Research Center, 2021). However, it is safe to assume that US American and Japanese newspapers have a greater audience size compared to US military and Okinawan newspapers, and consequently, a greater influence on society. This can result in *hegemony*, which is broadly understood as the process in which a dominant group establishes and maintains its power, and is often achieved by shaping the interests, needs, and worldviews of the public through the use of language (Berberoglu, 2017; Gramsci, 1971). The US American and Japanese newspapers greatly promote the security story, thereby convincing a greater number of people that these ideas and values are the ‘status quo’. This could be linked to the US and Japanese governments, who are responsible for major policies such as the US-Japan Security Treaty and US-Japan SOFA, concerning themselves with media production because of newspapers’ power to mobilise the public (Fairclough, 1995). In reality, the ruling Japanese Liberal Democratic Party and the Chief Executive of the *Yomiuri* have a long history of close involvement (O’Shea, 2019), which may result in many *Yomiuri* articles reporting the security story. The prevalence of the security story in US and Japanese newspapers could potentially be contributing

to the oppression of Okinawans. My findings show strong resistance to the security story by the RS, which promotes the justice story, and published 92-times more articles than US American newspapers and 2.4-times more articles than Japanese newspapers. Despite this resistance, the justice story will need to be published in more 'powerful' newspapers to prevail in society. However, my results may suggest that the opinions of Okinawans are being oppressed due to the prevalence of the security story in US and Japanese newspapers.

6.1.3 Political identities and antagonism

My analysis found that one of the key linguistic differences between societies was how they constructed certain identities. According to Mouffe (2005), an inescapable dynamic of politics is *antagonism* – the struggle between a distinct 'I/we/us' and a constructed 'other'. These political identities are apparent in how the US military see themselves as 'loyal' and 'reliable', how Okinawa sees the US, Japan, and the military as 'selfish', 'inconsiderate', and 'unreliable', and how Japan sees Okinawans as 'emotional'. These identities risk nurturing antagonistic relationships by allowing radical emotions to take over thoughts and actions, rather than promoting respectful dialogue between societies, which is required to construct and maintain resilient and sustainable democracies (Jones, 2014; Mouffe, 2005). The US and US military's stories justify US military presence in Okinawa for the protection of freedom and democracy, but this becomes hypocritical if the US, Japan, and the US military are not listening to the voices of Okinawans, and thereby creating antagonistic relationships. Furthermore, the current discussions surrounding base-related issues follow the narratives of 'pro-base vs. anti-base', 'pro-Henoko vs. anti-Henoko', 'US/Japan/military vs. Okinawa', and 'security vs. justice'. This polarisation and oversimplification of the issue exacerbates antagonistic relationships instead of giving space to search of sustainable alternatives (Mouffe, 2013b, 2013a). However, there is also the danger of labelling Okinawans as 'too emotional' and 'too radical' whenever they express their emotions and real experiences. Instead of labelling Okinawans as 'too emotional', there needs to be more empathetic and inclusive efforts to include Okinawans in decision-making process to avoid antagonistic relationships and strive for sustainability together.

7. Conclusions and future work

This study aimed to deconstruct the differences in how four societies – the US, US military, Japan, and Okinawa – and their digital newspapers have reported on US military presence in Okinawa and discussed the potential societal implications of these reports. Specifically, it examined the differences in the level of coverage of core themes (SQ1), what stories are prevalent in articles and whether they

are socially and ecologically beneficial, ambivalent, and/or destructive (SQ2), and how these stories have been told by different societies and their newspapers (SQ3).

Analysis reveals that Okinawa reports on the topic of 'US military presence in Okinawa' significantly more than the three other societies and is most concerned with the social and ecological burdens that the military bases impose on the prefecture. Furthermore, the study identifies two prevalent stories-we-live-by across articles: the *security story* and the *justice story*. While the US American newspapers predominantly report on the security story, the US military and Japanese newspapers report a mix of the security story and justice story, and the Okinawan newspaper solely reports the justice story. These findings may have implications in society in the form of *cognitive lock-ins*, *hegemony and oppression*, and *antagonistic relationships*, which could prevent societies from cooperating to find sustainable solutions to base-related challenges that disproportionately impact the lives of Okinawans.

Future research could address ways in which Okinawa residents could generate collective power to disseminate their opinions (such as elements of the justice story) into more 'powerful' news media outlets outside of Okinawa, which could potentially help strengthen their positions in political discussions and decision-making. Research could also branch into how the military-industrial complex (MIC) – the 'win-win' relationship between the country's military and the defence industry – could be perpetuating the military-related injustices not only in Okinawa but across the world. In 2019, the US and China had the highest military expenditures globally, spending \$732 billion and \$261 billion, respectively (SIPRI, 2020). Thus, an investigation into the MIC and the tensions between the US and China may be fruitful in gaining a better understanding of global-level root causes to local-level sustainability challenges.

The impacts of military activities on social and ecological systems are a seldom discussed topic in sustainability. The problems associated with the US military in Okinawa is just one local example out of the various military-related issues found across the world. By taking a sustainability sciences approach, this study shows how language and news media can shape societies' understanding of sustainability challenges, and how this could push societies away from each other or bring them together. If the US, US military, and Japan truly believe in democracy in the Indo-Pacific region, news media in these societies must expand on *what* they report on and *how* they report to promote more critical, inclusive, and diplomatic discussions within and between societies, which could help find sustainable trajectories for not only the US military crisis in Okinawa but military-related challenges across the world.

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9. Appendices

Appendix A. Articles selected for the ecolinguistic analysis

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Appendix B. Coding table

Table B1. Coding table used to code the 147 newspaper articles for the ecolinguistic analysis. Refer to Table 5 and Table 6 for a more detailed explanation of each code.

| Stories-we-live-by | Security story | Justice story |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Ideology | [SI1] US-Japan alliance and US military presence in Okinawa is indispensable for regional security. | [JI1] US military presence in Okinawa is a source of social issues. |
| | [SI2] The Henoko plan must go forward. | [JI2] US military presence in Okinawa is a source of environmental issues. |
| | [SI3] Regional security is a priority. | [JI3] The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of Okinawan people in decision-making processes is needed. |
| | | [JI4] The Henoko relocation plan should be stopped. |
| Framing | [SF1] China and other foreign forces are a security threat. | [JF1] The US military is a burden. |
| | [SF2] The Henoko relocation plan is a necessity, an opportunity, a solution, and a relocation. | [JF2] The US military is a security threat. |
| | | [JF3] China and other foreign forces are a security threat. |
| | | [JF4] The Henoko relocation plan is a burden. It is construction of a new base. |
| Metaphor | [SM] e.g., war, personification, infrastructure. | [JM] e.g., personification, nature, infrastructure, historical |
| Evaluation | [SEG] US military presence in Japan; the Henoko relocation plan; economic growth; freedom; control and stability; etc. | [JEG] changing the SOFA; protests; economic growth; local involvement in governance; etc. |
| | [SEB] The removal of the US military from the region; Chinese/North Korean/Russian threats; etc. | [JEB] the current presence of the US military; the Henoko plan; the current SOFA; Chinese/North Korea/Russian threats; environmental degradation; etc. |
| Identity | [SID1] Pro-base individuals – rational, well-qualified, motivated, intelligent, emotionally stable, etc. | [JID1] Okinawan people – emotional, angry, sad. |
| | [SID2] Anti-base individuals – emotional; radical; protestors; etc. | [JID2] Military personnel – selfish; uncontrollable; immature; inconsiderate. |
| | [SID3] Military personnel – heroes; warriors; selfless; honourable; loyal. | |
| Conviction | [SC] The US has the strongest military in the world. The US and Japan must be ready for potential conflict to protect democracy and stability in the region. | [JC] The US military does not guarantee peace. US and Japanese governments have not got Okinawa's best interests at heart. Henoko plan is not a solution. Etc. |
| Erasure | [SE] Ecological systems; the voices of civilians; history and culture of Okinawa. | [JE] The potential threat of foreign attacks. Military personnel as individual people. |
| Saliency | [SS] The China threat is imminent. Safety must be prioritised. | [JS] The environment. The livelihoods and wellbeing of Okinawans. |