

BOOK REVIEW OF

Masahide Ishihara, Eiichi Hoshino and Yoko Fujita (editors) (2016). *Self-Determinable Development of Small Islands*. [小島嶼地域の自律的発]. Tokyo, Japan: Springer. ISBN: 978-981-10-0130-7 (hardback); 978-981-10-0132-1 (e-Book). xvi+298pp+index.

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Autonomy and dependence

This excellent book has been published at a critical time. In various parts of the world – Bougainville, Catalonia, Scotland, New Caledonia, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, Veneto – referendums have recently taken place or will soon take place, and whose object is to question existing relationships between constituent units of sovereign states or quasi-federal arrangements (as with the Brexit vote in relation to the European Union).

These are significant episodes in the context of an international system that is now increasing aware and accepting of two types of jurisdictional classes: the more normal type is that of the sovereign state (SS), allegedly offering a territorial identity and legitimate exercise of power over a consenting community sharing a national history and identity. The second type is the subnational jurisdiction (SNJ), whereby a semi-autonomous unit exists within the purview and protection of larger power. Both forms of political structures are stable in their own ways: the world's oldest SNJs may very well be the island bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey, who have been in a special relationship with the British Crown, without forming part of the United Kingdom, for over 800 years now. Both forms of political structures involve local decision making and a considerable amount of international relations, given the onset of globalisation and ubiquitous communication technologies. Both types of regimes seek to attract foreign investment, develop competitive economies, and brand themselves as appealing locales for such purposes as tourism development or talent and skill based immigration.

SS and SNJs, however, differ in one critical dimension: SNJs are not independent, and much of their domestic politics must invariably deal with the management of the dependency relationship with their putative overseer. SNJs have the advantage of constituent assemblies of some kind, usually recognised by the over-arching state: this creates a legitimate political mechanism and conduit for the challenging of protest, demand and concerns. Metropolitan states, on their part, must pay attention to this relationship with their pesky subnational units, in such a way that it remains under control and does not boil over into widespread disenchantment and rejection of the central state's legitimacy: such may breed dangerous (and at times violent) secessionist movements and parties. In this dialectic, the two sides (and additional factions within each) will play to the similarities and contrasts of the respective citizens of the units. The metropole will tend to emphasise similar manifest destiny; unity, harmony and collective strength within a single nation state; greater opportunities for collective progress and collective security. In sharp

contrast, the aggrieved party is likely to appeal to different cultures, language and history – including possible experiences of occupation by an external force, including one from the metropole – which suggest that theirs is a condition akin to colonialism and which therefore can only be rectified via ‘independence’ and ‘freedom’.

Okinawa as Japan’s only subnational island jurisdiction

Within East Asia, Okinawa is a subnational jurisdiction that demands attention. It is the only island prefecture of Japan: all remaining 46 prefectures are on the ‘mainland’ of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Shuri Castle, in Okinawa, was the former seat of the Ryūkyū Kingdom, a long-term tributary state of China, prior to Japanese annexation. A strong sense of Okinawan identity remains; this is also expressed via the Okinawan language. It hosts the Kariyushi Club (かりゆしクラブ, Kariyushi Kurabu), a political movement that seeks independence from Tokyo. Okinawa was the site of the most vicious battle of the Second World War fought on Japanese soil and during which more than one quarter of the local population was killed. It is still swarming with US military facilities. It is indeed part of the irony of the peace settlement of post-war Japan that the country was constitutionally pacified by the US while Okinawa was heavily militarised by the same US. Ryukyuan continue to protest the foreign military presence on the main island (also called Okinawa).

The Okinawan relationship with mainland Japan is a long and tortuous one. The Ryūkyū kingdom, a tributary state of China, thrived by developing strong trade relations with numerous other countries. This role as ‘bridge’ to various regional kingdoms rested on a special Ryūkyū-China tributary relationship. In 1609, however, the island was invaded by a force from Kyushu led by the Lord of Satsuma and obliged to accept its suzerainty. For over two centuries, the kings of Ryūkyū played a risky diplomacy, paying tribute to the Japanese shogun as well as to the Chinese emperor. This double allegiance ended when Japan ordered the Ryukyuan to terminate tribute relations with China in 1874. Ryūkyū was annexed by and into Japan in 1879, establishing it since as the Okinawa prefecture, and abolishing its 550-year old monarchy. A period of Japanisation ensued: standard Japanese became the medium of instruction in schools, and the use of local Okinawan languages was discouraged. Such measures bred widespread resentment amongst the locals. Then came World War II and the Battle for Okinawa in which 120,000 combatants died and Shuri Castle was destroyed. Thousands of local citizens were forced by the Japanese to commit suicide rather than surrender. At the end of the War, Okinawa was run by a US military government: this arrangement persisted even after the end of the occupation of Japan as a whole in 1952. During that time, the US dollar was the official currency, and cars drove on the right side of the road (unlike in the rest of Japan). The US returned the islands to Japan on May 15, 1972, but retained its rights to bases there: the US military still controls about one-fifth of land area on Okinawa island, with some 30,000 US service personnel on active duty at any time. The US presence provides rent payments, creates job spinoffs to the locals, and supports local tourism; but there is a strong anti-US base feeling in

Okinawa. The alleged robbery, choking and raping of a woman in October 2012 by US sailors led to public outrage and recalls the rape of a 12-year-old girl by three US military personnel in September 1995 which “remains a high-water mark for anti-military sentiment” on the island. The scheduled deployment of twelve American MV-22 Osprey vertical take-off and landing aircraft to the Futenma base in Okinawa was the subject of large demonstrations because of safety concerns. The cases of rape, and conspiracy to rape, involving US servicemen (who are exempt from local jurisdiction), usage of banned chemicals, noise pollution, and accidents involving US planes crashing into local buildings, all stack up to foment antipathy. Futenma is one particularly contentious air base: it is now practically surrounded by sprawling Ginowan City. Demonstrations on land and at sea continue in the face of plans for extending Camp Schuab, a US military base. Okinawa’s governor, Takeshi Onega, elected in 2014, has pledged to stop the project. The tension has consumed not just local but even national politics. Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) leader Yukio Hatoyama pledged to scale down the US bases on Okinawa as part of “a more equal alliance” with the US in an electoral pledge; but, once elected as Prime Minister in September 2009, he reneged on this commitment and resigned after a few months in office. Mass public demonstrations against the presence, even relocation and expansion, of the US bases continue: one demonstration, in June 2016, was triggered by the death of a 20-year old female resident and linked to a US Marine Veteran, and is claimed to have drawn 65,000 protesters. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the Abe government would want to see US military strength in Japan diminished, in any way. Indeed, various Ryukyans support the deployment of additional troops and materiel to counteract the Chinese military build-up. Yoshitaka Nakayama, mayor of Ishigaki City, insists that the Yaeyama islands must be protected from the Chinese threat. Ironically enough, this looming Chinese menace, so physically close to Okinawa, has also obliged US strategists to consider their bases in Okinawa as lying perhaps too close to China for comfort: at least 5,000 US marines and 1,300 dependents will move to Guam from Okinawa Prefecture.

Nakayama was re-elected mayor of Ishigaki City in 2014: his repeated demands for more central government involvement in the tense stand-off between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Dao/Senkaku Islands have been met with calls for restraint from Tokyo. It may have been desperation that drove the 1,500 Yonaguni residents to vote (60% in favour; turnout of 86%) in a February 2015 referendum to support the stationing of a Japan Self-Defence Force base on the island, after years of neglect from Tokyo and its unwillingness to cooperate with the residents’ plan to turn their island into an international hub.

Okinawa as Pivot

Okinawa is thus the natural pivot at the centre of the book under review. This is so also because the book itself is crafted from a collective research project looking at ‘New Island Studies as an Academic Node between Japan and East Asia/Oceania’, masterminded and driven by the

powerful team of academics at the International Institute of Okinawa Studies (IJOS) at the University of the Ryūkyūs (UR), which is the single state university in Okinawa prefecture. Okinawa is fortunate to have this seat of higher education and research which undertakes cutting edge scholarship – including the running of this superb journal, on whose editorial board I serve – supported by suitable funding, to develop this critical appreciation of the Okinawa predicament.

The book smartly positions Okinawa as a case certainly worthy of inquiry on the basis of its own merits: but also as one member of a large family of ‘small islands’ that must endure and navigate relations with other players – some of them being bigger or meta-islands – in the East and South Asia region. In so doing, the book asks a fundamental question: to what extent is self-determinable development possible or feasible in such contexts?

Island-Mainland Nexus

The smaller the island, the more it depends on events that happen over its horizon and over which therefore it has little, if any, control. In the case of a subnational island jurisdiction (SNIJ), this dependency condition extends to decisions taken in its metropolitan heartland. This is the Naha-Tokyo nexus, but also the Jeju-Seoul, Hobart(Tasmania)-Canberra, Haikou(Hainan)-Beijing, Hagåtña(Guam)-Washington DC and Noumea-Paris relationship, as unfolds in Korea, Australia, China, Guam and New Caledonia respectively. This difficulty in determining outcomes on one’s own soil, in spite of jurisdictional autonomy, is a complex condition that is nevertheless common to small jurisdictions. Even nations that are sovereign at law, like the Pacific country of Palau, will find it difficult to consider self-reliant development trajectories: a powerful statement by Tommy Remengesau, President of the Republic of Palau, is a pithy reminder of this situation and is reproduced in the preface to this book. On SNJs, the situation is generally worse than in sovereign states. And on small islands that are also non-sovereign, the challenges are further compounded. Unequal terms of trade; the handicap of distance and peripherality; the obligation to accept a military presence (army, navy, air force); the inability to develop a home grown monetary policy; the trials involved in developing a suitable island brand that rises effortlessly above the national brand; the tribulations of developing, and then safeguarding, a suitable environmental policy ... these are some of the tough governance tests faced by SNIJs and which are amply and expertly addressed in this enjoyable publication.

Structure

The volume makes its case via five divisions. The first section presents papers that deal with Okinawa: the US military presence, the formation of an Okinawan diaspora around the world, the history of indigenous language revitalisation. The second section then moves on to address the issue of regional security, where the focus is on such flashpoints as the contested islands of

Takeshima/Dokdo, Senkaku/Diaoyu Dao and the multi-country contestation in the South China Sea, as well as the changing relationship of China (including Taiwan) and the US in the region. Part three dwells on the socio-economic argument: what are the development potentials of small islands in the Pacific? This includes a sober assessment of the potential of tourism in the region. Part four reminds us of the significant role of the sea and of so-called 'Blue Water' development plans in a region where small island states are also large ocean states, responsible for huge swathes of water via their exclusive economic zones. The fifth and final section presents three papers on three indigenous languages: Chamorro in Guam, Ainu in Hokkaido and Welsh in the United Kingdom. (The inclusion of this last chapter is my main concern with this volume, since it is the only contribution that is well beyond the East/South Asia region, and thus somewhat jars with the rest of the book's contents.)

I happen to be especially interested in this book and its contents because I have been researching the Diaoyu Dao / Senkaku island affair for my latest book - Baldacchino (2017) – and I have come to recognize the significant role that Okinawa (and Taiwan) can play in negotiating a workable (four player) solution to the current stand-off.

Conclusion

In this book, beautifully printed by Springer, the capable editorial trio has assembled a diverse cast of expert scholars and, in spite of the obvious and glaring differences in disciplinary expertise, they have nevertheless hammered together an impressive volume that will raise more questions than they answer about the autonomous development of small islands – and this is how it should be.

Available in both hard copy and e-book formats, I would encourage those interested in the challenges facing islands in the twenty-first century to invest in a copy of this book; or, as second best option, to pick and choose and purchase those chapters from the 16 that comprise this book that appeal most to them.

Professor Godfrey Baldacchino

University of Malta, Malta and University of Prince Edward Island, Canada

Reference:

Baldacchino, G. (2017). *Solution protocols to festering island disputes: 'Win-Win' solutions for the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands*. London: Routledge.