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- Japan
- Korea
- Southeast Asia

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From an American perspective, security seemed to be the most prominent topic in East Asia during 2003. President George W. Bush successfully made security issues dominate talks during APEC’s October meeting in Bangkok, and US bilateral relations with Asian nations have become increasingly focused on antiterrorism, threats from rogue states and – of course – support or disagreement with the US-led war and occupation of Iraq. While security has been an important concern in the region, a variety of other developments have also made the headlines in East Asia: political evolution and transitions, challenges facing China as it continues to develop and gain international stature, and the growing economic interdependency of the region. This fourth edition of the *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* aims to highlight these diverse issues with pieces on topics ranging from political Islam in Indonesia to corruption in China. In addition, we continue our commitment to topics outside of the political-economic realm with selections on art and linguistics.

For the past two years, China’s government has been thrust into the international spotlight as it completed its leadership transition and continues to grapple with myriad social and political problems. This issue’s China section examines some of these complex issues. William Chan explores the rampant corruption within the Chinese bureaucracy in “Considering the System: The Search for an Effective Anti-Corruption Policy in China.” Chan criticizes Beijing’s strategy of selective, highly-publicized crackdowns on corrupt cadres, claiming that it is only diminishing public confidence in the government. A solution, Chan argues, might instead be found in reforming the legal system, adjusting salaries and streamlining the national bureaucracy. Andrea Snavely focuses on China’s non-Han population in “A Review of the Chinese National Minority Education Program,” noting that improved educational standards has ramifications for national security and national unity. She suggests earlier instruction of Mandarin and more freedom to teach religious and minority-specific issues as some of the ways to close the huge development gap between Han and non-Han China. In the foreign policy realm, Susan Tiek looks at Beijing’s evolving attitudes toward the United Nations with her essay “China and the UN: United with Other Nations?” Tracking China’s position on peacekeeping and its response to the two Gulf wars, Tiek maintains that Beijing has become much more receptive to multilateral solutions for international conflicts. China’s increased involvement in the UN is mostly rooted in a realist desire to check American hegemony and create a multipolar world.
The articles in the Japan section of this issue come from disciplines that are not usually well-covered in area studies literature: art and linguistics. In “Takashi Murakami: Artist of Japanese Contemporary Subculture,” Gabriel Ritter presents an intriguing overview of Murakami’s art works, which focus on Japan’s consumer culture, idol-making system, as well as its otaku subculture. Ritter argues that while the artist focuses on cultural phenomena that are uniquely Japanese, his works also embody a poignant, critical view of contemporary Japanese culture. Meanwhile, in “Japanese Inferential Auxiliaries: Emphasizing and Deemphasizing Judgments through Yooda and Rashii,” Hidemi Sugi Riggs challenges the traditional explanation for the use of the two auxiliaries. Drawing upon a study of more than 5000 cases, she concludes that the semantic difference between yooda and rashii is not based on the type of evidence that the speaker refers to, as is generally presumed, but rather on whether the speaker intends to emphasize an inferential judgment.

The two articles in the Korea section seek to examine factors that are not necessarily proximate to the phenomena that they affect. In “Rhetoric, Reality, and Responsibility: The United States’ Role in South Korean Democratization,” Tracy Williams draws the readers’ attention to the United States as a critical player in the timing of South Korea’s democratization. She argues that prior to 1987, the US chose to support authoritarian rule for its own strategic interests and that this effectively prevented South Korea from adopting a democratic system. In “The Social Origins of the Korean Financial Crisis in 1997: Historical and Institutional Perspectives,” Byung-Soo Kim and Kane Lee urge the reader to consider non-economic factors in understanding the causes of South Korea’s financial crisis. Taking a historical perspective, they highlight the roots of cultural norms that shaped the seemingly reckless actions of South Korea’s government and business conglomerates prior to 1997.

Finally, the last piece in this issue addresses an intriguing question: how has the world’s largest Muslim nation never had an Islamic government? In “The Failure of Political Islam in Indonesia: A Historical Narrative,” Jeff Lee looks at Islam in Indonesia and how religion has failed to achieve a decisive role in the country’s politics. Lee begins his historical sketch at the time when traders first brought the religion to the archipelago and then illustrates how political Islam was marginalized by the Dutch, utilized by the Japanese during World War II and ultimately sidelined throughout much of Indonesia’s post-independence period. In the post-Suharto era, Lee concludes, political Islam’s fortunes are not much better: Islamic parties have failed to broaden their focus beyond religion, thereby preventing them from gaining the support of the vast majority of Indonesians who are primarily concerned with economic and development issues.
China’s Space Program: Beyond Shenzhou V

According to a legend, China produced its first astronaut during the Ming Dynasty, when artisan Wan Hu strapped himself to a chair, held onto two kites, and lit a handful of bamboo rockets. On October 15, 2003, former air force pilot Yang Liwei provided China with a more credible claim to being a space power, as he completed China’s first manned mission into orbit aboard the Shenzhou V. The Shenzhou V, which took off from the Gobi Desert, landed safely in Inner Mongolia 21 hours later after traveling more than 600,000 kilometers and orbiting the Earth fourteen times.

Events from last October have focused world attention on China’s burgeoning space program. Beginning with the aborted 1972 Shugang I project, Beijing has labored to put a man in orbit. The space program, however, has yielded much more than the recent manned mission. To date, China has launched over 70 satellites; between 2006 and 2010, it plans to send an average of ten satellites into space a year. In late December, China launched the first of two Double Star satellites, part of a joint Chinese-European Space Agency project designed to study the Earth’s magnetosphere. As the Russian space program withers and American space shuttles remain grounded, Beijing has set its ambitions higher, aiming for more manned flights and a rudimentary space station operating in a few years. Chinese officials have also hinted at plans for remote-controlled rovers on the Moon by 2010 and the possibility of manned outposts on the Moon by 2030.

Publicly, Beijing has stressed the peaceful intentions of its space program. China’s rapid advances in space, however, have rattled some of its neighbors, who are conscious of the military applications of space technology. For Japan, Shenzhou V served as a potent symbol of China’s growing strength and technological prowess. India – which has long desired to catch up with China in space technology – has in the past few months clarified its space ambitions, which include an unmanned mission to the Moon by 2008.

President Bush has denied viewing the Chinese space program as a threat. “[China is] a country that’s now beginning to emerge as a sophisticated country,” Bush has stated. “And it’s got great potential. I hope that they are able to make discoveries in space, like we did, that will… help mankind.” However, Bush’s mid-January announcement on future missions to the Moon and Mars raised speculation that Washington is concerned about China’s space potential. US Senator Sam Brownback, R-Kansas, has even alluded to a future US-China space race: “You’ve got the Chinese and others making plans to send probes and even humans to the Moon. I don’t think we want other countries to get ahead of us in this race.”

Chen’s Referendum Plans Met with Skepticism

Reactions ranging from outright opposition to strong skepticism greeted the proposal made by Chen Shui-bian in early December 2003 – the Taiwan President declared that the government would implement a referendum on the issue of China’s ballistic missiles on the same day as Taiwan’s presidential election in March 2004. The Chinese leadership quickly expressed its vehement
objection, noting that the holding of a referendum would constitute a provocative, incremental step toward independence. The US also expressed its own reservations. Most notably, during a press conference following the December meeting between George W. Bush and Wen Jiabao, the US President made the clearest on-the-record statement opposing Chen’s proposal. “We oppose any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo. And the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally, to change the status quo, which we oppose,” Bush said. Japan and France also subsequently made clear their desire that Chen should refrain from provoking Beijing.

With significant international skepticism, the proposed referendum—which was widely seen as a means to boost Chen’s re-election campaign—has quickly become a significant political liability for the incumbent. The opposition Kuomintang and People First Party have criticized Chen for mishandling Taiwan’s foreign relations and undermining the trust of its major allies. Chen, meanwhile, has vowed to continue with the referendum, while choosing to tone down the question on the ballot. Instead of asking voters to directly demand that China withdraws its ballistic missiles, the electorate will decide whether Taiwan should acquire anti-missile weapons if China refuses to remove its missiles and whether both sides of the Strait should establish a “peace and stability framework.”

Analysts note that Chen originally proposed the referendum in an effort to boost his re-election bid, as he is constrained by his administration’s poor record in managing the island’s economy. The opposition candidates have aggressively addressed that topic in their campaign against Chen.

Japanese Troops Deployed to Iraq

Despite public opinion polls suggesting that up to two-thirds of its population are opposed to deploying troops to Iraq, Japan began sending military personnel to the Middle East on December 26, 2003. In what is Tokyo’s biggest foreign deployment since the end of World War II, 1,000 Japanese soldiers have been stationed in southeastern Iraq where they are providing medical aid, rebuilding schools and helping restore infrastructure.

For Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, the decision to deploy troops came after months of often fractious debates in the Diet and within his cabinet. “Japan’s prosperity and development rests on the peace and stability of the world,” he told the first group of air force members to be sent to Iraq. “We cannot be absorbed in ourselves. We must lend our strength for the reconstruction and peace of other countries.” Many in Japan remain unconvinced by Koizumi’s logic, arguing instead that deployment to Iraq is helping to erode Japan’s pacifist constitution. Leading Japanese daily Asahi Shimbun editorialized, “How can the deployment of the Self Defense Force (SDF) to an Iraq that is in a state of war be justified with the ban on the use of force under Article Nine of the constitution?” Supporters of Koizumi counter that Japan’s deployment has been sent to a location away from the volatile “Sunni triangle” and will be involved only in aid and reconstruction efforts, as the Diet mandated in July 2003. Government members are aware that Koizumi is undertaking a grave political risk by signing off on the overseas mission. “The prime minister’s head is on the block,” warned Tokyo’s Mainichi Daily News.

The Iraq mission promises to be a pivotal issue in this summer’s parliamentary elections. On the eve of the first deployment in late December, main opposition leader Naoto Kan capitalized on the public’s wariness by telling a public rally that there was still time to reverse the government’s
decision. In addition to the election, Koizumi is also looking toward further strengthening Japan’s relations with the United States. Tokyo has already committed $1.5 billion for reconstruction in Iraq during 2004, and the Japanese press has speculated that this number could rise to $5 billion over the next four years. This amount is still less than the $11 billion Japan contributed during the 1991 Gulf War, but Koizumi is keen to avoid the international criticism that Japan garnered from limiting its contribution to financial aid during that conflict.

US Relocates Troops on Korean Peninsula

On January 17, 2004, the United States agreed to pull its troops out of Seoul to an expanded facility 45 miles south of the capital by 2006. The American base in Seoul, currently home to the 8th division of the US Army, occupies prime real estate and has been a point of contention with South Koreans; Local residents have complained of traffic congestion, and younger generations view the stationing of US troops in the capital as a slight to national pride. The United States plans on leaving 1,000 troops, which are part of the United Nations forces on the Peninsula. In addition to the redeployment of troops away from Seoul, the US had also earlier agreed to close half of its bases in South Korea, including 28 combat and support facilities and three training ranges, and return more than half the land currently occupied by US forces by 2011.

Although some experts claim that the restructuring of US forces on the Korean peninsula will lead to a reduction of US force strength, both the US and South Korean governments have emphasized that the plans will not diminish US capacity to defend South Korea in case of an attack by North Korea. Under the new configuration, US troops will sustain fewer casualties at the outset, and new, long range precision weapons can be used more effectively. In addition, US troops may also be deployed to other parts of the region more quickly. Altogether, as South Korea’s former Foreign Minister Yoon Young Kwan stated, these adjustments are steps in the process of transforming the US-ROK alliance “from Cold War to post-Cold War.”

The plan to relocate US troops comes at a time when a younger generation of South Koreans is gaining influence in politics and government. These leaders generally view the US as a country that supported South Korea’s past military regimes, while regarding China as an increasingly important power with which a constructive relationship needs to be carefully maintained. Striking a balance between the US and China and securing a greater degree of independence for South Korea constitute some of the basic premises of the foreign policy thinking of these new leaders.
Southeast Asia’s Response to Iraqi Occupation

While two Southeast Asian nations, the Philippines and Singapore, were members of the US-led coalition against Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime, opinion in the region on the continuing occupation of Iraq is far from unanimous. Majority Muslim countries have vocally criticized American policy in the Middle East, while other nations have offered support, aid and troops.

**Indonesia**

The war and occupation in Iraq have never been popular in the world’s largest Muslim nation. High ranking members of the government have become increasingly vocal in their criticism of what many Indonesians see as an unjustified war and an affront on Islam. In December 2003, Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda blamed the United States for angering Muslims worldwide and plunging the Middle East into more insecurity. If the violence and disorder in US-occupied Iraq continued, Wirajuda warned, it “would make the war . . . a debacle to the cause of security and peace.” The United States expressed displeasure at Wirajuda’s comments, calling them “an unjustified attack on [our] policies.”

The Indonesian government has remained relatively silent on the subject of an *ad interim* government in Iraq, saying it will first observe the ongoing process of reconstruction. The government believes that the UN should play a central role in the establishment of such a government and that the process should always receive the full support of the Iraqi people, according to Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Marty Natalegawa. Indonesia has maintained that it will only recognize an Iraqi government established under the auspices of the UN.

**Malaysia**

As the current chair for the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference, Malaysia declined to offer Iraq an invitation to the 2003 conference because it had yet to achieve sovereignty and stability. “[The US] must set a deadline for the pullout of the occupying forces,” said Foreign Minister Syed Hamid Albar. “We want Iraq to be under United Nations’ control so that more countries could join in to rebuild Iraq. This will give the efforts to rebuild Iraq international legitimacy.” Kuala Lumpur has stressed the need not only for international cooperation on reconstruction, but also the involvement of Muslim nations that understand Iraq’s religious tension.

With last October’s leadership transition, Kuala Lumpur has softened its tone on US policy in Iraq. President Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has signaled that he will not divert from former-President Mahathir Mohamad’s opposition of the war, but has emphasized the strength of other aspects of US-Malaysia relations. “We have good relations with the United States,” Abdullah mentioned in his first interview with foreign media since assuming the presidency. “Of course we differ very seriously on certain issues. There are political issues, for example the war in Iraq. But certainly our cooperation in other fields, in economics, in trade, has been going on unhindered.”
The Philippines

"We know the pain of terror, [and] we know the relief brought by knowing we have faithful partners against terror," stated Philippines President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo while greeting President Bush in Manila late last year. Arroyo has been a staunch supporter of the United States in its war on terrorism, and she enthusiastically extended this support to Washington during the conflict in Iraq. After major hostilities ceased, Manila begin deploying soldiers, policemen and social workers to Iraq, numbering nearly 200 by the end of 2003 and increasing to 500 in the first months of 2004. In return, the United States continues to aid the Philippines in its fight against terrorists and separatists operating in the country's south.

Thailand

Thailand, which like the Philippines has had a longstanding military alliance with the United States, adopted a pro-Washington stance during the war in Iraq and has contributed a number of troops. To date, over 400 troops have been dispatched to the central Iraqi city of Karbala, where they are being stationed for six months. After the six month period ends, Bangkok has promised to send replacements, which will be based in the country for another half year. Despite a landmine injury sustained by a Thai soldier in December and warnings from Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai that Bangkok would withdraw its troops if the security situation in Iraq deteriorates, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has vowed to complete the year-long mission.

Thailand's involvement in Iraq comes on the heels of close cooperation with the US on antiterrorism. In addition to contributing troops, Thaksin has allowed the US to use Thai bases and the CIA to interrogate Al Qaeda prisoners on Thai soil. Thailand has recently been designated a "major non-NATO ally" of the United States, but some in Bangkok are fearing that close cooperation with the United States on security issue has caused Washington to turn its back on some of Thaksin's more-autocratic policies and tendencies.
China in the UN: United with Other Nations?

Susan Tieh

Introduction

Since it replaced the Republic of China in the Chinese seat of the United Nations (UN) in 1971, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has relied heavily on the UN in promoting its international standing. Communist China was recognized by few governments and generally excluded from international diplomacy before it entered the United Nations; after gaining UN membership, China was recognized by most countries, culminating in the establishment of formal diplomatic ties with the United States in 1979. Thus, the UN offered China legitimacy, bringing it into the international community. In addition, China’s place as one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (UNSC) has been described by some as “the only way it can portray itself as a global power.” There are several other possible reasons for why the UN is important to China: it is a means to balance power and to promote a positive international reputation, and it is instrumental in the arena of international law.

Before examining the evolution of China’s attitude toward the UN, one must first ask: why does China’s view of the United Nations matter? After the United States and Great Britain led a war on Iraq without UN support in 2003, the UN was declared dead, and some suggested that “the grand attempt to subject the use of force to the rule of law had failed.” Furthermore, China has never been a particularly proactive member-state. Yet, China’s perspective on the UN does matter. Indeed, the history of Chinese involvement in the UN can be used to gauge the evolution of China’s general understanding of the international system and can help clarify whether China has embraced a multilateral approach toward conflict resolution. China’s perspective on the UN is also important for the UN itself. Wielding veto power as a permanent member of the UNSC, China has the potential to greatly influence any course of action taken by the UN. If the UN is truly in danger of being rendered irrelevant, then China’s attitude toward the UN will play a major role in determining the UN’s fate.

To gain an understanding of the evolution of China’s perspective on the UN, it is helpful to focus on two specific areas of Chinese involvement since 1971. First, looking at the development of peacekeeping and China’s reaction to it provides a useful framework for analyzing Chinese participation in multilateral activities. This development also reveals how China is constrained by national interests and concerns about political principles. Second, a comparison of two case studies – the 1991 Gulf War and the most recent war against Iraq – helps illuminate the extent of Chinese acceptance of collective security. Overall, both cases show that China’s response to the UN has been strongly influenced by its national interests. In particular, concerns about balance of power, sovereignty, and international reputation have consistently played large roles in the Chinese response.

When speaking of China’s international behavior, many analysts refer to China as “learning” or “adapting.” Whereas adaptation suggests that China is merely superficially conforming to international norms in a realist pursuit of state interests, learning means that China

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China is absorbing international norms and adjusting its state behavior accordingly. A study of peacekeeping and the wars against Iraq suggests that China may not only be using the UN to further its strategic interests, but that it may also have begun, genuinely yet slowly, to embrace the ideals of international cooperation and collective security under the UN. In other words, China is learning, gradually.

Background: The Chinese Voting Record

It is helpful to briefly review China’s voting record in the Security Council to gain a perspective on trends in Chinese involvement in the UN. The PRC has cast only five vetoes throughout its membership; in comparison, Russia (and its predecessor, the Soviet Union) has cast the most vetoes, 120, but it has not vetoed any resolutions in more than eight years. The United States has used its veto 76 times, while Britain has used it 32 times and France 18 times. Since 1981, China has only used its veto twice, both times in cases associated with Taiwan. On January 10, 1997, China vetoed a resolution authorizing a small peacekeeping mission to Guatemala because that country maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Similarly, in 1999, China rejected the proposal to establish a peacekeeping mission in Macedonia because of Macedonia’s ties with Taiwan. Chinese vetoes are thus extremely rare and when they do occur, they are generally governed by strict national interest.

By far the most common Chinese voting behavior in recent times is abstention. From 1990 to 1996, China had 29 abstentions, constituting 64 percent of the total 45 abstentions by all five permanent Security Council members. Yet, Chinese abstentions can actually be seen as an indicator of greater Chinese participation in the UN. When the PRC first joined the UN, it did not even participate in Security Council votes on peacekeeping resolutions. This changed in 1981, when China began not only to vote on peacekeeping resolutions, but also to affirm them. Since 1989 and 1990, however, China again shifted to abstaining on many peacekeeping measures.

Peacekeeping I: Eras of Evolution in the Chinese Response

Prior to joining the United Nations, the PRC generally viewed peacekeeping missions negatively. As Samuel S. Kim notes, China saw such missions as “docile special detachments of the international gendarmerie of US imperialism.” Kim attributes China’s critical view of peacekeeping to two causes: China’s experience in the Korean War, when it fought UN troops under American leadership, and the Maoist theory of just war, which sees peacekeeping as a pretext to justify American or Soviet intervention in the internal affairs of weaker states.

As noted earlier, upon joining the UN, the PRC expressed its opposition to peacekeeping in a “non-lethal” manner by refusing to participate in votes on peacekeeping and by not paying its annual peacekeeping assessment or contributing troops. Even though China did not use its veto to prevent all peacekeeping operations, its rhetoric sharply criticized peacekeeping. Huang Hua, Chinese ambassador to the UN during the 1970s, claimed that the creation of the second UN Emergency Force (UNEF II), intended to keep the peace between Egypt, Syria and Israel after the 1973 Yom Kippur War, would cause “infinite evil consequences in its wake and pave the way for further international intervention in the Middle East...
with the superpowers as the behind-the-scenes bosses.”

Kim divides the evolution of the Chinese response to peacekeeping into three broad eras: principled opposition/nonparticipation (1971-1981), support/participation (1982-1989), and contingent support/minimal participation (1990-present). These broad distinctions offer a useful framework within which to examine changes in Chinese policies regarding peacekeeping.

Kim characterizes the first decade of China’s membership in the UN as an era of principled opposition/nonparticipation with respect to peacekeeping. This opposition was a continuation of China’s ideological and experience-based disapproval of UN peacekeeping. The Chinese saw peacekeeping as an excuse for superpowers to meddle in the affairs of smaller states. As such, the Chinese opposed peacekeeping in an attempt to balance the effects of the superpowers. Hoping to prevent the United States or the Soviet Union from becoming hegemonic powers, the Chinese sought to minimize both states’ influence in international interventions by opposing peacekeeping of any sort.

Yet, if this was the case, one must ask why China did not resort directly to vetoing. Kim offers a “maxi-mini principle” to explain Chinese behavior: he proposes that China was a free-rider in the UN, always striving to maximize benefits while minimizing actual responsibilities. In Kim’s opinion, Chinese nonparticipation in peacekeeping votes allowed the Chinese “to have it both ways” because nonparticipation let the Chinese take a “principled stand” against peacekeeping while still allowing it to express implicit acceptance by not vetoing. Thus, China could claim moral ground by seemingly sticking to its principles, while also not incurring the resentment of the other Security Council members who supported intervention.

In late November 1981, Ambassador Ling Qing announced to the UN General Assembly that China was going to take a flexible approach to peacekeeping. On December 14, 1981, China voted for the extension of the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus for the first time. It also began paying its annual peacekeeping contribution in January 1982. As Kim notes, “the demands of China’s Third World friends and a desire to avoid any confrontation” over China’s failure to pay its dues prompted the decision to begin the payments. By 1982, China painted itself as a strong supporter of UN peacekeeping and of the UN in general. In a statement from that year it proclaimed that “[t]he more tumultuous the international situation, and the more seriously threatened world peace and international security, the more important and pressing becomes the task of strengthening the United Nations.”

In 1988, China became a member of the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. In China’s first statement as a member state, Ambassador Yu Mengjia declared that UN peacekeeping was an “effective mechanism” for politically resolving regional conflicts. And for the first time, in 1989, China sent personnel to serve on a UN force: five military observers were sent to the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in the Middle East and twenty personnel were sent to the UN Transitional Assistance Group (UNTAG), which monitored Namibia’s transition to independence.

According to Kim’s framework, this period of support/participation extended from 1982 until 1989. The shift in China’s attitude resulted from “tactical and situational adaptation” rather than “normative conversion.” Kim states that the main

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15 Ibid.

16 Kim, “China and the UN.” 53.

17 Ibid.


19 Ibid.


21 Ibid., 422.

22 Ibid.
motivation for the change was China's desire to balance growing American power by moving closer to the Third World. By emphasizing its place as "self-proclaimed leader of the developing world," it was necessary for China to cooperate more with the UN, as many Third World nations supported the UN and its peacekeeping missions.

Because the realist practice of balancing power recurs throughout the PRC's history, this argument is compelling. For instance, throughout the Cold War, China's foreign policy stance toward the US and the Soviet Union was largely dictated by larger geopolitical changes; China sought to ally itself with the weaker power against the stronger power. Originally closely tied to the Soviets, China moved toward the US in the 1970s because the US was widely perceived as being in decline, as the Soviets had achieved nuclear parity in the 1960s and registered technological superiority by their launch of the first man-made satellite, Sputnik. Not surprisingly, when the Soviets were in decline in the 1980s, Sino-Soviet relations warmed while Sino-American relations cooled. Seeking to balance American power by growing closer to the Third World via the UN thus correlates with China's long-term foreign policy behavior.

China's decision to support peacekeeping also improves its international reputation. As Kim notes, supporting peacekeeping missions was just another step in China's "quest" to be seen as a "responsible Third World champion" by the rest of the international community. China may have chosen to participate in peacekeeping to legitimize itself as an engaged and moralistic player in the world system. More likely, however, the decision to support peacekeeping was not made based on Chinese concerns with international reputation; if concern about reputation were the driving force for the change in Chinese participation in peacekeeping, this shift in attitude could easily have occurred earlier. Clearly, other factors, such as balance of power, were in effect.

Domestic reasons have been cited as motivation for change in the official Chinese position on peacekeeping. When China embarked on domestic economic reforms in the late 1970s, it required access to foreign markets and foreign investment. Therefore, China adopted a "more open and cooperative foreign policy" to enable the successful pursuit of its domestic economic goals. In addition, as M. Taylor Fravel notes, China's new cooperation on peacekeeping carried virtually no political risk and little financial cost, as the UN did not create any new peacekeeping operations until 1988.

Kim describes the last period from 1990 until the present as a time of contingent support and minimal participation. The list of UN peacekeeping missions that China has opposed since 1990 is long: Operation Provide Comfort in Iraq; the UN Protection Force in Bosnia; Operation Turquoise in Rwanda; and Operation Restore Democracy in Haiti. China abstained on all of the Security Council resolutions authorizing these missions.

Yet, one cannot simply attribute the change in China's policy to a shift in Chinese attitude. Looking only at the Chinese response to peacekeeping missions after 1990 ignores the essential fact that peacekeeping itself underwent major changes. Prior to 1990, peacekeeping took the form of what is generally referred to as traditional peacekeeping, best exemplified by the first peacekeeping mission devised by then UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold in 1956 in response to the Suez crisis. Peacekeeping is an innovation itself: there is no specific reference to it in the UN Charter. Peacekeeping was invoked under Chapter Six of the UN Charter, which deals with the peaceful settlement of disputes, but its basis in the charter is sometimes referred to as

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25 Kim, "China and the UN," 51.
26 Fravel, 1104.
28 H. Lyman Miller, "Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy" (lecture at Stanford University, May 2, 2003).
27 Kim, "China and the Third World," 142.
28 Fravel, 1104.
"Chapter Six-and-a-half" because peacekeeping combines the elements of peaceful settlement (Chapter Six) with enforcement (Chapter Seven). Over time, there emerged tenets regulating the nature of peacekeeping missions: first, peacekeepers must maintain strict neutrality; second, the consent of the parties involved has to be obtained; third, peacekeepers should only use their weapons in self-defense; fourth, peacekeeping missions should occur after a cease-fire agreement has been signed. Peacekeepers were there to help the belligerents maintain the cease-fire agreement.

In the 1990s, however, the nature of peacekeeping changed drastically. Called "second-generation peacekeeping" or peacemaking, this new variety did not follow the traditional rules. UN forces were still expected to maintain their impartiality, but peacekeepers were authorized to use force to fulfill their mandate. Missions were undertaken in conflicts in which there was no cease-fire or peace agreement in place. The UN no longer required the consent of all involved parties before intervening. Second-generation peacekeeping arose partly because the UN began to embrace the idea that sovereignty was a flexible concept that could be overridden for gross violations of human rights. As Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali declared in his outline for the future role of the UN in the 1992 "Agenda for Peace," the "time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty . . . has passed; its theory was never matched by reality. It is the task of leaders of States today to understand this and to find a balance between the needs of good internal governance and the requirements of an ever more interdependent world."  

China was deeply troubled by the new direction of peacekeeping and its looser definition of sovereignty. An article in the Beijing Review critically noted that the UN Charter does not contain any mention of peacekeeping and that the Charter states that countries should not intervene in the internal matters of other nations. China has repeatedly stated that UN peacekeeping missions must respect states' sovereignty. As former Foreign Minister Qian Qichen said, the Chinese felt "peace-keeping operations should strictly conform to the principles of the UN Charter and the norms of international relations. Such operations should be undertaken only with the consent and cooperation of the parties concerned . . . No peace-keeping operations or humanitarian aid programs should be permitted to interfere in the internal affairs of any country." The UN website of the Chinese delegation reaffirms that sovereignty must be respected and also declares that "military interference under the name of the UN should be rejected" and that "UN peacekeeping forces should strictly observe neutrality and non-use of force except for self-defense."

It is clear that China continues to support traditional peacekeeping in the face of second-generation peacekeeping. For instance, after listing the principles of traditional peacekeeping, which "strictly adhere to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter," the Chinese UN website states: "Adhering to the above principles, China has participated actively in UN peacekeeping activities." Implicit in this statement is the idea that China only supports peacekeeping that maintains traditional rules. Because China still embraces the principles of traditional peacekeeping, it has tended to oppose operations that depart from these guidelines, especially those that authorize the use of force.

China's overriding concern with second-generation peacekeeping is state sovereignty. Its preoccupation with upholding this principle has been well-documented. Overall, China is deeply concerned about instances of encroachment on state sovereignty because it fears that these will set a dangerous precedent that will allow other

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23 Ibid., 1005.
26 Flavel, 1106.
28 Flavel, 1006.
29 "Peacekeeping Operations of the UN," online.
30 Flavel, 1107.
China in the UN

nations to interfere in China's internal matters. Such fears stem in part from foreign encroachments on Chinese territory in the nineteenth century. The continuing importance of this historical period on Chinese political thinking is evidenced by President Jiang Zemin's 1997 characterization of this period as one in which China was subjected to "great humiliation" and stood "on the verge of subjugation" by foreign powers.\(^{37}\) More recently, in a November 2001 speech, then-Vice President Hu Jintao stated: "Because of our protracted sufferings from foreign invasions and enslavement in modern history, we are particularly jealous of our hard-won peace and freedom.\(^{38}\)

Another major reason for China's wariness of looser definitions of sovereignty is China's fear of independence movements within China. Separatist groups in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia have agitated for independence from China.\(^{39}\) In addition, China fears that accepting a weaker definition of sovereignty may allow foreign interference in the Taiwan issue.

Peacekeeping II: Reflections on the Past and China's Stance Today

Despite China's insistence on protecting a conservative definition of sovereignty, it had made progress in the level of its engagement in UN peacekeeping from 1971 to 1996. At the very least, it has moved along the spectrum of participation from no involvement to "complete formal participation". Even though China often abstains, at least it now participates in Security Council votes.\(^{40}\) Also, although China's concerns about sovereignty make it wary of second-generation peacekeeping, it now supports traditional peacekeeping, which it once rejected. Although China once declared that it would never send its troops abroad,\(^{41}\) in 1989 it contributed personnel for UN peacekeeping for the first time. Moreover, since 1990, it has sent more than 1,450 officers, soldiers, and military observers to participate in UN peacekeeping operations.\(^{42}\) Thus, although its progress had been slow, China became a more active member of the UN from 1971 to 1996, demonstrating its growing acceptance of the UN's role in maintaining international security.

Kim's examination of the Chinese attitude toward peacekeeping terminates at the mid-1990s. If the examination is extended, it appears that the trend of Chinese support for traditional peacekeeping missions continues after 1996. Because of failures and difficulties in Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia, the UN moved away from second-generation peacekeeping and returned to the traditional model.\(^{43}\) The number of peacekeeping missions also fell, from a peak of 70,000 peacekeepers in seventeen missions in 1994\(^{44}\) to approximately 37,000 peacekeepers in fourteen current missions in 2003.\(^{45}\) As the UN moved away from second-generation peacekeeping, it has adopted more traditional missions, which offer China more opportunities to

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\(^{39}\) Favel, 1112.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 1120.


\(^{44}\) "Sea of Blue," The Economist (April 30, 1994).


participate while still upholding its vision of sovereignty.

It appears that China has, in fact, increased its involvement in peacekeeping operations. From August to December 1996, China was ranked 49 in numbers of troops and other personnel contributed to peacekeeping missions, the lowest of the five permanent members of the Security Council. In December 1996 it had a contribution of 38 personnel.46 As of April 30, 2003, China is ranked 27 with 329 personnel partaking in peacekeeping missions, just below Russia and just ahead of France.47 In 2000, China sent fifteen civilian police officers to serve in UN peacekeeping operations.48 The deployment of the police to East Timor marked only the second time that Chinese personnel had been committed to serving in peacekeeping forces.49 Since then, China has sent 198 more police officers to serve in UN groups in East Timor and Bosnia.50

In January 2003, China announced that it would dispatch a 175-member engineering team as well as 43 medical unit soldiers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This marked the first time in a decade that China had sent troops on a UN peacekeeping mission.51 When announcing the decision to send troops, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue reiterated the Chinese commitment to the institution of peacekeeping: “China, as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, will continue to support and take part in the UN peacekeeping operations.” In addition, Zhang said peacekeeping “had played an important role in solving regional conflicts” and that the missions “were widely appreciated.”52

The continuation of Chinese support for traditional peacekeeping suggests that China does believe in its value for promoting peace. Although China still only offers minimal support for peacekeeping missions, its contribution is more substantial than the past in terms of personnel deployed. Thus, China’s current attitude toward peacekeeping might be described as moving back to support and participation. The increased Chinese support for peacekeeping is thus a product of the ongoing evolution of peacekeeping and of a Beijing that is, at the very least, much more supportive of UN peacekeeping operations today than it was when it first entered the UN. But the question remains: is this increased support the result of absorption of norms of collective security and international cooperation? An examination of the two Iraq wars offers some insight into the extent of China’s acceptance of such norms.

Case Studies: The Gulf Wars

The progression in Chinese support for the UN is evident when looking at the 1991 and 2003 wars against Iraq. During the first Gulf crisis, China supported a UN role, but it also called repeatedly for a regional solution to the issue. It adopted very different positions in 2003. In the diplomatic activity that preceded the 2003 war on Iraq, China consistently emphasized the importance of UN action as the means to maintain peace. It never called on regional actors to assume responsibility, arguing instead for all diplomacy to be controlled by the UN. Thus, China has exhibited a greater reliance on the UN in times of international crisis. This can be interpreted as an indication of China’s growing embrace of collective solutions to international conflicts.

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the international community, including China, was quick to condemn the invasion. The Chinese government issued a statement “opposing Iraq’s invasion and occupation of Kuwait, demanding Iraq’s immediate and unconditional withdrawal... and maintaining that the disputes between the two countries be

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46 “China to Continue Its UN Peacekeeping Work.”
46 “China to Continue Its UN Peacekeeping Work.”
51 Pomfret, A.24
52 “China to Continue Its UN Peacekeeping Work.”
resolved through peaceful political means, rather than the use of force." Even the leaders of the Arab world quickly aligned with the rest of the world in criticizing the invasion. Given the consensus, it is perhaps not surprising that the Security Council was able to act quickly. Just thirteen hours after Iraqi troops entered Kuwait, the Security Council held a formal meeting, during which it passed a US-sponsored resolution condemning the invasion and demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. The fact that China voted for this and other resolutions is notable because it actually suffered adverse economic consequences from the resulting trade sanctions. Iraq was one of the largest purchasers of Chinese arms, and the Chinese foreign ministry estimates that China lost US$2 billion in arms exports because of the sanctions.

Although China voted in favor of the first eleven Security Council resolutions pertaining to Iraq, it simultaneously called for an "Arab solution" to the Gulf crisis. In an address to the UN General Assembly on September 29, 1990, Foreign Minister Qian Qichen declared that China "stands for a political settlement of the Gulf crisis within the framework of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council." Even while seemingly affirming the importance of the UN, however, Qian emphasized the desirability of a regional solution. By calling on Iraq "to respond to the mediation efforts of the Arab countries and the UN Secretary General," Qian demonstrated the Chinese hope that "Arab countries will solve the crisis on their own." China ultimately abstained on Resolution 678, which authorized "member states cooperating with the government of Kuwait... to use all necessary means to uphold and implement" the previous resolution demanding immediate Iraqi withdrawal and surrender. It declared that it abstained "in view of [its] constant stand of striving for peaceful solution."

It was decidedly in China's best national interest to abstain. Chinese concerns about improving US-China relations, which had soured after the crackdown at Tiananmen Square in 1989, clearly played a large role in the Chinese decision to abstain rather than veto the Iraq vote. After Tiananmen, the US cut off high-level official contacts with China. China, however, leveraged its veto power to gain the resumption of these contacts. Foreign Minister Qian met with US Secretary of State James Baker the day before the Security Council voted on Resolution 678; it was the first time since June 4, 1990 that a ranking official had been invited on an official visit to the US. In exchange for a Chinese promise not to veto, the Bush administration granted Qian a visit to the White House, thus marking the resumption of high-level diplomatic ties. The US also appealed to the World Bank to lift its embargo on loans to China.

Overall, China saw the Gulf crisis as an excellent opportunity to demonstrate China's importance on the Security Council and to divert attention away from the events at Tiananmen Square and the resultant international scrutiny of China's human rights regime. Kim cites this as

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55 Meisler, 260.
56 Calabrese, 478.
57 Ibid.
58 "Text of Qian Qichen Speech at UN," Renmin Ribao (September 29, 1990), 1 (accessed through the Federal Broadcast Information Service, October 1, 1990).
60 Meisler, 265.
61 "The Iraq Issue," online.
62 Calabrese, 478.
64 Kim, "China and the UN," 84.
65 Kim, "International Organizational Behavior," 422.
66 Ibid., 423.
another example of the maxi-mini principle, since China was able to use the situation to "extract maximum pay-offs from the United States with minimum support."66

The Chinese reaction to the recent war in Iraq differed sharply from its earlier response in two ways. In 2002, the US accused Iraq of possessing weapons of mass destruction; Saddam Hussein had not cooperated with the weapons inspectors originally installed in Iraq under Resolution 687. With American urging, the Security Council passed Resolution 1441 on November 7, 2002. This resolution called for Iraq to cooperate with weapons inspectors. As it had in 1990, China in 2003 called for a peaceful resolution through "political, diplomatic, and peaceful means."67 Considering that in the most recent conflict Iraq's violation was not nearly as egregious as in 1990, China's desire for a diplomatic solution is hardly surprising given the repeated Chinese commitment to maintaining peace.

Throughout the turmoil over weapons inspections leading up to the war, China repeatedly called for a solution "within the UN framework."68 Unlike the previous Gulf conflict, during which China expressed hope for a regional solution, China in 2002 and 2003 emphasized that the problem had to be resolved through the UN. For instance, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that "the international community has very great expectations in the United Nations and the Security Council" and that the "dominant role of the United Nations and the Security Council in a political settlement of the Iraqi issue should be upheld."69 In the words of a senior official in the Ministry, China sought a "political solution ... within the framework of the United Nations, fully upholding the authority of the United Nations and requiring Iraq to honor its words of not possessing any weapons of mass destruction."70

Clearly, the two wars occurred in very different contexts making the comparison imperfect. Yet, these cases do strongly suggest that from the first Gulf War to the second, China has undergone changes in its attitude toward the UN's place in the realm of international security. The change arguably resulted from national interests, but that does not necessarily mean that there was no normative element. Certainly national interests played a major factor in Chinese behavior, but it can also be argued that this behavior also reflects a growing Chinese acceptance of UN norms like multilateral cooperation. Before an assessment of the roots of Chinese behavior can be made, however, the realist argument must be laid out.

A Realist Reading of the Different Chinese Responses

Beijing's decision to support a strong UN role can be interpreted as balance of power politics. In this realist interpretation, China's decision to stress the importance of the UN stems solely from a desire to constrain US power. Yong Deng describes the Chinese belief that "concentrated power without counterbalancing it is both dangerous and unnatural."71 Therefore, recognizing that the US is currently the world's only superpower, Beijing may seek to balance American power through the UN.

The realist explanation offers a compelling reason for China's support for conflict resolution within the UN framework; by advocating the UN as the sole means of solving international problems, China enhances its own international standing. During the period preceding the 2003 war, it was noted that "China seems to prefer that if the United States does attack Iraq, military action is taken with the authorization of the United Nations rather than without it, as happened with Kosovo and Yugoslavia."72 When the North Atlantic Treaty

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68 Ibid.
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Organization (NATO) intervened in Kosovo, China "expressed shock at the use of human rights as a pretext" for the bombing and called the mission "new hegemony."\textsuperscript{73}

In this view, China's ultimate goal is to build UN power to give China a greater say in world events. Beijing's repeated calls for solutions "within the UN framework" can be seen as efforts to promote the use of force only when UN authorization is given. If this norm were adopted by the international community, it could equip the UN with enough authority to counterbalance American power. It is thus in China's best interests to strengthen the UN as an institution, and its vocal backing of a UN-brokered solution to the Iraq standoff thus becomes an exercise in realism.

The above argument is quite compelling and makes it appear unlikely that Beijing's position changed from 1990 to 2002 as a result of normative alteration alone. Also, realists read the evidence of a recent deepening of China's commitment to UN peacekeeping as additional evidence of Chinese efforts to maintain the UN as a counterweight to American power.\textsuperscript{74} China's contributions to peacekeeping can thus be seen as power-balancing and not as signs of growing Chinese adherence to the cause of multilateral cooperation.

Conclusion

Looking back at China's responses to peacekeeping and the contrast in its reaction to the 1991 and 2003 Gulf wars, it is clear that China participates much more actively in the UN today than it did in the past. Many analysts argue that this change occurred because of China's pursuit of national interests and that norms played no role. Yet, it is important to note that the realist model and the assertion that China is moving toward true acceptance of the multilateralist ideals of the UN may not be mutually exclusive. Like other states, China's position on the UN is not static — it is ever-evolving and shaped by various factors, including state interests and international norms.

Generally, China acts according to its strategic interests. Faced with American hegemony, China has decided that promoting multipolarity is in its best interest. This was well-illustrated by the treaty China signed with Russia in July 2001, which articulated both nations' commitment to a "multipolar world."\textsuperscript{75} China uses the UN to help pursue multipolarity. This implies that China believes in the UN's mission enough to think that it can provide a counterweight to American hegemony.

At the same time, as China has chosen the UN as the best means of creating the world order it would like to see, the changing attitudes of China toward UN peacekeeping and its differing responses to the Iraq wars suggest that China may also have begun to embrace the ideas of mutual dependence and mutual responsibility. As Huo Hwei-ling explains, China's belief that the world is in a "unipolar moment" of American power means that "[t]he most important task of Chinese foreign policy . . . is to create an international environment that allows countries with different social systems to coexist and seek development,"\textsuperscript{76} not simply to secure China's own strategic interests. In turn, it seems that China has come to regard the UN as arguably the best institution for achieving this goal.

The changes in the Chinese approach toward the UN can therefore be read as rooted in both realist and normative concerns. While Beijing's desire for multipolarity is consistent with its perceived strategic interests, the evolution of China's attitude toward peacekeeping suggests that China's acceptance of the norm of multilateral cooperation may have increased. Therefore, there is reason to hope that when Beijing declares that "[o]nly by enhancing international cooperation can one . . . realize the goal of having universal and long lasting security,"\textsuperscript{77} it means what it says.

\textsuperscript{73} The Chinese position only hardened when NATO forces mistakenly bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade ("China to send civilian police to East Timor").


\textsuperscript{75} Glennon, 19.

\textsuperscript{76} Hwei-ling Huo, "Patterns of Behavior in China's Foreign Policy: The Gulf Crisis and Beyond," Asian Survey, vol. 32, no. 3 (March 1992), 274.


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Considering the System: The Search for an Effective Anti-Corruption Policy in China

William Chan

Introduction

The leaders of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) warn that public disgust with corruption (jubai tanwu) could threaten their rule. Public concern with the issue figured prominently in the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations and continued to grow following the brutal conclusion of the demonstrations, despite the CCP’s attempts to recapture public confidence. Unable to ignore the many angry marches and opinion surveys of recent years, China’s rulers have made corruption a top priority and have acknowledged the urgency with which this problem requires deliberate and effective response. This paper evaluates past and current efforts to curb corruption, noting their successes, shortcomings, and relevant political constraints and also tracks a new shift in policy. Rather than limiting the scope to specific offences, this paper considers the component parts of the problem, including the incentives, penalties, and actors, and thus takes a broader view of corruption. Because of the widespread systemic nature of corruption in China, this approach is conceivably more appropriate; effective policies must address the prevailing conditions that cause corruption.

Analyzing Corruption in China

Although corruption takes on myriad forms, it necessarily involves persons of at least some power. Cadres, because they control public services and have access to public material goods, are the typical perpetrators. For example, in poor areas, poverty relief funds are prime targets for local officials, who embezzle or divert them. Likewise, to make a little extra income, railroad station managers sometimes impose a “fee” on passengers leaving the station. Under the dual-track pricing system whereby many goods are sold at both a subsidized government price and a higher market price, opportunistic cadres would buy agricultural fertilizer at government-subsidized prices to sell at higher market prices — leaving peasant farmers with no option but to buy fertilizer at market prices. Sometimes the prize of corruption is non-monetary, for instance when a police chief agrees not to charge an influential law offender in exchange for the chance to send his child to a top school. In each case, the corrupt cadres have opportunities to abuse their power for personal gain with highly probable impunity.

Why are cadres so prone to corruption? According to game theory, “players” in a “game” are likely to engage in an act if the expected gains from participation outweigh non-participation. Robert Klitgaard adapts game theory to corruption to formulate the following important observation:

\[ \text{Corruption} = \text{bribe} - (\text{probability of punishment} \times \text{penalty of being corrupt}) > \text{(base salary + satisfaction of not being corrupt)} \]

In other words, the actors in this game are likely to engage in corruption if the expected

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6 T. Wing Lo, Corruption and Politics in Hong Kong and China (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1993), 59.

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benefits of participation outweigh those of corruption-free life.

With the concentration of power in the hands of the players themselves, participation in corruption certainly brings personal gain with a high chance of success. Statistical evidence suggests just how easy it is to get away with corruption. The data compiled by Melanie Manion (see Table 1) shows that from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s only 57 percent of investigated cases of cadre corruption were prosecuted — compared to 95 percent for non-cadres — and even those who are prosecuted may not necessarily be punished due to the loopholes in the Chinese legal system. More worryingly, the Cox News Agency finds that Chinese citizens generally see punishment as “selective and hardly putting a dent in the problem.” Clearly, discipline is the exception rather than the rule.

Cadres rarely fear punishment due to the lack of structural controls. In addition to being the “player,” cadres also fill the role of law enforcement. If a cadre benefits from corruption, why would other cadres expose them when they might be benefiting from corruption themselves? Besides, examples of corrupt law enforcement officers abound. In more blatant, publicly exposed cases of cadre corruption, fellow cadres would assume the role of prosecutor, investigator, judge, and executor of justice. Disciplining could involve as little as a warning or, in more severe cases, dismissal from the job or from the party. In recent years, extremely serious offenders have received prison terms or execution dates, but even this fails to produce the intended aggregate effect on corrupt officials. Instead of being scared into probity, many have fled abroad with their families and their cash. More than 4,000 corrupt officials have emigrated with more than $605 million, according to the official Ban Yue Tan magazine (Fortnightly Chat). The absence of reliable law enforcement hinders many efforts to fight corruption.

The Chinese system seems to even encourage corruption. The case of Wang Xuebing, the former president of the Bank of China arrested after stealing millions of dollars from the bank, illustrates the culture that has developed as a result of widespread corruption. A longtime associate of Wang’s stated, “All the conditions are there to tempt [high-level executives]. They are paid little. . . Everyone else is doing it. There is no sense of a moral code. You have to have an enormously strong personality not to get taken in.” In sum, cadres at all levels find ample opportunities to participate in corruption.

Countermeasures Employed

The problem described above requires a multifaceted solution. Currently, the Chinese government employs several simultaneous countermeasures: crackdown campaigns publicized as propaganda, development of the national legal system and salary increases for cadres.

Policy: Publicized Crackdown Campaigns

Beginning in the 1990s, the CCP tried to rebuild popular confidence through a series of highly publicized campaigns. In these campaigns, the CCP not only investigated and prosecuted offenders, but also publicized progress made in such endeavors through the Chinese propaganda organs. The 175,000 party members punished in 2001 represented a 30 percent increase from the number of party members disciplined in 2000. Meanwhile, state media organs ran headlines such as “Progress against Corruption.”

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1 Julia Kwong, The Political Economy of Corruption in China (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 60.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
Chinese Party Official says Anticorruption Struggle Must Continue," and “Party Delegates Call for Tougher Crackdown on Corruption.”

In particular, the CCP capitalized on the sensational stories, such as the Shenyang and Xiamen crime rings. The corruption web in Shenyang, China’s fifth-largest city, encompassed virtually every top official in the area, including the Mayor, the top prosecutor, and the chief judge. In Shenyang alone, dozens of leaders – senior government officials, bank and company managers, and law enforcement officers – received death sentences or long-term imprisonment. The press trumpets such achievements as huge victories for the CCP, which is supposedly rooting out the last criminal strongholds run by a few “bad eggs.”

The Xiamen smuggling case was treated similarly by the press. Lai Changxing, the alleged head of a smuggling syndicate, had bribed “scores of government officials to avoid customs taxes.” Renmin Ribao (The People’s Daily) ran a story under the headline, “Justice Forever Prevails over Evil,” and detailed how this “major victory... has once again attested to our party’s and government’s firm resolve in striking at smuggling and punishing corruption, demonstrating to the public that Criminal elements... shall never be able to escape ruthless punishment by the law.”

Contradicting evidence, however, detracts from the CCP’s assessments. Despite headlines like “Chinese Public Back Anti-Corruption Drive,” in reality, the government selectively punishes only a few high-profile cases. In a paper published in 2001, Hu Angang and Guo Yong of Qinghua University estimated that 10-20 percent of corruption cases are solved and only 6.6 percent of party officials who are disciplined for corruption receive any criminal punishment. Nevertheless, the final arbiter of the government’s efforts is public sentiment: whether the Chinese public considers these measures sufficient. In a report published in 2001 by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, 67.3 percent of respondents surveyed believed that reform was urgently needed. A Foreign Affairs article delivers an even more alarming analysis:

A survey of 818 migrant laborers in Beijing in 1997-98 revealed that the prevailing image of the ruling party was that of a self-serving elite. Only 5 percent of the interviewees thought their local party cadres “work for the interests of the villagers,” and 60 percent said their local officials “use their power only for private gains”... A 1998 study of 12,000 urban and rural residents across 10 provinces conducted by the CCP’s antigraft agency found that only 43 percent of respondents agreed that “the majority of party and government officials are clean” and that fully one-third said “only a minority of party and government officials are clean.”

The wide gulf between the official line and the on-the-street opinion highlights the shortcomings of these publicized crackdown campaigns.

Policy: Reforming the National Legal System

The unrefined and undefined status of Chinese law complicates efforts by the center to control prosecution procedures of lower courts. Reforming the legal system would hopefully clarify and standardize anti-corruption proceedings to ensure punishment when punishment is due. Not only are sentences handed out rarely – only 6.6 percent of convicted party members receive sentences – but many corrupt informal activities still fall into the category of “gray corruption” – not legally a crime, yet not quite lawful, either. For example, how would one characterize the giving of extravagant gifts, a common cultural custom, during business deals? This constitutes an abuse of power, but it does not fall easily into

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21 Kwong, 23.

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any of the “economic crime” categories of the Chinese criminal code, nor does it fall neatly into any categories such as graft or nepotism. Further developing the nation’s legal system would lead to easier prosecution and punishment of all underhanded activities by ensuring a more reliable court system.

The drive to reform the national legal system has received added impetus from World Trade Organization (WTO) requirements: in the years leading up to accession in 2001, China made several additions to its legal code to strengthen its candidacy. Now that China enjoys membership, it will need to continue its efforts to build up a sound legal system in accordance with WTO rules. Pre-WTO revisions include a new section on “Anti-Corruption” in the criminal code and anti-corruption provisions in many other laws and regulations governing corporate governance, accounting, auditing and public servants. Officials combating corruption in China are using the momentum of WTO accession to further develop the legal code. Vice-President Liu Jiachen of the Supreme People’s Court said in 2002, “The fight against corruption has to be backed by a sound legal system.”

Such a sound and comprehensive legal system is surely needed in the long run to prevent corruption, but effective law enforcement is another crucial element that is also lacking. As shown by the Shenyang crime ring, police forces are oftentimes just as susceptible to corruption as any other government official. Under these circumstances, even with a well-articulated legal code wielded by a trustworthy court system, corruption could run unchecked; the experience of many WTO member nations in Africa, Asia, and South America that are plagued by corruption despite being fully integrated into the global economy serves as a reminder. If anything, the drive to reform the laws emphasizes a co-requisite imperative, the need to reform law enforcement.

**Policy: Raising the Salaries of Cadres**

In China, civil servants enjoy the fastest rate of salary increase, having received five pay hikes since 1989. The rationale has been that if civil servants can not even afford to support their families on their salaries, then the system would be conducive to corruption. This is especially relevant in poorer villages where village cadres hold no formal bureaucratic positions (bianzhi) and receive no state subsidies. Their quality of life varies with the performance of the village. As a result, villages where money is relatively limited more easily breeds corruption. With salary increases, cadres would at least have the choice to not rely on corruption in order to get by. This is necessary to prevent conditions wherein cadres feel the need to be corrupt simply to support their families.

Politically, however, these pay raises hit a sensitive nerve. Zhu Rongji encountered much opposition when implementing this reform because workers of state-owned enterprises, in particular peasants, had not seen any salary increases in years. Not understanding that these efforts were meant as countermeasures to the corruption that they abhor, they quickly mistook Zhu Rongji’s efforts to raise the salaries of civil servants as class favoritism. Perhaps it would be worthwhile to consider giving pay raises only to cadres in poorer locations. In any case, most of corruption’s allures still exist despite relatively frequent income increases.

**Assessing the Past and Looking Ahead**

When designing anti-corruption measures, one must consider the general point already made about the nature of corruption – it is a low-risk, high-yield game for so many cadres that some experts have dubbed it a problem of “systemic

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25 Kwong, 149-50.
corruption." To combat such pervasive corruption, then, the government must address the structural elements that produce the conditions that cause corruption.

According to Klitgaard’s model, these elements include the _player_ – the cadre – and the _variables_, how much utility the actor expects to derive from participation, the chances of success and the chances of punishment. Zhu Rongji’s reform to raise the salaries of cadres focused on bridging the gap between a life of corruption and a life of moral public service, while reforming the national legal system focuses on increasing the risks those cadres who engage in corruption face. The method of publicized crackdowns, though, falls short of effectively influencing any of these variables. Propaganda does not substantially address any of the conditions that cause corruption, nor does it seem to fool the public; if anything, it may further disenchant the public. Even if crackdown campaigns had the effect of increasing the danger of participation, this potential is too quickly forfeited due to the selective process of actually carrying out punishments. This approach has failed because the token executions of a few high-profile bureaucrats do not constitute a sustained policy. So, while the other two methods appear justifiable, the publicized crackdown campaign method begs reevaluation.

New Policy: Streamlined Rural Bureaucracies Staffed by Elected Officials

The next wave of corruption countermeasures ought to intersect the implementation of village elections. Certain villages, leveraging on the 1987 Organic Law of Villagers’ Committees, have in recent years begun to hold grassroots elections of village officials. CCP leaders (and democracy activists) encourage this over the heads of local officials who are afraid of ceding their positions, hoping that by providing a party-sanctioned outlet for rural frustration – the ability to vote ineffectual village-level cadres out of office – they could diffuse rural unrest. China is now poised to make it possible for grassroots elections to be more far-reaching and to serve as mechanisms of anti-corruption.

Earlier in 2002 Beijing made preliminary plans to restructure China’s vast rural bureaucracy over the next five to seven years, handing both village and township administration to democratically elected committees. At a time when China’s governmental institutions must deal with fiscal crises, such a type of reform will save the authorities significant amounts of money: as the Beijing-based _Business Post_ reported, providing vehicles, drivers and fuel for top officials of 40,000 township governments alone cost more than 100 billion renminbi each year. Official vehicles are often used for non-official purposes – an example of “gray corruption” – fueling costs that force local governments to demand from peasants more than the legal maximum of five percent of taxes. With this reform, up to 60 million civil servants could find themselves moved or thrown out of work.

This policy’s _de facto_ purpose is to combat corruption, even if the official Chinese media avoid reporting it as that (in characteristic fashion, the official news reports maintain that there are only a few “bad eggs” and abstain from using the word “corruption” in relevant stories, but observers believe that corruption is indeed one target of these reforms). Nonetheless, cutting entire structures of rural governments will substantially decrease the number of corrupt officials by removing them from the corruption game entirely. This strategy finds precedence in the elimination of the double pricing system, which successfully discouraged speculation in many capital goods sectors in the nineties. At the same time, and more importantly,

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31 Pun.
32 Kwong, 139.
China's policymakers would do well to remember these lessons: policies that fail to 1) make the game riskier to play, 2) decrease the relative benefits of corruption, or 3) preclude the player from the game altogether do not truly address the problem. At best, those kinds of policies temporarily cover the problem; at worst, they lead to loss of public confidence. Unfortunately, China's track record in curbing corruption consists of cautious or misguided steps at times that called for proactive measures.

The restructuring of the local bureaucracies might well be a needed step, but even if successful, it will only form one pillar in a larger fight against systemic corruption. For one, China still lacks a proactive policy of law enforcement reform to accompany its legal reform. Leads on corruption rings are not hard to come by — law enforcement need only investigate the tall stack of leads provided by the public. China also lacks a strong policy of targeting levels above the township in the government hierarchy.

Perhaps political constraints inherent to a Communist party-state keep China's leaders from thoroughly exploring these paths. China must weather simultaneous problems on several fronts — fiscal non-liquidity, unemployment, health, grossly unequal development, and floating populations. Should all of these challenges coalesce to trigger a crisis of no-confidence as well, Li Peng's warnings to the National People's Congress that corruption could topple Communist Party rule may come true.35

34 Between 1989 and 1999, a total of 74,600 cases of corruption were reported to prosecutors by the general public and, in 2001, the public provided 80 percent of the leads to corruption evidence. See Wang, 129.
A Review of the Chinese National Minority Education Program

Andrea E. Snavely

Introduction

While minority populations constitute only 6.7 percent of the Chinese population, they occupy 60 percent of its total land area, including key border zones with India and Russia. Given this situation, minority unrest potentially poses a significant threat to Chinese national security. In addition, conditions for rebellion have been made riper by the failure of Deng Xiaoping’s reforms to bring new wealth to western China, where there is a large minority population. In most cases, minority areas remain some of the poorest in the country because they have been unable to industrialize and have remained heavily dependent on subsidies. The poverty of minority regions, taken together with their strategic importance to the People’s Republic of China (PRC), has the potential to become a significant source of instability.

Improving minority education in these areas could ameliorate both national security and poverty in western China. First, successfully implementing a curriculum in minority areas that improves minority understanding of Han culture could mitigate cultural discord. Second, minority education could fuel the economic growth of minority regions by providing them with trained ethnic cadres and skilled native workers. It is believed that as minority living standards improve, rebellion may become less likely. Moreover, the regime will have the added benefit of additional economic growth.

Nevertheless, while minority education paints a lovely picture in theory, it has proved to be difficult to implement. The history of minority education in China demonstrates minority peoples’ resistance to attempts at direct assimilation. This was especially the case during periods such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. In the contemporary era, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has made efforts to improve minority access to schools by implementing quotas and creating special “normal” universities, advocating the study of minority languages and allowing bilingual education, translating the Han curriculum into ethnic languages, and providing minority schools with extra funds, educational support, and training.

It is apparent, however, that institutional and structural problems continue to hamper educational effectiveness. Statistics from 1999 indicate that minorities still have disproportionate enrollment levels, receive fewer years of education, and have lower average test scores than their Han counterparts. Scholars attribute these discrepancies to a variety of causes. First, the standard curriculum has been shown to be ineffective when applied to minority areas. Second, low school attendance can be attributed to the unwillingness of parents to send their child to a school that they feel inadequately discusses their ethnic values and languages. Third, minority schools still suffer from severe lack of funds to attract competent teachers and provide adequate schoolroom facilities.

Given these constraints, politically and economically feasible solutions to the minority education problem are difficult to ascertain but could include the following. First, continuing to advocate a bilingual education while introducing Mandarin at an earlier age would improve minority students’ learning and test scores. Second,

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1 Robyn Iredale, Naran Bilik, and Wang Su, Contemporary Minority Migration, Education and Ethnicity in China (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2001), 147.
3 Iredale, Bilik, and Su, 149-150.
allowing a larger range of ethnic issues and cultural concerns to be addressed within the national curriculum might encourage parents to send their children to school. Third, studies suggest that desegregating schools wherever possible might inspire greater cultural understanding. Finally, issuing “well-established religious institutions” teaching permits in minority areas would have the advantage of offering students competent teachers in remote areas and an attractive curriculum at minimal cost to the government.

History

The establishment of the PRC after the revolution in 1949 brought about a new commitment to a “homogenized, socialist-oriented national education system reaching all corners of China.” At that time, the school curriculum was dramatically altered to reflect the new historical views of the Communist Party and a new definition of a minority. The new government took the traditional communist position held by Stalin. This position maintained the right of minority populations to preserve their own languages, culture and religions until the time when socialist influences would “melt together” all differences, making them extinct. For the first time, non-Han people needed to be identified and classified in order to meet the goals of the regime. A group of historians, ethnographers and linguists were sent out by the central government to identify minority groups based on the criteria set by Stalin in 1913. The team was also supposed to determine the groups’ evolutionary stage based on Engels and Morgan’s stages of development. Most groups were determined to have developed at best a feudal-serf system (the Mongols) and at worse a primitive society (the Naxi).

In order to deliver the benefits of communist society to minority peoples, normal institutions meant to foster higher learning in minority areas were set up by the state. By 1950, there were forty-five such national primary schools and eight secondary schools. These institutions primarily functioned to create reliable minority cadres to serve the CCP and the government in those areas. In addition, a large number of highly trained Han were sent to the countryside to monitor minority progress. Minority peoples were taught that they shared equal rights with the Han, but that their societies had not advanced as much.

The Great Leap Forward brought disastrous changes to the educational system. Educational change became focused on the idea of “education as revolution,” combining traditional subjects with agricultural or industrial work and increased political awareness. During this period, education was largely decentralized and left in the hands of regional cadres. In minority areas, the “Three Statements”—special conditions in border regions, backwardness of minorities, and special treatment of minorities—led to the intense criticism of minority cadres. The Great Leap Forward launched the Rectification Campaign, which aimed at replacing all minority languages with standard Chinese to increase “local nationalism.” These policies spread resentment of the Han government in minority areas.

In the brief period between the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, education was once again centralized, and minority languages reappeared in schools. The Chinese language was strengthened in the curriculum, but minority schools received new facilities and experimental boarding schools were opened. At the same time, government standardization caused many locally run schools to be shut down, cutting off many children in the poorest areas from education.

The Cultural Revolution made harsh revisions to the government’s nationalities policies. The Gang of Four, led by Jiang Qing, abolished all minority schools and universities, dubbing them “hothouses for budding revisionists.” Only standard Chinese was allowed as the language of instruction. Needless to say, this created widespread distrust and resentment of the CCP in minority regions.

Deng Xiaoping’s reforms in the post-Mao period reduced the ability of minority areas to provide quality education. He developed the idea of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” in order to administer his free market reforms in a sagging economy. Deng Xiaoping’s reforms called for a decentralization of the government while enforcing

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1 Hansen, 11.
the policy of “eating from separate kitchens.” Now, instead of lower levels of government relying on the center for their entire budget, they were made fiscally autonomous units. At the same time, popular tax reform was enacted to reduce economic burdens on peasants, especially at the village level. Lacking civic funds, townships and villages began to create township and village enterprises (TVEs) to subsidize their budgets. A village or township that successfully industrialized using TVEs received tremendous wealth during the 1980s. Although every village and township had incentives to industrialize, not every village or township succeeded.

Jean Oi’s statistics on provincial incomes in 1999 indicate that the introduction of rural TVEs was largely unsuccessful in minority areas. Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Tibet are shown as receiving some of the largest subsidies to make up for lack of rural performance. Faced with the need to rapidly industrialize, minority areas were distinctly at a disadvantage from other areas. First, these provinces lacked large amounts of startup capital. Second, transportation was poor in western China and thus the transport of goods from these rural areas was relatively expensive. Finally, lack of knowledge of Mandarin prevented investment from Taiwan or Hong Kong because businessmen could not communicate with each other. Forced to live within the bounds of their subsidies, minority areas’ ability to provide quality education suffered during this period and continues to suffer today.

Current Policy

After an intense evaluation, the government officially admitted that minority peoples lived in extremely backward conditions. Thus, they reasoned that to ensure economic development, special educational measures should be enacted in minority areas to create competent cadres and skilled workers. During this period, the state made a number of concessions concerning minority education in an effort to increase attendance and decrease alienation from the state. Currently, the Ministry of Education contains a division specifically devoted to minority education. Provinces and regions also keep similar minority education divisions within their education departments. In provinces with low minority populations, there are usually specific cadres whose sole responsibilities concern minority education.

In its effort to improve education for the minorities, the government is foremost focusing on methods to improve minority access to school. First, the government gives autonomous areas the ability to independently develop “nationality schools.” This aims to motivate parents to send their children to school at the state’s expense. Second, the CCP has developed something similar to an affirmative action program for minority students. The present policy includes quotas, lower entry standards, and special training classes for minority students who wish to attend universities. Finally, the government allows for minority primary and secondary schools to have greater flexibility when determining their structure and programs. This allows for primary and secondary boarding schools as well as special classes in remote mountainous areas. For example, the government has permitted the development of all-female classes in Muslim areas to encourage female students to go to school and special evening classes for the children of herdsmen.

The CCP has also chosen to address the linguistic differences between Han and minority populations by creating twelve major normal universities to study minority languages. The research from these institutions on minority languages is used to create textbooks in minority languages, of which there is a current shortage. In turn, the government has implemented several changes in the curricula taught at minority schools. Minority students are permitted to learn using

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2 Iredale, Bilik, and Su, 74.
3 Heberer, 50.

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textbooks in their native language (in cases where they exist) until the end of secondary school. The Han curriculum also has been translated into multiple minority languages and implemented in normal schools following the idea of “one syllabus, multiple textbooks.” At the same time, Chinese is seen as the language that will allow minority students the most career mobility, and so its presence is highly stressed. Other subjects taught include occasional classes on the students’ ethnic history, but this material is considered highly censored by most western scholars. At the university level, the instruction is usually in Mandarin due to the shortage of highly trained professors who speak minority languages.9

Finally, the government is carrying out several policies to improve the quality of the teachers and schools in outlying regions. Several normal universities offer special training for minority teachers and personnel. Incentives are offered to students of these universities if they return to their native region to teach after schooling. Additionally, the government has enacted academic exchange programs to link universities in autonomous regions with well-established universities in Shanghai and Beijing known for teaching expertise (this echoes the current government policy concerning state-owned enterprises, or SOEs, where successful companies are linked with ones that are not performing as well). Since the late 1970s, many methods have been used to improve teaching quality, including training sessions and assigning government officials to study minority education programs abroad. In 1992, the state organized 143 economic and culturally developed coastal schools to help scholars in poverty stricken areas. Highly trained teachers are sometimes sent from Beijing and other places to improve the overall teaching quality. From 1950 to 1980, thousands of university teachers were sent to Tibet in order to help with development. To fund these programs and to accelerate improvement, the government has created special subsidies for these communities. The World Bank also gives some assistance to the CCP’s minority education improvement funds.

Problems with Current Policy

Though the government has had some initial success in increasing the number of minority students attending school by raising quotas, the percentage of minority students in schools still remains below the total percent of minority people in the population.10 Additionally, Robyn Iredale notes that these increases only take into account the national average, not the vast differences in educational levels between different ethnic groups.11 A disproportionate number of minority children that succeed are from the Hui and Manchu ethnicities, which already speak Mandarin. There have also been recent attempts by Han individuals to falsify records and register as minorities in order to gain better access to university education.12 This propensity in some ways defeats the goal of an assimilation policy because it furthers resentment and cultural division between Han Chinese and minority peoples.

Moreover, the “one curriculum, multiple textbook” philosophy has been shown to be ineffective in most minority areas. Keith Lewin and Wang Ying Jie note that in the Yi autonomous prefecture, teachers complain that the Yi translations of standard textbooks are too difficult for students and contain too much material for the time available. These authors also point out that minority students may not be familiar with the content of designated textbooks because they inhabit a closed environment and have little contact with native Mandarin speakers.13 The studies of Stevan Harrell and Ma Erzi suggest that linguistic

9 Ibid., 51.
10 Ibid., 50.
11 Iredale, Bilik, and Su, 147.
12 Ibid., 51.

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and cultural boundaries between the home and school environments could be the reason for poor minority performance.\textsuperscript{14}

By stressing Han culture in the curriculum too forcefully, the government may be hindering rather than helping the assimilation process. Colin Mackerras goes so far as to posit, from his studies of the Muslim population, that the recent religious revival in these communities was the direct result of the CCP’s increased educational emphasis on secularization.\textsuperscript{15} While religious institutions have, in some communities, remained the primary venue of cultural learning outside of the home, religion, usually an important part of an ethnic identity, is often not well addressed in state-run schools, causing feelings of separation between nationalities. In many cases, moreover, religious institutions still compete with government schools for enrollment. Dru Gladney’s studies of the Hui people show that most Chinese Muslims are more interested in learning about Islamic history and Quranic languages than attending government schools.\textsuperscript{16} Mette Halkskov Hansen notes that minority individuals who have had a secular education can be stigmatized later in life by their people.\textsuperscript{17}

Finally, despite the money offered to minority areas by the Chinese government and the World Bank, the current system still suffers from a lack of funds. Lewin and Wang’s studies indicate that 30 percent of students in the Yi autonomous prefecture lack either benches or desks. In more than half of the rural schools, children sit on the floor because there is no furniture.\textsuperscript{18} In part due to this lack of basic infrastructure, there is a tremendous shortage of qualified teachers in western areas to teach at normal schools and universities. This problem is coupled with the fact that most highly educated minority students no longer return to their home provinces after completing their education. This phenomenon is due to new policies introduced in 1993 of charging tuition and doing away with job allocation after graduation.\textsuperscript{19} However, as the government realized that these policies were not favorable to less developed areas, where there are low returns to higher education and limited employment opportunities, it began to reinstate job assignments after graduation.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Solutions}

It is apparent that the issues facing minority assimilation through education policies are very complex. Nevertheless, there are some solutions that could be implemented. Although the following suggested policies do not take into account every problem posed by the current policies, they seem to be the most feasible and enforceable for the present situation.

\textit{Expand Bilingual Learning Opportunities and Instruct Mandarin Earlier}

In order for cadres to be successful, students must first learn the required material. Studies by Janet Upton on Tibetan education policy in the PRC have suggested that higher education in bilingual minority secondary schools may improve student scores on entrance exams to institutions at the upper secondary level.\textsuperscript{21} More educational offerings in minority languages would definitely help reduce the sense of cultural distance between the student and the school as well as improve the education of minority cadres. In the future, however, minority language instruction could become less necessary. Gerard Postiglione points out that instruction in Mandarin at a younger age, before its current introduction at the third or fourth grade, in a bilingual setting would make it easier

\textsuperscript{16} Gladney, 78.
\textsuperscript{17} Hansen, 272.
\textsuperscript{18} Lewin and Wang, 145.
\textsuperscript{20} Iredale, Bilik, and Su, 78.
for children to absorb. This would require fewer higher-level teachers to become fluent in minority languages and would greatly increase the Chinese language skills of the minority population.

Desegregate Minority Schools Where Possible

A desegregation program would have several advantages. First, teachers could become more specialized and the quality of teaching in these areas could improve. Second, desegregation might promote ethnic understanding among the Han while encouraging ethnic members to think critically about their own identity in Chinese society. Finally, competition against members of other minorities for spaces in school might encourage higher performance by ethnic minority students. This policy, however, also presents some implementation difficulties. In many rural areas, minority children are the majority and it would be difficult to find enough Han children to create a representative group within the student body. Additionally if states wish to retain instruction in minority languages, desegregation may not be possible.

Allow More Ethnic Issues in Minority Curricula

In order to increase ethnic minorities’ sense of inclusion in the PRC, the newest batch of state-educated minority members should be allowed to create a body of textbook literature that reflects a broader examination of ethnicity. This would conceivably increase cultural understanding and make schools more attractive to ethnic communities. The benefits from this simple act would be great while the costs would be minimal because the resources for the creation of these materials already exist. In addition, they would promote unity between ethnic minorities and the Han. This would solve the problem suggested by Hansen’s study, namely the stigmatization of minority intellectuals, because their education would no longer differ significantly from ethnic cultural norms.

Issue Teaching Permits to Well-established Religious Institutions

Though increasing the usage of minority languages in upper levels of instruction and diversifying the curriculum would benefit current minority education policy, the lack of teachers with expertise in minority languages still remains. As evidenced by Gladney’s studies, the majority of ethnic parents support religious institutions. Hansen notes that most parents consider a Buddhist education in a temple equal to or even better than a governmental one because it reinforces cultural values in addition to transmitting Tai script, history, and cultural values.

Indeed, this set of parental preferences suggests that an additional solution may be to allow highly educated members of religious groups the opportunity to run state-sponsored educational programs. A monastery education with certain essential Chinese curricular elements could provide a “modern education” for children while offering competent cultural training. The benefits of this program would include more competent teachers in minority areas, the presentation of an alternative minority identity, and the relief of some of the financial burden the government must bear to support normal schools. Additionally, this arrangement would hopefully foster a community attachment to the schools system that would inspire more students to attend. Problems with this policy might include the Han cadres’ low opinion of Buddhist religious institutions, which would inhibit its enforcement. However, this difficulty is worth overcoming when considering the tremendous benefits this program could potentially provide.

Conclusion

A greater commitment to improving the quality of minority education is nearly essential to regime stability given the strategic areas that minorities occupy and China’s goal of creating economic

22 Postiglione, 15.
23 Ibid., 14.
24 Gladney, 78-79.
25 Hansen, 250.
26 Postiglione, 14.
growth in the Western regions of the country. Significant reforms have been enacted since the Mao period to increase minority access to school, improve minority curricula, allow minority languages in schools, and fund their struggling school systems. However, while the government has had some success with these policies, minority attendance rates and test scores continue to lag behind the national average and cultural misunderstandings persist. In order to alleviate these problems, the government should increase its bilingual education programs, integrate the schools wherever possible, and offer a wider variety of ethnic subjects. In addition, for the PRC to retain stability in ethnic areas it must fund local monasteries and ethnic scholars to improve the quality and lower the costs of minority education. These solutions must be taken into account, for they offer the ability to improve minority relations, foster economic growth with better-trained cadres, and lay sustainable foundation for sustained economic growth in western China.
Takashi Murakami: Artist of Contemporary Japanese Subculture

Gabriel Ritter

Introduction

Takashi Murakami (b. 1962) is one of the most influential artists at work today. Best known for his cartoon-like, “superflat” style, Murakami produces works in a variety of media, creating painting and sculpture that both embody and critique contemporary Japanese pop-culture. His style is heavily influenced by anime (animation) and manga (comics) and is characterized by the use of flat areas of solid color and thick, black outline. He received his PhD in 1993 from the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music, becoming one of the first ever to earn a doctoral degree in Nihonga (translated as “Japanese-style painting”). Some may view Murakami’s eleven-year study of the outdated techniques of Nihonga as antithetical to his growth as a “contemporary” Japanese artist. But in many ways, Murakami’s classical training has helped shape his art practice both formally and conceptually. Murakami’s pop style utilizes the formal traditions of Nihonga and Rinpa through the flattening of the picture plane and the use of visual motifs found throughout the history of Japanese art. More importantly, it is his conceptual use of Nihonga’s underlying principle of emphasizing that which is considered “uniquely” Japanese that drives Murakami’s artistic production. Unlike his predecessors, Murakami turns to Japanese pop-cultural phenomena for what he considers to be “authentically” Japanese, including Japan’s consumer culture, manufactured pop stars, and the unique culture surrounding animation and comics.

Nihonga and Murakami

In order to understand the profound effect Nihonga has played in forming the conceptual base for Murakami’s work, it is first necessary to have a detailed understanding of Nihonga itself. During the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japan underwent drastic reforms on virtually every level of society. The previous shogun (feudal lord) Tokugawa Ieyasu was forced to relinquish power to the Emperor Meiji, and subsequently the Japanese capital was moved east from Kyoto to Tokyo. At this time, great effort was made to modernize Japan and restructure Japanese society to incorporate the technological advances of industrialization and to better reflect the Western model of a representative government. To this end, the Japanese government encouraged artisans and scholars to study abroad and return with valuable first-hand knowledge of the means of modernization. Japan also began importing Western culture on a massive scale and that had a great impact on Japanese art. Many Japanese artists adopted Western painting styles and techniques, as well as foreign subject matter in their art. These works done in Western styles of representation were labeled Yoga, meaning “Western-style painting”. In opposition to the growing popularity of Yoga, a nationalist movement in art arose which sought to preserve the rich tradition of Japanese style painting in the

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1 Rinpa: a decorative painting style originating in 17th century Kyoto that is characterized by the isolation and selective placement of individual motifs on an unembellished background.

face of westernization. This movement known as Nihonga was concerned with creating a “distinctive form of contemporary art that could express the country’s new found sense of national identity,” while also trying to retain elements of traditional, “native” Japanese art. Nihonga is characterized by the contemporary use of traditional materials, techniques, formats, and subject matter. These include paintings rendered with mineral pigments (iwaenogou), and shell whites (gofun) that are mixed in an animal glue (nikawa) medium. The use of silk and paper support materials in traditional formats such as hanging scrolls, folding screens, and handscrolls is also fundamental to the style.

Two of the pioneering figures in the creation of the Nihonga movement were Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908) and Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913). Fenollosa, an American professor of Philosophy at Tokyo University, and Okakura, one of Fenollosa’s star pupils, were both selected by the Ministry of Education to establish a new national art school to promote the revival of traditional Japanese art. Fenollosa was an avid Japanese art collector and was especially fond of the Kano school, which he considered the standard of Japanese painting. He preached the revival and renewal of traditional arts, and played an instrumental role in Nihonga’s early stages. In 1889, the Tokyo School of Fine Arts was opened with the purpose of fostering a modernized practice of traditional arts. The largest and most significant feature of the school was its painting department, which only offered courses in Nihonga. This is where Murakami was trained in Nihonga and received the university’s first doctorate in the field in 1993. Fenollosa taught classes in aesthetics and studio practice, but in 1890 he returned to America, leaving Okakura as headmaster. Under Okakura’s leadership, individual originality was emphasized, thus allowing his students the freedom needed to innovate Nihonga. Originality was also stressed through competition in the form of public exhibition and judging of student’s work.

It is with this background in mind that one can begin to deconstruct the conceptual basis for Murakami’s work. At its inception, the Nihonga art movement was created as a non-western school, consisting of “uniquely” Japanese styles and techniques, and was purposefully linked to a nationalistic identity after the Meiji restoration. As such, it is important to acknowledge Nihonga’s status as an artificial construct. Originally having been contrived by Fenollosa and Okakura as an “authentically” Japanese art form, Nihonga has become a vague category encompassing a large variety of styles, predominantly executed in traditional media and formats. Thus, Nihonga represents an artificial combination of styles and techniques that have come to identify Japanese “authenticity.”

In a similar fashion, Murakami aims at the formation of a national identity through visual representation, yet he finds Japan’s contemporary identity defined more and more by popular and subcultural trends. Among these trends, consumer culture, an “idol”-making system, anime/manga (animation/comics), and otaku culture, make up the topics Murakami devotes his attention to, and considers key elements in the formation of contemporary Japanese culture. Murakami has even stated in a recent interview, “when I consider what Japanese culture is like, the answer is that it all is subculture.” For the most part, Murakami’s choice of obscure subject matter presupposes that his audience is already familiar with the subcultural connotations of his work, at times leaving both foreign and Japanese viewers alike struggling to understand the unique context of the work. Further emphasizing the culturally specific nature of his art, Murakami has noted, “I just like things that are not universal.” Yet despite his focus on Japanese-specific cultural phenomena, Murakami is not in search of an illusive national essence. On the contrary, he is quite aware that the notion of national identity is a construct, and as such, is open to criticism and thorough deconstruction. Murakami uses this point to his advantage, by poignantly critiquing the same subcultural phenomena he upholds as the building blocks for contemporary Japanese national identity.

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Ultimately, while extolling Japan’s subcultural landscape as the country’s newfound cultural identity, Murakami simultaneously presents a reflexive, critical view of Japan itself.

**Consumer Culture and Japan’s Idol-Making System**

The early works of Takashi Murakami are marked by a strong political and social awareness. In works such as *Randoseru Project* (1991) and the later *Kase Taishuu Project* (1994), the artist addresses the controversial subjects of Japan’s rampant consumer culture and the stranglehold of the “idol”-making system on Japan’s talent industry.

The *Randoseru Project* takes shape as a group of *randoseru*, a specific leather or vinyl backpack worn by elementary school students in Japan whose shape Murakami traces back to an Imperial army design. The term *randoseru* comes from the Dutch word *ransel*, meaning backpack or knapsack. This backpack is a symbol of innocence and childhood in Japan, and on any given school day one may see flocks of school children donning black (for boys) or red (for girls) *randoseru* and small yellow caps. Murakami manipulates this common symbol of childhood by reworking the *randoseru* in a variety of exotic, and now illegal animal skins. In total, the artist has produced the classic backpack in eight skins including cobra, harp seal (one done in fur, the other in skin), whale, ostrich, caiman, hippopotamus, and shark, each dyed in colors ranging from lime green to hot pink. By recreating the seemingly innocent *randoseru* in such exotic materials, Murakami transforms an ordinary child’s bag into a piece of luxury merchandise. To further emphasize the *randoseru*’s high-end commodity status, Murakami employed professional trade-show models to display the works at the gallery opening. This project emphasizes the extravagant degree of wealth and spending experienced by Japan during the infamous “bubble economy” of the late 1980s.

Following Japan’s recovery after World War II, the country emerged as one of the world’s economic superpowers. Murakami’s generation, having grown up during the 1960s, well after the economic hardships endured by his parent’s generation, was to be the most prosperous in Japan’s history. Their level of affluence and lack of traditional values earned them the dubious title of *shinjinrui* (new human species). Notorious for being “the most materialistic, individualistic, and internationally aware generation” in Japan’s history, the *shinjinrui* thrived in the economic climate of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Remnants of this materialism still linger in Japan in a variety of forms ranging from the benign to the perverse. Japanese bookstores and magazine stands are lined with publications such as *Mono* (literally, “things”), *Boon* (fad or trend), and countless others whose sole purpose is to inform consumers of the newest gizmos, gadgets, fashions, accessories, and so on, in order to stay current with the perpetual flow of merchandise in Japan.

In Murakami’s *Randoseru Project*, the artist’s use of exotic animal skins also exposes Japan’s lax enforcement of laws regarding endangered species. According to cultural critic Dana Friis-Hanson, “Japan had been criticized globally for ignoring international environmental efforts and was late in ratifying the Washington Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITIES), which limited international export of skins such as those used by Murakami. Even more recently, Japan has been under worldwide scrutiny for the renewed activities of its whaling fleets in the Pacific. In fish markets throughout coastal Japan, one can still purchase packages of “whale bacon,” among other whale-related products.

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* Dana Friis-Hansen, “Portrait of the Young Japanese Artist as a Fanatic,” (SCAI The Bathhouse, NICAF Art Fair), 1.
* Ibid.
* Cruz et al., 34.
Referring to Murakami’s act of wrapping an innocent symbol of Japanese childhood in the skins of endangered animals, art critic Midori Matsui insightfully states “they [randosoru] exposed the moral irresponsibility of the Japanese consumer who jumped at any ‘cute’ commodity.”12

Murakami’s next project, the Kase Taishuu Project (1994) took advantage of a peculiar dispute between a popular singer and his manager in order to expose the underpinnings of Japan’s talent industry. As the story goes, the popular young actor/singer Kase Taishuu had a falling out with his manager and was seeking new representation. The manager claimed that because of the work and effort he had put into creating the pop-sensation’s image, he was the rightful owner of the Taishuu name. Ironically, in the court case that followed, the manager won the intellectual rights to Kase Taishuu and proceeded to replace the original Taishuu with a new actor billed under the same name. As if this situation was not complicated enough, Murakami took it upon himself to further exacerbate the incident by recruiting four more Kase Taishuu impersonators. With the help of four college students to play the role of Taishuu and an advertising campaign, Murakami successfully caught the attention of the Japanese public with his additional Taishuus, by landing photo spreads in magazines such as Shukan Asahi and Marco Polo.13 In this way, Murakami utilized the same mass-media campaign methods as the original Taishuu’s manager in order to undermine the idea of unique talent and the concept of the individual in Japan.14

To better understand Murakami’s critical position, a discussion of Japan’s “idol” (aidoru) manufacturing system is necessary. Originating in the early 1970s with Watanabe Productions,15 the concept of the aidoru-kashuu (idol-singer) as a means for manufacturing young pop stars was conceived. In this system, talent agencies scout, train, and package young men and women to become the next pop-sensation at a rate of a hundred idol-singers a year.16 On average, nine out of ten idols fail to achieve pop-stardom, and even the lucky few who do succeed are expected to have a career no longer than two to three years, at which point they are edged out by someone new.17 In Japan, “idols are made, not born,”18 each being molded to fit the same formula for success. Most idols exude cuteness instead of individuality, and are non-threatening in both their physical appearance and sexual demeanor. Emphasis is placed on an idol’s outward appearance, and the well-crafted packaging of their public image masks any lack of genuine talent in either singing or acting ability. Nevertheless, talent agencies saturate the Japanese media with their hopeful stars’ images, allowing the same interchangeable faces to appear in magazine ads, TV commercials, dorama (soap-operas), and even feature films. Murakami has described the idol system’s effect on Japanese society as “an incredible stranglehold on the production and consumption of culture.”19 Not only does the idol system frown on individual expression, it essentially promotes “fake talent.”20

In his Kase Taishuu Project, Murakami exploits the Japanese notion of “talent” and “fame” in popular culture, revealing that it too, is “thoroughly constructed through the manipulation of images and discourses.”21 Murakami likens the inauthentic creation of idol talent to the formation of identity in contemporary Japanese society. It is in this environment that the

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12 Matsui, 36.
13 Ibid, 41.
14 Cruz et al., 39.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
24 Matsui, 41.
inauthentic becomes authentic, and the manufactured is of equal value to the genuine. Knowing this, Murakami has set out to produce his own artists under his studio's name, Hiropon Factory. At his studio in Saitama, he employs more than thirty young Japanese artists who assist him in every aspect of his artistic production. In exchange for their services, Murakami provides these unknown artists with a platform to create and display their work through his many curatorial endeavors. But, unlike the idol system which discourages individuality and suppresses artistic expression, Murakami encourages his artists to pursue their own careers, and manages several well-received young artists, such as Chiho Aoshima and Aya Takano.

**Anime, Manga, and Otaku Fanaticism**

Murakami's next phase of artistic production deals less with appropriation and parody, and instead represents a genuine attempt to synthesize an original creation from the vast subcultural landscape of *anime* (animation) and *manga* (comics). In Japan, *anime* refers to both Western and Eastern styles of animation, whereas in the US the term has become synonymous with Japanese animation. Unlike cartoons in the US which are predominantly aimed at children, *anime* covers a wide range of subject matter—from science fiction and adventure to explicit pornography. This diversity can be attributed to the long history of *anime's* print predecessor, *manga*. The term *manga* was first used by Katsushika Hokusai, the famous 19th century *ukiyo-e* (woodblock-print) artist, in the title of the artist's *Hokusai Manga* (1812-19). This multi-volume series consisted of "caricaturequse or freestyle drawings of people, animals, plants, buildings, and illustrations for dramatic narratives for which he [Hokusai] invented imaginary creatures radically distorted" from their lifelike models. From this fanciful work evolved an entire genre of illustrated popular literature that is now enjoyed by, and intended for, Japanese of all age groups. However, the concept of animated images was introduced by the west through the early works of the Disney Studios. Despite its foreign origin, Japanese animation has far surpassed its western predecessor in both quality and quantity. *Anime* is renowned for its obsessive attention to visual detail, as well as the sheer volume of material the Japanese industry produces, out numbering that of the US and Europe combined.23

With all this in mind, Murakami sought to create his own "original" *anime* character with which he could introduce *anime* culture and visual sensibilities into Japanese contemporary art. The first step was to come up with a name for his new character. In typical Murakami fashion, the artist turned to obscure pop-cultural references from his childhood such as catch-phrases from anime, manga and Japanese comedy routines. Taking the catch-phrase "dojōjite dojōjite" (a muddled form of the Japanese word "doshite," meaning "why?")24 from the 1970s animated TV program *Inakappe Taisho (The Country General)* and combining it with the gag-phrase "ōshamanbe" used by comedian Toru Yuri, Murakami stumbled upon the ultimate catch-phrase "dojōjite dojōjite oshamanbe." From this randomly associated, nonsensical phrase, Murakami chose the first three roman letters from *dojōjite* to create the character, DOB. Not only does the name DOB have no meaning unto itself, but its origins, although obscure, can be considered authentically Japanese. Murakami himself has commented on the cultural specificity of DOB's roots saying, "these gags are extreme examples of things that are completely without universality."25 In this way, the choice of the character name DOB can be viewed as completely intentional on Murakami's part. On the one hand, Murakami closely mimicked the mass-market appeal of beloved, nonsensical Japanese character names such as Hello Kitty, while also generating a character who had uniquely Japanese roots, and who could serve as a platform for his

22 Cruz et al., 23.
24 Matsum 49.
25 Ibid.
vision of a new Japanese identity based on subculture.

As for the appearance of DOB, Murakami once again turned to previously successful pop-cultural icons such as Mickey Mouse, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Doraemon for inspiration. The end result takes the shape of an exceedingly cute, presumably male, mouse/monkey hybrid creature. As he appears in a 1994 computer generated line drawing, the original DOB has two large, round ears, and an equally round face. DOB is dressed all in blue except for his exposed face and belly. He also wears a large red bowtie, and a pair of white, Mickey Mouse-style gloved hands and feet. His left ear features a large “D,” and his right ear a “B,” and when one includes his perfectly round, “O”-shaped face, Murakami’s figure literally reads “D, O, B.” Murakami further emphasizes DOB’s cuteness through his wide, baby-doll green eyes, dainty eyelashes, and yellow button nose. The art critic Noi Sawaragi, a great supporter of Murakami’s work, traces the Japanese fascination with cuteness (kawaii) to the rule of Emperor Hirohito. Sawaragi points to popular opinion of Hirohito as a “cute, old man” and proposes the possibility of an indirect “rule by cuteness...under the emperor in postwar democracy.” He also acknowledges the “dangerous tendency” of Japanese to be attracted unconsciously to cute objects. Yet upon closer inspection, DOB’s pupils reveal a wild series of black, red, yellow and green concentric circles, which, along with his lightening bolt tail, betray DOB’s tendency toward madness.

Throughout Murakami’s career, DOB has taken many forms, continually evolving alongside his creator. Murakami himself even admits that “over the years it [DOB] has really become more of a self-portrait.” The following attempts to chronicle DOB’s evolution through a handful of representative paintings, and in the process, reflects Murakami’s growth as an artist. In the earliest and most common form, DOB appears as a cute, childlike figure. An example of this innocent portrayal appears in the painting Meaning of Blue (1998). Here DOB is depicted with an enlarged, almost infantile head and a small, toothless smile. DOB is accompanied by a group of colorful, happy-faced flowers which also appear on their own in Murakami’s Cosmos series. Both DOB and the flowers appear on a Rinpa-inspired background of unmodulated silver. Similar to the decorative Rinpa style, figures overlap one another to distinguish foreground from middle ground, yielding a flat composition overall. In this instance, Murakami subtly combines the cuteness of anime character design with decorative elements of 17th century Rinpa style.

Murakami’s next reincarnation of DOB represents a more explicit mixing of anime and traditional Japanese art. In the work 727 (1996), the artist depicts a mutated, somewhat menacing DOB floating on a gust of wind that closely resembles the depiction of water in Momoyama Period (1573-1603 A.D.) paintings by Kano Eitoku. Here DOB has taken on the alternative identity Murakami labels Chaos, and is now depicted with multiple eyes, a large gaping mouth full of sharp, blade-like teeth, and several extra “D” and “B” shaped protuberances. Despite his menacing appearance, DOB rides atop a stylized cloud that flows across the canvas from left to right, terminating in a series of graceful curls. Such stylized cloud formation were prevalent in Kano-school paintings from the Momoyama period and appeared in later works such as Ogata KMrin’s Red and White Flowering Plum Trees (18th century), and Tawaraya SMatsu’s View of Matsushima (17th century). By combining contemporary anime style and traditional Japanese painting motifs, Murakami makes an explicit statement on anime’s role as the new face of Japanese contemporary art. Murakami also

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26 Murakami, 130.

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attempts to destroy the barrier between high and low art through his mixing of styles, but the monumentality of the work itself and its tripartite format refer back to traditional Japanese formats. The tripartite canvas appears to mimic the traditional Japanese screen format called byobu which is a prevalent format used throughout Japanese art history. But it is Murakami’s technique, which entails the application of multiple layers of paint and the subsequent sanding down of the painting’s surface to reveal hidden layers of color, that gives 727 its unique appearance. The background of the three panels is predominantly white, with large patches of exposed purple underpainting. Wherever the artist has sanded away deeper layers of paint, burn-like patterns of color emerge, giving the entire composition a dynamic surface texture and color range. In this work, Murakami draws on his training in Nihonga to gracefully introduce anime forms into the established canon of Japanese art.

In DOB’s third evolution, Murakami continues with the “chaos” concept by mutating and deconstructing DOB even further. The 1998 work entitled Chaos is an exceptional example of DOB’s deconstruction. DOB no longer retains his original cute figure, but instead is multiplied, twisted, and pulled apart to form a web of distorted DOB faces. The central form in this composition consists of an upside-down mouth filled with sharp teeth, multiple eyes that are both open and closed, and swirls of DOB’s patented red, white, blue, and flesh toned color scheme. This larger blob is then connected to smaller, deformed DOB’s by thin strands, which create an organic, pulsating being that resembles DNA or cell structure on the microscopic level. This work is emblematic of an entire series of works dating from 1997 to 1999 in which DOB undergoes severe mutation and deformation. Most recently, DOB has taken on a darker, more sinister alter-ego in works such as The Double Helix, Reversal (2001). Here Murakami has placed two mutated DOB faces back to back, but has painted his character in an inverted color palette. Instead of the playful cartoon character, DOB is transformed into a psychedelic monster rendered in blacks, purples, deep blues, and greens. Murakami also replaces flesh tones with white, giving DOB a devilish, mime-like quality. These last two stages of DOB’s transformation are representative of Murakami’s obsession with DOB as an endlessly malleable alter-ego of himself. The methodical repetition and increasing madness conveyed through DOB’s de-evolution expose Murakami’s otaku (fanatical) tendency in his art production.

The term otaku is an honorific, refined form of the informal second-person address anata, meaning “you.” But, in the world of Japanese subculture, the word otaku has become a label for a growing community of “socially-inert, information-crazed, often brilliant, technological shut-ins.” Otaku are defined by their “connoisseur-like obsession” with accumulating objects and information which relate to their specific hobby or interest. Primarily, these interests tend to focus around the science fiction genre and anime, but otaku may turn their attention to numerous subcultural microcosms, including vintage jeans, computer games, and pornography. According to Murakami, the use of the term otaku in relation to anime fanatics began in the 1970s at the highly revered Studio Nue animation studio.

It was there that Masaharu Kawamori and Haruhiko Mikimoto, two graduates from the well-regarded Keio University, began referring to one another using the high-brow term otaku. The custom caught on with Studio Nue’s fans who used the term to show their respect toward the Studio Nue creators. Subsequently, the critic Akio Nakamori used the work otaku in a derogatory manner to refer to the socially inept class of anime and science fiction geeks, who then reappropriated the term to refer to themselves, and their community of like-minded individuals.

For the most part, otaku are outsiders, loners who prefer the confines of their science fiction fantasy world to social interaction with the real

38 Ibid., 77.
39 Murakami, 132.
41 Ibid.

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world. For this reason, *otaku* went largely unnoticed by mainstream Japanese society, until 1989 when a self-proclaimed *otaku* was arrested for the abduction and murder of four young girls. Miyazaki Tsutomu confessed to dismembering and cremating the young girls’ bodies, and in addition, had recorded his gruesome acts on videotape, and had even mailed the girls’ remains to their families.\(^{33}\) Miyazaki was a manga and pornography *otaku* “with a collection of 5,700 tapes, including many S&M and child pornography titles.”\(^{34}\) This horrendous incident exposed the psychotic degree to which some *otaku*’s obsessions extend to, and depicted the general *otaku* community in a bad social light. This, along with other factors, has led *otaku* to become the new social outcasts in Japanese society. In an interview with Wakasa Mako, Murakami describes the yearly *comike* (comic market) event at which for two days, an excess of 450,000 *otaku* gather together to view the newest products of the *anime* and *manga* industry. Murakami describes many of those attending the convention as “ugly,” referring to people afflicted with acute acne, obesity, and physical deformities.\(^{35}\) Because of their appearance, many *otaku* are rejected by Japanese society, and can only find escape, “salvation” as Murakami defines it, by immersing themselves in their fantasy worlds. Murakami describes *otaku* as true social outcasts that are both disliked and discriminated against in Japanese society as a result of their appearance and their subcultural obsessions.

Murakami has even gone as far as describing the *otaku* position in Japanese society as one of impotence. In his essay “Impotence Culture – Anime,” Murakami traces the origin of *otaku* and *anime*’s escapist tendencies to Japan’s defeat in World War II. Specifically, Murakami points to influential anime such as *Uchusenkan Yamato* (Spaceship Yamato) and *Gundam* as futuristic self-portraits of the trauma of defeat, and the *otaku*’s inability to confront reality. As Murakami states:

> Uchusenkan Yamato is a story of the resurrection of the warship Yamato, sunk during World War II before it even joined battle. Gundam, too, a story of the birth of a human ‘newtype’ with superpowers in the wake of a space war, gave the *otaku* a dream to follow and provided a sort of psychological escape zone for defeated spirits by equating the newtypes with postwar Japanese.\(^{36}\)

Yet, upon closer inspection, Murakami’s concept of impotence in regard to *otaku* subculture has much less to do with the helpless feeling of the postwar Japanese and more to do with a certain sexualized aesthetic of impotence present in *hentai* (pornographic animation). This unique *otaku* aesthetic, or what Murakami refers to as “a uniquely Japanese awareness of ‘beauty,’”\(^{37}\) appears to be simultaneously sexual and impotent, as exemplified by Murakami’s ongoing “figure” project.

Assembling resin model kits is a prominent hobby for *otaku*. These kits differ from typical plastic model kits in their high craftsmanship and lack of any paint. Resin model kits can be considered closer to miniature sculpture than merely plastic models, and require great skill to assemble and paint correctly. For the most part, resin model kits cover two genres, science fiction and *bishoujo* (beautiful girls). The *bishoujo* class of resin figures give *otaku* a chance to realize their favorite two dimensional anime characters in scaled-down, three dimensional sculptural form. These female figures are influenced by *hentai* and predominantly represent an exaggerated *otaku* female ideal. And because of their small scale, *bishoujo* figures offer *otaku* an object of erotic fantasy which they can dominate sexually without being intimidated by actual social interaction. It is

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\(^{34}\) Ibid.

\(^{35}\) Wakasa.

\(^{36}\) Fleming et al., 66.

\(^{37}\) Murakami, 138.
this genre, with its *otaku* and hentai characteristics, that Murakami sought to emulate in his *Miss ko* (1996) figure.

In order to appeal to *otaku* sensibilities, Murakami created a figure that prayed on the uniform fetish of many *otaku*. *Miss ko* appears as a tall, busty blonde wearing a modified waitress uniform from the Japanese chain restaurant Anna Millers. The uniform consists of a small red miniskirt that accentuates *Miss ko*’s long, slender legs. Each of her shoulders is covered in poofy red shoulder pads that end in frilly white lace cuffs. These pads are independent of the figure’s prominent, skin-tight waitress’ apron which has been modified into a pleated halter top. This top emphasizes *Miss ko*’s large breasts, and allows for a heightened sense of eroticism with her erect nipples poking through. *Miss ko*’s long legs cross slightly, denying the viewer any hidden pleasure gained by looking up her skirt (yet another *otaku* fetish), but her outstretched arm and beaming smile welcome the viewer, while also recreating the typical gesture of directing restaurant patrons to their seats. All things considered, *Miss ko* seems to be an *otaku*’s dream girl, fulfilling both the sexual fantasy and fetishism, but with one major difference, Murakami’s figure is life-size. Increasing the ideal *bishoujo* figure to a 1:1 scale model as opposed to the diminutive 1:5 scale of typical figures, meant breaking a longstanding taboo within *otaku* subculture. A life-size *bishoujo* figure not only forces *otaku* to confront their female fantasies as their equals, but also threatened to ruin the fantasy altogether by mimicking reality too closely. Alternatively, by creating an *otaku* figure in actual size, Murakami also intended to elevate *otaku* aesthetics and subject matter to the level of fine art which was of little interest to his primarily *otaku* audience. Luckily, Murakami’s sculpture was well received by the *otaku* community, and even went into production as a limited edition 1:5 scale resin kit model under the supervision of industry giant Kaiyodo.

Unlike Murakami’s first voyage into the world of *otaku* figure making, the artist’s next creation would belie his critical stance toward *otaku* subculture by pushing the limits of *otaku* sensibilities. This next sculptural project entitled *Hiropon* (1997), exploits the *otaku* sense of eroticism in order to create a caricature of *otaku* culture itself. *Hiropon* is a larger than life, seminude female figure that is depicted jumping a continuous rope of her own breast milk. The figure’s only clothing is a pink string bikini top that struggles unsuccessfully to house *Hiropon*’s enormously swollen and deformed breasts. The figure clenches her two phallic nipples causing her breasts to squirt out a twisting stream of milk that travels from one nipple to the other. All the while, *Hiropon*’s dazed, yet gleeful expression shows that she is thoroughly enjoying herself, as if basking in her grotesquely erotic playtime. But beyond *Hiropon*’s blue whirlwind pigtails and deformed breasts is her most *otaku*-esque characteristic—her lack of genitalia. As with most pornographic or hentai figures, *otaku* fans’ unique senses of beauty and eros dictate that their fantasy girls have no genitals. In this way, the figure remains sexually inert, impotent as it were, and thus far enough removed from reality to be considered unthreatening by *otaku*. This lack of genitals also exposes *otaku* obsessions with childlike sexual fantasies that sometimes border on pedophilia. But more importantly, this uniquely *otaku* sense of beauty is defined by a sexualized yet impotent duality. Ironically, *otaku* prefer idealized female figures with large breasts, long legs, and beautiful faces, but when it comes to actual sexual intercourse, *otaku* idealize the female form as impotent. *Otaku* fantasize about sexual intercourse without human contact through simulated sex scenes in *hentai* anime and their *bishoujo* figures.

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38 Ibid., 139.
emphasizing their removed status from social interactions. This sentiment is aptly exemplified in one *otaku*’s statement “I couldn’t bare to have sex with a real person.” 39 Yet because of *Hiropon*’s grossly exaggerated appearance, she ultimately represents the social deformity of *otaku* subculture rather than their erotic ideal. Even her name, *Hiropon*, is Japanese slang for heroin, further blurring the line between *otaku* obsession and addiction.

**Conclusion**

More than any other work by Murakami, *Hiropon* and his figure series comes closest to his realization of a “uniquely Japanese awareness of beauty.”40 But ultimately, this new aesthetic appears inextricably bound to the *otaku* sensibilities of Japanese social outcasts. Because of *otaku*’s marginalized role in Japanese society, it seems tempting to associate their aesthetic sensibilities with a new Japanese avant-garde as materialized through the work of Murakami. One might compare this to similar instances in art history in which subcultures or marginalized groups served as the impetus of cultural creativity: the mentally ill and their effects on the creation of *art informel* in postwar France in the work of Dubuffet, Fautrier and Wols; African masks and their influence on Picasso in the creation of Cubism; the Beat generation’s influence on the assemblage work of Rauschenberg and Kienholz; etc. Yet in the long tradition that is Japanese art, the search for an authentically Japanese aesthetic has been revisited countless times. The fact that Murakami also seeks this elusive goal is a testament to his background in the traditional art form, Nihonga. By mining the subcultural depths of *anime/manga* and the *otaku* community, Murakami hopes to find Japan’s new cultural riches. Subculture does appear to be the new face of Japanese culture, and as such, appropriate hunting grounds for Japan’s contemporary identity. *Anime* and *manga* are so pervasive on all levels of Japanese society that they indeed appear to be the building blocks of Japan’s new visual and artistic identity. Yet Murakami’s attempts to push the obsessive nature of *otaku* subculture with its social awkwardness and sexual dementia ironically result in what appears to be an authentically Japanese aesthetic, but one which fails to accurately represent contemporary Japanese identity. It is this paradox that permeates Murakami’s artistic practice, and continues to supply him with inspiration.

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40 Murakami, 138.
Japanese Inferential Auxiliaries: Emphasizing and Deemphasizing Judgments through Yooda and Rashii

Hidemi Sugi Riggs

Introduction

The Japanese inferential auxiliaries yooda and rashii contend with each other in use. These two occur in similar contexts and behave similarly on a syntactic level. Both are generally translated into "seem," "look," or "appear." Due to their syntactic likeness, researchers tend to state that they are "interchangeable" in some contexts.1 Teramura Hideo, for example, claims that speakers tend not to carefully distinguish yooda from rashii. Similarly, Mayumi Yuki Johnson states, "In many cases rashii can be substituted for yoo... Yoo and rashii are generally interchangeable."2

Meanwhile, Japanese language teachers typically rely on semantics to distinguish the subtle difference between yooda and rashii. This difference is generally explained in terms of the type of source evidence from which the speaker is inferring—direct versus indirect information or firsthand versus secondhand information. Standard explanations of Japanese grammar assert that speakers use yooda when inferring from firsthand information such as an eyewitness event. Thus, "the degree of certainty in yooda is the highest."3 On the other hand, rashii is used when the speaker holds second-hand information. Since rashii indicates the speaker’s objective attitude towards information underlying his/her inference, the degree of certainty is relatively lower than in the case of rashii.4 Consequently, conventional explanations of Japanese grammar state that the relationship between yooda and rashii is effectively the speaker’s belief in the accuracy of information under discussion.

The findings of this study, however, run contrary to standard explanations of yooda and rashii. This paper argues that the speaker’s motivation to choose one form versus the other is determined by the speaker’s desire to manifest his/her inferential conclusions. Collected data demonstrates that a speaker tends to use yooda to deemphasize his/her judgment. Conversely, the use of rashii occurs when a speaker wants to emphasize his/her judgment. To replace the conventional definition of yooda and rashii, this paper proposes a dichotomy of low focus presentation (reserving the inferential judgment) versus high focus presentation (presenting the inferential judgment).

This paper is intended to assist both teachers and students of the Japanese language. Because yooda and rashii are very similar in meaning, teachers often cannot clearly differentiate the two for students. Moreover, traditional explanations of the semantic differences—based on the type of evidence—do not adequately account for the actual use of yooda and rashii. This paper will contribute to the field of Japanese pedagogy by providing both teachers and students with a better understanding of the substantial meanings of yooda and rashii, thereby enabling students to

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3 Teramura, 249.
effectively distinguish between these two conjectures.

Previous Research and Problems

**Firsthand versus Secondhand Information**

Kashioka Tamako states that the speaker’s choice of *yooda* and *rashii* depends on whether the speaker has *chokusetsu-handan-zairyoo*—information which permits direct-judgment. She classifies visual information as “indirect-judgment-material,” placing the former category in opposition the latter. According to Kashioka, a speaker uses *yooda* based on his/her own intuitive judgments; *rashii* is based on something else, usually hearsay. Kashioka treats “intuition” as an information source that serves as the basis for a speaker’s deductive judgment. She claims that statements involving *rashii* express another person’s opinion; the use of *rashii* implies that the speaker is not responsible for the articulated judgment.

Teramura Hideo differentiates between the two auxiliaries on the basis of the speaker’s subjectivity; namely, *rashii* gives the impression that the speaker’s conjecture is based on obtained information rather than on his/her own subjective judgment. In contrast, *yooda* represents the speaker’s own subjective judgment. This interpretation of the two auxiliaries is more or less analogous with Kashioka’s explanation.

On the other hand, Aoki Haruo states that the speaker uses *yooda* to make inferences when he/she has some “visible, tangible, or audible evidence collected through his own senses.” The speaker uses *rashii* when evidence is circumstantial or secondhand. Aoki’s classification of information sources is different from that of Kashioka and Teramura. However, his definition of “firsthand information/secondhand information” is consistent with that of Makino and Tsutsui. These linguists state that *rashii* usually expresses conjecture based upon what the speaker has heard or read. *Yooda* is an expression that is based on the speaker’s visual perceptions. Makino and Tsutsui, however, contradict themselves when they later assert that *rashii* can refer to evidence that is directly perceived—objective information that would normally necessitate the use of *yooda*. The result of these contradictions is a general sense of confusion among teachers and students about the contextual use of *yooda* and *rashii*.

**Alternative Explanations**

By contrast, Kuramochi Yasuo states that “[r]ashii is a form that conveys the speaker’s convinced judgment based on objective evidence. The speaker’s certainty is very high.” When using *rashii*, the speaker believes his/her judgment to be accurate since his/her opinions are based upon firsthand data. Conversely, “Yooda expresses the speaker’s judgment of the situation even though his certainty in yooda is low.” Kuramochi provides a comprehensive explanation of the two inferential auxiliaries. He explains the use of *yooda* as an inference based on indirect source information.

As suggested, other grammarians and linguists have exercised little consistency when distinguishing between *yooda* and *rashii*. Despite the wide diffusion of the “firsthand versus secondhand information” dichotomy, this approach cannot account for the actual uses of *rashii* and *yooda*. The following five examples will
demonstrate the inconsistency of the current approach.

Counter-Examples to the Standard Interpretation of Yooda and Rashii

Example 1

"Watashi wa hon-sho o kaki-oe-ta toki, doushite konn monoo kaitan daroo to jimon-shi-ta. Omouni dooyara watashi wa, konnichi no genjitsu, toku-ni mata nihon oyobi nihon-jin no mondai ni tsuite, watashinari no vijon o teikyou-shita-katta rashii."

"After I finished writing I asked myself why I wrote such a thing. It seems that I wanted to provide my own opinion about present reality, specifically, about problems in Japanese society and Japanese people.

This excerpt is found in the preface of a bestseller written by psychiatrist Doi Takeo. The author asks himself "why did I write this" and then firmly states his reasons. Doi's response to this rhetorical question clearly cannot originate from a secondhand source, but rather originates in his own mind. He retrospectively analyzes his own motivations for writing the book and realizes that: "I wanted to provide my own opinion about present reality, specifically about problems in Japanese society and Japanese people." This motivation was previously unknown to himself and the reader. Traditional definitions of Japanese grammar state that rashii describes secondhand information. But in Example 1, rashii is used to describe firsthand information—the speaker's own thoughts.

Likewise, the speaker in Example 2 presents an inference based on her own observations:

Example 2

"Kinoo obachan no tokoro ni ikimashita. De, hochoki dakedo, jitsu wa moo motteiru

In this context, the writer actually observed her grandmother’s hearing aid. The author uses rashii when she introduces this information to the recipient of the e-mail message. Significantly, the writer uses an inferential auxiliary (rashii) despite directly viewing the hearing aid. The use of rashii in this context contradicts standard grammatical definitions. For example, Makino and Tsutsui state that if the speaker's assertion contains relatively little conjecture, rashii is almost the same as a hearsay expression. Similarly, Jun Takahashi claims that "rashii represents that a speaker makes an inference with the help of the extratextual knowledge, which is the so-called long memory or common sense." These standard explanations are not merely inadequate; they prevent students of Japanese from acquiring the inferential system.

Example 3

"Fumi ashimoto ga akaruku-natta. Ushiro kuruma ga kuru rashii. Furimui-tatoten, raito ga kodo o mashi-ta."

"Unexpectedly the ground around her feet lit up. It seems that a car is coming up from behind. As she turned her head, the light became brighter."

This excerpt is drawn from a romance-suspense novel. In the scene containing this narrative a young woman walks alone at night through a deserted alleyway. She quickens her pace as intuition tells her to hurry. Suddenly, the ground around her becomes light, leading the woman to believe that a car is rapidly approaching.

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16 E-mail communication, April 22, 2003.
17 Makino and Tsutsui, 251.ou e
Her conjecture is based solely on the bright headlights—a source of visual inference that should necessitate yooda. However, the woman uses rashii.

Example 4

"Naani, chottoshita shujutsu desu. Taiji ga shinde-iru rashii kara ne."

“Well, it’s a very simple operation indeed. All I have to do is get it out because the fetus seems to be dead.”

This conversation is an excerpt from a novel. In the preceding part, the speaker, an obstetrician, discovers that his patient’s fetus is dead. He arrives at this judgment through several modes of observation; the obstetrician listens for the baby’s pulse and monitors the patient’s uterus for signs of motion. Since both tests turn out negative, he concludes that the fetus must be dead. Clearly, these actions constitute firsthand observations. Once again, rashii rather than yooda is used to introduce “direct-judgment material.”

In Example 1, conjecture is solely based on the speaker’s introspective thought. In Example 2, on the other hand, conjecture is based on an eyewitness event. Likewise, in Example 3, firsthand visual evidence serves as the basis for conjecture. Lastly, Example 4 is a case where a combination of firsthand auditory evidence, tactile evidence, and linguistic evidence—the woman’s description of her symptoms—underlie conjecture. In all these examples, conventional theories of the firsthand versus secondhand distinction cannot account for the particular use of rashii.

Similarly, conventional grammar cannot account for the particular use of yooda in the following excerpt:

Example 5

“Shiai wa sudeni hajimatteita. 19:00 kara to ryokoosho ni

kaiteatta ga, panfu o mitemiruto 18:00 kara hajimatteita –yooda.”

“The game had already started. According to a guidebook for tourists, it was supposed to start at 19:00. Yet, in reality, it seems that the game started at 18:00 as the pamphlet stated.”

In this excerpt taken from a weblog, a writer introduces his inference about the commencement time of a kickboxing game. He checks the commencement time in a guidebook for tourists before leaving for the stadium. The guidebook states that the game will begin at 19:00, so he arrives at the stadium around 18:00. However, when he arrives, he discovers that the game has already started. After obtaining a pamphlet from the stadium, the writer learns that the game was scheduled to begin at 18:00. His statement, “when I looked up the pamphlet, it seems that the game began at 18:00 o’clock,” indicates that he made this inference based on the information contained in the pamphlet. Makino and Tsutsui claim that the use of yooda in the excerpt is because “his inference [is] based on firsthand, reliable information (usually visual information).” In reality, the use of yooda in this example is based on secondhand information—printed material.

Data Analysis and Hypothesis

Introduction of the Theory

The notion of systematic semantic opposition formed between the two linguistic signs is the fundamental principle of sign-meaning theory. According to Ellen Contini-Morava, “A sign-based theory of meaning maintains that it is reasonable to distinguish between semantics—aspects of meaning that are encoded directly into the linguistic signal—and pragmatics, i.e., aspects of meaning that are inferred by the hearer from contextual information, ‘encyclopedic’ knowledge, social conventions about communication.”

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2 Makino and Tsutsui, 549.
Unlike most mainstream linguistics theories, sign-meaning theory views language as a communicative rather than as a representational device. This theory hypothesizes that verbal signals are merely rough hints instead of complete fractions or building blocks of a conversation. Accordingly, a linguistic meaning may include more than descriptions or schematic scene; it can incorporate instruction to the hearer to pay more or less attention to an event; it can also suggest that the hearer be ready to infer an unusual, unexpected message.

By drawing upon sign-meaning theory, this paper claims that the speaker’s choice of *yooda* versus *rashii* is based on a desire to convey specific meaning. The type of information source that underlies a speaker’s conclusions does not influence this decision.

**Data**

The data corpus of this study comprises 21 books of essays, two novels, two nonfiction books, and e-mail messages. Approximately 5,300 examples of the inferential uses of the auxiliaries were collected for this study. Tables 1 and 2 show the token frequencies of these words in a variety of co-occurrences.\(^2\)

As Table 1 shows, *rashii* does not appear in equivocal expressions involving *ki* (“feeling”), *kanji* (“feeling/sense”), *omou* (“think”), *omowareru* (“I cannot help thinking”), *omoeru* (“it seems to me that”), and *mieru* (“can be seen”). Even though both *yooda* and *rashii* are usually translated as “seem” or “look like,” the data indicates that such equivocal expressions are not generally used with *rashii*. As for equivocal expressions, *yooda* is overwhelmingly used in these types of phrases. On the other hand, the preponderance of *rashii* in revelatory inferences is illustrated by Table 2.

The data analysis discussed in this section indicates that the semantic substance within the two auxiliaries is the degree to which the speaker emphasizes a conjecture. The speaker tends to use *yooda* when he wants to deemphasize his/her judgment. Conversely, the use of *rashii* occurs when the speaker wants to emphasize his/her judgment. Thus, this paper argues against the conventional accounts of *yooda* and *rashii’s* different semantic meanings and instead proposes a dichotomy of *reserving inferential judgment*

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\(^2\) *Yooda* has an attributive form “yoona” and adverbial form “yoont.”

Table 1: Co-occurrence with equivocal expressions “I have a feeling”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Yooda</em> and its equivocal varieties</th>
<th><em>Rashii</em> and its equivocal varieties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>yooda</em></td>
<td><em>rashii</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“it seems”</td>
<td>“it seems”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yoona ki ga suru</em></td>
<td><em>rashii ki ga suru</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have a feeling that”</td>
<td>“I cannot help thinking”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yoona kanji ga suru</em></td>
<td><em>omoeru</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have a feeling that”</td>
<td>“it seems to me that”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yooni omou</em></td>
<td><em>mieru</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think it is something like”</td>
<td><em>can be seen</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 2934 2308

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Table 2: Co-occurrence with revelatory expression *Jitsu wa ‘to tell the truth’*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Yooda</em> in a revelatory sentence</th>
<th><em>Rashii</em> in a revelatory sentence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Jitsu wa, yooda</em></td>
<td><em>Jitsu wa, rashii</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In fact it seems...”</td>
<td>“In fact it seems...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | 2 | 109 |
(yooda) versus presenting inferential judgment (rashii).

In the following sections I will examine cases that illustrate how the speaker’s emphasis is the basic criteria for word choice.

**Unexpected Information versus Expected Information**

As mentioned in the introduction, the type of inferential source—eyewitness versus hearsay information—is not the basis of the Japanese inferential system. The true basis is the speaker’s intent to emphasize his/her conjecture. Under what circumstances does a speaker want to manifest his/her inferential judgments explicitly? According to Wallace Chafe, the human mind is full of expectations about how the world should function. However, events do not always match expectations. Therefore the human mind has evolved methods to cope with unexpected events. Chafe states that “When we experience such events, we react with excitement[,] sometimes anger, and sometimes aggression.” Human beings describe unexpected events expressly rather than implicitly—especially when they contain new information. A speaker may also express his/her conjectures explicitly when he/she has reliable evidence: firsthand information. Holding this notion in mind, I examine the following cases:

**Examples of Rashii**

**Example 6**

“Fuini ashimoto ga akaruku natta. Ushiro kara kuruma ga kuru rashii. Purimuita totan, raito ga kudo o mashita.”

“It seems that a car was coming up from behind. As she turned her head the light became brighter.”

As mentioned before, this text is part of a scene from a romance-suspense novel. The text surrounding this excerpt reminds the readers that the woman had suffered other attacks in which a malicious driver had almost killed her. Thus, this event is particularly unexpected because it had already occurred once before. The author’s use of rashii emphasizes that this attack is unforeseen by the protagonist.

**Example 7**

“Naani, chottoshita shujutsudesu. Taiji ga shinndeiru rashii kara-ne. Shitai o sooha surya iiwakadesu.”

“Well, it’s not such a big deal. It’s a very simple operation indeed. All I have to do is get it out because the fetus seems to be dead.”

In text preceding this conversation the speaker, an obstetrician, discovers that his patient’s fetus is dead. The obstetrician then tells his patient the status of her baby. The obstetrician uses rashii to introduce this diagnosis for two reasons. First, the information is unexpected; emphasizing the information is a natural human reaction. Second, the obstetrician needs to convince the patient to undergo an abortion. In this example, the use of rashii is also a form of persuasion.

**Example 8**

“Soren ga suputoniku no uchiage ni seikoshi, amerika no uchukagaku ga ippo okure o totta amerika gawa ga yakki ni natte gennin o kyumeishita tokoro igai ya igai, ameirika wa gogaku ni rettanna noni soren ga gaikokugo kyoiku ni kiwamete nesshinde kore ga sorenkagaku no sozosei no takasa no himitsu rashii toiu kotoninatta.”

“The Soviet Union successfully launched Sputnik into the space; consequently America’s space science fell behind. So Americans desperately investigated the cause. Surprisingly, the result [of that investigation] was that whereas the Soviet Union advocated foreign languages education, the US gave a cold shoulder to it. Learning foreign languages enhances students’ creativity and achieved a high

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56 Buse, 99.
standard (of creativity), and it seemed to be the secret of their success.”

The exclamatory phrase igai ya igai “surprise, surprise” reveals that the writer intends to emphasize that the connection between foreign language education and science is unexpected. To do so, the essayist uses rashii.

Examples of Yooda

Example 9
“Ato, kyoo gureepfurutsu ga todoita- yooodesu. Doomo arigatoo. Boku wa mada kaisha na node tenai kedo sakki mearu ga hairimashita.”

“it seems that the grapefruits (which you sent me) were delivered today. Thank you very much. Though I haven’t seen them yet, because I am still at my work, an e-mail from my family came in a while ago.”

This excerpt is an e-mail message in which the writer expresses his gratitude for a surprise gift from his sister—the recipient of this e-mail. The writer uses an inferential expression to report the gift’s delivery because he has not yet personally observed the grapefruit. In this situation the recipient of the e-mail naturally expects that the writer will receive her gift. As a result, the writer does not wish to present his inference forcefully. In contrast, rashii is used in situational contexts where both the writer and the reader encounter unexpected information. For instance, both writer and recipient of Example 2 are surprised that their grandmother already owns a hearing aid. A comparison of examples 2 and 9 confirms the hypothesis that word choice is based on a speaker’s desire to emphasize or de-emphasize inferential judgment. This hypothesis is more or less parallel with recipient design, an idea from the field of conversation analysis. When discussing recipient design, Emanuel Schegloff states the following:

One important constraint on ‘telling’—a constraint specific to each particular recipient of the telling and thus a feature of the ‘recipient design’ of the talk—is that, ordinarily, speakers should not tell recipients what they suppose (or ought to suppose) the recipient already knows.

Moreover, Akira Komai and Thomas Rohlich claim that “When the speaker wants to avoid direct and matter-of-fact sentences, yoooda is used as a sentence softener to make a periphrastic phrase.” These statements are perfectly congruent with my argument—yoooda signals that a speaker is reserving his/her inferential judgment. Another example will further reinforce this assertion.

Example 10

“Theyir primary investigation about the victim’s identification finished. At that stage, they asked Fukuoka Prefecture Police Department for a more detailed investigation. Now, they have just received the report from Fukuoka Police Department. It seems to be almost hundred percent positive that the victim was Tamura Wakako as we expected.”

This excerpt is drawn from a narrative within a detective story. The example is interesting on a number of levels. First, although the report from the Fukuoka Police Department is secondhand information, the speaker nevertheless uses yoooda. This further weakens traditional grammarians’ claim that yoooda is reserved for firsthand information. Second, since the identity of the victim is consistent with the speaker’s expectations, there is less need to emphasize this information. The

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28 E-mail communication, May 9, 2003.
speaker does not use *rashii* to stress that the victim is Tamura Wakako because he already expected as much before contacting the Fukuoka Police Department.

**Information about the Group: Including 'me' or Excluding 'me'**

As stated previously, *rashii* is used to present information that is in some way revelatory to both the speaker and hearer. *Yooda*, on the other hand, is used to express information that is already known to the hearer. The following examples further support this explanation of Japanese auxiliaries. As Example 11 demonstrates, a speaker invokes *rashii* when referring to an external social group—in this case housewives.

**Example 11**

"Katei no shufu wa amari hon o yoma-nai rashii. Souu chosa kekka ga aru. Okusan gata wa hon o yonde iru no dewanai-ka to Yosoush-te-ita dakeni, kono suiji wa yaya igai de atta."

"Housewives seem to seldom read books. There are statistics that indicates this... Since I had presumed that housewives spend more time on readings, the statistics are a little bit different than my expectation." 32

This excerpt appears at the opening of an essay written by a professor. After introducing some statistics, the professor expresses his surprise that the results of his survey do not match his expectations. The word *igai* indicates the professor's surprise. His predictions are inaccurate because housewives are an external social group. The professor's lifestyle differs profoundly from that of women who lack a professional occupation. Because the professor is not a member of this social group, his findings are unexpected. Consequently, the author uses *rashii* in this context.

Conversely, in Example 12, the same author invokes *yooda* to articulate an unsurprising observation about his own social group.

**Example 12**

"Kangaete miru to (kangaete-mi-naku temo hakkiri shite iru ga) wareware wa sukoshi kooohii o nomi sugiru *yooda*.

"When I think over — (it's obvious even if I don't think it about it too seriously), we *seem* to drink too much coffee." 33

This excerpt is found in an essay in which the author self-examines the lifestyle of coffee shops patrons. As the first pronoun plural *ware-ware* indicates, the speaker conceives himself and his audience as members of a social group that frequent coffee shops. This sentence expresses his introspective thought: we *should refrain* from drinking coffee. Because the author includes himself in this social group, his observation is in no way surprising to his audience. For this reason, he uses *yooda*, correctly judging that *rashii* would be inappropriate in this context.

**The Speaker's Uncertainty**

*Yooda* is predominantly used in equivocal expressions and in contexts where the speaker makes an inference based on obscure information sources. This characteristic of *yooda* is widely acknowledged by students of Japanese linguistics. Nakahata Takayuki, for instance, defines the semantic substance of *yooda* as an indication of the speaker's uncertainty about his own judgment. 34

In contrast, Makino and Tsutsui state that *yooda* "involves the speaker’s reasoning process based on firsthand, reliable information and his knowledge." 35 According to this explanation, the

10 Ibid., 107.
1 Makino and Tsutsui, 550.
degree of certainty in *yooda* is higher than *rashii*. However, as the next example will demonstrate, firsthand information is not necessarily reliable.

Example 13

“Mukoo kara kobashirini yatte kita obahan ga surechigazama ni ookina koe de itta. ‘Ma ga aite masse’ no tokoro ga hakkirishinai. *Doomo MADO* no *yooda* ki mo suru. Aruiwa MAE datta no ka mo shire-nai.”

An old woman, who was coming up to me in a trot said in loud voice, ‘Your (?) is open.’ I did not hear the part *ma(?).* It **seems** to have been ‘window,’ or it could have been ‘front.’

This excerpt is found in an essay about the origin of the Japanese phrase “Shakai no mado” (“window to society”), a euphemistic expression for the zipper on a man’s pants. The author introduces the essay with an anecdote. While walking across a busy intersection he is accosted by an old woman who loudly warns him that his fly is open. Although he does not hear the word clearly, the author immediately recognizes the old woman’s admonition. Recollecting the scene, the author speculates whether the woman said “*mado*” (“window”) or “*ma-e*” (“front”). In this case, information, despite being received firsthand, is uncertain. Clearly, one of the key assumptions of evidential theory—firsthand information derives from authentic sources of information—is flawed. The author chooses *yooda* over *rashii* because this firsthand information is uncertain.

The Pragmatic Constraint on the Uses of Rashii

So far I have examined cases in which a Japanese speaker presents his/her inferential judgment strongly with *rashii* or weakly with *yooda*. Example 14 will illustrate a situation in which the use of **high focus presentation** is inappropriate. Likewise, the pair of sentences in example 15 below will represent the actual use of *rashii* and *yooda* in everyday life. This example suggests that the pragmatic constraint dictate the uses of *yooda* and *rashii*.

Example 14

“*Kaze hita no ka?” Erika no hitai ni te o ate-te, ‘Netsu wa nai *yooda* kedo.’”

“Have you caught a cold?” He put his hand on Erika’s forehead and said, *You don’t seem feverish . . .*”

This excerpt is a scene from a novel. The speaker sees his friend in bed and speculates that she has caught a cold. In this context, the speaker cannot use *rashii* because his inferential judgment refers to another person’s perception of her own physiological condition. No matter how much information the speaker possesses, he cannot actually tell Erika whether or not she feels ill. In other words, the speaker is unable to forcefully present his inferential judgment. Therefore, he uses *yooda* rather than *rashii*.

In the pair of sentences in Example 15, the speaker examines another student for signs of illness. She makes an inferential judgment based on the student’s appearance. The student’s complexion, choice of dress—a baseball cap and an unusually thick jacket—lead to the following conclusion:

Example 15

(15-a) Speaker’s mental inference

“Kono hito netsu ga aru *rashii*.”

“She **seems** to have fever.”

(15-b) Speaker’s actual utterance

“Netsu ga aru *yooda*-kedo. Daijoobu?”

“You **look** feverish. Are you all right?”

To Japanese speakers, only the second utterance could be used in a face-to-face conversation. However, the thought represented by the first sentence will arise in a speaker’s mind prior to actually making the utterance. In the mind of the speaker, the other student’s physical condition is unexpected. Therefore, *rashii* is appropriately used in Example 15-a. However, articulating the highly focused inferential
expression (netsu ga aru rashii) would appear strange. The hearer is obviously aware of her own feverish condition.

Likewise, in Example 14, an inferential judgment about the hearer cannot be unexpected information. As a result, the speaker finds it awkward to forcefully present his inferential judgment. For this reason, rashii is unsuitable under conditions where the hearer’s knowledge of a subject is by definition greater than that of the speaker. In this circumstance, the speaker’s inference will be represented using a softer expression involving yooda or one of its equivocal variants such as yoona kigasuru.

Conclusion

With an examination of more than 5000 cases, this paper uncovers a clear and more plausible mechanism by which Japanese speakers choose between yooda and rashii. First, the speaker’s word choice is not related to the type of source evidence that underlies an inferential judgment. Alternatively, the dichotomy between first and secondhand information does not serve as the basis for word choice. Instead, the speaker differentiates between yooda and rashii depending upon his/her intent to emphasize an inferential judgment. The choice of auxiliary depends upon whether a judgment is unexpected by the speaker or by both the speaker and hearer. Consequently, the level of certainty per se is not the primary condition for deciding to use yooda or rashii. As demonstrated by Example 13, a speaker may use yooda when he/she is not certain about a judgment. Or, as shown in Example 10, a speaker may also use yooda if information validates preexisting expectations.

Second, the semantic substance of the two auxiliaries relies on the speaker’s emphasis or der-emphasis of inferential judgments. Yooda reserves inferential judgment, while rashii presents an inferential judgment emphatically. The preponderant use of yooda and its equivocal variants reflect the Japanese social value of being unassertive. Regardless of age, gender, economic status, and social group, Japanese speakers use yooda to reserve their inferences. This serves to confirms a commonly held belief about Japanese character—Japanese people place positive value on equivocal mannerisms. Japanese use of yooda is representative of aimai no bigaku, the “aesthetics of vagueness.”

Third, conventional grammar deals with rashii as if it were a hearsay expression. This is not only an inaccurate interpretation but it also prevents students from fully understanding the meaning of rashii as an inferential auxiliary. In Japanese there are a wide variety of set hearsay expressions such as sooedesu (“I heard that,””) or to iu koto desu (“It is said that”). These expressions are distinct from the inferential rashii. However, some cases do exist where rashii could be interpreted as a hearsay expression. This suggests that hearsay intrinsically contains revelations and potentially noteworthy information. Yet, rashii is not a mere hearsay expression; it allows a speaker to emphasize inferential judgment.

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Rhetoric, Reality, and Responsibility: The United States’ Role in South Korean Democratization

Tracy Williams

Soon after the area of Korea under the 38th parallel came under US protection in 1945, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge proclaimed that one of the first and foremost US objectives would be to “work out measures for assisting the . . . development of democratic self-government . . . [in] Korea.”1 Yet South Korea did not democratize until over forty years later in 1987. During those decades, the United States would have been a likely initiator of democratization, as it sought to stand for the values of democracy and freedom in its struggle against the Soviet Union and also had vast influence and leverage over South Korea.2 Instead, however, the United States was the greatest benefactor of the authoritarian South Korean government during that time, supporting and legitimizing the regime through aid, presidential visits, affirmations of friendship, and economic support even as South Korea’s authoritarian leadership conspicuously oppressed democracy and human rights.

Explaining this gap between rhetoric and reality requires an examination of American foreign policymaking during the Cold War, taking into account factors such as the motivations (namely security, stability, and other national interests) and circumstances (most prominently the Cold War itself and the aftermath of the Vietnam War) faced by the United States. Together these factors drove the US government to support South Korea’s authoritarian regime instead of seeking democratization, and the evidence suggest that this role may have been key in delaying democratization in Korea. Thus the United States, the self-proclaimed leader of the free world during the Cold War, was a reluctant accomplice to oppression, sacrificing ideology for what it deemed to be more pressing concerns.

Background

When South Korea initially came under US protection in 1945, it was unready for democracy in many ways.3 South Korea had been under authoritarian rule for virtually its entire history, from kingdoms and dynasties to Japanese colonists, and a strong Confucian tradition had ingrained anti-democratic principles into the Korean people.4 Well before actual democratization in 1987, however, South Korea had achieved many of the objectives that are generally considered preconditions for democracy, such as economic growth, a cohesive cultural and social makeup, and high levels of education.5 The former ambassador to South Korea, William Gleysteen, points out that by 1977, “Korea had already achieved the . . . goals of economic security, fair distribution of wealth, social mobility, and educational opportunity,”6 and the facts strongly support Gleysteen’s statement.

3 See Han Sung-Joo, “South Korea: Politics in Transition,” in Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, eds., Democracy in Developing Countries: Asia (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), 269, for a description of South Korea’s difficulties.
4 Such as: “the people should follow established leadership without questions, and should not be concerned about the knowledge necessary for the exercise of leadership.” Quoted in Edward Reynolds Wright, Korean Politics in Transition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 7.

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In 1963, the growth rate was an admirable eight percent, a level maintained until the economic crisis of 1997. By 1965, the literacy rate had already risen more than twenty percentage points above 1945 levels, reaching over eighty percent, and this was accompanied by huge increases in enrollment for secondary and higher education. South Korea also possessed incredible societal cohesion due to its homogeneous make-up. Together, these factors could have conceivably formed a workable basis for a Korean democracy by the 1970s.

Accompanying this basis for democracy was a possible strong influence for democratization—the United States itself. American influence was enormous in Korea after World War II. Not only did the United States provide Korea with huge amounts of aid and assistance, but Korea also idealized its American liberator and tried to emulate it. According to David Cole and Princeton Lyman:

American influence extended directly into nearly every aspect of Korea political and economic development . . . the United States largely shaped the structure of the independent government, the postwar education system, the country’s internal and external economic relationships; and increasingly thereafter, through its training and education programs, it shaped the attitudes and abilities of key groups, especially in the education sector, bureaucracy, military and business community.2

As a democratic role model, the United States helped to create a desire to democratize among the Korean public by naturally “[reinforcing] the symbols and values of democracy” which helped “an internal and quite indigenous attachment to democratic principles . . . to develop [in Korea].”3

The United States also had various forms of leverage over South Korea to press for democratization, including:

A security treaty, a large American military presence, foreign military sales credits, government and private loans, markets for Korea’s exports, high-level visitors, supply of police equipment, assistance from international financial institutions, public criticism and diplomatic representations.4

Yet, with both the appropriate environment and the capacity to influence, US leverage over Korea was not forcefully applied toward democratization until the mid-1980s, and the key to understanding for this delay lies in the set of circumstances that pushed democratization far down the United States’ priority list until the mid-1980s. Certainly the influence of the United States may not have been a sufficient factor to democratize South Korea, but US policy toward Korea was “a crucial variable”5 that ignored or countered rather than promoted democracy in South Korea until the mid-1980s.

**US Motivations**

Thomas Carothers aptly sums up United States policy on democratization when he writes:

High-flying rhetoric notwithstanding, security and economic interests still often point US policy in a contrary direction . . . Democracy promotion remains at most one of several major US foreign policy interests, sometimes supplementary to but sometimes in competition with other, stronger interests.6

Carothers’ assessment accurately explains the past

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9 See Wright, 3: “there are a single race, a single language, common cultural assumptions, and . . . no minority group of significant size.”
10 Cole and Lyman, 59.
11 Cole and Lyman, 62.
12 Gleysestone, 33.
14 Carothers, 5.
democratization, in which the "other interests" could be summarized into three categories. First were security concerns, which were centered on the constant threat from North Korea. Next were stability concerns, which constituted a subset of security concerns since exploitation by potential enemies, such as North Korea, made instability dangerous. Third were other domestic and international US interests, such as responding to the American public, defining the US image and building relations.

Security was a very real concern throughout this period, even though the Korean War had been over for two decades by 1973. Indeed, the Korean War ended without a real peace settlement, and this led to situation of ever-present tension and uncertainty on the peninsula. Skirmishes and more severe events—such as the shooting down of an American plane, the seizure of the USS Pueblo by North Korea, and the Panmunjom "ax-murderer" incident in which six South Korean and American military personnel were killed by ax-wielding North Koreans while cutting down a tree near the demilitarized zone—served as constant reminders of the security threat. This was a justified United States concern, as evidenced by the over 300 American casualties suffered as a result of armed conflict with North Koreans during the Cold War. South Korea's security was also of particular importance because of its implications for the Cold War. Most American policy-makers shared Henry Kissinger's belief that "the vital interests of world powers [intersected] in Korea; conflict there inevitably [threatening] wider war."

The constant security threat, however, made democratization difficult because it gave the US a primary interest in building up a strong South Korean military. This made the military one of the strongest groups in Korea because of substantial US aid. The unfortunate upshot, however, was that it made "military entrée into Korean politics at some point inevitable," two military coups confirming this assertion. Once the military was in control, the prospects for US help in democratization became even bleaker as any pursuit of democratization would invariably undermine the governing military establishment and thereby hurt South Korea's ability to maintain its own security.

Secondly, stability was of utmost importance to deter an exploitative attack. Because democracy is inherently unpredictable, more so than other forms of government in that "political uncertainty is inherent... [and] no one has a perpetual hold on public authority," democracy was particularly unattractive in view of stability concerns. While authoritarian rule in Korea guaranteed strong leadership under accepted military leaders, democracy allowed for the possibility of weak leadership, or worse yet, pro-Communist leadership. At least the United States knew that the military leadership was firmly anti-Communist, as the military made it a point to affirm immediately after first taking power in 1961.

In another vein, economic stability had two-fold importance—not only was it a means of achieving overall stability, but economic success was also one of the best counters to communism and North Korea. Encouraging a successful economy was more important than democratization to ensure that South Korea would not fall victim to communist temptations. The authoritarian

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17 Washington largely paid South Korea's military budget. See Steward Lane and Gavan McCormack, Korea since 1850 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 139.
18 Cole and Lyman, 61.
20 Right after the initial military takeover in 1961, the government of South Korea quickly reaffirmed first and foremost its anticommunist commitment, which it would continue to espouse. Chang Do Young, "Korean Desire to 'Maintain the Most Friendly Ties' with the United States: Message from the Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Republic of Korea (Lieutenant General Chung) to the President of the United States (Kennedy), May 18, 1961," in American Foreign Policy: Current Documents (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1961), 974.
government in South Korea provided this stable political system and booming economy, using its centralized power to promote substantial growth and development. By 1969, Asia had the fastest economic growth in the world with Korea a central part of that growth, and scholars widely credited the authoritarian system, especially under the leadership of President Park Chung Hee, for this economic progress. Since the United States wanted economic stability for Korea and invested much so as to spur on Korean development, the economic success provided by the authoritarian leadership gave the US another reason to prefer the authoritarian status quo.

The Pre-1973 Era

Relations between the United States and Korea from 1945 to 1973 cannot be characterized in any consistent way. While Korea was an important issue for the victors at the end of World War II, it soon fell from US concern and was notably absent from Secretary of State Dean Acheson’s Asian defense perimeter in 1950. Soon after, however, Korea was at the forefront of Unites States interest when North Korea attacked the South, prompting a quick response of help by the United States under the auspices of the United Nations. After the Korean War, the United States was committed to South Korea, with troops stationed there, a mutual defense treaty, and agreements to give economic and military aid to Korea.

For the remainder of the 1950s, the United States was largely concerned with rebuilding the war-torn country and with Korean reunification—democracy an understandably distant goal. South Korea did experience a brief democratic interlude following US pressure for democratization in 1960, but it lasted only nine months after which a military coup d’etat by General Park Chung Hee overthrew the government. The US supported Park initially, who ran the government with a façade of democracy. In 1972, however, the Park instigated the yusin emergency reforms, creating a highly authoritarian government which involved the dissolution of the National Assembly, prohibition all activities by political parties and revision of the constitution to call for indirect presidential elections and the abolition of term limits. This made South Korea’s sham of democracy completely apparent, the yusin reforms “[signaling] that Park was now . . . ready to abandon the onerous principles . . . of liberal democracy and to suppress civil society at his will.”

This blatant rejection of democracy by the Park government, however, was partly the inadvertent doing of the United States, specifically its post-Vietnam policy of non-intervention and its efforts to improve relations with China. After Vietnam, vehement anti-interventionist sentiments of the American public led President Nixon to propose the so-called Nixon Doctrine in 1969, declaring that “Asia [is] for the Asians . . . We should assist, but we should not dictate . . . [and] avoid the kind of policy that will make countries in Asia so dependent upon us that

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26 “United States Reaffirmation of ‘Traditional Friendly Relations’ with the Republic of Korea: Message From the American Charge d’Affaires as Interim at Seoul (Green) to the Korean Foreign Minister (Kim Hong-II), May 26, 1961,” American Foreign Policy Documents, 975.
27 Kim, 57.
28 Another factor leading to the imposition of the yusin reforms was that Park was going to exceed the constitutional term limit soon. However, the timing and style of the reforms were probably influenced by the US general withdrawal from Korea and relations with China, both which made Park realize that he was responsible for guaranteeing the security of South Korea himself. See Gleysteen, 13.

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we are dragged into conflicts such as the one we have in Vietnam. Under this new doctrine, the United States wished to decrease its physical involvement in Asia by reducing troops and supporting allies instead through economic and military aid. In line with this emphasis on decreased involvement, the United States wanted desperately to avoid disturbing the delicate balance of power on the Korean peninsula, which meant avoiding policies such as democratic promotion, because unbalancing the status quo could endanger South Korea and necessitate US intervention in Asian affairs again. The United States’ new non-interventionist stance accompanied by the withdrawal of one of the two remaining US combat divisions in Korea was also distressing to Park, however, because it took away the credibility of the US deterrent and, in Park’s eyes, endangered South Korea.

When the United States attempted to reaffirm its new non-interventionist policy to a former Korean War enemy, China, and also normalize US-Chinese relations in 1972, it was the last straw for Park. He saw these events as "a fundamental challenge to Korea’s national security and to his own political future," convincing him that the yusin reforms were essential for Korean security and his political survival. The US’s new isolationist policy thus pushed Park toward authoritarian rule. This connection led Jerome Cohen and Edward Baker to write that "two of the less well known casualties of the Vietnam War were democracy and human rights in Korea."

Tensions build: 1973-1977

The United States' response to Park's yusin reforms had to be guarded. With the Vietnam War having just ended in 1973, the US was intent on avoiding instability in Korea at any costs, as instability might necessitate intervention, which was the last thing US politicians wanted as long as the American public was fiercely non-interventionist. Consistent with this isolationist policy, the US also wanted to withdraw some American troops from Korea. This led to a difficult situation, however, since withdrawing troops would subtract from the United States' ability to maintain security and stability on the Korean peninsula, making these two goals—maintaining a secure situation and withdrawing troops—incompatible. Three months after the yusin reforms were imposed, a report of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee expressed this difficulty in policy:

With the US involvement in Vietnam soon to be terminated...and with the end of our illusions about Korean democracy, it should be possible to take a fresh look at our residual interest in Korea. Our basis objective would appear to be to avoid tension or conflict on the Korean peninsula which would disturb the present apparent equilibrium in the north Pacific where the interests of the Soviet Union, China, Japan and the United States converge. To date we have sought to accomplish this by a US deterrent presence. This policy has been expensive and has carried with it the danger of an automatic US involvement in another Asian war.

Thus, the United States sought a more non-interventionist means of maintaining security and stability on the Korean peninsula, and the answer came from the authoritarian Park regime itself. Park's yusin reforms kept the system stable, and by supporting the Park regime—through economic aid and good relations—the United States could bolster security and stability indirectly. This was the road the US chose to follow, but it made it difficult to disapprove of Park's highly authoritarian system because the US could not act to change it, not because of any concrete bar

29 Shanghai Communique, <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communique01.html>. The United States reasserted a non-interventionist policy in Asia and an attempt to improve relations with China—both of which would understandably be threatening to South Korea.
30 Gleysteen, 13.
to action but because of the United States’ reliance on Park to keep South Korea secure and stable.

Congressional hearings on human rights violations in Korea during 1974 were especially revealing of this dilemma in US policy. These hearings started with standard US rhetoric, condemning the “the increasingly oppressive nature” of Park’s government and demanding “a thorough reevaluation of US policy” including the possibility of cutting off “immoral” aid to the oppressive regime. But a heated conversation between human rights advocate Edwin Reischauer and Representative Vernon Thomson revealed the true US government objective—maintaining the stable status quo by aiding Park no matter what:

Mr. Reischauer: I have said I was for our aid and presence and so on until the recent situation... I think the spirit of the people is much more important... something much more important than weapons is being threatened, and that is why I am taking this stand...

Rep. Thomson: ...my final point is that while you can come in here and tell us, “Let’s just send them a signal and pull out of there,” you don’t have to make that decision.

Mr. Reischauer: I wish I could.

Rep. Thomson: Maybe that is why you are not in the Government.

The dialogue above demonstrates the new US policy towards Korea, one of “a new pragmatism” where security and stability were important, non-intervention reigned supreme, and no room was left for democracy.

But this policy also led to an awkward position where the United States, forced to rely on Park’s militaristic and increasingly authoritarian government to secure South Korea, also irritated Park by withdrawing US troops, raising US-Korean tensions. Two other factors also contributed to increased tensions between the United States and Korea in the 1970s. The first was in the mid-1970s when South Korea began secretly pursuing a nuclear option, which deeply worried the Ford Administration. The second was the Koreagate scandal, revealed in 1976, where the US press discovered that the South Korean government had used bribes to garner support for Park among US elites. The scandal had twofold importance: first, it made Congressmen wary of dealing with Korea in the future, effectively taking Korea off the legislative table, and second, it also offered an explanation for why there was relatively little US pressure, especially from intellectuals and political elites, for the US to stop supporting South Korea’s obviously authoritarian regime. Together, these events created a highly tense situation that was particularly dangerous for the United States, which was heavily reliant on Park and did not want to risk a breakdown in US-Korean relations. But tensions would rise even further with the next president to take office, Jimmy Carter, whose new cause of human rights would cause more friction at a particularly important time for Korean democratization.

Dilemma of Interests: 1978-1980

While US-Korean relations during the Nixon and Ford administrations were tense but stable, Carter rattled the cage when becoming president in 1976 with two new tension-raising policies: human rights and troop withdrawal. Non-intervention was still a cornerstone of US policy,

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35 ibid., 50-69.
37 Gleystein, 20 and 26. Gleystein states that Koreagate “poisoned US-Korean relations for more than two years” and “virtually paralyzed legislative action on Korea” because Congressmen were nervous about being associated with the scandal.
39 Gleystein, 29.
as demonstrated by Carter’s troop removal plan, but human rights was the new feel-good goal Americans turned to, as proclaimed by Carter in 1978:

We’ve restored a moral basis for our foreign policy. The very heart of our identity as a nation is our firm commitment to human rights ... This is true in our domestic policy; it’s also true in our foreign policy. The world must know that in support of human rights, the United States will stand firm.40

Yet the US could do little to enforce human rights in Korea as long as it continued to rely on Park for preserving security.41 In the end, Carter opted to sacrifice human rights to maintain security, choosing to support Park’s regime rather than use US leverage to improve the atrocious human rights situation.42 Human rights were not taken off the agenda, but they became an issue discussed privately and not publicly. A Congressional hearing in 1979 clearly demonstrated this new policy as, when the subject turned to human rights, the then Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke said:

[Human rights have] always been a matter of private discussions between us and the Koreans. I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to discuss it in public session in detail, but I would like to state that it does seem to me that the situation now is essentially static ... Again I would, with your indulgence, prefer to continue that aspect of discussion in the closed session. That is all I would have to say on the point.43

This initiated the beginnings of the system of “quiet diplomacy,” a convenient mechanism that allowed the US to act consistently with its ideology, as the US could claim it was pressuring South Korea, while posing no real threat to the authoritarian regime.44

But while the administration was juggling security, stability, non-intervention and human rights, the cause of democratization emerged explosively in the late 1970s. In 1979, democratization demonstrations opposing the authoritarian Korean government broke out across the country. President Park cracked down on the political protesters, and though the United States warned Park of the consequences of political repression,45 the situation continued to deteriorate. When a member of the Korean intelligence assassinated Park in October of 1979, another military coup occurred with control passing to General Chun Doo Hwan. With the people of Korea struggling for democracy and the Korean government horribly destabilized from both the coup and the massive demonstrations, the United States tried to ride the fence between ideology and interests as long as possible, criticizing the government for its oppression while also reaffirming its alliance and security commitment.46 But the tensions that had been building in US-Korean relations since the 1970s made the situation especially hazardous. Thus, the United States, still reliant on the military regime, had to tread carefully.

Everything came to a head on May 18, 1980, when an uprising in Kwangju, later called the “Kwangju Democratization Movement,”47 resulted in a military crackdown with anywhere from 194 to 2000 protesters dead. The United States’ role in this event is unclear. While some, like reporter Tim Shorrock, claim that the United States approved

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41 Gleyenstein, 33, where he notes that “[the US could not] be seen as lifting the mantle of legitimacy from Park ... the consequence could conceivably be another coup and another military leader, not necessarily more enlightened than Park Chung Hee.”
42 Gleyenstein, 32.
44 Gleyenstein, 32, for the reasoning behind this policy: “reluctant to antagonize an Asian ally, the Nixon and Ford administrations limited themselves to quiet diplomatic intervention.”
45 Gleyenstein, xviii.
46 “December 13, 1979, US Embassy Seoul to Department of State, Younger ROK Officers Grab Power,” in Gleyenstein, 212.

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of the use of military force against the
 demonstrators, others, like former-Ambassador
 William Gleystteen, hold that the US only approved
 of military use as a last resort and was shocked at
 the result. Regardless of the truth, democracy
 lost in the end. The United States chose not to
 follow through on its prior warnings, and condemned
 the Korean government’s actions instead. US
 was not willing to let the tense relations coupled
 with the massacre unravel the US-South Korean
 alliance, as the US was still reliant on the South
 Korean government to maintain security. Even
 human rights advocate President Carter admitted
 that, in this case, “human rights issues had to be
 subordinated to security concerns,” the sad result
 being the dramatic crushing of the South Korean
 people’s attempt at democratization.

 More than just security and stability concerns,
 however, played a part in this. The fall of the Shah
 during the Islamic Revolution in Iran the year prior
 demonstrated the dangerous consequences of
 instability that could result from US
 encouragement of liberalization. Iran, which had
 been a staunch ally of the United States, had tried
 to liberalize at the United States’ urging. But the
 liberalization backfired as the new freedoms led to
 a push for further reforms the Shah was not willing
 to implement. Thus, after the Kwangju incident,
 one “overriding concern in Washington . . . [was]
 to keep South Korea from turning into ‘another
 Iran’.” To do this, Carter would follow a policy
 suggested by Michael Ledeen and William Lewis
 in their book written soon after the revolution in
 Iran:

 The United States wishes to see its friends—and
 others—move toward democracy, and
 when the opportunity presents itself,
 Americans should be prepared to exert
 considerable pressure toward that goal. But
 when the United States is faced with a choice
 between a productive alliance with a dictator,
 or loss of security by destabilizing another
 government, it should be mature enough to
 accept temporarily the former, with all its
 obvious discomfort.

 The US did accept the former, and in his 1981 State
 of the Union Address, just a year after the massacre
 at Kwangju, Carter would focus on how “[we]
 maintained our alliance with Korea and helped
 assure Korea’s security during a difficult period of
 political transition.” Security and non-
 intervention trumped democracy, the importance
 of the alliance displaced human rights, and South
 Korea’s democratization would have to wait.

 Reagan and Quiet Diplomacy: 1981-1985:

 Ronald Reagan’s presidency signaled a new
 era in US-Korean relations. One of his first acts
 after becoming president in 1980 was to reaffirm
 friendly relations by inviting Chun to the White
 House as the first major visiting head of state.
 Afterward, Reagan chose to practice what would
 come to be known as “quiet diplomacy,”
 pressuring for democracy and liberalization
 privately but rendering this pressure insignificant
 by publicly reaffirming US commitment to Korea
 and bolstering Korean security through increased
 military aid.

 This policy was a result of both domestic
 problems, including the economic recession, and
 standard defense-bolstering Republican ideology.
 Bogged down in the recession, the president had

 49 Gleystein, 4-5.
 50 For two examples of the anti-interventional stance at this time, see Nathan N. White, US Policy Toward Korea: Analysis, Alternatives,
 and Recommendations (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 1, and Sehn Hak-Kyu, Authoritarianism and Opposition in South Korea
 (New York: Routledge, 1989), 112.
 51 Gleystein, 65.
 55 Carter, “State of the Union.”
 56 Cohen and Baker, 216.
 57 “Democracy in South Korea: A Promise Unfulfilled, a Report on Human Rights” (New York: International League for Human Rights
 58 Reagan explains this policy in his 1986 State of the Union Address.

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little time to ponder the political democratic fate of South Korea, and in response to the breakdown of détente in the late 1970s, Reagan made his top priority countering the “evil empire” of the USSR: by increasing defense spending for the US military and US allies. This focus on opposing communism also changed the perception of South Korea: rather than an authoritarian human rights violator, it was, as described by former Secretary of State George Shultz, “a stalwart ally and a valiant symbol of resistance to communism,” an especially appropriate role because of South Korea’s location. Thus, in spite of the State Department’s reports that documented “a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights” by Chun’s regime, Reagan ignored concerns for human rights and democracy and instead strengthened military alliances against communism. The overriding opposition to communism became the new focus of US policy, and testimony given at a 1983 Congressional hearing demonstrates this: “communism is . . . the worst human rights violation, and to prevent that, other abuses will be endured . . . the US should assist any legitimate government defending itself from a communist takeover.”

This policy was different from past ones, however, in that it went beyond merely supporting and legitimizing the authoritarian South Korean government to celebrating South Korea as a bulwark against communism. Chun’s visit to the White House was especially significant for this in that it “increased Chun’s stature and tied the new American administration tightly to him.” Shultz felt the visit “sent a signal to the world, urgently needed, that the United States was committed to South Korea’s security.” But the praise of South Korea’s non-communist stance coupled with the reassurances of US commitment to South Korea’s security was the worst possible combination for democratization, in that such strong legitimization of the South Korean government confirmed and augmented its power and made internal movements for democracy impossible. But even then, the rhetoric in favor of democracy continued. In 1983, Reagan in his State of the Union Address stressed that:

The commitment of the United States is to developing the infrastructure of democracy throughout the world. We intend to pursue this democratic initiative vigorously. The future belongs not to governments and ideologies which oppress their peoples, but to democratic systems of self-government which encourage individual initiative and guarantee personal freedom.

Democracy was a favorite buzzword, not a practical policy, and would be ignored until later in the decade.

Sea Change in US Policy: 1986-1987

By 1986, US policy had changed drastically toward one of active democratic promotion, a development unanticipated by much of the academic world. When Ambassador Jim Lilley, following the old policy, advised Secretary Shultz on his visit to Korea in 1986 to “avoid political topics in . . . public remarks” and that “the slightest mention of democracy . . . would . . . cause trouble for the United States and the South Korean government,” Shultz chose to ignore the advice and instead advocated publicly for “the continuation . . . [toward democracy] in a stable and orderly way.” This public pressure was a significant departure from the former quiet diplomacy, especially as Korea was experiencing

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60 “Democracy in South Korea: A Promise Unfulfilled,” 17.
62 Cohen and Baker, 216.
63 Shultz, 975.
65 Reagan, “State of the Union.”
67 Shultz, 978-979.
turbulence as a result of large anti-government protests erupting across the country earlier that year. At the same time, some in Congress began to call for the United States to go beyond quiet diplomacy and pursue democratization by imposing economic sanctions, unlike in previous hearings where democracy and human rights were relegated to the back burner. “The Reagan Administration,” Senator Kennedy criticized in 1987, “has shown contempt for the struggle for democracy in other lands. We have learned to regret in Congress that quiet diplomacy in this administration means no diplomacy.”

This is obvious rhetoric, but different from the old rhetoric in that it demanded action and change.

In February of 1987, the United States uncharacteristically applied strong public pressure on Chun through a speech by Assistant Secretary of State Gaston Sigur. The speech’s significance was not missed by the *Washington Post*, which covered it as follows:

The Reagan Administration turned up its public pressure on the government of South Korean President Chun Doo Hwan yesterday . . . US apprehension about the political situation in Korea and US policy toward it, which have grown clearer and sharper over the last two weeks of public demonstrations, escalated further at Sigur’s news conference. . . Sigur insisted that major new democratizing steps be taken by the Chun government, came closer to specifying what they should be, and did so in a more highly visible and symbolic public setting.

Departing from quiet diplomacy, the speech was “exceptionally outspoken” and “implied that Chun could not count on American support if he resisted popular demand for change.”

At the same time, in response to the South Korean anti-government protests in 1986, the United States acted differently than it had six years before. While after the anti-government demonstrations of 1979-1980 the US reluctantly accepted the South Korean government’s imposition of martial law and violent crackdown, by 1986-1987 US had adopted a near diametrically opposite policy—one of active resistance—and strongly influenced the South Korean government. As described by Selig Harrison:

Having helped to precipitate the explosion in the streets, the Reagan Administration did intervene decisively to block the use of Korean armed forces in suppressing demonstrations. President Reagan’s June 19 letter to Chun and the State Department’s public appeal to military commanders on June 22 undoubtedly played a major role in preventing the imposition of martial law.

The new US policy may very well have made the difference in how the Korean government responded to the demonstrations, backing down to democratization in 1987. The underlying circumstances were not all that different in 1980.

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71 Fowler, 11.
72 Gleyneen’s infamous telegram where he says, “In none of our discussions [with Chun and Blue House Officials] will we in any way suggest that the US government opposes Korean government contingency plans to maintain law and order, if absolutely necessary by reinforcing the police with army,” 114-115.
74 “There was nothing inevitable about the fact that . . . Korea’s democratization process would face another serious setback and authoritarian rule would be restored.” See Han, “South Korea: Politics in Transition,” 280.
75 This is shown mainly by the lack of anticipation among scholarly works. See Han and Myers, 31.
and 1987—there was nothing inevitable about South Korea’s democratic failure in 1980\(^{74}\) or success in 1987.\(^{75}\) The United States’ policy, however, was radically different in the two episodes, and this certainly contributed to the difference between democracy’s failure in 1980 and success in 1987. Ultimately, on December 16, 1987, South Korea democratized, with Roh Tae Woo becoming the first honestly elected South Korean president in over a quarter of a century.

**Explaining the Policy Shift**

The catalyst of this policy change was neither rediscovered morality nor a resurgence of Wilsonianism. Multiple factors converged in the mid-1980s to shift US policy away from quiet diplomacy and toward active persuasion. First, the Cold War was winding down by 1985, with Gorbachev in power in the Soviet Union, and by 1986 the security threat posed by the Soviets was far less substantial.\(^{76}\) Second, in 1986 the US had a role in the successful overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos’ dictatorship in the Philippines, and “just as the failure in Iran made the Carter Administration more risk averse,” as James Fowler writes, “the success in the Philippines caused the Reagan administration to become more aggressive in South Korea,” giving the US confidence in its ability to push for positive changes.\(^{77}\) Democratization in the Philippines also increased pressure on the US from the press and the American people to take a more active role in Korea.\(^{78}\) The post-Vietnam era’s fear of intervention had dissipated, and instead “editorials . . . called on the government to ‘replicate its success’ from the Philippines in Korea by abandoning ‘quiet diplomacy.’”\(^{79}\) The vocal desires of the American public became the first priorities of election-conscious American politicians, and accordingly, Reagan moved democratization up the priority ladder. This complemented a third factor, a desire to return to American values and ideologies after the Iran-Contra scandal broke in the mid-1980s, as the scandal would have given Reagan an additional incentive to demonstrate a commitment to American values.

Fourth and very significantly, South Korea “was emerging onto the world stage,”\(^{80}\) selected as the host for joint meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and for the 1988 Summer Olympics. The US could not have wanted the inevitable embarrassment of showing the world and the American public that the regime it had been aiding since the 1950s was a dictatorship. Congress was well aware of the new attention on Korea, as demonstrated by its debates about Korean democratization in 1987, with one congressman noting that “Korea enters a year of important transition, both politically and in terms of its international prestige by virtue of the holding of the Olympics.”\(^{81}\) The stakes were higher as “the whole world was watching on the eve of the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games” and the media was focusing its attention on the peninsula.\(^{82}\) The United States’ actions in pursuing democracy in Korea were thus likely, in part, an attempt to preempt criticism by taking an active stand in promoting and achieving democratization before Korea was on show for the world.

The comparison is stark. In contrast to how human rights were shoveled under the table in 1979, there were at least seven Congressional hearings dedicated entirely to democratization in Korea in 1986 and 1987. In June of 1987, several senators in the midst of South Korean riots introduced the Democracy in South Korea Act in the US Senate “to bring the blessings of democracy to South Korea by means of a range of American economic sanctions.”\(^{83}\) The United States government also claimed credit for the democratic process in Korea, asserting that, “the Administration and

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\(^{74}\) Especially with Gorbachev’s quest to change the “evil empire” image to the United States. Norman Naimark, “Gorbachev” (lecture at Stanford University, March 5, 2002). Also see Judge and Langdon, 222-244, for other factors leading to the winding down of the Cold War in the period labeled “The End of the Cold War.”

\(^{75}\) “Assessing the Prospects for Democratization in Korea,” 6, and Fowler, 15.

\(^{76}\) Fowler, 16.

\(^{77}\) Fowler, 15.

\(^{78}\) Shultz, 978.

\(^{79}\) See “Assessing the Prospects for Democratization in Korea.” 44.


\(^{81}\) See Kristeva.
Congressional efforts have helped stimulate positive developments [in democratization].

Retrospective Analyses

Yet questions still remain, specifically how responsible the US was for Korea’s late democratization and what the US could have reasonably done to support South Korean democracy earlier. If valid security concerns blocked the road to democracy and the change in the strategic context was what finally allowed the US to threaten sanctions without risking security, then the US cannot reasonably bear the responsibility for the delay, since the costs of a security threat enormously outweighed the benefits of democratization. If security was not the swing factor, however, and if the change in US policy rested more significantly with something else, then US responsibility becomes a more salient issue.

Studying the application of US sanctions in Korea suggests that security did not automatically negate the possibility of sanctions, although many portrayed it like it did. For the 1980 crisis, Glexstein implied that heavy sanctions were out of the question since they posed greater risks than benefits, asserting that:

US policymakers were torn between, on the one hand, a powerful instinct to threaten (and if necessary apply) major sanctions against the new power holders and, on the other hand, realistic awareness that heavy sanctions might not be effective and posed great risks to American political as well as security interests in Korea.85

Sanctions that the US did apply in the 1970s and early 1980s were security-safe in that they were “rarely effective . . . not actually meant to be anything more than a gesture of displeasure or con-

cern.”86 Even in the early 1980s the impossibility of using sanctions because of security concerns was still professed, as in one Congressional session during 1982, where a witness contended that “our security and economic stakes in Korea . . . preclude our threatening to withdraw troops or to cut access to US banks . . . Proponents of major sanctions to achieve human rights goals strike me as dangerously naïve.”87

But if US policy really avoided sanctions to maintain security, then sanctions would still have been dangerous in the mid-1980s. While the general winding down of the Cold War reduced security and stability concerns in general, the situation in Korea was still tense with fear of an attack as the Olympics approached and a recent plane hijacking by the North Koreans.88 Thus, if the US reduced support or destabilized South Korea at this crucial time, it could still have endangered South Korea substantially. When the US did push for democratization, had the Korean leadership not acquiesced so easily, the United States may have caused security or stability problems. The difference, though, was that the US was willing to risk these dangers in light of the new importance attached to democratizing South Korea.

Thus an answer to this puzzle seems to be that the United States always had sanctions and the option of using them, even with the security concerns, but merely did not believe liberalization was important enough earlier to risk the use of sanctions. In support of this hypothesis, there is striking evidence that the United States did use harsh sanctions against Korea, but on a matter deemed much more important—South Korea’s nuclear weapons program in the 1970s. According to Michael Siler, the United States felt that nuclear weapons would lead to an extremely volatile situation on the Korean peninsula and drew a hardline policy, threatening President Park with “1) a suspension of all economic, trade and financial

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84 Hearing of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Developments in Korea, September 1987, First Session, September 17, 1987, 2
85 Gleystein, 77.
88 Shultz in his memoirs describes the hijacking in 1987 and the worry that South Korea would be a target of North Korean terrorism. See Shultz, 981.
assistance; 2) an acceleration of the US military pull-out; and 3) other unspecified political sanctions. These harsh sanctions would have almost certainly weakened and destabilized South Korea had they been applied, but the US was obviously willing to take this risk. Yet for more minor reasons, such as economic reforms, the US was also willing to apply stronger sanctions, as noted by a critique in a Congressional hearing: "the Reagan Administration has insisted on private, quiet diplomacy as the most effective way to bring about democracy—unlike the open arm-twisting, extortion and threats it is prepared to use to open markets."

The United States also had at least one mild sanction that could have been applied easily without much risk to security—public disapproval of the South Korean government. This helped to encourage the first bout of democratization in South Korea in 1960, and it was also used in 1987. But in 1979, the United States chose not to risk any sanctions, not even public pressure, for democracy. James Fowler feels this was a critical factor, saying:

"Economic or military sanctions to promote liberalization do] not exhaust the means of influence at the US command. In the second cycle of liberalization, the United States would make its presence felt primarily through the use of public pressure . . . . As ephemeral as public sentiments might be, in Korea they were used successfully [by the United States] to exert influence and were sorely missed when they were not used."

The basis for the decision not to use public pressure can be traced back in part to the non-interventionist sentiments following Vietnam, which made sanctions an impossible option for any US politician wanting to get reelected because pressure for democratization could lead to destabilization or upheaval that might necessitate US intervention. Also, because of its reliance on the South Korean government to maintain security and the high tensions of the 1970s, the US did not want to risk antagonizing the South Korean government or harming US-Korean relations with public criticism. Sanctions were, therefore, kept off the table, not because they were impossible but because they were inconvenient.

This bolstering of the authoritarian regime in South Korea to ensure security, however, played the most significant role in hampering South Korean democratization. The United States' attitude toward Korea's military leaders, time and time again, "gradually changed from suspicion and hostility to unenthusiastic acquiescence to strong support, despite their increasingly repressive rule," and this lessened South Korea's chances for democracy by strengthening the position of the authoritarian regime. The US supported and legitimized South Korea's authoritarian government at every step of the way—though various visits between US and Korean leaders, affirmations of friendship, and public statements supporting the South Korean government. This hindered the possibility for a natural democratization process in Korea, as bemoaned by Kim Dae Jung in a 1983 interview:

[The US] should [support democratic forces in Korea] now. We are not asking that you interfere in Korea's internal affairs; nor do we wish you to carry out democratization in our country for us. It is enough if you give us moral support. Instead . . you are supporting a dictatorship. . That's why we face such difficulty in trying to restore democracy in our country."
Coming from a man whose life had just been saved by Reagan’s legitimization of Chun Doo Hwan, this must have been a very serious point indeed.

Did this legitimization policy help to suppress Korean democracy? Arguably yes. Philippe Schmitter and Guillermo O’Donnell argue that authoritarianism itself is a primary barrier to democratization:

By trivializing citizenship and repressing political identities, authoritarian rule destroys self-organized and autonomously defined political spaces and substitutes for them state-controlled public arena in which any discussion of issues must be made in codes and terms established by the rulers—give or take a few tolerated dissidents and some mavericks carefully ignored by the regime-controlled media. Only the most highly motivated individuals are prepared to accept the risks of actions outside this arena.

The United States played a major role in legitimizing Korea’s authoritarian rulers, thus making a domestic effort for democracy much more difficult. The United States could have criticized the Korean government publicly while also affirming the security commitment. But as long as the US lent support to the authoritarian rulers of South Korea, it hurt the Korean people’s chances of achieving democracy, even on their own. Had there been no US influence at all—either supporting or criticizing the South Korean government—democratization may have enjoyed an earlier appearance, as the authoritarian government would not have been nearly so well legitimated.

**Conclusion**

Other forces present in South Korea—the development of civil society and the strengthening of the opposition for example—doubtless played important roles in ushering the transition to democracy. The United States, however, was a unique actor with special power to induce change in Korea, and the history of US-Korean relations in the decades leading up to South Korea’s eventual democratization is a revealing portrait of American motivations and the gap between rhetoric and reality. The United States always had democratization in Korea on its list of desired goals, but it was not a top priority until much later. Driven by the preferences of the American public, the United States’ government was forced to follow the policies of balancing security concerns and maintaining non-intervention, thus supporting the South Korean military government. As the tide of US public opinion turned with the end of the Cold War and South Korea’s hosting of the Olympic Games, even security concerns could be brushed aside to pursue the goal of democratization.

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95 Reagan’s invitation to Chun was also an incentive designed to persuade Chun to commute Kim’s death sentence, which he did soon after being invited. See a timeline of this in Gleye, xxiii.

The Social Origins of the Korean Financial Crisis in 1997: Historical and Institutional Perspectives

Byung-Soo Kim and Kane Lee

In 1997, financial mayhem swept through the emerging economies of Southeast Asia, culminating in a severe financial crisis in South Korea. While economic decline in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand was foreseen by analysts, the events leading to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout of the South Korean economy were largely unexpected. At the time South Korea was no longer a developing country; rather, its shipbuilding, automotive, consumer electronics and semiconductor industries were highly competitive in global markets. Corporations such as Samsung, Hyundai and Kia were recognizable brand names throughout the developed world. Just four years before the crisis, the World Bank issued a report, The East Asian Miracle, praising South Korea’s economic development. In particular, as a Bank of Korea study highlighted, annual per capita income in South Korea rose dramatically from the equivalent of $82 in 1961 to the equivalent of $10,308 in 1997.

Yet during the financial crisis, the Korean won lost half its value against the US dollar, the stock market plummeted more than 40 percent, and dozens of major firms and business groups filed for bankruptcy. How could South Korea’s economy collapse so rapidly? A variety of conjectures emerged. Some diagnoses pointed to cronyism, moral hazards and government interventions as culprits behind the collapse. Traditional Confucian values, previously lauded as the catalysts behind the miraculous economic ascent of South Korea, came to be seen as accomplices to the crony capitalism and corruption prevalent in the business sector. Consequently, the tilt of the ensuing reforms was toward the elimination of the state’s heavy involvement in business and the introduction of free market principles, which were synonymous with global standards.

During the process of reform, the international financial community shifted much of the attention surrounding the financial crisis to the heavily debt-driven Korean business groups,¹ called the chaebol. That these organizations would ultimately blame for the crisis is not surprising given their high visibility. For example, according to the Bank of Korea, the 30 largest chaebol accounted for 26 percent of the country’s GNP in 1995 and nearly half the total value added in the economy.²

Based on the reform guidelines established by the IMF, Korean business groups came under severe pressure to restructure their organizations according to Western standards of high corporate transparency, a strict adherence to core business lines and the elimination of cross-subsidiary loan guarantees. Such restructuring, however, has been met with varied success thus far. Due to resistance from the various chaebol and an inflexible labor force, significant attempts at organizational reform

¹ Business groups are sets of independent firms linked through multiple economic and social relations. Whether they are the keiretsu in Japan, jitsuang in Taiwan, grupos economicos in Latin America, or chaebol in South Korea, business groups in general consist of legally independent firms that do not operate as isolated units in the market, but have institutionalized relationships with one another and work coherently as an entity. Social relations within business groups, unlike those of American-style conglomerates, are generally ongoing and well-maintained; personal and operational connections begin as soon as a firm joins the group or they may even be the basis for the group’s coalition in the first place. See Chung Chih-rien, Market, Culture, and Institutions: The Formation and Transformation of Business Groups in Taiwan: 1960s-1990s (Stanford University: PhD Dissertation, 2000) and Lisa A. Keister, Chinese Business Groups: The Formation, Structure, and Financial Impact of an Interorganizational Network (Cornell University: PhD Dissertation, 1997).


have been relatively slow. Still, the Korean economy has recovered well from the financial crisis despite these thwarted efforts to reform the chaebol in a prompt manner according to IMF guidelines.

In this paper, we argue that approaches that look only at the economics ultimately fail to present a full picture of South Korea’s economic rise, downfall, and recovery. The IMF urged the Korean government to implement structural reforms in the chaebol without considering the social and historical factors that led to the formation of the business groups in the first place. We will focus on the Korean government’s role in the financial crisis and, more specifically, demonstrate how the state’s actions are deeply rooted in the country’s social institutions. Moreover, by examining proximate causes as well as ultimate causes of the crisis from a historical and institutional perspective, we will explain the reasons why 1) the government has not been able to fully implement the many of the IMF reforms and 2) the changes that actually have been implemented show varied results.

The Korean Financial Crisis

The financial crisis in Southeast Asia began with Thailand in July 1997. The Thai economy faced a huge foreign debt, trade deficits, a weak banking system due to non-performing loans and a weak currency. Korean automaker KIA Motors and the machinery group Halla both went bankrupt shortly following Thailand’s crisis. Subsequently, companies and investors in the rest of Southeast Asia and Korea saw that “these economies shared all of Thailand’s problems. So [they] rushed to convert local currencies into dollars.” As a result, the won began to depreciate. As the financial crisis in Southeast Asia helped to create a loss of confidence in the Korean economy, foreign lenders began to call in their loans and cease the automatic rolling-over of Korean debts during the fall of 1997.

South Korea’s finance minister revealed on November 21, 1997 that the government would seek financial aid from the IMF to prevent a complete economic collapse resulting from the severe depreciation of the won and a major credit crunch. On December 3, the IMF handed Korea a $58 billion package of loans and loan pledges, along with a list of required reforms. Still, the Korean currency continued its slide until December 11, losing half of its value against the dollar and not stabilizing until April 1998. The depreciation meant that the per capita GDP of Korea was halved in dollar terms, making import prices skyrocket. This development greatly affected Korean firms, which have always relied heavily on foreign materials and capital goods for their operations. The external debt burden of the already highly leveraged Korean corporations doubled in local currency. An astounding two-thirds of the debt was short-term, and lenders refused to roll them over. Consequently, the effects of the crisis were devastating: 123 bankruptcies per day in December 1997, 151 per day in January 1998, factory closures, wage reductions, layoffs, cancellation of investment projects, and so forth. Korean stocks plummeted during the latter half of 1997, losing almost half their value. The economy experienced negative 5.8 percent growth in 1998.

Immediate Causes of the Crisis

Much has been said in the current literature about what caused the Korean financial crisis. We can summarize the proximate causes of the crisis to be 1) a slowdown in the economy as Korean

2 Bank of Korea.
4 Kwon, 78.
companies lost international competitiveness; 2) a weak financial sector used by the government simply to promote industrialization; 3) excessive growth of the chaebol at all costs with the use of debt capital; 4) an inflexible labor market; 5) lack of transparency, which masked business and financial problems; and 6) the panicky investor pullout that began in Southeast Asia.  

The slowdown in the economy in the 1990s, particularly in the export industry, was one of the causes of the financial crisis. Sales of memory chips slumped in 1996 as global demand decreased significantly. Similar trends were seen in several other key export areas such as steel and ship production. Korean firms began to lose their competitiveness partly due to an overvalued won, inefficiencies caused by overinvestment and the high demands from the country's rigid labor unions. The government's protection of domestic industries led to regulations that "distorted resource allocation and encouraged inefficient business operations." Increasing competition and the expansion of exports in China and Southeast Asia exacerbated the situation. In fact, between 1995 and 1997, Korean terms of trade decreased by 25 percent. The slowing of the Japanese economy and the continuing depreciation of the yen in the latter part of 1996 also hurt Korea's exports.

Leading up to the crisis, the Korean financial sector was inefficient at best and was used merely as an instrument by the government in accelerating the growth of the chaebol. The government still set interest rates and appointed top personnel, even as its grip on banks was loosened in the 1980s. Due to falling oil prices, declining international interest rates and the decrease of the American dollar value against the Japanese currency, the state relaxed its tight Credit policies of the early 1980s, and thus the largest chaebol continued the process of capital accumulation through the 1990s. The chaebol bought stakes in the privatized financial institutions, using them to borrow more money for expansion purposes. The government realized that the chaebol had grown so immense that the Korean economy could not afford to let them fail; thus, the state continued to guarantee financial backing for the chaebol. Furthermore, "implicit and explicit government guarantees encouraged banks to take excessive risks since banks would receive high profits if projects were successful and the government would absorb the losses if projects failed." Such banking practices inevitably led to inflated prices of assets and few incentives to ensure good credit. The financial sector became seriously undercapitalized as its efficiency declined and the perception that banks would not fail grew stronger. Other advanced countries began pressuring Korea to liberalize its financial sector, which it eventually did in the early 1990s. The liberalization allowed Korean corporations and banks to become far less reliant on the government, whose international guarantees were no longer needed in order to ensure good credit and large capital inflows from the international financial markets. Thus, the banks went on a borrowing frenzy; they were able obtain huge amounts of short-term loans from international banks for use in long-term projects in various chaebol. The capital inflows that came with this liberalization also contributed to the overvaluation of the won, which the government sought to maintain for, among other things, political objectives such as making Korea a member of the OECD and achieving a high national per capita income.

With the borrowing frenzy of the early 1990s, the chaebol in Korea continued their expand-at-all-costs strategy, financed by both national and international short-term loans. The state pursued its industrialization policy though a small number of chaebol, which were allocated a disproportionately large amount of resources, including direct financial assistance, preferential loans, institutionalized privileges and shielding from global competitors and minority shareholding. With such relationships with the government, the chaebol perceived themselves as nearly invincible – "too big to fail" – and felt secure in expanding and diversifying on debt capital. The highly
leveraged financing that emerged in the early 1990s led to the top 30 chaebol having debt-equity ratios “in excess of 400 percent, and in some cases 1,000 percent.” The indebtedness of the chaebol rose as exports slowed down and profits decreased. They could not pay interest on an increasing number of loans. These non-performing loans further weakened the already inefficient financial sector. The accumulation of foreign debt clearly paved the way for the 1997 financial crisis.

During this period, the inflexible labor market certainly did not help the situation. The hourly average wage in Korea rose from $1.23 in 1985 to $7.40 in 1995—a 500 percent increase. The labor movement in Korea grew stronger as job security increased. However, the movement’s “failure to respond to changing domestic conditions helped raise labor costs rapidly and discouraged foreign investment,” especially in light of increasing global competition from developing countries such as China, which could supply cheaper labor. Because labor reform measures were difficult to enact, the chaebol instead sought to expand their businesses rather than lay-off workers or cut wages.

Unfortunately, all of these trends simply went unnoticed in part due to a lack of transparency in the financial sector. Because no shareholder could own more than four percent of a bank’s equity, the corporate sector was monitored quite ineffectively by the financial markets. By the early 1990s, even the government no longer could effectively monitor the banks because of liberalized financial reforms in Korea. As a result, the banks went on a borrowing splurge with little in their way. Many analysts were in turn initially surprised by the financial crisis, given the country’s generally sound macroeconomic indicators: high growth, low to moderate inflation, insignificant external deficits, large government financial surpluses, high national savings and a GDP growth rate of six percent. Ultimately, with the collapse of several prominent chaebol in early 1997 and the financial crisis in Southeast Asia, investors began to worry about the economic prospects of Korea, which followed the same highly leveraged, export-driven growth strategy that appeared to be failing in Thailand and Malaysia. Investors were worried about Korea’s dependence on those countries for trade and capital flow channels, so expectations arose that Korea’s currency might depreciate. Whether or not these concerns were legitimate did not matter; confidence in the Korean economy was lost. Altogether, “the contagion effect, worsening current account, weakening finance of banks and corporations, large external debts and the small amount of international reserves provided conditions for a speculative attack on the Korean won.”

International banks discontinued the rolling over of short-term debts and the ensuing rush for the American dollar led to the economy’s financial collapse. With the high demand for the dollar, the government could not contain the depreciation of the currency; state reserves plummeted from $22.3 billion at the end of October 1997 to $7.3 billion one month later.

Structural and Institutional Factors in the Crisis

Nicole Biggart argues that “although default on debt was the proximate cause of South Korea’s collapse, the ultimate causes of financial failure were initiated generations ago when postcolonial Korea established economic institutions.” Indeed, many of the proximate causes of the crisis can find their roots in the underlying institutional factors and historical precedents that have come to shape Korea’s distinctive business environment.

In the 1990s, many Asian countries had begun to compete against one another for the same chunk of the global market, using the same low-cost, mass-producing strategy that had proven to be so

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81 Kim Tae-ho, 29.
82 Kwon, 79.
83 See Kim Suk Hi.
84 Kwack, 56.
85 See Choi.
87 Guilleen, 193.
successful for Korea in the past. Such a strategy was thus no longer unique, and "at the root of the Asian crisis [laid] the commitment of vast resources – labor and borrowed money – to megalomaniac industrial and construction projects."\textsuperscript{17} As economies began to falter one by one, it soon became apparent to investors that such a "commitment" across Asia was unsustainable. Choi Young Back, thus, attributes the Korean crisis to what he calls "The Cult of Leveraged Growth" – how Korean business patterns persisted despite a context that was greatly altered by financial liberalization. Referring to the "system of privatized gain and socialized losses that has existed since the 1960s"\textsuperscript{18} – one in which the government routinely shields corporations from competitors, he suggests that business decisions have been excessively colored by personalism and the mind-set that firms should leverage to the highest possible degree. Indeed, with financial liberalization in the 1990s, the business groups grew too large for the government to handle, even though their failure was not to be afforded given the important role of the various chaebol in the economy. Despite minimal economic profits from investments by the chaebol, the leveraged growth pattern continued because the logic behind building these hierarchical empires fit in with social institutions upon which the chaebol were originally built. In other words, the "mobilization of resources was fueled by . . . cultural and elite competition behaviors," which for years had been the social bases of the Korean economy.\textsuperscript{19}

How did these social bases arise? One certainly cannot underestimate the lasting effects of Confucianism on modern-day Korean society. During the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910 AD), the yangban elites – a rural-based, highly educated class – were often segmented into classes of distinct lineage that competed fiercely for control of the Korean society. Confucian ideals of familism and statecraft particularly influenced Korea during the Chosun Dynasty, supporting a kinship system that was hierarchically arranged at both the household and state levels. That business groups in Korea are usually led by a single entrepreneur is normatively acceptable, for the society has been dominated by vertical social relationships in which "the patrimonial superior rules over the household’s moral, economic, and personal affairs unencumbered by any defined rights and duties of those being organized."\textsuperscript{20} The system of patrimonial authority was relatively unaffected by foreign pressures, even amidst scores of invasions and during Japanese colonization. Moreover, this pattern repeated itself every generation when the eldest son inherited his father’s property and private lot. Such inheritance norms have carried over into modern Korean households and are still commonplace.

Although the Chosun Dynasty royalty lost its power during the Japanese occupation (1910-1945), the colonizers maintained an "authoritarian, centralized apparatus in the form of an occupying general who reported directly to the Japanese emperor."\textsuperscript{21} A small number of old yangban elites, businessmen, and officers realigned their sycophancy with the Japanese colonizers, participating in the buildup of the zaibatsu manufacturing firms and infrastructure in Korea – part of Japan’s war plan to use the country as both an agricultural and low-manufacturing base. Although many of the properties were dismantled by workers following Japan’s surrender in the Second World War, the legacy of patrimonialism was not lost. The employment of personalistic channels for government favors was rampant during the Japanese occupation and carried over into Syngman Rhee’s corrupt administration during the 1950s.\textsuperscript{22}

Traditional Korean inheritance practices, coupled with the reinstitution of a patrimonial class

\textsuperscript{17} Choi, 49.
\textsuperscript{18} Guillen, 193 and Biggart, 311.
\textsuperscript{19} Biggart, 312.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 312.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 312.
\textsuperscript{22} Biggart, 314.
hierarchy from Park Chung Hee’s military coup in 1961, largely provided the backbone for Korea’s path to industrialization during the latter half of this century. President Park needed to build “an economy from a weakened and discredited rentier capitalist class, opportunistic entrepreneurs who had arisen under Rhee to exploit government largess, deteriorated residual zaibatsu properties still under government ownership and a large populace of angry landless laborers recently devastated by war.”\(^{23}\) There existed two models he could emulate: on the one hand, the Japanese model of the keiretsu, the older form that Koreans had directly worked under, and on the other hand, the American model, which was present in Korea since the Second World War in the form of defense contractors. The keiretsu business groups were characterized by facilitative guidance from the state, crossholdings with affiliated banks, long-term subcontracting relationships between large and small firms and cooperative labor relations; the American models, on the other hand, were marked by autonomy from the state, professional management, price-based, subcontracting relationships, and strong yet regulated labor unions.\(^{24}\) Rather than merely copying the other successful models, however, “Park acted on an affinity for elites that existed in Korean society; it was a logical and rational choice, and in retrospect, it is clear that this choice led to a reincorporation of patronialism in the management of Korea chaebol.”\(^{25}\) Despite its unpopularity among the masses, the chaebol had “the force of understanding and begrudging legitimacy, at least in its formative period,”\(^{26}\) since Koreans were accustomed to centralized authority. During Park’s era, the Korean government had the ability and means, among other things, to obtain capital and aid from other governments. The government was thus able to prod a few potentially successful and well-connected entrepreneurs to enter new industries with great growth potential, thus facilitating the proliferation of business groups.

Clearly, then, the proximate causes of the 1997 crisis were in fact rooted in longstanding institutions and attitudes. Though they had begun to invest in marketing, distribution and proprietary technology, Korean firms lost international competitiveness as other countries began to compete with them in mass production. The solution of the chaebol was to expand even more on debt-equity rather than seek profitable methods. Such a strategy can only be explained given traditional normative forces: “The preference for debt over equity finance resulted from the desire to maintain family controls of the firms and the belief that the government would not permit companies to fail.”\(^{27}\) The patriarchal authority that dominated corporate governance, in line with earlier forms of Korean dynastic and aristocratic rule, cared more about building elite business empires and settling old regional rivalries than creating profits and shareholder value. The competition between patriarchs and their constituents of rival chaebol was extremely personal, stemming from centuries of regional and clan rivalries. The growth of the chaebol was feasible in Korean society because kinship norms could be coercively utilized to incorporate individuals and groups beyond the base unit, the patrimonial household. Similarly, the intervention of the state, its subsequent repression of labor and the secondary status of financial institutions were consistent with historical social arrangements in Korean society.

The proximate causes of the crisis explain the immediate situation in the minds of the economic actors involved. The institutional and historical analysis, however, allows us to see how these actors were embedded in the society – how the government, religion, family structure, social beliefs, network of relations, and economic resources could have shaped their actions “by limiting possibilities, making some forms of action likely or more ‘reasonable’ because they have the force of understanding and acceptance in the


\(^{24}\) Biggart, 314.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 315.

\(^{26}\) Kwack, 57.

community." The prevailing nature of the patriarchal authority in present-day Korean households and the chaebol attests to the fact that this social phenomenon itself is being continually maintained and mutually reconstituted.

The Role of the Government: Post-1997 Crisis

Many have suggested throughout the reform period that the government is no longer the state that it had been in the 1960s and 1970s and that corruption from overlapping business ties may decrease due to calls from the public to end subsidies and privileges. Contrary to this view, however, the government's traditional role as a moderator between banks and corporations continues to be upheld. Political scandals tied to big business still abound, and the state continues to exercise a high amount of authority, which actually may be further strengthened by the nationalization of a number of financial institutions. For instance, two major commercial banks—Korea First Bank and Seoul Bank—were nationalized rather than closed shortly after the beginning of IMF reform. The state was able to pressure the LG group to drop its bid to enter the insurance business via the acquisition of Korea Life Insurance. The government even managed to induce a few chaebol to swap certain subsidiaries so that each of the swapping chaebol could focus on its core competencies without worrying about overcapacity.

However, such cut-and-paste measures may be problematic because they assume component firms are bound to the chaebol only by direct equity. On the contrary, through their empirical analyses, Tarun Khanna and Jan Rivkin suggest that despite the vertical authority of Korean business groups, component firms are actually more tightly bound to the chaebol by social ties rather than by direct equity. Although each company is legally independent, the founder and his family tightly control group policy through an informal but powerful unit called the "planning and coordination office."

The state has failed to fully eliminate cross guarantees, a reform policy that has been near the top of its agenda since 1998. Instead, the government has decided to implement a watered-down, yet still controversial version of the policy: component firms' equity investments of companies both in and out of the group cannot exceed a cap of 25 percent of the subsidiary's net assets. Even after a large consortium of business group leaders petitioned to end this policy in May 2001, the government rejected their request. With every step in one direction of the reform process, the state seems to take another step in the opposite direction—an indication of the conflicting interests being dealt with. For example, while the government let Daewoo fall in 2000, it directly and indirectly subsidized emergency rescue packages for Hynix Semiconductor (formerly Hyundai Engineering) the following year, citing "short term cash flow problems."

Evaluation and Lessons from the IMF Rescue Package

Though we have yet to see the long-term consequences of the current restructuring process, the underlying problem of the earliest reforms was that they were forced upon the Koreans by the IMF through the government rather than being actually initiated by the Koreans themselves. The IMF bailout in December 1997 came with "stiff macroeconomic conditions and unprecedented demands for institutional changes." The IMF demands that accompanied the bailout funds—ultra-tight monetary policies and the breaking down of trade barriers for free capital mobility—have been deemed unnecessary by many in the international community. Mauro Guillen argues that the IMF ignored the "underlying social organization of the production side" of the Korean economy, thus misdiagnosing the crisis as "a macroeconomic balance-of-payments problem..."
rather than as a microeconomic debt deflation problem, and as a crisis of excess consumption rather than excess investment.” He further cites the reputable economist, Martin Feldstein, who states that the nature of the problem was “temporary illiquidity rather than fundamental insolvency” and thus could have been solved simply by “coordinated action by creditor banks to restructure its short-term debts.” Ultimately, the IMF’s $58 billion rescue package might have done more harm than good because its reforms did not match the situation at hand.

Koo Jahyeong and Sherry Kiser attribute the short-term recovery of the South Korea economy to the stabilization of the currency crisis and containment of the country’s downward spiral of bad credit. With the government’s involvement, the financial markets were stabilized by non-market forces when “a temporary agreement to maintain exposure was reached with private bank creditors and discussions on voluntary rescheduling of short-term debt was initiated in late December 1997.” Furthermore, the won’s slide was halted not by the IMF’s loan package, but in January 1998 when the Korean government “converted S24 billion of short-term private debt . . . into claims of one- to three-year maturities with government guarantees.” The IMF’s tight monetary policy, which attempted to limit capital flight with resultant high interest rates, actually saw a huge decline in economic activity – GDP growth and private consumption dropped far below the IMF’s estimates by the latter half of 1998. Some researchers have empirically demonstrated that such a tight monetary policy “would have minimal positive effect” since “the Korean government controlled capital outflow reasonably well and the Korean bond market had negligible foreign investment.” Moreover, Koo and Kiser effectively argue that the financial crisis was not a result of the weak fundamentals because the recovery started before the implementation of major structural reforms; they also repudiate the claim that financial crisis resulted solely from nervous markets because the economy did not return to its original equilibrium following a short-term debt rescheduling and the injection of ample capital from the IMF.

In fact, many observers of Korea prior to the crisis regarded the economic situation there to be sound: the World Bank had just cited Korea as the exemplary case of the “Asian Miracle,” in June 1997 the World Economic Forum had ranked Korea as the fifth best place to invest in the world, and foreign lenders had been giving Korean banks favorable interest rates. Other signs, including a declining account deficit and 8 percent growth in the economy, would also have suggested that what the Koreans needed were bridge loans rather than structural change mandates from an organization that was unfamiliar with the Korean context. Indeed, following the adoption of the IMF package, the Korean economy plunged in growth and unemployment reached sky-high levels. Ultimately, as the credit squeeze pounded the economic situation of Korea, the IMF “batedly took a U-turn on macroeconomic policy in May 1998 and allowed the Korean government to lower interest rates and pushed it to increase budget deficits.” Consequently, the economy’s contraction decelerated just months later and the recovery began in 1999 which, Chang Ha Joon and Yoo Chul Gyu argue, was a natural response to a shift away from an IMF macroeconomic policy “that was excessively tight and unnecessarily shrank the economy.”

Many other aspects of the IMF’s reforms were in the process of being formally implemented, such as the downsizing and dismemberment of group-level planning offices, which had been previously shown to function as effective information gatherers and coordinators specifically geared toward the intricacies of the unique authority structure of the chaebol. Such reforms, however,

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54 Ibid., 27.
55 Ibid., 27-28.
56 Chang Yoo, 110
57 Ibid.
58 Guillein, 194.
may stifle the advantageous features of the chaebol and could "prevent South Korean businesses from following their instincts and desires to be different in the global economy, even at the cost of making mistakes, which they have indeed."\(^{46}\)

**Conclusion**

This discussion of the immediate causes and structural factors of the South Korean financial crisis, as well as the policy implementation of the IMF rescue package, focuses on the conflict between traditional social organization and prepackaged economic reforms. The South Korean financial crisis represents a dismantling of social organization more than the implementation of economic policies.

While financial mismanagement played a central role in the financial crisis, historical and institutional perspectives must be taken into consideration. The social bases of the South Korean financial crisis provide a counterbalance to a perspective that rests solely on the issue of financial mismanagement. Economic analyses that are based solely on the market approach pay little attention to how market principles may be embedded in a country's unique social structure.

More specifically, the development of the chaebol demonstrates how economic actors are embedded in social structure. Financial indicators, such as stock market prices and capital investment, reveal general trends of overall economic performance, but such statistics cannot depict the social structure in which the economy is embedded. Economic literature about business groups in general and the Korean chaebol in particular tends to analyze business groups utilizing firm-based theories derived from neoclassical economics. The rationale behind many of the reform measures pushed by the IMF appears to be based on this market approach, but such logic appears to be faulty. With this rationale, it is difficult to explain Asian economic organizations and their interfirm networks. Thus, we must view the chaebol not merely as collections of isolated entities but as networks of closely linked firms capable of concerted collective action. The difficulty of enacting most of these reforms — even despite the increased autonomy of the Korean government — further demonstrates the shortsightedness and unfeasibility of many of the IMF proposals within the social context of South Korea. We also have seen preliminary but compelling evidence that the Korean economy's subsequent recovery from the crisis involved more than the government's interventions in stabilizing the currency market and containing the downward spiral of debt than the IMF's stalled reform measures for restructuring the chaebol.

The institutional and historical lens provides a very unique perspective for interpreting the continual reconstitution of the system of patriarchal authority seen in the chaebol. This process, which persists beyond the impact of IMF reforms, is characterized by: 1) the historical precedent of South Korea's distinctive business environment; 2) the hierarchical kinship system based on Confucianism that underlies the chaebol structure; and 3) the state's interventionist role in serving as a moderator between financial institutions and the chaebol. The perspective of embeddedness shows that the continual reconstitution of the chaebol is a permanent feature of the South Korean economy.
The Failure of Political Islam in Indonesia: A Historical Narrative

Jeff Lee

“If we really are a Muslim people, let us work as hard as possible so that most of the seats in the people’s representative body which we will create are occupied by Muslim delegates...We assert that 90 percent of us profess the religion of Islam, but see in this gathering how many percent give their votes to Islam?”

– Sukarno, June 1, 1945

Introduction

The above comment made by President Sukarno in 1945 accurately describes Indonesia’s political environment even fifty years on. Why has a society that is overwhelmingly Muslim failed to “give” more than 50 percent of their votes to Islam? In other words, why has political Islam been ineffective in a country that is demographically overwhelmingly Muslim? This article will explore the nature of political Islam in Indonesia and attempt to explain its failure to gain national power.

According to its 2000 census, Indonesia is the world’s fourth most populous nation, with 228 million people, of whom 88 percent self-identify as Muslims. It also has a robust set of institutions that represent the interests of the diverse Islamic community. For example, there is the MUI (Council of Indonesian Ulama), a group that lays down guidelines for the Muslim population, governing their lifestyles and conduct. The Ministry of Religious Affairs, though formally serving Indonesia’s five officially recognized religions, is largely devoted to Islamic affairs. In addition, there are organizations like Muhammadiyah, which claims a following of around 30 million, and Nahdlatul Ulama, with some 35 million, representing Indonesian Muslim civil society. Respected Islamic scholars also hold prominent places in Indonesian society. For example, there is M. Din Syamsuddin, who is the vice chairman of Muhammadiyah and “the most visible face of the Council of Indonesian Ulama.”

According to a Far Eastern Economic Review report, leaders from two political parties, Golkar and the Development Unity Party (PPP), have asked him to join their parties in the past few months. In a recent interview, the Jakarta-based director of an Indonesian think-tank, the Center for Information and Development Studies, mentioned that Syamsuddin has a viable political future. Another example is Dr. Amien Rais, the former chairman of Muhammadiyah and currently the speaker of the Indonesian parliament (MPR) and chairman of the National Mandate Party (PAN).

Nevertheless, despite the presence of such organizations and personalities in the world’s largest predominantly Muslim country, Indonesia’s

4 The Ministry is the major employer of Islamic scholars in the bureaucracy and is responsible for over 40,000 Islamic educational institutions, administers marriage law for Muslims, oversees the organization of pilgrimages to Mecca and oversees the major celebrations in the Muslim calendar. Non-Muslims do not feel the need for such a ministry and remain mistrustful of its Islamic orientation. For a more in-depth discussion of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, see Deliar Noor, Administration of Islam in Indonesia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Modern Indonesia Project Southeast Asia Program Cornell University, 1978).
6 Dhume, “The New Mainstream.”
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
government has “never been in the hands of leaders determined to identify the state with Islam.”9 In fact, the state has historically resisted numerous attempts to impose an Islamic identity. The state ideology of Pancasila (Five Principles) embodies a vision of a pluralist state that is tolerant of the major distinct religious traditions present in the country.10 Various political factions in the People’s Consultative Assembly (MPR) have attempted to introduce Islamic (sharia) law as an integral part of the country’s Constitution since 1945, but these efforts have been rejected, most recently in 2002.11 In 2002, the elected MPR, which represents the voices and interests of the nation’s population, was so overwhelmingly opposed to the incorporation of sharia into the constitution that its proponents preferred not to pursue it to avoid an embarrassing defeat. Numerous Muslim organizations and political parties also refused to support the push for sharia. This list included the Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and the National Awakening Party (PKB).12 Although Indonesia has the world’s largest Muslim community, defeats of political Islam have far outnumbered victories. Islam, though the avowed religion of the majority of Indonesians, has “rarely been the dominant element in the nation’s politics.”13

Before the 1999 MPR elections, many Islamic leaders anticipated that they would gain more than 50 percent of the vote since they believed that Indonesian society was “far more Islamic than at the time of the 1955 general elections when Islamic parties won 43.9 percent of the national vote.”14 However, the twenty Islamic parties only obtained 37.5 percent of the national vote.15 Of the twenty Islamic parties contesting the election, only four, the PPP, the PKB, the PAN, and the Crescent and Star Party (Partai Bukan Bintang, PBB), met the minimum threshold of two percent of parliamentary seats that would enable them to stand in the next election.16 The rest of the Islamist parties had to either disband or enter into a coalition; some also considered changing their names in order to stand again as “new” parties in future elections.

As such, Indonesia is a country where an overwhelming majority self-identify themselves as Muslim. There are robust Islamic institutions, organizations and prominent Islamic leaders who are actively involved in Indonesian politics. One would expect that this organized Muslim majority would be able to successfully project itself onto the national political agenda. Yet political Islam has failed to dominate Indonesian politics. In their book, A Sense of Siege: The Geopolitics of Islam and the West, Graham Fuller and Ian Lesser observe, “the role of Islam is likely to grow in the internal politics of Muslim countries.” Beyond explaining the prior failure of political Islam in Indonesia, one may ask whether it will succeed in the future. Or will the efforts of Indonesian Islamists to acquire political power continue to fall short, obliging them instead to retreat to “the family and the mosque?”

Defining Terms and Concepts

Before proceeding to analyze the nature of political Islam in Indonesia, it is important to pause and first define key terms and concepts. This section will discuss the use of terms such as “political Islam;” the distinction between “Muslim,” “Islamic,” and “Islamist;” Pancasila;

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10 For an explanation of Pancasila, please see next section on “Defining Terms and Concepts”.
14 For detailed breakdown of 1999 parliamentary election results, see Greg Fealy, “Islamic Politics: A Rising or Declining Force?,” in Arief Budiman, ed., Indonesia: The Uncertain Transition (Adelaide: Crawford House, 2001), 122.
15 For a discussion on what constitutes an “Islamic political party,” please see next section on “Defining Terms and Concepts.”
16 Fealy, “Islamic Politics: A Rising or Declining Force?”, 122.
and finally, how one measures the “success” and “failure” of political Islam.

“Political Islam” is a general name that refers to a movement that uses Islam as the main vehicle to attain political power. Political Islam seeks to acquire power through competitive elections and works from within the existing, established political system. There is a belief that there should be a “nonseparation of the religious, legal and political spheres” in society. In addition, the definition of an “autonomous political space, with its own rules, its positive laws, and its own values, is prohibited.” Rather, the entire system should be governed by Islamic law and an Islamic code of conduct.

While the terms “Muslim,” “Islamic,” and “Islamist” have often been used interchangeably, for the purposes of clarity, this paper will attempt to draw some distinctions between these terms. “Muslim” is a broad, all-inclusive term that describes everyone from “marginal” to “fanatical” followers of Islam. “Islamic” is a more formal term, and it has a connotation of someone who takes his or her faith seriously. According to the Holy Koran’s definition of the term “Islam,” it refers to the readiness of a person to take orders from God and to follow them. Thus, someone who is “Islamic” is someone who is ready to follow upon those orders. An “Islamist” is someone who believes with sufficient intensity in his religion and wants to see it obtain power in the political realm. There are two types of Islamists: political Islamists (discussed in the paragraph above) and violent Islamists. Violent Islamists are those who are willing to use force and other non-electoral means to acquire political power; they are commonly called “fundamentalists”.

“Pancasila” is enshrined in Indonesia’s national ideology. The term refers to the five principles that form the basis of the Constitution of the Indonesian Republic. Indonesia is frequently described as a secular state because of Pancasila, but formally it is a state bound closely to religion. The first principle of the five-part national ideology enshrines “belief in Almighty God” which implies monotheism even though there is no official state religion or formal acknowledgement of the authority of religious law in the constitution. All Indonesian citizens must profess adherence to one of five officially recognized faiths (Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism). As a result, many “unrecognized” religious minorities find it less troublesome to identify themselves as Muslim. Thus, although 88 percent of the population self-identify as Muslim, Indonesia observers refer to this number as “statistical” Muslims, since not all of them are “practicing” or even “believing” Muslims.

Any attempt to measure “success” and “failure”, especially when discussing politics, is always tricky. However, for the purposes of this paper, “success” is defined as the ability of political Islam to achieve its objectives (i.e., obtaining political power through electoral means), while “failure” is defined as the inability of political Islam to reach these objectives.

Political Islam in the Pre-Suharto Era

A (Brief) Pre-Colonization History of Islam in Indonesia

While the precise when, why, and how of Islam’s arrival in Indonesia is not very clear, the first evidence of the existence of Muslims in the Indonesian archipelago dates to the thirteenth century, when Marco Polo found gravestones with etchings that confirmed that at least part of the Indonesian archipelago was under Islamic rule. By the seventeenth century, Islam’s spread was

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18. Ibid.
19. There is an inherent contradiction within political Islam; namely, political Islam can only attain power and be able to create a state based on Islamic laws and an Islamic code, by participating first in the “autonomous political space” that it refuses to acknowledge.
20. The five principles are the following: 1) belief in the one and only God; 2) a just and civilized humanity; 3) the unity of Indonesia; 4) democracy guided by the inner wisdom of deliberations of representatives; and 5) social justice for all the Indonesian people. For a complete definition of Pancasila, refer to Sukarno’s speech “The Pancasila” in Herbert Feith and Lance Castles, Indonesian Political Thinking, 1945-1965 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1970).
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well documented and an overwhelming majority of the population had “accepted an Islamic identity.”

The Islam that flourished in Indonesia was markedly different from the Islam established in other regions. First, the brand of Islam that was adopted in Indonesia was heavily influenced by local culture, mysticism and animism (many Islamic scholars would claim that this made Indonesian Islam “impure”). Historical documents from the fifteenth century provide evidence that Islam in the archipelago “did not reflect the austere legal interests associated with the four Orthodox schools of Islam, but rather the metaphysical considerations and ascetic ethos associated with the mystics of Islam, the Sufis”. Second, while Islam was established in other regions by Arab or Turkish conquests, it was introduced into Southeast Asia by traveling merchants and Sufis. Unlike the political upheaval in the Middle East and India that accompanied the arrival of Islam, existing regimes in the Indonesian archipelago were not overthrown and replaced by new Muslim regimes. Instead, Islam spread and was consolidated at the grassroots level. The continuity of the elites “gave strong expression to the pre-Islamic components” of civilization in Indonesia. Third, because Islam’s spread was mainly from interaction with Arab traders, rather than a top-down imposition by indigenous rulers or Arab conquerors, there was a great degree of variability in the nature of Islam adopted in the archipelago. This was further facilitated by the fact that a centralized political and bureaucratic authority did not exist. The archipelago was made up of many local villages with separate governing authorities and village chiefs. As such, Islam was organized “only on a local village scale” until quite late.

The Arrival of the Colonizers, and the Suppression of Political Islam: Sixteenth Century - 1942

The arrival of the Portuguese colonizers in the early sixteenth century paradoxically contributed to the spread of Islam. The presence of external powers, first the Portuguese and later the Dutch, created a stable political climate that was conducive to business with Muslim traders, who, along with Muslim teachers and missionaries, flocked to the region. While the Europeans established their commercial supremacy, Islam was consolidated as the basic indigenous expression of cultural identity, political resistance and economic competition. At the same time, however, the archipelago remained a diverse, differentiated group of islands with few links between them. As a result, in each major region (e.g., Java, Aceh and Minangkabau), a form of “Islamic society developed which was at once characteristic of the particular region.” There was no common, cohesive, Islamic identity across the islands.

From the early 1900s to the Second World War, there was a renewed interest in Islamic scholarship among the educated elite in Indonesia. Pilgrims and students returning from the Middle East brought back with them a variety of views on Islam, Islamic beliefs, and practices. This interest in religious reform and revival resulted in the creation of a number of intellectual and service organizations such as Sarekat Islam in 1912 (originally Sarekat Dagang Islamiyah when created in 1909), the Persyarikatan Ulama (Union of Religious Scholars) in 1911, Muhammadiyah (the way of Muhammad) in 1912, Persatuan Islam (Islamic Union) in 1923, and the Nahdlatul Ulama (the Rise of the Religious Scholars) in 1926. Although the religious reformers had different beliefs and agendas, the creation of these institutions revitalized Islam as an organizational force.

Japanese Occupation and the Creation of a Politically Active Islamic Community: 1942-1946

Islam’s position in Indonesia was strengthened under Japanese occupation. While Indonesia had been under Dutch rule, Islam had

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24 Ricklefs, 11.
25 Lapidus, 468.
26 Ibid., 487.
27 Ibid., 474.
28 Ibid., 474.
been excluded from politics. However, the Japanese recognized the importance of religion in society and were careful to accommodate, rather than marginalize, Islam. They presented themselves as liberators of Islam in order to gain the support of the local Muslim population and exploited anti-Dutch Muslim feelings by emphasizing and encouraging aspirations for an eventual Islamic state. They also used Islamic teachers and the network of Islamic schools as ready-made instruments of mass indoctrination. Administrative and military functions that had only been in the hands of the colonial powers were assigned to the Muslims, providing them an opportunity to experience limited political leadership.

In March 1943, the Japanese created Putera, a political organization under close Japanese control but with four leading Indonesians, including Sukarno and Hatta (who eventually became the future president and vice president of Indonesia, respectively). This organization, though merely a consultative body, allowed leading Indonesian figures to participate in the process of policy formation. The Japanese also attempted to centralize control over Islam by creating a new organization, Masjumi, in October 1943. Masjumi had branches in every residency in Java and leadership of Masjumi was placed under the control of Muhammadiyah and NU figures. In 1944, the Japanese created a military wing of Masjumi. This wing was named Barisan Hizbullah (God’s Forces) and was designed to relieve the over-stretched Japanese forces by placing responsibility for the defense of Indonesia against Allied attack on the shoulders of the indigenous fighting forces. This provided the Indonesians with significant military experience. The religious revival and reform that had begun in the pre-war era as an intellectual/social movement suddenly gained a political and military dimension.

As the Japanese saw that they were losing the war, they began to provide Indonesia with greater autonomy and placed more control in local hands. More Indonesian officials were promoted, and in November 1944 Indonesian vice residents were appointed to oversee the administration of government. The Japanese also formed the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Indonesian Independence, with the intention of creating an independent state in order to impede the restoration of Dutch rule. This committee included men such as Sukarno, Hatta, Mansur and Dewantara, all of whom played an important role in shaping the political environment of post-World War II Indonesia. Sukarno advocated a vision of a religiously neutral nationalism and laid out his own doctrine of Pancasila. Islamic leaders were unhappy that Islam seemed to play no special role in the foundational document of Indonesia. They were eventually appeased with a compromise document known as the Jakarta Charter, which stressed the "belief in God, with the obligation for adherents of Islam to carry out Islamic law" but lacked constitutional status.

Thus the new Indonesia came rhetorically into being on August 17, 1945 (though not in reality until December 27, 1949). It was neither an Islamic state according to orthodox Islamic conceptions, nor a secular state, in which religion would be merely a private matter. The first principle of Pancasila ("Belief in the One and Only God") was a multi-interpretable formula that provided a "real possibility for people to agree while disagreeing." This formula seemed to patch over irreconcilable differences between the committee members by "reassuring Muslims that the Indonesian Republic would not be a secular state, even if it were not based on any single religion." This newly independent Indonesia immediately faced an external challenge from the returning Dutch who wanted to reestablish colonial rule.

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29 Sya bin H. Muhammad, The Role of Islam in Indonesian Politics (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1999), 70.
30 Ricklefs, 208.
31 Ibid., 209.
33 Robert Cribb, Islam and the Pancasila (monograph no. 28) (Auckland: James Cook University Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1991), ii.
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Political Islam Spearheading the Nationalist Cause: 1946-1950

When the Dutch tried to return to Indonesia in 1946, they were bitterly opposed by the local population, which saw the fight through two lenses—a fight for political freedom as well as a struggle for Islam. The leadership of Masjumi urged its members to "prepare Muslims for the liberation of their country and their religion," and the NU produced a resolution calling for the "jihad for the defense of the Indonesian fatherland—an individual duty of every Muslim, wherever he might be." Thus, the fight for independence caused Islam and politics to become inextricably intertwined.

In 1946, the Indonesian government created a Ministry of Religious Affairs to administer matters of religious law, ritual and education. The decision to establish this Ministry was in part an attempt to appease Muslim groups aggrieved at the omission of the Jakarta Charter and the refusal to implement sharia law. From 1946, the ministry served as bastion of Islamic patronage and was the major employer of Islamic scholars within the bureaucracy. Although it formally served Indonesia’s five officially recognized religions, the Ministry had a distinct Islamic orientation. This is evident from its logo, which includes a depiction of the Koran.

In 1949, faced with stiff domestic opposition from guerilla forces and international pressure from the United Nations and the United States to end the war, the Dutch finally abandoned their attempt to restore their empire in Indonesia. Indonesia was at last independent and now faced the daunting prospect of shaping its own future. There was a general consensus among the educated elite that democracy was desirable, and they set about trying to construct a democratic state. Unfortunately, the experiment with democracy did not last very long. During the democratic period from 1950 to 1957, seven coalition governments, all of which included either or both the Masjumi and the NU, ruled Indonesia. This experiment failed because the system was wracked with "corruption, the territorial unity of the nation was threatened, social justice had not been achieved, economic problems had not been solved, and the expectations generated by the Revolution were frustrated." Democracy was ultimately rejected in favor of a stronger, more centralized government that would be more stable and able to chart a long-term course for the country.

While the external threat to Indonesia’s territorial integrity had been resolved, there were internal threats to Indonesian stability stemming from disagreements over the role Islam would have in the newly independent nation. From 1948-1962, there were a series of rebellions across Indonesia orchestrated by the Darul Islam movement. The goal of that movement was the establishment of Negara Islam Indonesia (an Indonesian Islamic State); it refused to accept the ambiguous wording of Pancasila. The Darul Islam movement released its proclamation in August 1949, which announced a “holy war or the revolution of Islam which will continue until... the laws of Islam are in all perfectness throughout the Negara Islam Indonesia and... the Negara Islam Indonesia has 100 percent sovereignty de facto and de jure, within and without, in the whole of Indonesia.”

The Darul Islam rebellion occurred in West Java from 1948-1962, in Aceh from 1953-1959, and in South Sulawesi from 1950-1959. The rebellions

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35 Boland.
36 Fealy, “Divided Majority: The Limits of Political Islam in Indonesia.”
37 Muhammad, 93.
38 Rickels, 237.
40 Boland, 54-74.

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in West Java and South Sulawesi were finally quashed when the local leaders of the rebellions were killed. In Aceh, however, the central government realized that the military action would not work and reached a negotiated settlement that acknowledged Aceh as a special administrative district with limited autonomy, particularly in religious affairs. This was effectively the creation of an Islamic political entity within the Indonesian state.

During the period from 1945-1957, the political role of Islam was mainly advanced by Masjumi. Masjumi transformed itself into a political party on November 7, 1945 and intended to be the party of Islamic unity. Notes from its 1946 General Assembly meeting emphasized “the realization of the ideals of Islam in state affairs, so that a form of state can be created... in accordance with the teachings of Islam.” More specifically, Masjumi viewed it necessary to refine the principles of Pancasila “in order to realize an Islamic society and an Islamic State.” Masjumi’s contribution to the nation was considerable in the early period of Indonesian independence. It provided leaders for cabinets and parliaments from its establishment in 1945 until its abolition in 1960. From 1945 to 1957, it was one of the largest parties in Indonesia, and four or five ministers in every cabinet were representatives of Masjumi, except in the first cabinet of Ali Sastroamidjojo (from 1953 to 1955, when Masjumi members rejected any position in this cabinet).

Up to this point, Masjumi had been a representative body that spoke for all Islamists including the NU and Muhammadiyah. In the name of Uchiwah Islamiyah (Islamic Unity), ideological differences between the reformist faction (Masjumi) and the more conservative faction (the NU) were glossed over. However, in 1952, the conservative NU withdrew its support from Masjumi and became its main challenger for the support of the Muslim population. The NU pointed to Masjumi’s casual nature in their acceptance of the use of Bahasa Indonesia in a number of types of prayer, and their tolerance toward the wearing of Western clothing while in prayer. The ideological differences between the two main Islamist groups that had been glossed over for the sake of Islamic unity were now exposed. The conflict between the two factions reached a critical point when there were changes in the Masjumi organization that were deemed unacceptable to the NU leaders. In the run-up to the 1955 elections, village campaigners of both the Masjumi and the NU claimed that only a vote for their party would allow a man to enter Heaven and that not to vote for their specific party meant going to Hell.

After its separation from Masjumi, the NU expanded its political influence and succeeded in attaining dominant positions in the Department of Religious Affairs, and an NU member was to head the ministry in 20 of the 23 cabinets over the course of 20 years from 1945-1965. After Masjumi was abolished in 1960, NU consolidated its position as the leading Islamic voice in Indonesian politics.

The elections of 1955 did not bring victory to any one of the mainstream parties in Indonesian society. Although Masjumi won 20.9 percent of the vote, and NU won 18.4 percent of the vote, PNI (the Indonesian Nationalist Party) won 22.3 percent of the vote, and the PKI (the Indonesian Communist Party) won 16.4 percent of the vote. According to B.J. Boland, “on a regional level Islamic groups managed to keep a considerable amount of influence through appointed or elected Muslim civil servants. But it can be said that on the national level, as a result of the elections of 1955, the political progress of Islam was in fact blocked.” The impasse between the two groups

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42 Boland, 42.
43 Ibid., 43.
46 Ibid., 16.
47 Ibid., 58.
48 Boland, 85.
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- Islamists on one side, and committed secularists on the other – made possible the later intervention of Sukarno. The results of the 1955 elections precipitated a period of political instability. In March 1956, a cabinet crisis led to the formation of the second cabinet of Ali Sastroamidjojo; in December, Vice President Mohammad Hatta resigned; finally, at the end of 1956, the Masjumi ministers in the cabinet resigned their positions.\(^9\) This led to a paralysis of the government and effectively ended the democratic experiment that had taken place since 1950. As Sukarno acknowledged in a 1957 speech, “In the history of the Republic of Indonesia, now more than eleven years old, we have never achieved stability in government.” In its place, Sukarno advocated the creation of a “guided democracy,” a “unique conception to save the Indonesian Republic.”\(^50\)

The Marginalization of Political Islam Under ‘Guided Democracy’: 1957-1965

Over the course of the next eight years – the duration of the Sukarno presidency – political Islam found itself marginalized and frustrated in its ability to have an impact on the political process. Sukarno’s suggestion for a new and stable central government included the formation of a gotong rojong cabinet (a cabinet of mutual help) in which every party, including the Communists, would be represented.\(^51\)

The idea of an inclusive gotong rojong cabinet was in opposition to Masjumi’s earlier vision of an Islamic government that represented “an Islamic society and an Islamic State.” Masjumi’s vision now had to take a backseat to Sukarno’s desire to include groups of all political stripes and ideological leanings in a new government. He asserted that “we should not discriminate, that we should no longer ask: are you Masjumi, are you PKI, are you Nahdlatul Ulama, are you Protestant, are you Catholic? No we should not! ... No matter what political party an Indonesian may adhere to, he remains – when all is said and done – an Indonesian.”\(^52\) In the eyes of the Islamist parties, this was a step in the wrong direction for their vision of an Islamic state. As Feith noted “Pancasila, previously accepted by Moslem political leaders as a symbol to which they could give at least tentative assent, now became anti-Muslim property; President Sukarno, as a vigorous defender of the Pancasila ... came to be seen a spokesman for one side in the struggle, instead of a non-partisan head of state.”\(^53\)

During Sukarno’s presidency, Islam-based parties had to take a back seat to the Communists who surged to the forefront. Sukarno had decided to use the Communists (PKI), the “only party with a strong organizational backing,” as a foil against the army.\(^54\) Elections for provincial councils were held in 1957 and revealed “major PKI gains,” and this increased the determination of the army to oppose the PKI.\(^55\) PKI was the only party with an active grassroots organization and it had campaigned for the implementation of Sukarno’s guided democracy policies. In elections in Central and East Java in July 1957, the PKI came in first with 34 percent of the vote, while the NU came in second with 29 percent of the vote. These results reinforced Sukarno’s view that “the PKI could not be refused a role in government.”\(^56\) Masjumi effectively eliminated itself as a player in Indonesian politics by refusing to have anything to do with guided democracy. In response to the 1957 provincial election results, Masjumi held an All-Indonesia Congress of Islamic Scholars that proclaimed communism was forbidden to Muslims and that the PKI must be outlawed.\(^57\) This marked the start of its precipitous decline as an influential

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\(^9\) Ibid., 88.
\(^50\) Quotes from a speech Sukarno gave on February 21, 1957 entitled “Saving the Republic of the Proclamation,” in Feith and Castles, 83-86.
\(^51\) Ibid.
\(^52\) Ibid.
\(^54\) Ibid.
\(^55\) Ricklefs, 260.
\(^56\) Ibid., 260.
\(^57\) Ibid., 261.
force in politics. Masjumi was finally banned by the Sukarno government on August 17, 1960. The internal division in the Islamist camp, between orthodoxy (the NU) and modernism (Masjumi), had split the Muslim vote and limited the effectiveness of political Islam. The decline of Masjumi now assured the political victory of the NU within Islamic circles and reduced the divisiveness of political Islam in Indonesia.

Sukarno's regime finally collapsed in 1965 as the social, political and economic structures of Indonesia began to falter. In 1965, Sukarno withdrew Indonesia from several international economic organizations, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. He also announced the formation of an anti-imperialist Jakarta-Phnom Penh-Hanoi-Beijing-Pyongyang axis. Against the backdrop of these moves, the black market rate for the rupiah against the US dollar plunged from Rp. 5,100 at the beginning of 1965 to Rp. 17,500 by the third quarter and Rp. 50,000 by the end of the year. Inflation was "extreme, with prices rising at something like 500 per cent for the year."58 An alleged Communist coup against Sukarno, led by senior officials in the military and the Communists, was put down with the support of anti-Communist Islamic groups. Ironically, this attempted coup, though unsuccessful, led to Sukarno's fall from the pinnacle of power; he was soon replaced by General Suharto in a subsequent coup.

**Political Islam in the Suharto and Post-Suharto Era**

*The Suppression of Political Islam under the New Order: 1965-1989*

General Suharto took over the presidency following the failed 1965 coup attempt. In the wake of the coup attempt, the government returned to a limited democracy called the "New Order" with the military as the major political actor. Once the initial alliance between Islamic activists and the pro-Suharto military had succeeded in destroying the PKI and ousting Sukarno, Islamic groups that had actively participated in the military's campaign to purge all Communist influences expected to be rewarded. Instead, Islam continued to be marginalized and limited to the private religious sphere, as Suharto was determined to prevent it from becoming a powerful political force.

Suharto was suspicious of political Islam and saw it as a threat to his vision of a Pancasila-based Indonesia, so he enacted a series of laws and regulations to combat the growing strength of political Islam. He came into the office with the twin goals of pursuing economic development and ensuring social harmony. He was wary of the political system under Sukarno that had encouraged political affiliation based on ethnic, regional and, especially, religious affinity.59 In the 1971 election, his Golkar party captured 62.8 percent of the vote, while the NU did the best of the non-governmental parties with 18.7 percent of the overall vote.60 The government used this election victory as justification for completing the destruction of the old political parties and old loyalties. In 1973, Suharto banned all political parties that were based on religion. Under a new law, the four Islamic parties that held seats in the national parliament were united under the Partei Persatuan Pembangunan (United Development Party, PPP). The government's intention in creating one party affiliated with Islam was to allow it to exert greater control over the Islamists. The government loosened the link between religion and politics by barring the PPP from using religious symbols in political campaigns. It also limited the effectiveness of the Islamists since the reformists and the conservatives were now under one banner and were internally divided.61 In the 1977 and 1982 elections, Golkar secured at least 62 percent in each election while the PPP, Golkar's closest rival, never gained more than 30 percent of the vote.

The threat posed by political Islam was identified by then Vice President Adam Malik in

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58 Ibid., 280.
60 Leo Suryadinata, *Political Parties and the 1982 General Election in Indonesia* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), appendix A.
61 Although the parties agreed to merge into the PPP in January 1973, they were not able to agree on the statutes and bylaws of the new amalgamated party until November 1975.
May 1982. He explicitly identified political Islam as the main target of the government: "We ought to steer clear of debates on ideology and religion. In the campaign for the DPR [Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat, the People’s Representative Council, which is the lower-house of parliament] in May 1982, I stressed the dangers of dividing and polarizing ourselves along religious lines. This is wrong and can be very counter-productive." In 1984, Suharto undermined the rest of the PPP’s support by forcing it to replace Islam with Pancasila as the party’s sole ideology (asas tunggal). Under the Law on Mass Organization, political parties that wanted to be recognized in national elections had to subscribe to the ideology of Pancasila, and they were explicitly forbidden to organize between elections. This law deprived parties of the right to promote Islam as the central platform of their manifesto, limiting their ability to draw support from the Muslim population. According to Vatikiotis, this law ensured that "the PPP lost all significance to the Muslim community." Later that year, the country’s largest Muslim organization, the NU, withdrew from the PPP and politics altogether. The marginalization of political Islam and the effect of this new law are best seen in the results of the 1987 election. The PPP saw their share of the vote decline from 27.8 percent in 1982 to 15.9 percent in 1987.

The Suharto government decided to "emulate the old Dutch policy of emasculating political Islam while outwardly promoting its spiritual health" and they "fashioned a policy which promoted Islam as a religion, confined it to the mosque and precluded it from any affairs of state." As a first step, the government sought to manage religious education. All religious preachers had to be licensed to preach in mosques, and in order to obtain a license, they had to first pass through a government Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN). In addition, 95 percent of the Islamic institutions at the tertiary level were government run. This ensured that the government had some control over Muslim intellectuals and that religious leaders they mistrusted were not able to preach widely.

The Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) provides another example of state sponsorship of Islamic institutions as it attempted to exert greater control over Islam and "confine it to a mosque." It was established in 1975 under the aegis of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and was supposed to issue fatwa (religious edicts), advise governments on Islamic issues, and promote good relations among the different Islamic groups. However, the MUI gained a reputation in Muslim circles of being a tool of the Suharto government. It made a succession of decisions that seemed to reflect the regime’s wishes, rather than the teachings of the Koran.

From Containing to Co-opting: 1989-1997
"The dilemma for Muslims is that they always want to play politics, but they are always in a position to be co-opted." – Mohtar Mas’oed, Krapyak, November 29, 1989

By 1989, the government was making progress in improving the living standards and welfare of

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62 Muhammad.
63 Leo Suryadinata, Elections and Politics in Indonesia (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002), 33.
66 Vatikiotis, 120.
67 Ibid., 126.
68 Fealy, "Divided Majority: The Limits of Political Islam in Indonesia."
69 The most notorious of these decisions were several fatwa declaring that state lotteries in which senior regime figures had a financial interest were not prohibited for Muslims. Senior MUI officials were also closely associated with the regime’s electoral vehicle, Golkar.
70 Contained in Ibid.
71 Vatikiotis, 119.
the Indonesian masses. Jakarta announced that Indonesia had achieved self-sufficiency in grain and that over 100,000 new schools had been built, improving access to basic education, particularly in the rural areas. Annual per capita income increased to nearly US$600, leading the World Bank to reclassify Indonesia as a middle-income country in 1982.71 The social and economic progress that Indonesian society experienced buoyed support for Golkar at the ballot box. Golkar won 73 percent of the vote in the 1987 election, 68 percent in the 1992 election, and 74.5 percent in the 1997 election.72 The successful program of economic development also provided legitimacy for Suharto’s New Order regime.

Having consolidated and centralized political control over Indonesia, the national government began to adopt a more benign attitude toward Muslim organizations from 1989 onward. A new Education Law drafted in 1989 “enshrined with more certainty the role of religious education.” In December 1989, the Religious Justice Bill was passed which granted new powers to Islamic courts and raised their status within the structure of the judiciary.73 In March 1990, “Suharto called together some of his closest Chinese business cronies and demanded they share their wealth more equitably” with the non-Chinese population.74 Suharto also supported the creation of a broad-based organization of Muslim intellectuals, the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI), which “emphasized the responsibility of Indonesian Muslims for penetration in politics.”75 ICMI was also designed to increase the “participation of Muslim intellectuals in the elaboration of the strategy for national development”, thereby giving them a stake in the future direction of the nation.76 This was a move that Suharto had forbidden since the early days of the New Order. ICMI was an organization conceived by young modernist activists but immediately co-opted by Suharto. It was headed by B.J. Habibie, a personal friend and advisor to Suharto.77 Suharto was also more keen to be seen as an observant Muslim and promoted a number of Islamic causes, including the building of mosques that were largely paid for by a Suharto-controlled fund (this fund received monies from an official levy on Indonesia’s public servants).78

While years of economic growth and improvements in living standards had made Suharto more secure in his control over the country, he also seemed to be playing the Muslim card to counter the stirrings of an increasingly disillusioned military.79 Suharto was facing opposition from the military for his re-election to a sixth term in 1993, and he courted the Islamic vote through these gestures and maneuvers. According to one Indonesia watcher, “there was a growing ABRI (military) undercurrent of dissatisfaction with Suharto,” who was perceived by military officers as “having stayed too long.”80 It emerged that a former Minister of Religious Affairs, Alamsjah Ratprawinagara, was busy collecting the signatures of the ulama (Islamic scholars) in East Java for a petition calling for Suharto to be elected as president for another five years in 1993.81 Suharto let it be known that when he died, he would like Muslims to pray for him, and he confided in B.J. Habibie that “I was born a Muslim; I will struggle for the Muslim cause.”82 He also made his first hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, after which he symbolically

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71 Ricklefs, 305.
72 Suryadinata, Interpreting Indonesian Politics, 199.
74 Muhammad, 131.
75 Ibid., 203.
77 Habibie’s close personal relationship with Suharto began as a boy while he lived near the Makassar military headquarters in the early 1950s. See Harold Crouch, The Army and Politics in Indonesia, Politics and International Relations of Southeast Asia (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 123.
79 Vatikiotis, 131.
80 Ramage, Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam, and the Ideology of Tolerance, 43.
81 Vatikiotis, 131.
82 Ibid., 131.
added Muhammad to his name. These efforts were particularly designed to convince Indonesians of the depth of his commitment and devotion to Islam.

His regime also became a generous patron of Islamic activities and infrastructure. For example, in the late 1980s, over US$30 million was devoted to mosque construction, leading to an increase in the number of mosques from 507,175 in 1985 to 550,676 in 1990. Suharto also personally established the Pancasila Service Foundation (YAMP) in 1982, for the stated purpose of developing socio-religious resources for the Islamic religious community. By 1991, the YAMP had raised over US$80 million and built over 400 mosques. Through such beneficence, the regime was able to curry favor with Islamic groups and win their support at the ballot box.

Suharto’s intentions and motivations for his renewed devotion to Islam and more benign attitude toward Islamic participation in political life are unclear. However, there was a resurgence of Muslim activism from the late 1980s onward, and Suharto’s astute political moves positioned him to capitalize on this revival. The late 1980s saw a proliferation of avowedly Muslim publications; mosque attendance also increased. There was broad agreement in intellectual circles on the need to make Islam immediately applicable to the lives of the Indonesian people. Rapid urbanization, access to education and economic development meant that the number of practicing Muslims who belonged to the upwardly mobile middle-class was growing rapidly. They brought Islamic religious beliefs into the bureaucracy and the business world. At the end of 1989 and 1990 respectively, the two largest Muslim organizations in Indonesia, the NU and Muhammadiyah, held their national congresses. At each of these meetings, the leaders of the two organizations stressed a desire to improve relations between the two groups, and the idea of dual memberships in both organizations was raised. There was also talk of creating a “Coordinating Committee of Islamic Organizations” to restore internal harmony within a divisive Islamic community. This was an indicator of the resolve of both groups to improve bilateral relations and a realization that the divisiveness of the past twenty or thirty years within the Islamic community meant “no Muslim leader had been able to win national support from all factions within the Muslim community.”

Suharto quickly found that his attempt to co-opt Muslims was being thwarted by the NU and Muhammadiyah. NU’s leader, Abdurrahman Wahid, stressed in a 1992 interview that “the NU is in a very good position as the anchor of politics in Indonesia; PPP, PDI, and Golkar all need us...nearly everybody needs us because of our mass base which we utilize very prudently. By refusing to endorse Suharto openly, we withhold support to this unbalanced system of governing...the current system is based on cronyism and the destruction of the country in the long run.” In 1993, Amien Rais, a prominent leader of Muhammadiyah and the ICMI, “was among the first to call for succession in the country.” Despite the lack of support from NU, Suharto and Golkar managed to retain a commanding lead (albeit a slightly smaller one) in the 1993 elections. His choice of cabinet ministers in the new cabinet was decidedly “more Muslim and less military, which found favor with his new civilian and Muslim support base.”

Islamic Groups and Their Role in Suharto’s Downfall: 1997-1998

In March 1998, Suharto was re-elected to a seventh term, but it came on the heels of a worsening economic crisis and questions were raised about the ability of the regime to stay in power. Suharto was 76 years old and suffering from ill health. His cabinet appointments reflected poorly on his ability to serve as a “clean” leader.

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82 Asghar, Meji, and Meuleman, 216 and 230.
83 June 18, 1992 interview with Abdurrahman Wahid as cited in Ramage, 60.
85 Vaikiotis, 208.
They included his daughter as well as one of his closest business cronies; his son-in-law was made commander of the elite Kostrad forces, which controlled troops in and around the capital (this angered senior officers in the military). He chose B.J. Habibie as his vice president, which horrified foreign investors because of Habibie’s reputation for wasteful high-tech projects. With his cabinet appointments, Suharto managed to alienate the military, the international business community and the local Indonesian population in one fell swoop.

The 1997-1998 Asian economic crisis caused a steep plunge in the value of the rupiah and necessitated a bailout package from the International Monetary Fund. From July 1997 onward, the rupiah came under attack by speculators. Per capita income plummeted to about US$200, representing a drop of 80 percent from pre-crisis 1997 levels. The legitimacy that Suharto had earned by being the guarantor of Indonesia’s economic growth and development disappeared. The last straw came in May 1998, when US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright “announced that Suharto should resign for the good of his country.” Suharto soon found himself facing mounting pressure calling for his resignation, culminating in nationwide demonstrations and protests.

Muslim groups played a crucial role in dealing Suharto’s regime a final blow. These groups, which he had courted and to which he had granted increasing power since 1990, joined opposition voices in the call for his resignation. He denied significant inclusion of the Muslim interests in his cabinet line-up, and the groups withdrew their support from him at a crucial moment. Islamic student organizations, state-run and private Islamic universities and tertiary institutions such as the IAIN, the Islamic University of Indonesia, and the Muhammadiyah University, played prominent roles in nationwide demonstrations.

Prominent Muslim leaders like Amien Rais identified with the students and called for political reformation and an end to Suharto’s presidency. In fact, Dr. Rais drew on his growing popularity to publicly denounce Suharto’s government and threaten to “bring the Muslim masses onto the streets as a ‘people power’ against Suharto’s rule.” The ICMI also threw its weight behind the reformers; after a meeting of its central leadership council in May, the ICMI announced that it “supported student demands for total reform.” On May 16, Adi Sasono, the Secretary-General of the ICMI, gave a fiery anti-Suharto speech and the press reported that Achmad Tirtosudiro, a senior leader in the ICMI, had called for Suharto to “resign before the twentieth of the month.” Suharto had long managed challenges to his presidency by maintaining shifting alliances of elite groups and isolating opponents. However, his attempt to manage his alliance with the Islamic faction had spun out of his control.

**Political Islam – Revived and Rehabilitated: 1998-1999**

On May 21, 1998, in a brief ceremony broadcast around the world, Suharto resigned and was replaced by his vice president of only two months, B.J. Habibie. He was a compromise candidate, an interim placeholder who would guide the country through to the next election. He was “distrusted by the military, not taken seriously by business executives in Jakarta, and lacked an independent power base beyond ICMI.” In fact, when he was confirmed as the vice president in January 1998, his infatuation with expensive technology projects had alarmed the international markets and caused the rupiah to crash to an all-time low of Rp. 17,000 to US$1. Thus, immediately after becoming president, Habibie set about attempting to consolidate his support base; he projected himself as a Muslim leader and selected

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80 Konstrad is the Strategic Reserve Command in the Indonesian military.
81 Varthiati, 220.
83 Varthiati, 220.
84 Porter, Managing Politics and Islam in Indonesia, 203.
85 Ibid., 209.
86 Ibid.
88 Arief Budiman, Barbara Hadley, and Damien Kingsbury, Reformasi: Crisis and Change in Indonesia (Clayton, Australia: Monash Asia

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ministers with strong Muslim backgrounds – some, such as Agriculture Minister, Dr. A.M. Syaefuddin, commented that people from a minority religion (i.e., not Muslim) were not eligible to seek the office of the president.98

One of Habibie’s landmark goals as a devout Muslim was to give Indonesian Islam a “modern and developmental-oriented face.” He argued, “Islam did not promote primordialism or exclusivity as it supported and promoted tolerance. Due to this, [he believed] the values contained in Islam were compatible with modern democracy.”99 He highlighted the fact that “even though Muslims constituted 25 percent of the human race, in terms of their performance in gross domestic product, they only accounted for five percent,” and he advocated for Muslims to focus on economic development in order to achieve growth and prosperity.100

During Habibie’s short tenure (May 1998-October 1999), he devoted his energy to electoral reforms in preparation for the 1999 elections to the national parliament as well as to the provincial and district legislatures. In his inaugural speech as president, he announced that his government’s goal was to revise electoral laws and revitalize electoral politics.101 By November 1998, his government had sent draft proposals to the DPR and MPR for guidelines on establishing political parties and the implementation of new elections.102 He also lifted restrictions that had been placed on the formation of political parties (except for restrictions on communist parties, which continued to be banned).103 He also supported efforts to rescind the Pancasila Sole Foundation Law, which had required all political organizations to be based solely on the state ideology.

The lifting of restrictions on parties resulted in a proliferation of new political parties in preparation for the upcoming election. Many of the parties were formed on the basis of old affiliations – aliran—the primordial/communal/sectarian loyalties that had been suppressed under Suharto’s New Order. Islamic, Christian, ethnic Chinese, nationalist, and socialist parties dominated the political scene. Islamic politics had experienced a major revival since 1990 and the transition from Suharto to Habibie had a positive impact on Islamic politics. Almost half of the 48 parties (20 of the 48) declared eligible to participate in the 1999 elections could be described as “Muslim-oriented.”104

**Political Islam – A Frustrated Cause: 1999-2001**

Despite this flurry of organizational activity, Muslim-oriented parties did not fare well at the ballot box. Most voters opted for secular parties such as the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P, led by Megawati Sukarnoputri) and Golkar. PDI-P received 34 percent of the vote, Golkar received 22 percent, the National Awakening Party (PKB) led by NU chairman Abdurrahman

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Comparison between Secular and Islamic Parties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secular-based (24 parties in 1955, 28 parties in 1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Islamist (4 parties in 1955, 20 parties in 1999)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Wahid received 17 percent, the PPP received almost 11 percent and Amien Rais’ National Mandate Party (PAN) received 7 percent.\textsuperscript{105} This meant that the two major secularist parties had obtained more than 56 percent of the vote and the three major Islamist parties had 30 percent.

At this juncture, a comparison between the results and implications of the 1955 election and those of the 1999 election is in order. Islam had been in the political wilderness for an extended period preceding both elections, suppressed by first the Dutch colonizers before 1942 and later by Sukarno and Suharto until 1990. It had been rehabilitated as a legitimate political force before the elections, and expectations were high in both cases that political Islam would experience a major victory. The results from both elections were disappointing for political Islam.

As Table 1 demonstrates, not much had changed for political Islam since 1955. Muslim constituents still seemed ambivalent towards the political cause of Islam.

Although Megawati’s PDI-P party received the largest percentage share of the vote, it did not translate into her election to the presidency. Instead, through behind-the-scenes politicking between the Islamic parties and Habibie’s faction of Golkar, Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of the PKB and NU, was elected Indonesia’s fourth president. The Islamic minority parties threw their weight behind Abdurrahman "because they preferred a Muslim cleric in the top executive post to a woman, who seemed to represent the interests of nationalism against political Islam."\textsuperscript{106}

Abdurrahman Wahid (also known as Gus Dur) was officially appointed president on October 19, 1999, but it was to be a short, problem-plagued presidency that only served to further undermine Islam as a political force. Gus Dur was the first Muslim preacher to become an Indonesian president and was the grandson of one of the country’s most revered ulama, Hasyim Asy’ari. This should have been a positive development for Muslims seeking a greater role for Islam in politics because it appeared to show Islam’s power as a legitimating force in Indonesian politics. Moreover, his nomination had won the support of all the major Islamic parties, demonstrating a heretofore unforeseen unity among Islamic parties. Unfortunately, Gus Dur granted privileged economic access to NU leaders, undermining public confidence in his administration, an act that tarnished his reputation, and sullied that of political Islam as well. Despite his rhetoric condemning the practices of the New Order, he continued to intervene heavily in the legal apparatus to pursue his own political aims. For example, he tried to replace the governor of the Bank of Indonesia, Syahril Sabrin, even though he did not have either the legal or constitutional authority to do so. He then insisted on replacing Sabrin, and when that failed, he had Sabrin arrested.\textsuperscript{107} He also recommended "prosecutors halt investigations into the business irregularities of his conglomerate friend Maritmutu Sinivasan."\textsuperscript{108}

After a lengthy investigation by the DPR-appointed Special Committee, the DPR declared, "Parliament hereby decides to issue a memorandum to reprimand Abdurrahman Wahid in that he has indeed violated the state guidelines . . . professional oaths . . . and good governance."\textsuperscript{109} On May 30, 2001, the Indonesian Parliament voted to hold an MPR special session, initiating the impeachment process against Gus Dur.\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{106} Porter, 231.
\textsuperscript{107} Grayson Lloyd and Shannon L. Smith, Indonesia Today: Challenges of History (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001), 38.
\textsuperscript{110} Suryadinata, Elections and Politics in Indonesia, 187.
Gus Dur tried stubbornly to remain in office, issuing executive orders freezing both the DPR and the MPR, but he had lost support among the parliamentarians and the public. His last moves were perceived as a desperate attempt to cling to office.

Rousing the Sleeping Giant? – Anger from the Islamic ‘Street’: 2001-present

Megawati Sukarnoputri was elected president on July 23, 2001, and the MPR also elected Hamzah Haz, leader of the PPP, as vice president. Hamzah Haz defeated four other candidates in order to obtain the position of vice president and he was clearly a representative of the Islamists. In forming her new cabinet, Megawati was careful to provide at least one cabinet position to each Islamic party in order to ensure their support for her administration.\footnote{Ibid., 198.}

In the wake of terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the subsequent responses of the United States, Muslims in Indonesia became increasingly vocal about their anger toward what was perceived as an American attack on the Muslim world. This complicated political calculations in Indonesia. Megawati initially expressed her firm support for the US policy against terrorism and was received in the White House on September 17, 2001 by President Bush. However, this did not play well in Indonesia; Islamic groups organized anti-American demonstrations across Indonesia, and the Indonesian Council of Ulama (MUI) as well as Hamzah Haz were equally critical of the United States and disapproved of the US action against Afghanistan.\footnote{Ibid., 199.}

Since then, the Islamic factor in Indonesian politics has remained a potentially destabilizing force for the Megawati government, and this has forced Megawati to back away from actively supporting Washington’s war on terror. In spring 2003, thousands of protesters flooded the streets of Jakarta protesting and burning US flags in order to show their displeasure at the US military campaign against Iraq.\footnote{According to the Washington Post, over 100,000 protestors gathered in the streets of Jakarta alone during the weekend of March 28-29. See Dean Yates, “Huge Indonesia Rally Leads Asia Anti-War Protests,” Washington Post, March 30, 2003.}

With an eye to the 2004 national elections, external events have galvanized both the Islamists and the secularists to action. In a recent address to the annual congress of the NU, Megawati posed a rhetorical question: “Isn’t it our intention to show that Islam is a peaceful religion? . . . We should broaden our religious perspective by promoting the loving and forgiving attitude and annulling the narrow-minded view that to have a different opinion or stance is wrong.”\footnote{Fabiola Desy Unidjaja, “Megawati Asks Clerics to Fight against Fanaticism,” The Jakarta Post, July 26, 2002.}

Three days later, Hamzah Haz was speaking at the closing ceremonies of the NU congress and announced that the PPP “would keep on fighting for sharia law.”\footnote{Fabiola Desy Unidjaja and Tiarna Siboro, “PPP Will Fight for Sharia Law, Hamzah Says,” The Jakarta Post, July 29, 2002.}

There is an ongoing battle to define the precise role of Islam in this society, and its exact nature (e.g., militant vs. moderate). An April 2003 New York Times headline captured it best when it asserted “With Indonesia Politics Up for Grabs, Islam’s Role Grows.”\footnote{Jane Perlez, “With Indonesia Politics up for Grabs, Islam’s Role Grows,” New York Times, April 30, 2002.}

Against this historical backdrop, one wonders why political Islam has not been successful at asserting itself in Indonesian politics. Whether political Islam is measured by results at the ballot box, or by attempts at instituting sharia law, these efforts have failed repeatedly. Why? And are there reasons to believe that its most recent revival will end differently?

An Explanation

Political Islam – A Divisive Issue

Because of the divisions within the Muslim community, Muslims who share the same religion may share little else. Their diversity is reflected in their lack of a consensus on the view that the state should be Islamic. Even as Muslims have become more pious and devout in their private practice of...
their faith, they have not granted Islam the same prominence on the political stage.

Islam is a divisive force in Indonesian politics because of contentious issues that have polarized the community, as in the discussion of the imposition of sharia law. Muslims do not feel the urge to rally around politicians solely because they wave the “green card.” Instead, Muslims tend to identify with politicians and platforms that promise to improve their lives. Until Islam is able to make the transition from being a divisive force to becoming a unifying force, Indonesian Muslims will continue to focus on the basic concerns that affect their daily lives, rather than the transcendental questions or matters of high politics.117 When a group such as Front Pembela Islam (FPI) holds a rally of 5,000 or 10,000 neatly uniformed demonstrators in the center of the national capital, it makes for quite a spectacle. But with the greater Jakarta area housing some 20 million people, and with millions of young males unemployed or underemployed and on the streets, it is significant that groups such as the FPI have not been able to attract a greater following.118 Muslim parties that are interested in many issues across multiple sectors will fare much better than single-issue Islamist parties whose leaders hope that Islamic identity will be enough to win the sympathies and votes of the Muslim masses.

The Rise of Cultural (vis-à-vis Political) Islam

There is a growing religiosity within the Muslim community. This has manifested itself in various forms, including the increasing prevalence of Islamic attire such as the hijab for women, the greater number of Muslims praying at mosques, and the growth in Islamic publishing.119 But Muslims generally remain reluctant to associate themselves with Islamist political organizations and have little interest in the “scholasticism of Islamic law.” They “prefer nonconfessional governance to an Islamic state,” and Robert Hefner refers to such people as private Muslims.120 This growing segment of the Muslim community appears confident that one can be a “good Muslim” without necessarily supporting a formally Islamic state. A good example of the rise of the phenomenon of “cultural Islam” is found in the popular Indonesian rock-and-roll band, Slank. In its songs, Slank attacks social inequality and calls for peace and tolerance. Its drummer, Bim Bim, says, “I grew up in an Islamic tradition, and I would say that my Islam is a modern Islam. For me, Islam is about goodness.”121 Cultural Islam is asserting itself as a politically moderate force that is also religiously devout. This community is inclined to vote for parties that have moderate policies, and the religious identity of a party matters less to these “private Muslims” than do its proposed policies. Political Islam has thus far failed to win their votes for lack of a convincing political platform.

Islamic Parties: Lacking an Economic Agenda

In order to understand why Suharto’s regime was able to retain political power at the expense of other groups (including political Islam) from the 1960s until 1997, one must examine the economic progress made within Indonesia. All things considered, there was a prolonged and broad-based improvement in living standards under the New Order. Consumption of foodstuffs “such as rice, meat and dairy products, rose continually since the late 1960s,” and between 1968 and 1995 the daily protein intake per Indonesian improved by more than 60 percent.122 There was a vast increase in the ownership of consumer goods, including televisions, machine washers, and refrigerators, reflecting a parallel rise in the real purchasing power of the average Indonesian.123 The system

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117 This is, in some ways, the antithesis of conventional wisdom, which holds that it is precisely economic stress and economic concerns that cause “militant Islam”, or at least a willingness to turn to religion for answers to political problems. For a discussion of poverty and its links to “militant Islam,” see Daniel Pipes, “God and Mammon: Does Poverty Cause Militant Islam?,” National Interest, Winter 2001/2002.
118 Lloyd and Smith, 259.
119 Fealy, “Divided Majority: The Limits of Political Islam in Indonesia.”

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would continue to function as long as Suharto was able to keep the costs of corruption and cronyism below the benefits of economic growth. Success in promoting economic development so ensured that Muslim parties were not able to compete politically, not with such an obviously viable economic agenda that was benefiting the masses. By presiding over decades of economic growth and prosperity, Suharto preempted such opposition.

In addition, the PPP, the main Islamic party that was allowed to contest parliamentary elections during the New Order period, failed to develop or present a coherent economic agenda. The PPP failed to articulate a clear alternative to the policies being pursued by the ruling party. Because of the distinct factions with competing agendas within the PPP (e.g., urban modernists versus rural traditionalists), they were only able to achieve consensus on issues that all factions within the PPP could agree upon, and that was religion. Thus their election platform asserted an Islamist agenda, including the creation of an Islamic state, and the imposition of Islamic law within the secular state. The same time, they were unable to agree upon specific policies necessary for the administration of a country, such as a detailed economic policy.

The salience of economic issues in Indonesian politics is further demonstrated by the fact that Suharto’s worst political troubles began when the Indonesian economy failed to show signs of revival or recovery in March 1998. By then, the rupiah was trading above 10,000 to the US dollar, millions of people had lost their jobs and inflation was running at an annual rate of 150 percent. There seemed to be an inverse relationship between the rupiah’s exchange rate and the number of protesters on the street; as the rupiah’s value plummeted, the cries for “Reformasi” (reform) grew louder. If political Islam wants to be a credible force in Indonesian politics in future, Islamic parties need to campaign on economic issues and have an economic agenda.

Table 2: Exit Poll Data from the 1999 Elections

| Question: | What would you say is the main reason you voted for this party (the party you voted for in the June 7, 1999 elections)? |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good economic plan</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote human rights</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamic</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New programs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be trusted</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eradicate corruption</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other leaders support</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longtime member</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deeply religious</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve security</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand for people’s aspirations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has many supporters</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform minded</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked the candidate</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other characteristics</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The average Indonesian is concerned with the “mundane” problems such as standard of living, inflation and the like, while the Islamist parties seem more concerned with religious practice and Islamic law. This is reflected in poll data. For example, according to the 1999 exit poll, 34 percent of Indonesian voters voted for a political party based on the soundness of its economic plan while only 15 percent of voters did so because a political party was either Muslim or religious (see Table 2). If Islamic political parties are to succeed in Indonesia, they need to realize the importance of developing a credible economic agenda as the masses will not vote for a party solely because it waves the Koran.

123 Ibid.
124 Kingsbury, 106.
125 Liddle, “Indonesia’s Unexpected Failure of Leadership.”

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As assembly speaker, Amien Rais said "Muslims should pursue a politics of salt, not of flags or lipstick." Flags and lipstick, like the Islamic state, are showy, but it is salt — by which he presumably meant specific policies and programs that benefit Muslims — that people need and want. Until political Islam demonstrates an ability to campaign on a platform that resonates with the people, a platform that will tangibly improve the standard of living of ordinary citizens, its success at the ballot box will remain limited.

Islamist Parties and Violence in the Name of Islam: Guilt by Association?

While economic policies are important and while people are concerned with how the government will improve their individual lives, economic policies and platforms are not the sole deciding factor in Indonesian elections. Economic growth and development can only occur in an environment that is stable and peaceful. Indonesians (Muslims and non-Muslims) desire stability and order, not revolutionary change and turmoil. Thus, they will vote for parties that are committed to restoring order because they want assurance for their physical security and because they realize that growth and economic prosperity will only return when normalcy and stability are restored.

In recent years, Indonesia has been a hotbed of violence conducted under the banner of Islam. This includes the activities of the Free Aceh movement (GAM), which has been fighting for independence from Indonesia. While the fight is primarily over political independence, GAM has also used the rhetoric of religious difference as a reason for its quest for independence. As part of its agenda, it wants to declare an independent Islamic state and adopt sharia law. In addition, since 1998, periodic communal violence has occurred between the Muslim and Christian communities in Sulawesi, Medan, the Moluccas, Irian Jaya and Ambon. Numerous radical Muslim groups are also present in Indonesia, including the Islamic Defenders Front, Laskar Jihad and Jamaah Islamiah. Some of these groups have been labeled as international terrorist organizations and have been implicated in destabilizing events such as the Bali bombings of October 12, 2002, the April 2003 bombing of a United Nations building in Jakarta and the August 2003 bombing of the Jakarta Marriott Hotel.

These intermittent acts of violence have continued to decrease confidence in the Indonesian economy. In 2002, an estimated net US$6.9 billion left Indonesia in foreign direct outflows. This is in addition to the US$3.27 billion and US$4.55 billion in FDI that left Indonesia in 2001 and 2000 respectively. These net disinvestments by foreign investors are troubling because they signal a lack of confidence in the ability of the local economy or the local political environment to provide the stability necessary for economic growth. These signals from foreign investors are further exacerbated by the weakness of domestic consumer confidence. Consumer confidence in Indonesia has been on the decline and in February 2003, it saw a "steep drop...to 82.3, almost 10 points down from January." Economic weakness has also had a real impact on the lives of ordinary Indonesians, with economic growth lagging the number of new entrants in the labor force. Between 1997 and 2002, the labor force increased by 7 percent while employment increased by 2.9 percent. There are not enough job opportunities being created for the burgeoning population of under-employed or unemployed. Incidents like the 2002 Bali bombings have made a

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132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
bad economic situation worse. Immediately after the bombings, foreign tourist arrivals into Indonesia plunged by 20 percent when compared with the same time period in 2001. This has affected the economy, which is dependent on tourism as a source of growth and foreign currency.

Indonesian voters may rationally understand that most Islamist parties do not identify with the violent acts committed in the name of Islam. However, because Islamist parties co-exist under the same “green banner” that is waved by these violent groups, they are (unfortunately) tainted by association. Political Islam has also been slow to condemn these disruptive acts of violence and some leading Muslim politicians have been vocal defenders of individuals suspected of violence. For example, M. Din Syamsuddin, vice chairman of Muhammadiyah and a prominent member of the MUI, has been “a vocal defender of figures such as the Laskar Jihad militia’s Ja’far Umar Thalib and the jailed Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir (the alleged spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiah, the group implicated in the 2002 Bali bombings).” In fact, Indonesian Vice President (and leader of the PPP) Hamzah Haz has provided groups like Jemaah Islamiah with political cover. In response to a question about his defense of Bashir, he once remarked “If the police want to arrest him (Bashir), you should arrest me first.”

Comments by political leaders such as M. Din Syamsuddin and Hamzah Haz have undermined political Islam’s ability to appeal to a public that wants security and stability. Such comments from leading Islamic politicians suggest that it lacks the political will to root out violence and instability in Indonesia. In a country plagued by political turmoil and economic weakness, the failure of political Islam to address these two problems will limit its ability to appeal to voters.

Concluding Remarks: Looking Ahead

Indonesian voters will go to the polls on April 5, 2004 to elect members to the House of Representatives (DPR), the Regional Representative Councils (DPD), and the District Legislative Assemblies (DPRD). The 2004 election will also mark the first time that a president has been directly elected, due to a recent change in electoral laws. What are the prospects for political Islam in these elections?

At first glance, although political Islam fared poorly in the 1999 election, its prospects of improving its performance in future elections may be good. There are several reasons for this. First, Islamic parties are likely to be better organized with an established network and effective mobilization strategies by the next election. The existing Islamic parties should also fare better because of prior experience in the 1999 elections. Second, the national organizations like NU have recognized that having their senior leaders affiliated with competing political platforms limits the organization’s influence on electoral outcomes, and they are addressing this issue. For example, NU organized a conference in 2002 aimed at reuniting its fragmented politicians and ulama scattered throughout different parties and social groups. The meeting culminated in a recommendation for the establishment of an NU political commission at the national and regional levels to strengthen its coordination on political issues.

Ultimately, however, if political Islam fails to address the issue of economic and physical security for the Indonesian people, it will not fare as well as parties that campaign on a platform of development with order and stability. It matters less whether Islamists wave the “green card” and matters more if it is seen as a credible voice of peace and prosperity. According to a 2002 poll conducted by Kompas, the top concerns for Indonesians in thirteen major cities were improving security, ending corruption, upholding the law and expanding employment opportunities. Political Islam will have to look beyond the rhetorical agenda of religion and attend to these concerns first before it will gain majority electoral support.

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136 Some observers believe the link between political Islam and violent Islam is more insidious, suggesting that political Islam is not just afraid to crack down “in bed” with the violent groups.