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In tandem with Barack Obama’s election in November 2008, many changes have been taking place in East and Southeast Asia that seem to require revisiting traditional assumptions underlying US policy.

For one, Japan is still the world’s number two economy, but no longer the unquestioning ally it used to be. Since the Democratic Party of Japan came into power in September 2009, promising more security independence from the US, tensions have surfaced over relocation of US military bases. This cooling of relations is accurately viewed not as an accident but a reflection of the delicate nature of the US-Japan security alliance. Although the alliance has for a long time been the cornerstone of US policy in East Asia, it was bound to be fraught with tension as Japan naturally aspires to a more equal relationship, and on a larger level, the political and international clout commensurate with its economic power.

In China, 2009 is the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, 50th anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising, and 60th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. While China is continuing to prosper economically, it is being shown that development alone cannot tame separatist movements in Tibet and Xinjiang, or their consequent social problems. Articles in the China section all seek to address such gaps between expectation and reality.

In South Korea, there was a change in helm from a liberal to a conservative president in December 2007. Since then, Seoul has taken a tougher stance on North Korea, still upholding reconciliation and peace as long-term goals, but insisting North Korea disarm its nuclear weapons before expecting friendly gestures. This brings Seoul much closer to Washington’s official position on North Korea, and gives the Obama administration a chance to work with a
cooperative South in dealing with the North. It is a marked departure from past years when South Korean President Roh’s Sunshine Policy and Bush’s extreme anti-terror rhetoric created an alarming discord.

Domestically, while overseeing South Korea’s impressive recovery from the global financial crisis, President Lee Myung-bak has come under fire for his administration’s over-enthusiastic attempts to control public opinion. This is the topic of one of our opinion articles in this issue.

Broader trends in the region, even in the wake of the global financial meltdown, is that of growing economic affluence, and the formation of blocs partly motivated by a desire to counter more traditional global powers. Japan very recently proposed an East Asian community, with Prime Minister Hatoyama articulating the aspiration that “East Asia is going to lead the world.” ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, will try to expand its membership to China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, and New Zealand.

As Kei Koga lays out in his article, ASEAN will face many challenges in seeking to increase its membership and clout. Nevertheless, the message for the US is to not neglect the currents of change in East Asia at the expense of its influence in the region, and to emerge as a valuable and indispensable partner to nations that are eager to take their place.

Tsung-Yen Chen & Sunok Josephine Suh

Editors-in-Chief, Winter 2010
The July 5 Riots

One long simmering region of China’s oft forgotten West, Xinjiang, has regained the world’s attention. On July 5, 2009 Xinjiang exploded into fiery protests. The riots in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi, that began on July 5 and then re-erupted on July 7 were stunning, both in violence and scope. It was the bloodiest conflict in over twenty years. Over the course of three days, the violence left more than 1,700 people injured and nearly 200 dead. Hospitals were flooded with patients, though the government did not provide ethnic breakdowns of the data. The scope of protest was also surprising, as Uighur protests rarely spread geographically. Historically Uighur protests have been smaller, almost terrorist acts – a string of bus bombings in 1997 is exemplary. Thus the spreading of the incident from Urumqi to Kashgar, where 200 people protested without violence, is relatively unique.

Aside from a general underlying ethnic tension, the exact spark that ignited the rioting is almost certainly connected to an incident on June 26 in a Guangzhou toy factory. In June a malcontent Han worker in the factory falsely posted online that, “six Xinjiang boys had raped two innocent [Han] girls at the Xuri Toy Factory.” The worker, who had quit his job but wanted it back, was trying to get even with the factory owners. Instead he set off a brawl that began at 2:00 am Friday morning and lasted for hours, involving hundreds of people. Two Uighurs were killed and 118 people were injured. The factory had been encouraged to hire minority workers as part of a government program.

News of the factory incident, while reported on state media like Xinhua, was inflamed and exaggerated in Xinjiang. One Uighur resident of Urumqi said, “At the time, the government did not report the news well in Xinjiang. Originally it was a couple of people killed. But as the news spread, it became progressively more exaggerated. Then 10 people had been killed. Then dozens.” When on July 5 Uighur university students marched legally and peacefully to petition for a full investigation into the factory incident, the Uighur resident said, “Uighurs from outside of Urumqi, people from the lowest social class, people without jobs, took advantage to cause problems . . . it was just like a war.”

However, the Chinese government, always quick to claim foreign meddling in Tibet, again looked abroad to extricate themselves from the mire. The authorities blamed Rebiya Kadeer, a Uighur in exile and head of the World Uighur Congress for instigating the riots. Ms. Kadeer flatly denied the charges. In the West, the argument that foreign countries are trying to split Xinjiang and Tibet off from China carries little weight, as it probably should. But in China, it is commonly accepted as fact. One small storeowner in Chongqing, the
economic hub of interior China, said, “Of course the World Uighur Congress caused the riots. Its leader is just like the Dalai Lama.”

The protest unfolded in two main waves. The violence began on the afternoon of Sunday July 5, when rioters exploited the students’ peaceful protest march, turning the incident violent. Violence quickly surged through the city, centering around an outdoor shopping market in downtown, and “the rioters threw stones at the police and set vehicles on fire, sending plumes of smoke into the sky . . . police officers used fire hoses and batons to beat back rioters and detain Uighurs who appeared to be leading the protest.” The People’s Armed Police, a paramilitary force, moved into Urumqi on the same day, quelling the conflict around midnight and dozens of Uighur men were arrested. Cell phone and internet service was shut off. According to a witness the violence was “just too sudden” and Uighurs not native to Urumqi caused most of the violence. He said, “Uighurs native to Urumqi have a good relationship with local Han Chinese. The outsiders, they are not managed well.” There is no data available as to who participated in the riots.

Several days later a second wave of violence followed. The second time, however, the roles were reversed – the Han Chinese furious with the Uighurs. Ethnic minorities in China benefit from what many Han Chinese consider to be unfair policies – they get extra points on the all-important College Entrance Exam and families are not limited to one child, among other advantages. Most Han Chinese are unaware of many of the issues Western human rights groups raise or find them offensive (often they are denied as lies). The combination does not create a tolerant atmosphere for the outbursts of a supposedly spoiled minority. A shop worker in Chongqing expressed she “would kill all of them [the Uighurs].” She then paused, “No. But I am so mad I could die!”

Incandescent with rage over the Uighurs’ destruction and violence, on July 7, Hans armed themselves with “makeshift and menacing weapons, including clubs, meat cleavers, long knives, axes and bricks” and set out to settle the score. Earlier in the day, about 200 Uighur protestors, mostly women, had defied city wide curfew and came out to demand the release of missing Uighur males – often husbands and sons. The incident was tense, with protestors smashing the windshield of a police car, and happened to be observed by foreign journalists on a government-guided tour. Later, when the violence broke out, “armored-personnel carriers of China’s People’s Armed Police . . . rushed through city streets to keep ahead of the surging crowds, barring them from mosques and Uighur neighborhoods.” They were mostly successful in preventing wide-scale violence, relying on tear gas to control crowds. As of July 9, the city had settled into an uneasy quiet.

The Last Two Decades

Violent protest is nothing new to Xinjiang. Uighurs carried out several violent strikes in the 1990s, and the best-known bombing occurred in Urumqi, on February 25, 1997. Three bombs on buses exploded nearly simultaneously and contemporaneously with the state funeral for Deng Xiaoping. The bombs killed 9 and injured 74 people. The Uighur Liberation Party claimed responsibility for the bombings, and later the government executed eight men. Following
closely behind the Urumqi bombing, a bomb similar to the Urumqi device exploded on a bus in Beijing’s Xidan shopping district on March 8, 1997. Interestingly, Uighur weapons may have come (as weapons originally supplied by the CIA) from Afghan mujahideen fighters.

Xinjiang was not quiet in the new millennium either, particularly in the buildup to the 2008 Beijing Olympic games. In January 2007, Chinese police reported that they had attacked a “terrorist training base” in southern Xinjiang, killing 18 people and arresting 17 more. They captured 18 homemade anti-tank grenades (and more than 1,500 unfinished ones). The police went on to list more than 260 “terrorist incidents” that Uighurs in Xinjiang had been responsible for. The next year, in January 2008, “the Chinese police attacked what the authorities said was a terrorist gang in Urumqi... Two people were killed and 15 others arrested.” They found a collection of small weapons, including knives, axes and books about terrorism.

Two months later, contemporaneous with the Tibetan unrest in March 2008, resistance continued in Xinjiang. On March 7 a Uighur woman smuggled three containers of gasoline onto a China Southern airliner bound for Beijing from Urumqi. She brought two of the containers into the plane’s bathroom, but failed to detonate them. When flight attendants on board discovered the plot, the flight made an emergency landing in Lanzhou and four Uighurs were arrested.

The violence continued on March 23, as Chinese officials put down a protest in Hotan, Xinjiang, and in early April police arrested twenty-five Uighurs in Gulja on suspicion that they had been constructing bombs. Police found three bombs in a cowshed, and believed that there were more in the area. That Xinjiang has a history of violence and unrest is clear. How to handle that unrest is murkier.

**Extinguishing the Fires**

Despite the blaring headlines, the Uighur independence movement is little more than an irritant to the Chinese government. The government possesses an overwhelming preponderance of force, and the policy of Han immigration is an extremely effective tool to diffuse minority strength and bind the regions to China proper. In another twenty years, the Uighurs will be minorities in their own homelands. In Urumqi, Han already outnumber the Uighurs. China may be hoping the problems simply solve themselves.

The Uighur tendency to attack civilians both inside and outside of Xinjiang gives China’s leaders more to worry about. A bombing in Beijing or Shanghai would inflame Han nationalist sentiment, which would ironically be dangerous to the CCP itself—average citizens would demand drastic action, and if the CCP did not meet their demands, that would damage the Party’s credibility on the home front. Beijing is aware of the danger, and maintains a “strike hard, high pressure” campaign in Xinjiang to combat the “separatist organizations.” Beyond this, there are some ways that Beijing could do to improve stability and reduce violence in Xinjiang.

The first one is simple: eliminate incentives for Han Chinese to move to Xinjiang. The Han are already established in the area, which was the goal, and they would likely keep coming anyway. In the meantime, the Party would have a propaganda
victory.

The second two are more challenging. First, Xinjiang is famous for its abundant natural resources. Government authorities in Xinjiang announced in 2004 that “we are continually making important discoveries of oil and natural gas” and stated the region possess over 20 billion tons of oil reserves, a quarter of all reserves in China. A 2005 study reported that Xinjiang has the most coal reserves in all of China, possessing over 40% of national stocks. The New York Times notes, “China has a bottomless thirst for oil and gas, and Xinjiang these days is producing both in ever greater quantities.” Developmental economist Paul Collier argues that resources “help to finance conflict and sometimes even help to motivate it.” Might the Resource Curse be at work in China’s northwest? In reality, Xinjiang is not suffering from the Resource Curse, but rather “Resource Anger” because the region does not see concrete benefits from its resources.

Despite the vaunted “Develop The West” campaign, which has invested billions into the region, the income gap boggles the mind. According to some (highly optimistic) statistics, urban residents in Urumqi in 2007 had about RMB 11,000 per year of disposable income (in reality, Urumqi is majority Han and other cities in Xinjiang are much poorer – rural disposable incomes are about RMB 300 per month). In contrast, in 2007 Beijing households had over RMB 20,000 per year of disposable income. To combat dissatisfaction, the government should directly (and very publicly) invest a percentage of the resource income back into Xinjiang – in addition to its Go West program.

Secondly, China must realize that Islam itself is not a cause of the violence in Uighur resistance. In fact, some of the unrest stems from restrictions on their religion. In light of that, the CCP would do well to relax the regulations on religion and let the Uighurs practice their faith in peace. Freedom of religion would earn the CCP Uighur goodwill, in addition to international approval. As one Uighur in Xinjiang commented, “This situation [the July 2009 riots] has nothing to do with religion.” China would do well to adopt a more laissez-faire religious policy.

When all the smoke clears, Xinjiang is still going to be a part of China – and always will. Independence is simply not in the cards, nor should it be. The real question revolves around Xinjiang’s continuing integration with the rest of China. Can – or will – the government adjust some of its hardliner policies to make the Uighurs feel less threatened in their homeland? The answer to that question will determine much of the future Han-Uighur relationship. But in the meantime, as one Uighur in Xinjiang said about Han-Uighur relationships, “This is going to be really, really awkward.”

MICHAEL BROWN

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VOICES


Xu Jing, Personal interview, Chongqing, China, July 7, 2009.


The author has a male Uighur contact in Xinjiang, Telephone interview, July 6, 2009.


The author has a male Uighur contact in Xinjiang, Telephone interview, July 6, 2009.

Liu Hong, Personal interview, Chongqing, China, July 7, 2009.

The author has a male Uighur contact in Xinjiang, Telephone interview, July 6, 2009.


See note 12


The author has a male Uighur contact in Xinjiang, Telephone interview, July 6, 2009.


The author has a male Uighur contact in Xinjiang, Telephone interview, July 6, 2009.

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Michael Brown is currently teaching and studying at a university in Chongqing. He received his BA in June 2008 from Northwestern University in East Asian Studies and Political Science. From 2006 to 2007, he studied the Chinese political system in Hangzhou as a National Security Education Program scholar. His main academic interests are East Asian politics, the effects of nuclear weapons on international security, and Chinese-English translation.
2009 is a year of anniversaries for the Greater China region. This year is the 50th anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising against the Chinese and the Dalai Lama’s forced exile, the 90th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement and its outburst of Chinese nationalism, the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, and the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Apart from these politically loaded anniversaries, China, like the rest of the world, is faced with a financial crisis. Although China’s economy is among the only ones in the world that continues to exhibit positive growth, rising unemployment could cause domestic discontent. On the surface, this year could be a turning point in China’s history, but events so far have suggested that radical human rights changes are still out of reach.

March 10th was the 50th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising, which came 19 days before the newly established Serfs Emancipation Day (nongnu jiefang ri 农奴解放日). Not wanting a repeat of last year’s events before the Beijing Olympics, China inundated the region with policemen and troops. China also froze internet and mobile texting services in areas where protests were the fiercest. These pre-emptive measures appear to have successfully deterred riots and maintained peace in the region, but at what cost? (For a somewhat different view, see the article by Michael Brown in this issue of SJEAA.) Although Chinese media has used the newly created Serfs Emancipation Day to show the supposed satisfaction and happiness of the Tibetans, foreign media has been turned away. “Peace” has trumped freedom of expression.

The 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre is also being tightly monitored. Articles mentioning June 4, 1989 are routinely being deleted from Chinese websites, and the Chinese government is putting serious effort in censoring the events of that day. Outside of internet censorship, retired professor Sun Wenguang was beaten in early April for trying to honor Zhao Ziyang, a Chinese leader who sympathized with the students in the Tiananmen incident. It appears that restriction on the freedom of expression is only increasing. One recent example is the Chinese government’s response to Charter 08, namely, not much of an official response but subsequent arrests and interrogation of the signatories.

So what should China do with the upcoming 60th anniversary of its founding? One answer, backed by Jackie Chan, a famous martial arts movie star who has denounced protests against China’s human rights record in the past, is that the Chinese government should just keep doing what it has been doing, that is, control and censor. In April of this year at the Boao Forum, an economic conference held in Hainan, where Prime Minister Wen Jiabao also made an appearance, the movie star said, “I’m
gradually beginning to feel that we Chinese need to be controlled. If we are not being controlled, we’ll just do what we want.” This statement was greeted with applause from the audience. Independent of the motives underlying Chan’s remarks, his statements can easily be interpreted as being in support of the Chinese government’s ideology of restriction and repression in the name of “peace and prosperity” and a “harmonious society” while sacrificing supposedly unnecessary Western freedoms because the “Chinese need to be controlled.”

I believe that Jackie Chan’s words are a profound insult to a majority of the Chinese people. In one sentence, he stereotyped the Chinese as a directionless dictatorship-craving people. With the extravagant Beijing Olympics and the more recent G20 summit, China has shown its thirst for more global influence. The fact that, so far, it has suffered the least in the global financial crisis has boosted its standing in the international community. But for China to have an even greater influence, it must first prove itself to be trustworthy and responsible. That the Chinese government will use the 60th anniversary of its founding to boost nationalism is undoubtable, but China should also use this year of anniversaries to increase transparency in decision-making and improve human rights to better its international image from that of being a restrictive totalitarian regime. Unfortunately, judging from how China is currently restricting freedom of expression, especially that which criticizes the Communist Party or advocates any form of democracy, Jackie Chan’s approach of control is deeply set in the Chinese leadership.

ENDNOTES


VICTOR LIU

Victor Liu, at the time of writing, was a freshman at Stanford University hailing from New Zealand with an interest in philosophy and literature. He intently follows international relations in the East Asia region.
South Korea’s former President Roh Moo-hyun’s death on May 23, 2009 was one of the most unexpected events in the nation’s recent political memory. He was inaugurated as President in 2002, with grassroots support from the public symbolized by the activities of Rohsam (People Who Love Roh), his Internet-based support group. As the first president outside of the political mainstream, he carried a reputation as an anti-establishment revolutionary, dating back to his days as a human rights lawyer during President Park Chung-hee’s dictatorial regime. While this allowed strong public support to coalesce for Roh’s agenda of political reform, it simultaneously resulted in strong disappointment when his attempts failed.

While Roh was in office, both the public and his political opponents harshly criticized many of his policies, including a re-dispatch of troops to Iraq in 2003, and the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement in 2007. Still, a great number of people (150,000 according to the police sources and 400,000 according to grass-roots organizations) gathered at his official funeral in Seoul, and many others (one million from the day of his death on the 23rd to his funeral on the 29th) paid tribute to him in his hometown of Bongha, where he lived following his retirement until his death, and at commemorative altars set up by ordinary citizens nation-wide. Internet users also expressed their condolences by putting up pictures and videos of Roh on the web.

Most people see the direct cause of Roh’s death as the scandal surrounding “bribes” – or gifts, aid, and investment, from an alternate point of view – of up to six million dollars in which many of his family members were implicated. They say he may have died because of a strong sense of guilt resulting from a failure to live up to his reputation as a clean and transparent “working-class president.” Others point out that he was greatly humiliated by an investigation led by overzealous prosecutors working only from ill-defined allegations of bribery, and without any respect for his position as a former president.

In this context, some in Korea argue that Roh’s death was the outcome of a political revenge by the current Lee administration, which has often fared unfavorably in comparisons to Roh’s, while facing severe criticism against its hard-line, conservative agendas such as the Four Rivers Development Project and the Media Reformation Law. Considering the timing of the prosecutors’ investigation on ex-President Roh’s relatives, one
could argue that the Lee administration used the case to distract the public and reduce opposition to its policies.

Such is the reason why the commemoration of Roh's death has been closely linked to recent movements protesting the Lee administration. For example, the death led to a series of joint statements from various sectors of civil society lamenting the endangered status of democracy in Korea, the first of which was a declaration by one hundred and twenty-four professors at Seoul National University. Moreover, the sudden death of the ex-President pushed some one hundred thousand people to participate in a massive movement commemorating the twenty-second anniversary of the June Uprising of 1987, which marked the beginning of democracy in Korean society.

It is quite notable that Roh's death has given life to anti-government movements that had been undermined as the current administration restricted anti-government statements on the web through various means, including the attempted introduction of a Cyber Defamation Law, and prohibited people from holding political gatherings in front of the City Hall in Seoul Plaza, arguing it amounted to a technical violation of the Law on Assembly and Demonstration. However, the anti-government movement after the death of Roh holds different characteristics from previous movements, in the sense that citizens have finally realized that demonstrations alone are not enough to bring fundamental change to the Korean political environment.

It is true that the democratic movement led by middle- and working-class citizens played the primary role in bringing an end to thirty years of authoritarian rule in Korea. However, the movement could not single-handedly overcome legacies of the authoritarian period: a narrow political spectrum created by anti-communist ideology, and an absence of institutionalized politics wherein methods of reaching compromise between opposing parties have been established. Presidents elected after democratization, including Roh, all failed in bringing substantial reform to politics as usual, revolving around ever-changing parties without definite platforms, created largely for the convenience of winning the next presidential election and dissolved just as easily afterwards. In turn, the public had to be continually disappointed at ordinary politics and saw social movements as the only viable option for political change.

In fact, in order to bring the fundamental change that the public longs for, it is important to establish institutionalized politics, and channels and precedents of compromise. An important step in this direction is to reform party politics from within, by working to elect competent politicians who can reflect the wide spectrum that exists of people's class, vocational, and functional interests.

The arc of ex-President Roh's political life fully demonstrates this need for change. His inauguration as the first president from outside society's traditional mainstream, and subsequent failure of political reform, shows clearly that a president, albeit one with a revolutionary mindset, cannot alone change the political environment. Neither can a social movement always bring wanted political transformation, as evidenced by the public's confrontation with the current administration. The tragic death of ex-President Roh made manifest these limitations of traditional Korean politics.
Thus, if Korean citizens are to commemorate his death in a truly meaningful way, now is the time for them to engage in the nitty-gritty of ordinary politics rather than simply protesting against it, and to elect and reward politicians who refuse to play old politics, showing the ability for productive conversation and compromise in the process of carving out legislation.

Soo Young Yang

Soo Young Yang is currently an instructor at Jeju National University in South Korea. She received her BSocSc in September 2008 from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Asia Pacific Studies and a subsequent MA in January 2010 from Stanford University in East Asian Studies. Her academic interests include the relationship between mass media and collective identity in East Asia, and the effect of global cultural exchange on collective identity formation.
Benefits of Hydroelectric Projects

Some critics argue that the Three Gorges Dam’s “destructive impact on China’s environment, culture, historical relics, and human habitats far outweigh its benefits.” Yet, there are also substantial benefits. Most notably, hydroelectric dams produce clean renewable energy, provide flood control, and facilitate river navigation. Upon completion, the Three Gorges Dam will have an annual output of 84.7 billion kilowatt hours and reduce China’s dependency on coal by some 50 million tons a year. In a country infamous for its air pollution, hydroelectric power is necessary to transform economic and environmental policy in China.

Moreover, the dam’s capacity to reduce floods is a major benefit. Because of its size, the Yangtze River has a unique history of catastrophic floods. Between 206 BC and 1911 AD, “there were 214 major floods recorded along the Yangtze, averaging about one every ten years.” Furthermore, “approximately once every century huge floods have caused massive damage and loss of life all along the Yangtze,” an area of high population density and backward economic development.

The twentieth century brought “an almost record number of serious floods, due in part to the over-cultivation of the riverbanks as the population increased and later to the deforestation and misuse of land during the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.” The Three Gorges Dam would contain the water flowing from the upper Yangtze and control the rate of flow from the area. If other dams are built in conjunction with the Three Gorges Dam, the possibility of controlling flooding throughout the Yangtze River region could become a reality.

In addition to flooding, the river is legendary for its turbulent rapids. The existence of thousands of trackers to tow junks upriver, river-oriented religious practices and legends, specialized shipbuilding, and even life-saving boat organizations in the Three Gorges region are all testaments to the dangers of these rapids and how
people have adapted.

Submerging the rapids beneath the Three Gorges Dam reservoir will offer substantial benefits. The shipping locks enable the passage of vessels of up to 10,000 tons. Increased water depth will allow an influx in shipping traffic along the entire Yangtze River, and the economic potential for the region would be greater than anything previously imaginable.

**The Ecological Price**

However, the benefits must be weighed against the disadvantages as with all major construction projects, as the Three Gorges Dam brings a sizeable ecological and social price tag. While reducing coal-based power plant pollution in China, the Three Gorges Dam is nevertheless creating a different type of pollution that is unique to dams, namely the build-up of sedimentation where there was previously fast-flowing water. The accumulation of sediment already costs the Chinese government more than US$1.3 million a year to clean up, and the water level is still below its maximum potential height. “A higher dam and deeper reservoir will result in greater sedimentation” concentrated at the end of the reservoir and at the dam’s base, oftentimes greatly reducing the energy output of the dam and requiring vast amounts of money to dredge and clean out.

Sedimentation also has a negative effect on the water table, “the upper limit of the portion of the ground saturated with water,” which is subject to fluctuation based on precipitation. When sedimentation “blocks up the underground water passages,” this permeability is reduced and water is forced to the surface in areas around the reservoir, unnaturally damaging crops or houses.

A related concern is that the decrease in the rate of flow of the Yangtze “may also lead to significant problems for human and animal health as huge amounts of sewage, chemicals, and other contaminants that in the past were flushed out by the fast-flowing river will now collect.” In an era of increased concern about the growing global extinction rate of rare plants and animals, any large-scale construction project that impacts its surrounding environment is subject to scrutiny. The Three Gorges region is a unique ecosystem in which “forty-seven plants, of which thirty-six are found only in the Three Gorges, are considered rare and face extinction” even without the additional threat posed by construction of the dam.

While plant species preservation in the Amazon and other river ecosystems of the world is important to pharmacology and future medicinal applications, many rare plants in the Three Gorges already serve as ingredients in traditional Chinese medicines. For example, the lotus-leaved brake is a rare plant, found nowhere else in the world, and is believed to have the extraordinary ability of curing kidney disease. Furthermore, some animal species such as the giant panda and Chinese sturgeon, integral to the ancient culture of the region, are becoming endangered, a problem hastened by the accumulation of “silt, sewage, and other toxins that were previously washed away by the water,” rendering the fresh water unpotable.

Not only will the Three Gorges Dam affect the species in the region, it could potentially even change the local weather. One scientific study has determined that “the climatic effect of the Three Gorges Dam is on the regional scale rather than
on the local scale,” decreasing precipitation in vital agricultural regions and increasing precipitation elsewhere.\textsuperscript{13} The enormous increase in water volume is also “expected to have a moderating influence on the temperature” of several degrees Fahrenheit.\textsuperscript{14} “Such a change is considered a potential threat to agriculture” in areas where rice, grain, and fruit cultivation, particularly the cash crop of tangerines, will not tolerate significant changes in climate.\textsuperscript{15}

A further drawback is that the rising water will inundate 23,800 hectares (one hectare is about the size of 2.5 football fields) of arable land in a region where the most productive soil is located near the river. To compound the problem, the people upon whom this burden will fall are those involved in subsistence agriculture and most lacking the means to adapt to such change. Their livelihoods already border the fine line between maintaining a stable livelihood and falling into poverty, and the effects of the dam could potentially exacerbate their circumstances.

Impact on Culture

Aside from the environmental and agricultural disadvantages, there will be a drastic cultural upset as well. The Three Gorges Dam threatens to overwhelm and irreversibly impact the local culture, history, and communities in the area. The introduction of the steamship to the river serves as a case study of the threat that outside influences can pose to traditional Yangtze River life and local people’s responses to these threats. In 1889, the first steamship that attempted to navigate the upper Yangtze River was initially barred access on the basis of concerns including “the probable loss of work for thousands of junkmen and trackers, the potential loss of transit duties, and damage to small craft along the river by larger, more powerful steamships.”\textsuperscript{16} Steamships eventually prevailed and the modernization of navigation caused economic change. Likewise, the Three Gorges Dam will also reconfigure the basic socio-economic framework of the Yangtze River area, profiting some individuals while bankrupting others.

The Three Gorges region is also significant as a symbol of the history of China. The Yangtze River has traditionally been viewed as the heart of ancient Chinese civilization, and the region’s inhabitants have maintained their cultural traditions despite suffering through centuries of natural disaster, warfare, and economic disruption. Unfortunately, the Three Gorges Dam will not only alter the cultural traditions irrevocably, it will wash away much of the archaeological record of the history of the Yangtze River heartland. From a preservation perspective, “of the approximately 1,300 known archeological sites in the area to be flooded, between 400 and 500 have been determined worth saving.”\textsuperscript{17} In a country with a long and complex history in which cultural relics have been made even rarer by events like the Cultural Revolution,
the loss of these monuments and historical sites is tragic.

Ironically, during the preparatory stage of building the Three Gorges Dam, “5,000 artifacts were found . . . from members of the Neolithic Daxi culture of over 7,000 years ago” that would not have otherwise been discovered.¹⁸ This fortuitous find is the exception to the rule of the dam’s adverse impact on archeological sites in the area.

Realizing the imminent loss of these sites, China has made efforts to mitigate the situation. “Each county has its own Cultural and Antiquities Bureau that is responsible for . . . the preservation and protection of cultural sites in and around the Three Gorges” but with limited time and funding, they are greatly constrained in their endeavors.¹⁹ Although the government acknowledges that “money and the rapid completion of a project [are] being balanced against cultural loss,” the Three Gorges Dam poses an inevitable threat to the global human heritage.²⁰

Relocation and Economic Consequences

Finally, the immediate influence on the local inhabitants must be taken into consideration. There has been much media publicity about the displacement of the Chinese peasants living in the valley. This has been viewed as a logistical and moral issue of colossal proportion. Officially, “1.13 million have been moved from towns and villages upriver” and another “172,000 have yet to be uprooted”; but these numbers are not by any means exact.²¹ In 1985, the original calculation of the number of persons to be displaced submitted to the National People’s Congress (NPC) for approval was 725,000. In 1992, the State Council estimated by extrapolation that the number would reach 1,980,000. This forced regional migration is not limited to a single group or community; rather, it involves “two county-level municipalities, 11 county seats, 140 towns, 326 townships, and 1,351 villages.”²²

This humanitarian emergency begs for solutions. Wherever these uprooted people are relocated to, there needs to be adequate housing, economic opportunities, and a welcoming environment in order to avoid a crisis of relocation. The government’s official strategy for aiding resettlement is the Developmental Resettlement Policy. This government-financed effort is designed to bring about “reclamation of higher-elevation land, the cultivation of cash crops, and the creation of industrial jobs along with lump-sum reimbursements for relocatees’ losses.”²³ Despite the attempts at easing economic stress, the displaced populace will nonetheless face the emotional trauma of being uprooted from their traditional homes.

Critics of mandatory resettlement policies in developing countries emphasize the loss of villagers’ “moral map, the basis of their livelihood, and a historical touchstone of deeply emotional identities.” The villagers’ loss is compounded by the “shock of community breakup, the loss of farmland, the production of food in a radically different ecosystem, [and] the difficulty of adjusting to an alien habitat’s social order.” Because interpersonal relationships in China are founded on communal and group identity, the disruption of communities carries an unrivaled gravity that is unique to Chinese culture. Regardless of compensation, the “resettlement inevitably produces a dehumanizing
effect’ and often results in ‘a crisis of cultural identity’” that may undermine individuals’ ability to ever recover emotionally and economically.24

Fortunately, “none of the 326 towns that will be affected by the reservoir will be completely submerged,” so the resettlement will mostly involve moving those displaced to other parts of their towns.25 Also, the fact that the dam is taking so “many years to build will help facilitate successful resettlement and give people enough time to adapt to their new environments and employment possibilities.”26

A related problem is the timing and complexity of relocation – “just over half of those to be moved (54 percent) are from townships,” so many officials believe that “resettling people from townships [to other parts of their towns] is a simple affair.”27 Yet, many analysts warn that, “given population growth and peoples’ desire to escape poverty, if the resettlement programs are not implemented soon, the locals may start building projects below the submersion line.”28 In fact, “by 1986, [RMB] 11 billion had been invested in projects below the submersion line and, by 1990, the figure was up to [RMB] 18.5 billion and was increasing by an average of [RMB] 1.8 billion per year.”29 The local entrepreneurs have also taken risks by building hotels and restaurants below the water line under the assumption that they will earn back a considerable return on their original investment before the water rises high enough to flood their enterprises.

Then there is the question of how the areas designated for resettlement will be affected. One government official declared that “the question of whether relocatees can be resettled in nearby areas without destroying the local environment and its capacity to support people is . . . key to the whole issue of resettlement and to the overall success of the Three Gorges project.”30 Whether the resettlement areas, which themselves already face underdevelopment and high population densities, will be able to handle the influx of all these refugees has yet to be determined. Because the dam will submerge more than 23,800 hectares of prime agricultural land, farmers will be forced to work less productive fields and paddies while trying to maintain current production. About 280,000 hectares of the undeveloped land in the area is arable, yet much is inaccessible because of the topography, the rocky terrain that characterizes the Three Gorges area. Approximately “33,000 hectares of land will be required to accommodate the 300,000 rural settlers” assuming they can even continue farming at all after relocation.31 Official Chinese estimates are that “an additional 30 to 50 percent of this amount must be developed and given to the locals as compensation for lands allocated to resettlers.”32 In total, 53,000 to 67,000 hectares must be developed in order to resettle people successfully and assure them adequate farming productivity, stable lifestyles, and incomes comparable to what they enjoyed before. A daunting challenge lies ahead, but techniques such as building dikes to protect arable land from rising waters can help protect hectares of farmland and alleviate some of the burden.

**Political Challenges**

Despite the present-day issues associated with the project, the history of the Three Gorges actually extends back to nearly a century ago.
Planning for a dam in the Three Gorges area began with the Chinese revolutionary hero Sun Yat-sen in 1919 and has continued until the present day with surprisingly little concern being expressed until recently about the potential negative impact. Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Yat-sen’s successor in the Nationalist government, brought in American experts to assess the area and plan a Three Gorges dam using aerial photographs taken by the Japanese, who had also attempted plans for building a dam in region. Later, after the Communist Revolution, one of Mao Zedong’s main priorities was to build the Three Gorges dam after the economy had stabilized. However, due to the political instability of China throughout the 20th century, progress on a dam was erratic. Nonetheless, it appears that control of the Yangtze River and exploitation of the river for hydroelectric power had been at the forefront of the domestic plans of many modern Chinese leaders.

The idea of building the largest dam in the world in the Three Gorges region has been so compelling that policies were created solely to expedite the planning process itself. In a show of supreme political authority, Deng Xiaoping, China’s leader from 1978 until 1997, created an entirely “new Three Gorges province, directly under the administrative control of the State Council” in order to avoid the tensions between the two historic Three Gorges provinces and allow dam preparations to proceed unhindered. Later, Li Boning, the “vice minister of Water Conservancy and Electric Power, was authorized to begin the immediate organization of a provincial bureaucracy,” an action that barely concealed the purely economic ambitions of the Chinese government. It was only in the late 1980s that “a growing political openness in China made possible intense domestic discussion about the Three Gorges Dam” while at the same time international opinion about large-scale dams was turning increasingly negative. In 1992, the NPC “approved a resolution to proceed with the Three Gorges project with a vote of 1,767 for, 177 against, and 664 abstaining.” This seemingly overwhelming support of the resolution actually marked the smallest margin of any vote in the history of the NPC and revealed underlying anxieties about the future impact of the dam on the official level.

One of the greatest difficulties for supporters of the dam has been funding. The World Bank, a major financier for hydroelectric dam construction in developing countries, “refrained from financing the project,” reflecting global unease about the dam’s effects. The project as also been plagued by “various forms of corruption . . . [that] are widespread and almost impossible for higher-level authorities to control,” often leading to the disappearance of millions of dollars from resettlement funds.

However, the general opinion of the Chinese people has been favorable to the Three Gorges Dam project. In fact, a sizeable Chinese population outside the government sees the dam’s benefits as potentially outweighing its negative effects. Although certain individuals and small groups continue to protest the dam, “within China the issue no longer arouses widespread concern.” Optimists cite that the dam “has brought in new roads and airports, [and] high-rise buildings and factories” that are much in demand in a region of China that was historically underdeveloped.
Other advantages that appear as the water level rises include accessibility to “temples once too high in the mountains to reach” and the opening of “tributaries [once] too shallow for tourist boats to navigate.” Even the scenery changes caused by the transformation of the river into a lake can seem an improvement to the forward-looking mind.

Reflection

The Three Gorges Dam, now the largest and most powerful hydroelectric dam in the entire world, has caused ecological and social upheaval on an unprecedented scale. Despite some pessimism and anxiety in the international community about the dam and its consequences, there is nevertheless much support for the project and appreciation of its anticipated benefits.

The dam’s ultimate success or failure depends on the Chinese government’s ability to coordinate the economic, social, and political concerns into a coherent and flexible management strategy on both regional and local levels. The dam is a great stepping-stone for a country desperately rushing towards the future. Though China has performed well under pressure in coping with the myriad of problems caused by the dam’s large-scale construction, resettlement, and environmental adventures, further consideration of these issues is well-warranted. The future will tell whether the Three Gorges Dam turns out a tragedy or a triumph in terms of its impact on the culture, environment, and people of China’s ancient Yangtze River Valley.

ENDNOTES

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., 148.
7. Chetham, Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of the Yangtze’s Three Gorges, 187.
9. Ibid.
10. Chetham, Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of the Yangtze’s Three Gorges, 187.
11. Ibid., 188.
12. Ibid., 189.
14. Chetham, Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of the Yangtze’s Three Gorges, 188.
15. Ibid., 188.
16. Ibid., 86.
17. Ibid., 47.
18. Ibid., 175.
19. Ibid., 47.
20. Ibid., 48.
23. Ibid., 45.
24. Jing, The Temple of Memories, 70.
25. Qing, The Dragon Has Comet: The Three Gorges Dam and the Fate of China’s Yangtze River and Its People, 44.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 44.
28. Ibid., 46.
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While it is not uncommon to see individuals in Chinese populations around the world donating their time and money to charitable causes, most do so only for family members or, based on the tradition of guanxi (personal connections), for business acquaintances and other close friends. In spite of the strong traditions of charity in Buddhist and Confucian thought, Chinese in the People’s Republic of China (PRC), Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and other locales in East Asia—influenced by a variety of political and economic persuasions, in particular the effects of state control and the newfound prosperity of recent decades—have been historically unaccustomed to giving to strangers or engaging in volunteer work. A combination of family-centric concerns and material desires has traditionally taken social precedence, with individuals using their spare economic resources either to care for their parents or to build up their own wealth. Yet in Taiwan today, more and more individuals are volunteering both time and money to charitable causes for individuals not just outside their immediate families, but often completely unknown to them at all.

If we accept the broad definition of “philanthropy” as the “private and voluntary transfer of resources (money, goods, services, knowledge, skills, or time) for the benefit of others, irrespective of either the motives of the donor or any benefits that may accrue to the donor,” then it seems apparent that the widespread rise of philanthropic activity across all demographics in Taiwan is significant in a number of respects. First of all, in spite of Taiwan’s heavy corporate environment, this activity by and large has not been pursued with the goal of private commercial or political gains (for example, with wealthy individuals or corporations making charitable donations in hopes of improving government and corporate relations, as is frequently practiced in developing African nations). Instead, although major business corporations certainly have contributed to Taiwan’s volunteer efforts, the island’s philanthropic scene is dominated by...
civilian grassroots efforts. Moreover, because Taiwan has liberalized tremendously since the lifting of martial law in 1987, the development of its now-booming non-profit sector – even though this sector had begun developing prior to the end of martial law – has gained greater recognition and appreciation in conjunction with the government-led political reforms leading up to 1987, leading many to view it as a “positive new trend” of post-1980s Taiwan.

As part of this “positive new trend,” Taiwan’s non-profit sector is drawing volunteers from all walks of life who are engaging in an unprecedented level of charitable activities. Among the younger generation it is becoming increasingly common for students to perform community service through their schools, and although such pursuits have yet to be institutionalized in the school curriculum itself, they have been supported by what one interviewed student described as “widespread active encouragement” from teachers and parents alike. In 1999 one in seven Taiwanese citizens fifteen years of age or older participated in regular volunteer work activities, a statistic that remains unsurpassed in East Asia with the exception of Japan, a country which experts consider an anomaly in the region because of its relative scarcity of state-run enterprises, chronologically earlier politico-economic progression toward free-market reforms, and complex history of relations with the United States (as part of a conscious effort to improve bilateral cultural and political understanding in the aftermath of World War II, both nations embraced government-run and privately initiated philanthropic projects, since these were seen as a crucial component of repairing postwar US-Japan relations).

This trend of philanthropic engagement in Taiwan is not just limited to students. A growing number of middle-aged and older citizens, women in particular, are voluntarily donating to or participating in welfare projects run by spiritual organizations such as the Tzu Chi Foundation. Even in the military, which requires a minimum of twelve months of service for all males ages 19 to 35 years, civilian service alternatives have become increasingly available and popular, with the Taiwanese government becoming the first in Asia to maintain its military service requirement while offering alternative service options in state-run hospitals and social services departments of local governments. Thirty years ago, the development of such trends would have been next to impossible, and their impact today testifies to the degree to which Taiwan has transformed itself in recent decades. Taiwanese society’s liberalization, development of a capitalist economy, and advent of a newly gender-conscious society have paved the way for the growth of its philanthropic culture, ultimately allowing for the pioneering role of philanthropic organizations in sculpting out a new public sphere for women in Taiwanese society.

**Economic and Political Background**

Taiwan has sustained rapid economic growth since the 1960s, boasting annual GDP growth rates of 8.9 percent in 1966, 12.9 percent in 1971, and 13.9 percent in 1976, while dipping slightly to an average of between four and eight percent in the decades since. Its per-capita GNP has increased more than 1,200 percent since 1966. Guided by a national development policy of “growth with
stability,” Taiwan’s economic development has been paralleled by increasing income equality, decreasing unemployment rates, and a substantial reduction in poverty levels. Moreover, the lifting of martial law in 1987 has invited the enactment of transformational pieces of social welfare legislation and given a facelift to Taiwan’s growing non-profit culture. In order to gain voter support in the face of increasing criticism of its authoritarian rule, the KMT in the 1980s spearheaded efforts in the direction of state welfare; at the same time, enriched by the successes of capitalist development, the KMT remained “wary of the economic burden of radical increases in state welfare, and hence the party always hopes that the [private and non-profit] sectors will progressively share the welfare burden.” Facilitated by the nature of Taiwan’s changing social dynamic, a variety of charitable groups have indeed stepped in to “share the welfare burden.”

In light of the government’s apparent great strides in state welfare development at the time, it might seem perplexing that charitable groups should feel compelled to “share the welfare burden” in the first place. A closer examination of Taiwan’s welfare legislation and the circumstances under which it was being passed, however, seems to offer some clues to better understanding this paradox. While some scholars have suggested that social welfare development in Taiwan was an inevitable and inseparable consequence of economic growth, this claim fails to account for why the rate of Taiwan’s social welfare development remained sluggish and irregular even during the industrial booms of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and it also fails to consider economic counterexamples to the paradigm such as the PRC. Rather than being a natural result of Taiwan’s economic development alone, the drafting of social welfare legislation in the 1980s was in fact a highly politicized process that was often employed in response to specific events and with specific goals in mind. As Tsai and Chang suggest in their examination of the island’s welfare legislation, Taiwan’s movement towards increased state welfare under the KMT stemmed in large part from its political efforts to distinguish itself from the PRC. Similarly, the enactment of three groundbreaking pieces of social welfare legislation in 1980 can be seen in large part as a politicized response to the Kaohsiung riots of 1979 that, in the commemorative words of the Taipei Times two decades later, resulted in “the building of public pressure on the government to end martial law and democratize the political system” and laid the seeds for “the end of one-party rule, martial law, and political censorship of the media and the institution of free elections.” Consequently, in the context of the limited and politicized KMT welfare reforms of the era, more and more dissatisfied individuals began looking for other options.

**The Changing Role of Women in Taiwan**

**Economic Dissatisfaction**

Given the societal tensions of the time, it is understandable why individuals might feel compelled to seek “other options.” More difficult to understand, however, is why during this period of capitalist market expansion and prosperity more and more people turned to non-consumptive practices that promoted redistribution of valuable resources through charity. To comprehend this increase in philanthropic activity, it is necessary
to examine more closely the individuals who were engaged in Taiwan’s growing “non-consumptive practices” and consider the circumstances under which these practices were taking place. Foremost among those in search of “other options” in the 1980s was a new generation of Taiwanese women. Just as the Taiwanese citizenry as a whole was largely dissatisfied with the rate and extent of government reforms, so were many young Taiwanese women similarly dissatisfied with their perceived roles and responsibilities in Taiwanese society. As a result of economic development and a rising sense of “gender consciousness” among the new generation of women workers – with younger women “largely [shunning] factory employment [and] leaving it to older married women with greater family responsibility yet less education or fewer skills needed in the contemporary service sector”18 – the roles of Taiwanese women underwent dramatic changes from the 1980s to the present. These changes can be observed both on the level of individual women and in the context of their roles within the family.

On the individual level, it is no coincidence that the women’s movement in Taiwan began in the 1980s. Even as Taiwan was becoming wealthier as a whole, more and more women found themselves dissatisfied with the lack of equality in the distribution of that wealth. Because there was no law in Taiwan requiring employers to give equal pay for male and female employees, as late as 1982 women on average still earned only 64 percent of men’s earnings for the same work (this figure ranged to a low of 54.5 percent in manufacturing jobs and to a high of 71.3 percent in the service industry).19 One explanation for this is that men were perceived to be better workers; respondents to a survey at the time suggested both that “women can never match men in physical strength and endurance” and that women “can’t devote themselves to work as totally as men do,” having home obligations to attend to.20 Because of such views, most men in Taiwan up until the 1980s felt it was entirely reasonable for women to earn lower salaries, and therefore little was expected to be done to change the situation.

Yet clearly some changes did occur from the 1970s to the early 1980s; by 1991, women’s wages, although still lower than men’s, had risen to 63.4 percent in industrial manufacturing and 85.3 percent in services.21 More women were being promoted to administrative and managerial positions in both the public and the private sectors. At the same time, these changes in Taiwan also reflected the efforts of women to redefine gender roles in Taiwan. Their endeavors were not limited to the workplace, for even as organizers of the women’s movement focused on securing equal pay and work opportunities, they also sought shared household responsibilities between men and women.22 These efforts effected groundbreaking changes for women’s roles not just in the workplace, but also in the home.

Changes in the Family

Up until the 1980s the average Taiwanese family still conformed to the Chinese “corporate model,” with each member of the household bearing his or her part of the joint economic burden. Yet as Yan Yunxiang has suggested, because a “new perception about what a family ought to be may shape individual behavior within the family and transform the family institution . . .”, the pursuit of
family economic interests is insufficient to explain all the changes in family life.” A two-fold trend was developing in Taiwan, where married women on the one hand were dissatisfied with the inequity of their economic roles and, on the other hand, because of the increasing salaries of their husbands, were no longer as needed by their families to work in the first place. For scholars such as Yan Yunxiang studying these and similar developments, “major revisions of the corporate model and a search for a new approach to studying the private lives of individuals” thus became necessary.

Yan’s qualifications of the corporate model of the Chinese family, although addressed at the situation in the PRC, provide several key insights into changes in Taiwanese society as well. Indeed, while the traditional corporate model may be employed as an archetype for explaining much of Taiwan’s economic success in the latter half of the twentieth century, it fails to account for Taiwan citizens’ – in particular women’s – increasing willingness to operate outside an economic context and pursue economically counter-intuitive philanthropic or charitable activities. Moreover, it also neglects to address the key institutional role of religion in Taiwanese society (cf. section on religion below). As Yan notes, the corporate model underplays the life of the individual in an attempt to evaluate women’s lives almost entirely in light of the shared family unit. By the mid-1980s, in conjunction with the women’s labor movement, an increasing number of women had begun thinking of themselves in a more individual light.

Indeed, as Friederike Fleischer notes in her discussion of space commodification, “in the context of women’s subordinate position in society . . . it is not work per se but what is conceived as work, and the social value assigned to it in a given cultural context that shapes women’s domestic and societal status.” According to researcher Zhang Li’s observations, this issue of “gender domination and the value of women’s work [became] closely linked to the construction of gendered spaces” in Taiwan as well as elsewhere in Asia. Because the majority of Taiwan’s philanthropic groups were grassroots movements that operated outside the umbrellas of both government control and the social patriarchy, they provided female participants with an opportunity to reject their traditionally “subordinate position in society” and carve out their own niche in the Taiwanese social sphere. Philanthropy was viewed as distinctly different from monetary work, creating an opportunity, as one woman puts it, for dissatisfied women “to walk out from this small world” and expand beyond a “life [that] was too narrow.”

Taiwan’s growing fast-food culture of the 1980s offers an interesting perspective into the individualization that characterized women’s social movements of the era. In his study of foreign fast food restaurants in Chinese cities, for example, Yan Yunxiang examines how women seem more likely than their male counterparts to frequent a McDonald’s. His main explanation for this gender aspect of Chinese fast food consumption is that dining in a foreign restaurant like McDonald’s affords the female customer an increased sense of agency, avoiding the formal Chinese dining establishments where men “order food for their female companions and control the conversation” and allowing her to make individual consumer choices in terms of ordering from the menu,
smoking or not smoking, eating alone or in a group, etc. In an arguably similar manner, women in Taiwan embraced philanthropic groups and activities as a means of appropriating their own personal space outside the sphere of their husbands’ direct influence. Even more so than in the case of fast food establishments, however, Taiwanese women who participated in volunteer activities away from their husbands’ eyes have been able to gain individual satisfaction and develop a sense of ownership over their work (this sense of personal “ownership” of labor contrasts sharply with its observed lack in the industrial and manufacturing sector, where many of these dissatisfied women worked up until the early 1980s). Through offering an alternative to the constraints of both the home and the workplace, charities have therefore become, somewhat like foreign restaurants, a more and more socially accepted, “safe” environment in which women can express their own thoughts, concerns, and desires.

Another factor that may have indirectly motivated Taiwanese women to become engaged in philanthropic activities was the rise of a new yingchou (business favors) culture. As in the PRC, Taiwan’s business scene and network of corporate guanxi relationships by the 1980s had become increasingly bound up in a complex set of social expectations for men. As Elanah Uretsky has noted, “extramarital relationships with female entertainers, lovers, and ‘minor’ wives are part of masculine entitlement” for Chinese (and Taiwanese) men. Thus, although the prevalence of yingchou practices has strengthened social bonds among men in a business context, it has at the same time also led to increased fracturing of the family unit. As a result, the perceived loss of husbands to the rise of barroom and karaoke business culture practices has led a rising number of Taiwanese wives to lament that important community values have been lost to individual self-interest, with many women complaining about the ill effects of excessive drinking or other yingchou-related practices. Set in the context of these women’s existing frustrations with their roles in the workplace, the combination of all of these factors has primed the scene for the advent of a unique women’s charity movement in Taiwan.

Philanthropy, Religion in Taiwan, and a Case Study of the Tzu Chi Foundation

Taiwan’s philanthropic culture has manifested itself in society through a number of charitable organizations, the most well known of which is the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation, or simply “Tzu Chi.” Forty years ago Tzu Chi was virtually unknown in Taiwan; today it is the largest civic organization on the island, claiming a membership of nearly 20 percent of the Taiwanese population and operating foreign charity branches in fourteen countries. Founded in the city of Hualien in 1966 by Buddhist Master Cheng Yen and thirty local housewives who contributed NT$0.50 a day to help purchase medical supplies for the poor, it now donates upwards of US$25 million per year to hospitals in Taiwan, flood and earthquake victims in the PRC, famine sufferers in Ethiopia, homeless individuals in Indonesia, and other groups.

Tzu Chi, as an organization founded in Buddhist philosophy, has been able to achieve such widespread influence in large part because of the key
institutional role that religion plays in Taiwanese society. In contrast to their counterparts in the PRC, where many forms of unsanctioned religious worship have been largely suppressed throughout the rule of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, more than three-quarters of Taiwanese households actively practice Buddhism, Daoism, or local variants such as I-Kuan Dao, with another three to four percent being Christian. Exempt from the periods of religious suppression on the Chinese mainland, religious values and practices in Taiwan have had the opportunity to flourish. Christianity has had a long history of involvement on the island in the management of hospitals and food pantries, while Buddhism, as Y.Y. Tsu notes in his discussion of Buddhism's impact on East Asian societies, similarly “has always been active in social welfare work.” At the same time, because male authority figures have historically held a monopoly on the key roles in formal religious ceremonies, traditional forms of religious worship in Taiwan consist mostly of small daily household tasks that involve taking care of the family gods and offer little more to women than everyday household labor.

As a result of these factors many of Taiwan’s earliest religious charities tailored themselves specifically to appeal to a female audience, and in that sense the origin of the philanthropic movement in Taiwan was very much a gendered phenomenon. Tzu Chi has been able to attract women from all segments of the Taiwanese population, young and old, rich and poor. Almost 90 percent of Tzu Chi’s leadership and three-quarters of its general membership is female, a figure that is roughly paralleled by the 70-30 percent female-male membership ratio exhibited by most non-profit associations in Taiwan. Already driven toward philanthropic activity by their dissatisfaction with labor inequality in the 1980s and a desire to create their own public sphere, Taiwanese women turned to Buddhist charities in particular because they offered a unique blend of appealing values and opportunities.

Some scholars, in their examinations of Taiwan’s philanthropic culture, have been puzzled by the apparent paradox between the inculcation of strong Buddhist religious values and the concurrent declines in both Buddhist nun activity and the recruitment of new nuns. There are several explanations for this apparent paradox. In the context of Taiwan’s development and modernity, the act of leaving the secular world to become a nun seems to be more a flight from real problems than a step towards solving them. Moreover, the option of chujia (leaving the family) to enter a life at a temple or monastery – in addition to raising issues of family responsibility and filial piety – is largely irrelevant to the needs of most modern Taiwanese women. Rather than fulfilling the desire “to walk out from this small world” and expand beyond a “life [that] was too narrow,” it thrusts the woman into a new world that, although no longer dominated by the social patriarchy, is just as narrow and confined.

Because of their focus on pragmatic action in charity over traditional Buddhist values, Tzu Chi and other grassroots philanthropic groups spend relatively little time on conventional spiritual elements such as learning sutras or perfecting a monastic lifestyle. Instead, they focus mostly on secular action. Through a hands-on approach to charity work, they offer women a different kind of
self-cultivation and satisfaction, without posing the practical dilemmas and difficulties of becoming a nun. Perhaps most importantly, because Tzu Chi urges its members to address pressing familial and societal problems rather than to “leave the family” and enter a life of religious self-cultivation, it universalizes women’s domestic concerns and skills on a larger world stage. In traditional Chinese culture, women’s roles had been confined to the domestic sphere, and “[even] when they produced commodities [in an economic context], men mediated access to the market.” A longstanding image of women as nurturing domestic figures had thus been inculcated. Tzu Chi, however, even as it confirmed the “nurturing” power of women in their family roles by allowing them to care for homeless children, crippled individuals, and the abandoned elderly, also extended those roles beyond the family itself for the first time. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly for women, it allowed them to attain a sense of accomplishment in a public sphere to which they traditionally have not had access.

From a historical perspective, the significance of Tzu Chi in particular and of Taiwanese charitable organizations in general lies in the newfound success of women in the public sphere. Prior to the 1980s, grassroots movements were disallowed by the government, and men dominated the highly politicized civic scene; during the 1980s and thereafter, however, women redefined their own roles within this scene, taking advantage of opportunities to engage in philanthropy as a means of constructing a female-dominated facet of the larger Taiwanese social sphere. As has been previously discussed, economic growth and labor inequality spurred the development of the women’s movement in Taiwan, which in turn initiated an ongoing transformation of the woman’s role in Taiwanese society. The island’s women, thus supported by new wealth and inspired by a rising sense of gender consciousness, embraced philanthropic activity as a means of making their own impact on the public sphere. In their search for greater self-fulfillment and social involvement in a new context, women in Taiwan have found a new voice for themselves and for the women succeeding them, establishing a trend of philanthropic growth and engagement that is still growing to date and will likely remain a thriving characteristic of twenty-first century Taiwanese society.

ENDNOTES

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People who live in Beijing joke that the city is changing so quickly that they get lost after returning from a week or two of vacation. Perhaps the humor helps them cope with the growing pains they must be experiencing. To give an idea of the scale of redevelopment, one third of the Old City (the historic 62 square kilometer region at the heart of the city) had been destroyed and rebuilt by 2000. The city's ancient alleyways, known as hutongs in Mandarin, are disappearing at a rate of 600 per year. The rate of construction of the new city is equally staggering. Before the start of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, 35,000 workers labored daily on the third terminal of Beijing Airport, constructing the largest airport building in the world. Investment in Olympic facilities alone was at US$3.2 billion. The city also spent US$24.2 billion on updating its transportation system and in related construction projects. In a country with a per capita income that just recently passed US$1,000, that is an astonishing figure.

Why study urban redevelopment in Beijing? In addition to its unprecedented speed and scale, Beijing's redevelopment offers insight into how the Chinese government is managing society within the context of a rapidly growing economy. The case is especially important considering the past 2008 Olympic Games, when much of the development has been geared towards its success and the government hoped would officially inaugurate China as a major player on the world stage. This redevelopment, then, comes at a crucial point in Chinese history.

Ultimately, the city itself offers a testimony...
to these changes, as well as a few hints about China’s trajectory. In the first part of this essay, I investigate the history of redevelopment in Beijing, looking at three specific projects in the Dongcheng District. In the second part, I consider the themes of redevelopment, concluding with a few thoughts on the Games in 2008. Throughout the paper, I draw heavily on maps and photographs, as my goal is to show the physical changes transforming the cityscape.

**Historical Context**

While settlements have existed in the area for several thousand years, Kublai Khan built the Old City of Beijing during the Yuan dynasty in 1272. The city was designed to be symmetric around a central axis. At its center lay the Palace – the Forbidden City – where the emperor lived and ruled with a divine mandate. The design principles came from the *Zhou Li*, a classic Confucian text, which insisted that the capital city’s layout should support the “maintenance of law and orderliness.”

Even during this period, the city would ideally reflect the government’s values and simultaneously reinforce them. Finally, the traditional housing structure in Beijing is the *siheyuan* (a traditional housing complex built around a central courtyard), which is connected to the city’s main roads by a system of narrow alleyways (*hutongs*). In times past, a single aristocratic family would occupy a *siheyuan*; today, as many as ten families live in one. Urban communities within Beijing were based on the networks of *siheyuan* and *hutongs*.

After taking power in 1949, Mao built what we might think of as a second Beijing on top of the first. Initially, intense debate broke out over the merits of traditionalism and modernization. Renowned Chinese architect, Liang Sicheng, argued that the Old City should have been completely conserved for its artistic and cultural value. He proposed building the administrative center of the new government in the western suburb of the Old City. On the other side of the debate, a group of Soviet experts argued that it would be faster and cheaper to move into the Old City. As for the demolition of *hutongs*, they said, “rickshaw drivers are now employed as factory hands,” meaning that the life of the old city had to give way to the life of the new one. In the end, the Soviet experts prevailed, in part because Mao was intent on industrializing the city rapidly. Arguing that “forests of factory chimneys should mushroom in Beijing,” Mao widened roads and tore down the Old City’s walls so that workers could get to the factories more quickly.

What was fascinating about Mao’s approach to the city was its contradictory relationship to the past. Mao sought to appropriate old icons to enhance the prestige and legitimacy of his new government even as he destroyed the remnants of feudalism, such as the city walls and many of the *siheyuan*. He may have tried to resolve this contradiction through the idea of transformation: the old palace square (Tiananmen), for example, was expanded to become the people’s square. At any rate, his decision to establish his new Beijing directly on top of the old one created a fundamental conflict over city planning that has continued into our modern period. In the meantime, a new force entered the mix: globalization.

**Case Study: Dongcheng District**
The Dongcheng District (also called the East City District) in Beijing is the north-eastern quadrant of the Old City. Covering an area of roughly 25 square kilometers, it includes the Forbidden City as well as one of Beijing’s most famous shopping districts, Wangfujing. Development tension is particularly acute in the Dongcheng District. Dongcheng contains many of the city’s oldest neighborhoods and monuments, but its location also makes its real estate especially valuable – making it a prime candidate for redevelopment.

By examining cultural, residential, and commercial development projects in Dongcheng, we can begin to understand the principles guiding these changes. Let us begin by briefly introducing the choices made by Chinese authorities for each project and then move on to deconstruct the common factors that drove these three projects.

Cultural Project: The National Theater

The National Theater was a pet project of former Chinese president Jiang Zemin, and was initially proposed by Zhou Enlai in 1959 (though the Great Leap Forward put an end to the project then). In 1999, after considering proposals from forty-four architects (more than half of whom were Chinese), authorities selected the design by French architect Paul Andreu. His post-modern design features an egg-shaped dome in the middle of a square reflecting pool.

Given its proximity to the Forbidden City, the building was bound to cause controversy. Nevertheless, authorities pushed on, though they did scale back the project from an original cost of US$500 million to a final cost of around US$300 million – still making the National Theater more expensive than New York’s Lincoln Theater and Sydney’s Opera House. The National Theater, the first of the Olympic megaprojects, perfectly illustrated the government’s high hopes for the event. The state had hoped for a design “on the cutting edge of international architecture, instantly recognizable as Chinese, and displaying both coherence and unity with its surroundings.” We will investigate the state’s competing goals later on.

Residential Project: The Nanchizi Renovation

Nanchizi is one of the oldest neighborhoods in Beijing. A five hectare area located just outside the Forbidden City, it was originally used as a royal warehouse for silk, meat, and grain during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911); several princes lived there as well. The area was opened to the public after the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911. In 1990, Beijing’s municipal government commissioned a team of scholars from the Tsinghua School of Architecture to consult on a number of redevelopment projects, including the Nanchizi project. Before the redevelopment, team leader Junhua Lu wrote, “Nanchizi Street itself is one of a very few with a perfectly preserved atmosphere of classic old Beijing: completely shaded by the branches of mature Chinese Scholar trees and lined with mainly one-storey shops serving local residents.”

To be sure, conditions in Nanchizi were not ideal. As with many of the siheyuan in Beijing, residents had built many additions in the courtyards, resulting in overcrowding: the population density for the neighborhood stood at 467 people per hectare (2.47 acres). Nevertheless, the neighborhood was not as densely populated
Beijing’s Dongcheng District

as most in the Old City. A survey conducted by
Lu’s team found that only 41 percent of residents
wanted the state to rebuild their houses.18 In 1990,
the municipal government designated Nanchizi as
one of twenty-five conservation areas.19 This small
piece of the ancient urban fabric seemed safe from
developers.

Recognizing the substandard living conditions
in many of the historic neighborhoods, city leaders,
in the late 1990s, chose Nanchizi as a pilot program
for the redevelopment of important conservation
areas. Lu’s study of the area suggested that 60
percent to 70 percent of the siheyuan were worth
saving and updating.20 The municipal government,
however, decided to raze 231 of the 239 houses,
replacing them with new “old style” two-storey
buildings.21

One resident, Mr. Xie, said that the government
offered him RMB 1 million (US$120,480) for his
house, while the new two-storey houses would sell
for RMB 3 million (US$361,450).22 The media
later reported that some of the houses sold for as
much as RMB 8 million (US$963,840).23 Even
UNESCO protested at the demolition of historic
areas.24 In the end, roughly 50 percent to 60
percent of the original residents had to relocate,25
largely due to the cost of living in the new units.
In Lu’s survey of 1997, only 7 percent of residents
had said that they would be willing to relocate.26
Activists, such as the author Jun Wang, worry that
the Nanchizi model of redevelopment is now being
applied to other hutongs throughout the city.27

Commercial Project: Oriental Plaza

When it opened in downtown Beijing in 2001,
Oriental Plaza was the largest mixed-use complex
in Asia. The complex includes a mall, some offices,
a five-star hotel, and has 800,000 square meters
of floor space. The project began in 1992, when
Beijing’s municipal government partnered with
Hong Kong billionaire Li Kai-shing to build an
office and shopping complex in Wangfujing, one of
Beijing’s shopping districts.28 In 1995, the project
hit a stumbling block when Beijing’s mayor, Chen
Xitong, was accused of taking US$37 million in
kickbacks from Li Kai-shing. Mr. Chen had been
a prime cheerleader for the project and had been
intimately involved with it from the beginning.29
In 1996, after the State Council approved a slightly
scaled-down version of the design, construction
began.

The project hit another obstacle in 1997, when
construction workers discovered bones and tools
from the late Paleolithic era at the construction
site, some more than 20,000 years old – the
oldest artifacts ever uncovered in the area. This
discovery challenged the common conception
that the ancient people were not able to live in
the inhospitable climate of the Beijing area.30
Nevertheless, construction continued after several
weeks’ pause; city leaders agreed to include a small
museum for the artifacts in the mall.31 The project
was completed in 2001 at a total cost US$2 billion
– four years late and US$800 million over original
cost estimates.32

Themes of Dongcheng Redevelopment

While the three projects examined above serve
different purposes, the extent to which they reveal
common strands in decision-making by Chinese
leaders is startling. Amazingly, a pedestrian could
view all three projects over a 15-minute stroll
down Chang’an Avenue in downtown Beijing. The first two themes are rooted in China’s response to globalization and its own past. The next two themes are consequences of the structure of the state in China.

**Cultural Capital and the Globalization of Nothing**

Singaporean geographer Lily Kong argues that cities with global aspirations try to gain status through the accumulation of cultural capital. Often, such efforts lead to mega-projects of striking buildings designed by international architects. The goal is to attract investors and professionals to a city with renowned performance and “creative buzz.” In Beijing, the accumulation of global cultural capital has consistently come at the expense of local cultural capital.

Sociologist George Ritzer, a pioneer in globalization studies, invented a two-dimensional scale to represent different forms of globalization. One of the dimensions is from “nothing” (that is, centrally-planned, homogeneous content) to “something” (locally-conceived, distinctive content). On the other axis is “glocalization” (the mixture of the global and the local) and another awkward new term, “grobalization” (the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, etc. that are imposed on local areas). Among other things, Ritzer lists as examples of the “glocal-something” quadrant “indigenous crafts”; an example of the “glocal-nothing” quadrant is souvenirs. For the “grobal” quadrants, Ritzer gives us “touring museum shows” and “Benetton sweaters” as examples for the “something” and “nothing” dimensions, respectively. As such, one theme of redevelopment in Beijing is a preference for nothing – homogeneous global content – over something. We cannot, however, correctly describe Beijing’s redevelopment as “grobal,” because the term implies a globalizing organization which does not exist in this case. Instead, the external driver for the homogenous global content is the international expectations of a “global city,” as described by Ms. Kong.

Mr. Andreu’s postmodern design for the National Theater brings together many of these issues. Authorities received two separate petitions, one from scientists and the other from architects, complaining about the design. Critics said that the design was wrong for Beijing on multiple levels. It was exorbitantly expensive, failing to take into account that China is still a developing country. Regarding the architecture, one architect complained that “Andreu has no idea of Chinese culture. His proposal is extremely incongruous with its surroundings.” For example, the design violates all the rules of feng shui. In response to these criticisms, one of Mr. Andreu’s defenders suggested that “since Heaven (the dome) is round and Earth (the lake) is square in traditional Chinese symbolism, one might interpret the whole edifice as a manifestation of Heaven and Earth in harmony.” This seems a bit of a stretch. Mr. Andreu himself defended the design as well:

> The Grand National Theatre will, in architectural terms, oppose the Great Hall of the People in what I see as a classical rhetorical figure: the opposition of contraries. One has impressive neo-classical facades composed of straight lines. The other has no facade, but only a roof and is composed almost exclusively of curves. There will be a dialogue between them, each expressing its time and function.
In other words, the National Theater fits in with its surroundings by not fitting in at all.

The most dramatic example of how the design does not acknowledge its context comes from the physical geography of Beijing. A Chinese architect would never design a building like Mr. Andreu’s for Beijing because of the heavy volumes of dust that blow in from the Gobi desert. The project’s supporters say that the dome can be cleaned (admittedly at great cost), but critics compare the dust-covered dome to a piece of dried dung. At any rate, it is a building which may as well have come from space, because it is devoid of any meaningful relationship with its context (societal, architectural, or even geographical). It would not look out of place in London, Tokyo or any other city with a taste for expensive, post-modern architecture.

This theme is sadly evident in the Nanchizi and Oriental Plaza projects as well. In Nanchizi, authorities tore down the ancient siheyuan and replaced them with bland, two-storey buildings with only a cursory nod to traditional styles. Social life in the Old City used to revolve around street life in the narrow hutongs. This ancient lifestyle cannot survive in a world of wide roads, luxury apartments, and suburban high-rises.

As for Oriental Plaza, the concept of a mall is the perfect example of homogenous content. The complex literally buried the local cultural content: the hutongs as well as the area’s most important archaeological excavation site. Architecturally, one official made the laughable assertion that the scaled-down version of Oriental Plaza would “make everyone happy because it fitted in with the traditional appearance of the capital.” Finally, Oriental Plaza is situated in close proximity to the Forbidden City, the Great Hall of the People, and many other monuments. It towers over these iconic buildings, detracting from their stature.

Many people have compared the current redevelopment to what Mao did to the city after he took power. This comparison is too simplistic. Mao sought to appropriate ancient icons for use by his new government. His new buildings, such as the Great Hall of the People, usually mixed Soviet architecture with traditional Chinese elements, a hybrid form that is an example of glocalization. Contemporary leaders, on the other hand, are bounded by Mao’s decisions while also seeking to break with them. They are bounded in the sense that Mao’s choice to build the new Beijing on top of the old has forced them to destroy historic areas in order to begin new projects in the city center. Unlike Mao however, their architectural choices represent a radical break with the past. Their new buildings refuse to seek validation in ancient icons, instead taking a purely global form. Mr. Andreu’s Egg Shell wants nothing from the Forbidden City.

**New Forbidden City**

Another difference from Mao has to do with access. For all its flaws, Mao’s vision for the Old City was essentially one of democratization – the conversion of private, royal spaces into public spaces for the people. In many cases, today’s Chinese leaders have broken with this Maoist legacy and are instead, converting local spaces in the city center into global spaces. In practice, this has often meant a return to a pre-Maoist conception of the city center as an exclusive community.

In Nanchizi, authorities compensated public
housing residents so inadequately – just RMB 5,900 per square meter – that many of them could not return after the renovation. After the new development, the minimum price per square meter was RMB 20,000, making it “one of the capital’s most exclusive high-rent areas.” As has been the pattern with much of Beijing’s redevelopment, most of the relocated residents probably moved to “colorless high rise[s] on the city’s outskirts.” Nanchizi is not an isolated case. Beijing’s Old and Dilapidated Housing Renewal project razed dozens of historic hutongs and forced the residents to move. Note that almost all of the old neighborhoods (left) were within the Old City, while all of the new settlements (right) are outside of the Third Ring Road and most are outside of the Fourth Ring Road.

By 1998, the program had “demolished about 4.2 million square meters of traditional houses in the four districts that constitute the old city” and relocated hundreds of thousands of residents. These policies represent a systematic attempt to exile the poor to the suburbs. Only the rich can afford to live in the redeveloped Old City, where the price of new housing is about twenty times the average annual income of the local residents. Forbidden city indeed.

Anne-Marie Broudehoux, an expert on Beijing’s renewal, believes that shopping malls like Oriental Plaza represent a new type of public space for China:

... far from being accessible to all, these spaces cater for the small fraction of the population now enjoying surplus income and leisure time. In this sense, they have become sites of exclusion, where the newly emerging social fragmentation is constructed and reproduced.

This has clearly been the case at Oriental Plaza, where “leather-jacketed Chinese entrepreneurs inspect an Audi TT 1.8 coupe - price 800,000 Renminbi (£69,000) - with a confident air.” In one instance, Oriental Plaza’s bottomless need for bourgeois exclusivity approaches self-parody: one of the mall’s tenants is the world’s largest indoor golf course. Uncomfortable and unwanted in Oriental Plaza, many Dongcheng locals do their shopping at an indoor market a few blocks away.

Finally, the debate about the operations of the National Theater shows that party leaders are still uncomfortable with some of these changes. In 2004, the director of the theater’s art committee said, “we think that the National Grand Theater should be a cultural symbol of elite cultures [italics mine] both from home and abroad and a platform to enhance communication between China and foreign countries.” At construction costs of US$91,300 per seat, a figure which does not include the maintenance costs, tickets were expected to be pricey.

For one reason or another, party leaders could not stomach taking Mr. Andreu’s design to its natural conclusion. After years of indecision, they opted to heavily subsidize the theater so that some tickets could be sold for as little as US$4. Rather than presenting purely global art forms as Mr. Andreu’s design seems to demand, about two thirds of their line-up features local performers. “Egg shell promises affordable arts for all” the People’s Daily proclaimed proudly. Why the change of heart? Perhaps party leaders were queasy about turning a cultural project into a playground for the global elite. Maybe they wanted to acknowledge...
the significant opposition without conceding on the choice of design. Or perhaps it had to do with the leadership change as Hu Jintao is said to be cooler towards western-oriented cultural projects. Whatever the reason, it was a victory for "something."

Neo-Marxist Leslie Sklair believes that globalization has led to the rise of the “transnational capitalist class” (TCC), made up of transnational corporate executives, globalizing bureaucrats, globalizing politicians and professionals, and consumerist elites. Looking at Beijing, it sometimes seems as if the city is being rebuilt as a private club for members of Sklair’s TCC. There are roughly 100 golf courses in Beijing alone, many of them built recently in public parks, and the city has seen an explosion of exclusive, Western-style gated communities.

None of this is surprising, as all cities have some exclusive spaces. What makes Beijing unique is the spatial concentration of these projects in the city's historic center, where many capital cities do not permit commercial buildings at all, and the fact that the construction of transnational spaces in this area almost always results in the destruction of local spaces, for the historical reasons discussed earlier. Finally, in capitalist societies, redevelopment is driven by a “growth coalition” led by private companies. In Beijing, the local governments drive redevelopment, with the help of companies either owned by or closely tied to them. Jasper Goldman calls this phenomenon the “growth regime.” It is easy to forget that this “growth regime” exists in a state that is still officially socialist.

Potemkinism and the Systematic Mismanagement of Development

Ms. Broudehoux writes that the age of world class media events has caused city leaders to “[squander public funds] to turn cities into ‘stage sets,’ using spectacular urbanism, monumental architecture, and modern infrastructure to erect ‘Potemkin’ façades of progress, order and prosperity.” The redevelopment of Beijing has pushed the marginalized elements of society out of sight, into the fringes of the city, turning the Old City into a Potemkin village for foreigners.

The Olympic megaprojects, such as the National Theater, represent an effort to impress foreigners in order to become a “global city.” These projects are Potemkinesque because they place an extreme emphasis on form over functionality. The US$400 million “Bird Nest” stadium is a perfect example. The tangle of steel bars that made the stadium so expensive serves no function other than an aesthetic one.

Turning more specifically to the National Theater, the design may be so radical as to render the building unsafe; the underwater entrance poses a serious hazard in the case of a fire or earthquake. As for the performances, the theater will have good acoustics, but the design will make backstage work much more difficult. Finally, if the purpose of the design is to show foreigners that the Chinese are rich and globally-oriented, then that image is a façade. It is a building with an opulence out of proportion with its city, as demonstrated by the decision to heavily subsidize the theater so that locals could attend.

Much of the destruction of hutongs in the city center is motivated by a desire to impress foreigners, as the area has a heavy volume of tourists. This
process accelerated with the Olympics last summer. Qianmen, a hutong just south of the Forbidden City, was demolished in the fall of 2007. One resident, Mr. Pan, complained that “They are moving forward with this quickly because of the Olympics. This neighborhood is the face of Beijing to the world. They don’t want foreigners to see this scarred old face.”

As for Nanchizi, some foreign media have been lapping up the government’s story of the miracle of urban renewal. The Baltimore Sun reported that “Instead of leveling old neighborhoods and forcing long-timers out, the Dongcheng District renovated Nanchizi Hutong . . . When the dust settled, residents were moved back to upgraded quarters with tap water, toilets and broadband cable.” In fact, the new Nanchizi housed the urban elite, while most of the original residents languished in drab high-rises in the suburbs. The exaggeration of the quality of living conditions – particularly the implication that a few high quality locations are representative – is a hallmark of classic Potemkinism.

Last of all, Oriental Plaza had two messages for foreigners. The first is “We are a consumerist society.” In reality, many of the locals shop at an indoor market in an alleyway behind a mall. It is no accident that authorities insist that this market, the Xincheng Trading and Whole Sale Market, be located inside rather than on the street. Moreover, they situate the building in a back alleyway, where a new mall hides it from the view of tourists.

Oriental Plaza’s second message is “We are a prime location for global capitalism.” This also turned out to be false, at least initially. The desire to present an impressive façade was a key contributor to the building’s functional deficiency – it flooded the market for office real estate at a time when there was already a surplus. In 2001, it faced a 29 percent vacancy rate in the office spaces and struggled to find retailers, partly because the bureaucracy made it difficult for foreign retailers to get licenses. It seems that officials were mainly interested in the image of a global business center. Inside, much of the building is empty.

Potemkinism is incredibly problematic because it leads to vast overspending on projects with few long-run returns. The Olympic megaprojects are the perfect example. They are shockingly expensive – the National Theater alone cost ten times more than the state’s annual spending on poverty alleviation – and will have limited utility now that the Games are over. But Potemkinism is really a symptom of a much deeper problem, as these projects serve another purpose besides impressing foreigners. In a Communist system, unelected leaders are accountable to their party superiors rather than to the public. In China, those leaders earn promotions based on demonstrating economic development, so they have intense pressure to show “visible” development to party bosses. In other words, an ambitious politician stands to gain political power by building megaprojects as dramatic representations of his success. When we consider that politicians can also expect kickbacks on a megaproject (recall Mr. Chen’s US$37 million for Oriental Plaza), we begin to see why Chinese leaders are building theaters with underwater tunnels when much of the Old City does not even have plumbing.

It is a system which has led to a chaotic mismanagement of development. One consequence
of this voracious appetite for “visible” development is that party leaders often violate their own rules. Nanchizi was designated a conservation site, but local leaders bulldozed it anyway. Out of respect for the iconic buildings in the city center, new buildings in the Old City were not supposed to be taller than 18 meters, yet the tallest of the three Oriental Plaza buildings is almost four times that height. These rules were meant to guide development in a culturally sensitive way, but they were no match for the confluence of factors driving towards Potemkinism and the megaproject.

Beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the government began to decentralize decision-making for city planning. In democracies, decentralization brings decision-making closer to the people it affects. In China, however, local politicians face different incentives, so decentralization has led to an internal competition that creates harmful redundancies. Oriental Plaza, for example, competes with the Financial Street in the West City District, the International Financial Center in the Xuanwu District, and even the Central Business District (CBD) in the Chaoyang District. Because leaders in each district could not bear to see a different district become the city’s international financial center, they created redundant infrastructure and left foreign companies confused about where to set up local operations. The same phenomenon can be seen at a national level between Beijing and Shanghai. At the end of the day, chaotic, unconstrained development with massive inefficiencies is a symptom of Potemkinism.

We have seen how the Communist system leads to an inefficient and (paradoxically) unplanned development. The final theme is the way in which the instruments of socialism have been used to inflict suffering on the poor and make profits for the rich. Ironically, the poor in China would have fared better at the hands of hard-core capitalists. One principle of Communism under China was state ownership of land. In the reform era after 1978, the government transitioned into a system in which it sold land use rights while still technically owning the land. Party leaders got a crash course in property rights in 1994 when they tried to evict the first McDonald’s in China after just two years of the twenty-year lease (they wanted to use the land for a brand new project called Oriental Plaza). The company refused to leave, eventually conceding only after receiving a new location a few blocks away and an extremely favorable compensation deal.

International corporations could not care less, however, if the government violates the property rights of the urban poor. In areas like Nanchizi, public ownership of the land made it easy to evict people with minimal compensation. In fact, since the reforms allowed city governments to lease public land for the first time, these city governments actually gained a significant windfall when they evicted the poor. No wonder most of the projects in the Old City tended towards high-end housing and commercial real estate, which produced the most lucrative leases. In Beijing, 20 percent of the city government’s budget comes from leasing land, but that figure can reach 50 percent in other cities. It is difficult to watch this process unfold without thinking of this conspiracy.

Instruments of Socialism Turned Against the Poor
between local governments and members of the TCC as a fundamental betrayal of the values that brought the Party to power in 1949.

Finally, megaprojects like the National Theater and Oriental Plaza require an army of workers to build. At its peak, Oriental Plaza had 20,000 people working on site. Many of these workers were affected by another Communist-era policy called the household registration system (*hukou*), which operated from the 1950s to the late 1980s. The *hukou* system was a method of controlling the labor market, as people could only receive their rations if they remained in their home province. While the *hukou* system has been relaxed slightly since the 1980s, rural citizens working in the city are still “restricted from receiving public services such as education, medical care, housing and employment, regardless of how long they may have lived or worked in the city.”

As a result, China’s roughly 200 million migrant workers live in deplorable conditions. One official government study found that 17 percent of them live on construction sites. Their low status means that employers can abuse them with impunity. For example, even though most migrants earn just US$4 a day, many employers never pay them. In June 2006, migrant construction workers alone were owed US$14.47 billion in unpaid wages. Originally designed to prevent painful fluctuations in the labor market, the *hukou* system has instead created a permanent urban underclass. It is a system that works well for the city governments and the TCC, since they get a source of cheap labor (or, evidently, free labor) for their megaprojects.

**Conclusion: Olympic Dreams and a Mega-Gamble**

We have seen that urban redevelopment in Beijing has literally turned the city inside out, flushing the marginal elements of society out of the Old City in order to create a new transnational space for globetrotting elites, who move in from the suburbs and from around the world. While not yet a capitalist society, Chinese society cannot really be called communist either; it is a unique system that combines socialist efficiency with capitalist equality. The Olympics have amplified and accelerated these trends, as the Games represented the ultimate Potemkin moment for the city. The image of a pretty little girl standing in the Bird’s Nest and lip-syncing the National Anthem to a live audience of 91,000 people seemed to encapsulate the whole enterprise begun seven years earlier.

For Beijing, the Olympics were, in fact, a significant gamble, both in the short-term and in the long-term. In the short-term, the government was betting that nationalism would discourage any major protests, even though preparations for the Olympics caused hundreds of thousands of evictions. Additionally, the government had forced all construction projects to be stopped by the end of 2007 and as a result, there were hundreds of thousands of “idle laid off workers loafing about in the capital during the months leading to the Games.” Yet in the end, these marginalized groups never mustered the political will to organize themselves. Despite some embarrassing criticisms before the Games, including protests along the torch route and world leaders threatening to boycott the opening ceremonies, the general consensus was that the Chinese leadership had won its bet. “Truly exceptional Games,” International Olympic Committee President Jacques Rogge
said at the closing ceremonies.\textsuperscript{85} He was right – if smooth execution of the event is the only standard that matters.

In the long-term, the government was betting that the Olympics would help it sustain economic growth. Here, the outcome is far less certain. A variety of studies suggest that the Olympics may not be the economic boon that most countries think it is.\textsuperscript{86} Moreover, as Ms. Broudehoux suggests, the strategy of destroying local cultural capital may backfire, since local culture is one aspect of a city’s competitive advantage.\textsuperscript{87} While many tourists visited the hutongs and \textit{siheyuan} to get a sense of old Beijing, who would fly thousands of miles to see the Westernized, or more accurately, McDonaldized buildings of the new Nanchizi. Finally, from a broader perspective, the economic outlook today looks very different than it did over the summer when the Olympics ended. Chinese officials believe that to keep its 8 percent GDP growth is the minimum needed to prevent urban unemployment from rising and even triggering serious social instability.\textsuperscript{88} That level will be difficult to achieve in the face of the global downturn that began in September 2008. As unemployment rises and Olympic nationalism begins to fade, Chinese leaders ought to be worried.

In conclusion, we have seen how China’s leaders have invited many of globalization’s ills into the Old City. But if globalization is the problem, maybe it is also the solution. Chinese authorities are betting that they can participate in globalization without being changed by it. A significant criticism of Mr. Ritzer’s globalization of “nothing thesis” is the idea that globalization has been a major force for spreading human rights norms around the world. The government’s long-term strategy for staying in power is sustaining economic growth and for that, it needs the support of the TCC. As the McDonald’s eviction case shows, the government will make sacrifices to maintain that support, particularly as the desire to maintain high growth rates becomes increasingly desperate. If the TCC is willing to curtail its rent-seeking, then it has an opportunity to act as a catalyst for a transition to democracy in China. For all its cruelty and injustice, Beijing’s redevelopment just might have created a space for change.

\textbf{ENDNOTES}

5 Ibid., 10.
7 Ibid., 209.
8 Ibid., 244.
9 Ibid., 245.


Ibid., 231.

Ibid., 228.


"Review for National Grand Theatre Project." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,402601,00.html >.


Ibid., 28.

Ibid., 16.


Ibid., 96.

Ibid., 94.


Ibid., 96.

"Review for National Grand Theatre Project." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,402601,00.html >.


"Review for National Grand Theatre Project." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,402601,00.html >.


"Review for National Grand Theatre Project." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,402601,00.html >.


Anne-Marie Broudehoux, The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing, 121.


Figure from Zheng Lian, "Urban Renewal in Beijing, Observation and Analysis" (McGill University: Master's Thesis, 1995).


Yang and Zhang, 153.


"Review for National Grand Theatre Project." <http://www.guardian.co.uk/international/story/0,,402601,00.html >.


Anne-Marie Broudehoux, The Making and Selling of Post-Mao Beijing, 116. This indoor market is behind another mall. Not coincidentally, that mall (Sun Dong An) was built on top one of the cities oldest public markets. Again, authorities chose to convert a distinctly local place into a transnational one where locals were not welcome.


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HARNESSING THE CHURCH IN TODAY’S CHINA

The Case of Xiamen’s Xinjie Church

This paper looks at how the modern Chinese state co-opts Christianity by especially focusing on Xinjie Church in Xiamen, Fujian. Xinjie Church is proclaimed to be China’s first Protestant church. The commercial heart of Xiamen is undergoing a facelift, and although the church is located in the midst of the section being redeveloped, its status has preserved it from being demolished. This paper argues that the local authorities are aggressively promoting the church’s significance, but their enthusiasm is tempered by the immediate lure of economic profits and the fact that the rights for the redevelopment program have been allotted to a private firm. The preservation of Xinjie Church provides a medium for the intersection of local governmental concern regarding public opinion, urban modernization, and the use of history.

Chris White
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Introduction

The scene enveloping Xinjie Church is not uncommon in today’s China. Yellow cranes are scattered in the sky as a green mesh screen hangs on scaffolding hiding the progression of a large concrete building. As the building seems to grow a level each week, the neighboring pit, future home for the next shopping plaza, seems to get deeper at the same pace. In the midst of this construction site lies a narrow strip of land, just enough for a path, that connects the commercial heart of the city of Xiamen, Zhongshan Road, to a small plot of unexcavated land upon which sits Xinjie Church. In the words of a pastor of the church, the building is slowly being “wrapped up like a Chinese dumpling,” surrounded on all sides.

Recently, in 2006, many Western media outlets ran the story of a new church building in Hangzhou, just a few hundred miles up the coast from Xiamen, which was ruthlessly demolished as congregants looked on.¹ The most obvious difference between the Hangzhou episode, described in one report as “normal practice for Chinese authorities,”² from the situation in Xiamen is that the church building in Xiamen is officially recognized as a registered church, whereas the edifice in Hangzhou housed and was constructed by an unregistered body of believers. However, the case of Xinjie Church reveals more than just a difference in official attitudes toward registered and unregistered churches in China. Not only has this particular church been saved from the wrecking ball, but it is also being used by the state. This paper will briefly look at ways
Christianity in general has been co-opted by the modern Chinese state and more specifically explore the limits of this co-optation, as seen through the story of Xinjie Church.

Co-opting the Church

In his book *State and Religion in China*, Anthony Yu’s thesis clearly stated that “there has never been a period in China’s historical past in which the government of the state, in imperial and post-imperial form, has pursued a neutral policy toward religion.” China’s history is rife with examples of official use of various religions. Li Shimin, the founder of the Tang dynasty (618-906) claimed descent from Laozi, the founder of Daoism, and promoted this religion to justify his rule over China. The rulers of the Ming and Qing dynasties, likewise, were eager to use the services of Jesuit (both European and Chinese) academics in their quest for accurate astronomical observations. Seen in the religious pretensions of rebellious groups such as the White Lotus (which emerges at various times throughout Chinese history) or Taiping Rebels (in the mid-nineteenth century), a quick perusal of Chinese history seems to justify the state’s desire to, in the words of Daniel Bays, maintain that “civic loyalty would always trump spiritual loyalty.”

With this background, it is not surprising that today’s China is also attentive to its dealings with religion. The current governing attitude has been described by Pitman Potter as a “trade-off” in which the state allows a measure of religious freedom but at the same time expects (or demands) something in return. The most obvious benefit the state hopes to gain from allowing a measure of religious freedom is allegiance to the authority of the governing structure. Related to this is the promotion of patriotism. The official, government sanctioned Protestant organization is formally known as the Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM). As the name indicates, this organization is expected to generate devotion to the state, and churches belonging to it are expected to support and propagate the idea that a good Christian is a patriotic Christian.

Another benefit of religion is that this can aid the state in their battle against superstition. Document 19, a 1982 directive published in the Party’s *Red Flag* journal, which remains the outline of the current religious policy, says that by granting religious freedom, the Party hopes to strengthen its efforts to “disseminate scientific education” and to bolster its “propaganda against superstition.” According to official Marxist doctrine, Protestantism is still technically a form of superstition; however, it is higher on the development scale of religions, and thus preferable to more “backward” religious practices.

The state has also found that the church can be helpful to its goal of creating a “harmonious society.” As China becomes more of a market-based economy and as demographic shifts create an aging society, the state is searching for more creative ways to ease the growing social welfare burdens. Some churches operate orphanages, homes for the elderly, or even schools. The government sees activities like this as important and concrete ways for churches to serve society, thus making them useful. Related to this is an increase of discourse on the church aiding in the creation of a “civil society” and encouraging civic organizations.
Hamrin expresses optimism that what she coins “SOIs” (state-organized institutions) will be given more freedom and in fact even pressured to be more active in filling the gap where traditional state channels have failed to meet society’s demands. Sometimes permission for these social welfare projects is given after the local government sees that these groups have provided a valuable service.

The state has also found expediency in using Protestantism to promote international affairs. Consenting to a measure of religious activity has, in some ways, pacified some of Beijing’s foreign friends. While the dissatisfaction of China’s religious policy is expressed by many outside (especially Western) observers, China’s authorities attempt to occupy a point on a continuum that uses religion when possible and limits any detrimental side effects, including adverse international opinions. Today, one of the roles of Protestantism in China is, in the words of Julian Pas, its “diplomatic usefulness.”

Not only is the state’s cause furthered by granting a degree of freedom in socio-political ways, but it also benefits in terms of economic progress. A popular view held by some leaders is that to an extent, there is a correlation between Protestantism and economic growth. For example, religion is emphasized when it plays a role in promoting tourism or securing investment, especially from the outside. Hunter and Remmington bluntly state that “tolerance [of Protestant activity] is the price paid to attract foreign currency.” MacInnis agrees with this interpretation of seeing the economic benefits of religion referring to it as a “cultural artifact” earning “both foreign exchange and international goodwill.”

This section has briefly examined ways the state is co-opting the church on a broad, national level. We will now analyze the circumstances surrounding the particular case of Xiamen’s Xinjie Church. This example specifically focuses on how this church’s history and significance is being harnessed to attract tourism and international goodwill.

**Background of Xinjie Church**

Protestant missionaries first permanently entered Xiamen (Amoy) in early 1842, but a lack of immediate converts led to a delay in building a permanent church building. At the time of the initial construction of the church, foreigners were still prohibited from purchasing land. As a way around this restriction, the missionaries, led by William Pohlman of the (Dutch) Reformed Church of America, asked a local convert, Hok-kui-peyh, to purchase the land and then reimbursed him. Technically, the land was owned by Hok, but he immediately “donated” the land to the church. Pohlman, in writing to his home mission board, described the piece of land as “central, yet not in the busy bustle of the city. It is on one of the great thoroughfares, where we may always expect to have good audience.” Xinjie Church was then built in 1848 and dedicated on February 11, 1849, in a joint opening ceremony and funerary service for Pohlman, who was lost at sea when returning from Hong Kong where he had gone to (among other things) secure lamps for the new church.

The building’s roof suffered damage and the building underwent massive repairs in 1933, being reopened in 1935. At this time, the Churches of Christ in China, a national body consisting of Chinese church leaders wanting to establish a united, indigenous church organization, erected
a stone monument proclaiming the church as “China’s first church.” (zhonghua diyi shengtang 中华第一圣堂). During the Cultural Revolution, like all official churches, Xinjie Church was closed and in 1979 became the first church in Fujian to be reopened. Soon after this, in 1982, Xinjie Church was granted government protection as a city-level historical site. This status was upgraded to provincial-level historical site in 2005.

Figure 1. Xinjie Church (photo by author, October 2007). In this photo, the pedestrian path used at that time is in the forefront (slanting down). Since this photo, the area in the forefront of the picture and to the left has also been excavated and the commercial building that will occupy this site is undergoing construction while the building in the back of the photo where the crane sits is nearly complete (five stories aboveground).

While some improvements have been made to the interior of the church, today’s Xinjie Church looks very similar to pictures of the original structure (see Figure 1). (Although the rebuilding of the church in 1933 increased the size and added a level, it preserved the overall architectural appearance of the church.) Today, the church still exhibits the stone monument first erected in 1935 in addition to an historic plaque briefly describing the history of the church. The inscription on this plaque reflects some of the significance attributed to Xinjie Church. The plaque explains that Western missionaries arrived on the heels of the Opium War and the subsequent beginning of the unequal treaty system. It goes on to proclaim that this first church is “influential within and outside of China and is of great value for the research of religious history.” Another stone monument sits in the courtyard and also celebrates Xinjie Church’s history as the first Protestant church in China. This stone emphasizes the unequal treaties which pried open China and the ensuing encroachment by the missionaries. While this critical view of foreign intervention corresponds to the official narrative denouncing imperialistic missionaries, these monuments also employ another approach to the history of the church by simultaneously stressing the communication between the West and East that Xinjie Church in particular and Protestant missions in general represent.

The particular expedience of Xinjie Church, from the state’s point of view, focuses on the church’s distinctiveness as being the first Protestant church. Both the church and the city are keen to promote Xiamen as the birthplace of Chinese Protestantism. This is especially true of local officials who see the status of the church as a draw for tourism and a way to remember early Sino-Western interaction. It is not surprising that such an attitude is prevailing in Xiamen, known as an outward oriented city, ancestral home of many overseas Chinese (huaqiao 华侨).

While Xinjie Church has received this official recognition as China’s first church, it is interesting to remember that China’s official position regarding Taiwan is that it is, and always has been, an inseparable part of China. This should mean that Protestantism in Taiwan should also be considered
when addressing the history of Christianity in China. Dutch missionaries erected Protestant churches in Taiwan as early as 1631, predating the arrival of Protestantism to Xiamen by over two centuries.\(^{21}\) The history of Protestantism in Taiwan is not neglected by mainland scholars, but it is conveniently overlooked when giving profitable titles such as “China’s First Church,” especially when such designations are used to promote an agenda, such as tourism or representations of Sino-Western interaction.\(^{22}\)

Even disregarding the earlier entrance of Protestantism into Taiwan, the case of China’s first Protestant church may need some clarification. Part of the problem is how one defines “church.” To be sure, there were numbers of curious locals and even catechists meeting in small groups in many of the treaty ports long before the opening of Xinjie Church. Even before the opening of the five treaty ports following the First Opium War, Robert Morrison led regular “church” services for some inquirers in Guangzhou. Murray Rubinstein reports that Morrison (although it was illegal at the time) regularly preached on Sundays to a congregation averaging five to eight people as early as 1814.\(^{23}\) Likewise, even in Xiamen, soon after arriving, the first permanent missionary, David Abeel, began to have regular worship services with numbers of those attending averaging 50 as early as the summer of 1842.\(^{24}\) These services were regularly held long before the first converts were baptized in 1846. Initially hosted in the homes of missionaries, after time these services were moved to “chapels” or storefronts rented with the intent of using them for Christian preaching. By 1846, Xiamen was already home to three of these “chapels.”\(^{25}\)

Some western sources, including Kenneth Lattourette’s seminal work, *A History of Christian Missions in China*, published in 1929, list the earliest Protestant church as being located in Ningbo.\(^{26}\) Ningbo, like Xiamen, was one of the initial treaty ports officially opened to foreigners and missionaries at the Treaty of Nanjing, signed at the end of the First Opium War in 1842. Ralph Covell also lists Ningbo as having an earlier Protestant church. Here, by 1844, the main church was “comprised of six missionaries and one Chinese convert who had come . . . from Singapore . . . Evangelistic itineration created three very weak churches in nearby areas. This led to the organization of a Presbytery by 1846 and completed a structure for full ecclesiastical life.”\(^{27}\) While it seems that these sources refer to a church set up not specifically for Chinese Christians, but rather for the early missionaries and that Xinjie Church is, most likely, the first Protestant church building established in China for Chinese, it is interesting to note that this claim is not even questioned. According to a current pastor of Xinjie church, a delegation from Ningbo churches raised the issue at a meeting with Xiamen church leaders in the 1990s. However, they merely mentioned that they thought they had an earlier church without presenting any evidence or pursuing the point. The matter was dropped and the title remained with the city and the church even more aggressively promoting Xinjie as the birthplace of Chinese Protestantism.

What really, then, is meant when using the title of “China’s first church” is the first distinct building designated for church services for Chinese built in mainland China. It does not refer to a “body of believers,” nor does it simply refer to a
designated spot for Christian worship, for both of these existed in (mainland) China long before the opening of Xinjie.

Xiamen is not unique in its promotion of religious structures for tourism or cultural purposes. Buddhist and Daoist temples and mountains rank among the most popular tourist destinations in China. While not on the same scale as many of these temples, Christian churches have also been celebrated in other cities. Examples of this can be found in the northeastern city of Harbin where St. Sophia’s Russian Orthodox Cathedral is a major city landmark. However, in this case, today the cathedral acts more as a museum, housing pictures and relics of Russian influence from Harbin’s history. The coastal city of Qingdao in Shandong province is another example. Both Protestant and Catholic churches are featured destinations for tourists visiting this coastal city. The Catholic church here, built in a Gothic style in the 1930s, is touted as a “masterpiece of Christian architecture.” The main Protestant church in Qingdao was built in 1910 and reflects the German influence in the city. Both churches charge visitors for entering the compounds and are often found on postcards or pictures representing Qingdao.

The expediency of Xinjie Church and its title as “First Protestant Church in China” was apparent in Xiamen’s recent participation in the LivCom competition. This international competition, formerly known as “Nations in Bloom,” confers awards based on the “liveability” of cities. LivCom (short for “liveable communities”) honors take into account a city’s “enhancement of the landscape, heritage management, use of environmentally sensitive practices, community involvement, and planning for the future.” Xiamen was awarded the gold medal in 2002 when the competition was hosted in Germany, the birthplace of Protestantism. Part of Xiamen’s presentation focused on its heritage as having China’s first Protestant church. Dr. Bill Brown, a professor at Xiamen University and a member of the team entrusted with presenting Xiamen’s proposal at the LivCom competition, explained that initially, Xiamen’s committee was hesitant to incorporate Xinjie Church into Xiamen’s application. However, after their successful bid, the city began to see the church in a new light. In this example we can see that when the expediency of the church is seen, its status, in the eyes of officials, is elevated.

City Renewal

Although considered a “medium-sized” city by Chinese standards – the population of Xiamen city is 1.5 million, in the last 30 years, helped by its status as an early Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the city of Xiamen has transformed itself. Throughout the 1980s and 90s, it ranked first in economic growth and second in environmental protection, gaining the nickname of “garden island” and blossoming into a popular tourist destination for domestic and international visitors. In 2002, the city of Xiamen decided to embark on a new urban renewal campaign, an attempt to recapture the grandeur of Xiamen’s history while at the same time modernize the city. This particular campaign was the city’s first to see the restoration efforts led by a private company. The government sold the rights of redeveloping a portion of the central business district to a commercial developer, Rongkun Real Estate Company. However, the city
placed stipulations that the new district preserve the architectural and cultural history of the business district. For example, the height of new buildings is limited to five stories (aboveground) and the façades of the structures are required to reflect the historical architecture of the district.

Xinjie Church is located in the center of the district, adjacent to Zhongshan Road, the major commercial street. Previously the church was surrounded by housing and not very noticeable to pedestrians on the street. In fact, many citizens of Xiamen did not realize there was a church there, let alone China’s “first Protestant church.” However, because of its central location, the church sits right in the middle of the new urban renovation plans. Because of its status as an historic site, the preservation of the church was safeguarded and its demolition was never seriously debated. However, housing for nearly 2,500 residents of the area was demolished and the developer was responsible for relocating these residents to different sections of the city.

Throughout the construction process (which is still going on), Xinjie Church has remained open. This has meant that various temporary sidewalks, even pedestrian bridges spanning the excavation, have been erected. Considering the fact that Xinjie attracts over 1,000 weekly worshippers and daily holds a variety of gatherings, from worship services to prayer meetings, this has proved to be a challenge. From a construction point of view, it would surely be easier to temporarily close the church for a few weeks, but it is obvious that a precondition for the construction was that the church would be able to maintain normal operations throughout the process. This shows that while the church’s title makes it especially expedient for the state, the state’s interest does not stop here. Instead, when dealing with religious bodies, the Chinese state is guided by a sense of pragmatism that seems to be evolving. As the political savvy of China’s leaders has increased in regards to gauging popular opinion, they have become more sensitive to the populace’s religious beliefs. Wenfang Tang argues that public opinion has gained increasing attention from China’s recent leaders. Likewise, Document 19 speaks of the need to “cultivate public opinion.” Opinion surveys have become more common in society in general and their results are used to both bolster official positions and to form new policy. Correspondingly, official concerns over religion are viewed through a lens which accounts for public opinion.

The specific case of Xinjie Church is interesting because of its complexity. It is not merely a matter of preserving China’s religious heritage, nor is it only a desire to harness history by utilizing the title of “first Protestant church,” nor to simply preserve or enhance public opinion or grassroots support. The construction surrounding and preservation of Xinjie Church is a point of intersection for all of these issues, but it is also balanced by China’s desire for economic progress. This particular point is seen in how the plans for the renovation of the area around the church have changed over the past few years.

With Xinjie’s protection ensured and in accordance with the provisions put in place by the city, the developer’s initial plans were to build an underground shopping plaza in the space in front of the church, forming a public square on the ground level, leaving an unobstructed view of
the church from Zhongshan Road. In this plan, the church would act as the centerpiece of the revitalizing efforts. These plans were published in the local newspaper which reported that “not only will Xinjie Church – China’s earliest Protestant church – be preserved, but an open recreational square will be built [in front of the church] named Holy Church Square . . . ”37 As can be imagined, the leadership and laypeople of the church were excited that their edifice would take center stage in the new area. However, as construction began, it became apparent that the plans had changed. Instead of leaving the space in front of the church as an open square, the construction company decided to build a shopping plaza reaching five-stories above ground.38

This change in strategy highlights the limits of co-opting the church. In the case of Xinjie Church, it seems a precarious balance was finally reached when it was decided that while the history of the church, the fact that it is tagged as China’s first Protestant church, is useful, this utility was not sufficient to keep it from being trumped by more tangible economic benefits. The details of this specific case are even more convoluted because it is a private firm, rather than the city government, spearheading the revitalization of the urban area. As mentioned above, even though a private developing company is in charge of the renovation project, local authorities have remained involved by ensuring that throughout the construction phase the developers continue to allow entrance to the church.39 However, the lure of immediate profit from a greater amount of rental units has caused the developer to change the original plans which saw Xinjie Church as the centerpiece. In this instance, the local government has decided to not interfere in the new plans. Initially it was thought that prominently featuring the church as the centerpiece of the revitalization efforts would aid in tourism and the overall appeal of the district. However, it was ultimately decided that using the space for commercial purposes would generate more profit. It seems that in both instances, the deciding factor was which plan would bring the greatest profit. While the local government on one hand wants to promote the novelty of housing China’s first Protestant church, its prominence is competing against the chance for economic profit, and in this case, the latter has emerged victorious.

The Church as China’s Cultural Heritage

While the plans for construction surrounding the church changed, the rhetoric connected to the project did not. Promoters continued to stress the importance of preserving the area’s cultural heritage. The story can be followed in the pages of Xiamen’s local newspapers,40 which refer to the area as the “cultural heart” (wenmai 文脉) of Xiamen. Likewise, the articles continually mention the preservation of the historical features and relics of the area and the tourism draw that the new district will bring. For example, a member of the developing team is quoted in Xiamen Daily as saying, “The advantage of [the district under renovation] lies in that it possesses a rich history and culture.”41 Another article refers to Xinjie Church as “bearing witness to [the district’s] past, present, and future.”42

Signs adorning a barrier put up enclosing the construction site, officially titled “historical and cultural wall,” promote the shopping plazas
and the overall restoration project. One sign (see Figure 2) shows a picture of Xinjie Church with the slogan “Inherit Chinese contextual culture, rebuild the prosperous business street.” While the English translation on this sign leaves something to be desired, the sign itself is intriguing in what it reveals. Because of the historical or manufactured importance of Xinjie Church, it has been decided to use the image of the church to show how its preservation is also a promotion of how “traditional Chinese culture” is being safeguarded against the forces of modernization.

Such a sign is significant for it seems to imply that Christianity is becoming more accepted into Chinese culture at large. While this paper argues that in the case of Xinjie Church, its major value is its utility in labeling it as China’s first church, this sign raises the question of whether the status of Christianity is changing. The sign connects Chinese “contextual culture” to Christianity, a novel approach in that Christianity is often thought of as yangjiao (洋教), a foreign or Western religion. In describing local government attitudes toward what was once labeled “superstition,” Wang Mingming explains that “‘tradition’ (chuangtong 传统), ‘heritage’ (wenhua yichan 文化遗产), ‘culture’ (wenhua 文化), and whatever is associated with the greatness of ‘being Chinese’ is now highly valued by government officials.” It is likely that the creators of this sign did not consciously appropriate a picture of Xinjie Church as a part of Xiamen’s heritage in order to advance the indigenization of Christianity in China. They surely did not think that much about it. At the same time, it is obvious that it did not seem unnatural to use a picture of the church. The use of this picture and slogan reflects a shift in attitude occurring in today’s China. While Christianity previously has consistently been remembered and referred to as a yangjiao, this sign suggests that it is beginning now to be seen as part of modern China.

**Conclusion**

A sense of disappointment set in when the leadership and members of Xinjie Church realized that their building would no longer be the centerpiece of the revitalized area. Instead, they would be enclosed by new above-ground shopping plazas. This was not the only impact the city’s restoration efforts placed on Xinjie Church. An initial side effect of the modernization efforts was to lessen the attendance at Xinjie Church. In order to make room for the new shopping plazas, 2,500 residents were forced to relocate to new housing in various parts of the city. Many of these residents who formerly attended Xinjie Church, partly because of its convenience, have either decided to attend other churches closer to their new residences or have ceased attending church altogether, at least on a regular basis. This
raises an interesting question of how churches will respond to the challenges of urbanization found in many cities in modern China. As cities undergo facelifts, some churches are being moved to new districts, or more commonly, as is the case with Xinjie Church, housing surrounding the churches is being torn down and residents relocated, often to outlying areas. It remains to be seen how individual churches or authorities will deal with these new challenges.

Many of the complexities surrounding Christianity in modern China can be viewed through the prism of Xinjie Church. This analysis has shown that while the state has not only adopted a sense of “reluctant pragmatism” in dealing with churches, but also hopes to co-opt the church. Yu describes the government’s attitude toward religion as one which “tolerates and accommodates.” However, the case of Xinjie Church shows more than this. Not only does the church exist (tolerate) and has been protected and allowed to remain open during the city’s modernizing efforts (accommodate), but the church building is also aggressively being utilized for purposes such as tourism and aesthetic and historical importance. But simply stopping the analysis here, with the state exploiting the church, is also premature. This paper argues that this case of co-opting the church is more complex. Because of the influence of the private developer authorized with the task of redeveloping the commercial heart of Xiamen, the limits of the expediency of Xinjie Church are made quite apparent in this case. Furthermore, this case highlights the evolving nature of Christianity in China and how it is becoming more and more accepted.

ENDNOTES


2 Ibid.

3 Anthony C. Yu, State and Religion in China (Chicago: Open Court, 2005), 3.


6 This name is derived from the stipulations that the TSPM and the churches under its auspices must be self-funded, self-propagating, and self-governed. The adoption of these stipulations is closely related to the historical relationship between foreign Christian agencies and Chinese believers. In an effort to make a complete break with foreign church bodies, the Chinese government officially sanctioned the TSPM in 1950. Other official religious bodies have similar “patriotic” names, for example the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association.


11 Hamrin, Carroll, Leach, and Bays.


This may also be true for religions other than Protestantism. For example, see Bill Savadove, "Buddhism put to the service of tourism," South China Morning Post, February 19, 2005 and Graeme Lang, et. al., "Temples and the Religious Economy," Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion, vol. 1.1 (2005).


MacInnis, Religion in China Today, 93.

This is not pinyin, but an early version of a Romanized Amoy dialect. Because missionaries rarely used Chinese characters when writing to their home boards, many names of Chinese Christians (or places) are hard or virtually impossible to decipher.


In Chinese: 中华第一圣堂是国内外有影响的基督教堂，对于研究宗教史有重要价值。

Xu Xiaohong (徐晓鸿). "When Did Protestant Christianity Enter China?" (基督教新教何时传入中国?), Tianfeng 天风, June 2006.

In a case of ironic bliss, on display in a lobby of Xinjie Church (just a few meters away from the monument proclaiming the building as the First Protestant Church in China) was a copy of Tianfeng, the official magazine of the Protestant churches of China, which featured an article debasing Robert Morrison's arrival to the mainland in 1807 as the entrance of Protestantism into China because the Dutch had done so over a century earlier in Taiwan. The article not only mentions the entrance of the Dutch, but also the fact that they built Protestant churches there. (See Xu in above endnote.)


David Cheung, Christianity in Modern China: The Making of the First Native Protestant Church (Brill, 2004), 167.

Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christian Missions in China, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1929), 248. Latourette says that D.B. McCartee went to Ningbo in 1844 and "[h]e was soon joined by others and in May, 1845, a church was organized. Possibly the first Protestant one on Chinese soil.


For both churches, tickets are not required to attend services, but throughout the week when no services are going on, entrance requires a ticket.

At least in the case of the Catholic church, Catholic Christians are not charged for entering the church at any time. It seems that this is simply dependent on one's profession at the ticket booth.

Information about Xiamen's participation in this competition can be found at <http://www.amoymagic.com/NationsinBloom2002.htm>.

Interview with author regarding Xiamen's involvement in the Liv.Com competition, April 10, 2008.

Christianity in Minnan: Reproduction of Traditions in Post-Mao China (Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 2003), 3.

Because of the increase in numbers of church attendees and a desire to meet the needs of the different demographics of the congregation, in 2006, Xinjie Church increased the number of Sunday worship service to three. The first service is strictly in the local dialect (minnanhua 闽南话) and appeals to many local, older worshippers. It is followed by another morning service that is in the local dialect but also translated into mandarin (putonghua 普通话). An afternoon service, targets a younger demographic and is strictly in mandarin.

Additionally, because four families permanently live on the church grounds, access through the construction site (to Zhongshan Road) must remain open at all times, rather than just when the church hosts an activity or service.


MacInnis, Religion in China Today.

In Chinese: "到中山路商业广场，爽！" Xiamen Ribao, July 10, 2003. The proposed plaza is referred to as "圣堂广场" (shengtang guangchang). Xinjie is not only the historically or architecturally significant church to be enclosed by buildings. Jean Charbonnier explains that "churches in China are often hidden behind large modern high-rise constructions, even when the architecture of the church would have been an adornment to the locality." Christians in China, 600-2000 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), p. 508.

Furthermore, while excavating the land bordering the church, the walls in the first floor of the church began to reveal cracks. The leadership of the church notified the government, who dispatched province level officials to investigate and ensure the church remains structurally sound.

The following papers have articles on the development of the region with specific reference to Xinjie Church: Xiamen Ribao, July 10, 2003; Dec. 14, 2004; Nov. 22, 2005; July 7, 2006; Sept. 10, 2006; and Xiamen Wanjiao, July 4, 2007.


In Chinese: "老城区改造第一锤敲醒中华老街" Xiamen Ribao, November 22, 2005.

In Chinese: 中华城区历史文化墙.

In Chinese: 传承中华文脉，再展鼎盛商街.


Some authors, like former Time reporter David Aikman, go as far as saying that in the near future, Christianity, or at least a Christian worldview will become dominant in China. I think this position seems a bit extreme. David Aikman, Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power (Regnery, 2003).

For example, according to the China Aid Association, a registered church in Yancheng, Jiangsu province was, not without protest, torn down in December of 2008, purportedly because the land it occupied was coveted by real estate developers. This story can be found at <http://westuminiumission.blogspot.com/2009/01/midland-group-chinese-church-demolished.html>. Reporter Pierre Fuller blogs about a similar circumstance also by the Chinese government, regarding a church near the center of Xian, Shaanxi province. This story can be found at <http://thechinabeast.blogspot.com/search/updated-max=2009-02-01T22%3A34%3A00-08%3A00&max-results=12>.


Yu, State and Religion in China, 1.
CHRIS WHITE

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日本
There is increasing concern in Japan that the growth and aggressiveness of the Chinese military could negatively affect Japanese security. Indeed, Japanese policy concerning the East China Sea and related issues resists any acceptance of China’s regional domination or perceived aggression. This article includes a short history of relations between Japan and China in the East China Sea and discusses four Japanese fears: first, the security of the sea lane of communication (SLOC); second, the loss of the Senkaku Islands; third, the loss of Taiwan’s de-facto independence; and fourth, the loss of energy resources. I proceed to ask whether Japanese policy in the East China Sea operates from a defensive realist position, and offer a national-level analysis that provides a look at what concerns Japanese leaders and why their apprehensions have induced policy change.

Introduction

Many of Japan’s leaders, government officials and defense planners worry that the growth and aggressiveness of the Chinese military could alter the political and economic order of the East China Sea. These Japanese leaders are distressed by an inability to define and manage increasing Chinese military and political power.¹ More specifically, Japan fears the disruption of shipping routes through the East China Sea, the loss of the Senkaku Islands, the loss of Taiwan’s de-facto independence, and the loss of energy resources. Currently, Japanese leaders and defense planners resist China’s regional domination and perceived aggression in the East China Sea.² Any major disruption in sea traffic would be devastating to Japan’s economic well-being. According to Japan’s former US Consulate attaché and current Embassy Chancery Head to the Philippines, Jiro Okuyama, “We cannot accept seeing part of the existing order of East Asia being taken over or taken away by China.”³ Indeed, Japan’s Self Defense Forces (SDF) are active along its maritime border with China. In early 2007, Japanese fighter jets were scrambled against a Chinese submarine that drifted close to Kyushu. From January to March 2006, fighter jets intercepted Chinese spy planes and fighter jets one hundred and seven times along the maritime border, as opposed to only thirteen times in 2005.⁴ In November 2004, the Japanese Maritime SDF (JMSDF) chased a Chinese submarine that had entered Japanese waters.⁵

This paper will connect Japan’s policies
concerning disputes in the East China Sea to the realist approach in international relations. I offer a national-level analysis that provides a comprehensive look at what concerns Japanese leaders and why those concerns have induced policy change. In section one, I utilize both offensive and defensive realism to explain security dilemmas in the international system. Section two details the growth of the Chinese military, while section three relates defensive realism to the Japanese view of the Senkaku Islands and the East China Sea. Section four contains an extended description of the actual policies emanating from the Japanese view, and is followed by section five, which describes the reciprocal nature of Japan and China's perception and interpretations of each other's security actions.

**Realism and the Security Dilemma**

Realism asserts that all nations act within an international system of anarchy. This absence of central authority or government is the cause of an "enduring propensity for conflict between states." Thomas Hobbes clarifies this system in explaining that nations "... are in that condition which is called war as is every man against every man." Within this system, nations can only rely on "their own capabilities to ensure their survival." Edward Carr believes this system is responsible for a constant battle for preservation: "Pure realism can offer nothing but a naked struggle for power." A significant peril in this framework is the belief in threats of force, which compel nations to seek, enhance, and expand their power through arms builds, unilateralism, and expansion in an endless competition to ensure national survival. Kenneth Waltz stipulates the critical tenets of survival as first, constantly being preoccupied with possibilities of conflict, second, counteracting those possibilities, and third, never letting the guard down.

The focus of realist policy-making is national interest and security. In its approach marked by deterrence, containment, great power alliances, and balance of power politics, geographical location, access to resources, and varying alliances all complicate international relations under the assumption that every nation is a rational and competitive actor pursing its utmost goal of survival. In short, states are self-centered, competitive, aggressive, and concerned with security.

There has also been an evolution of an offensive and defensive branch in realism. In defensive realism, states acquire power with the goal of self-preservation, while in offensive realism, they further increase their capabilities in order to project power. John Mearsheimer posits the basic tenet of defensive realism as survival: "Survival is the primary goal of great powers. Specifically, states seek to maintain their territorial integrity." Defensive realism predicts that when nations feel threatened, they will pursue ambitious military, economic, and diplomatic strategies to increase their security. When a defensive realist nation pursues such policies, other nations often misconstrue them as threats of force, which further decrease security. According to Alexander Wendt, this type of policy mirroring can lead to a reciprocal cycle of action and reaction. Policies meant to buttress national security can undermine it.

In offensive realism, nations attempt to amplify their influence, particularly when they have the power to do so. Eric Heller refers to this idea as...
“power maximization” – a nation will project influence into any sphere in which it could increase its absolute power.18 Similarly, Stephen Brooks explains that nations will constantly attempt to “advance their power over other nations, taking military advantage of weaker states whenever they have the chance.”19 However, increasing power in this manner often leads to a zero-sum approach among opposing nations. One state believes it must amplify its power to counter the existing or future power of another state.

The acquisition of power can cause increased insecurity among opposing nations. Policies that help a state gain power often lead to a security dilemma, which Benjamin Friedman and Harvey Sapolsky refer to as “You Never Knowism.”20 They point out, “Planning against You Never Know is difficult. What weapons do you buy to fight it?”21 Given that for many nations, the answer is often more weapons than they need,22 policies meant to head off indefinite threats before they arrive, inadvertently lead to further instability. Kenneth Waltz similarly posits that many nations believe that they “do not enjoy even an imperfect guarantee of their own security unless they set out to provide it for themselves,”23 and that this self-help behavior can undermine security policies. Certainly if Japan maximized its power, China would be agitated. If Chinese leaders perceive Japanese policies as aggressive, they may initiate a cycle of reactive security policies.

**Growth of the Chinese Military**

We have seen that in offensive realism, a nation will seek to “improve its relative power position” through arms buildups which in turn result in anxiety among its neighbors.24 Defensive realism says such buildups may be countered, but that leaders will “mistakenly believe that aggression is the only way to make their state secure.”25 A security dilemma then emerges over real or imagined intentions, whereby each state seeks the upper hand or simply security through military solutions, only to increase the future cost of acquiring power or defending itself. The uncertainty and overestimation involved in the game provides justification for increasing investment in military solutions.26

Japanese leaders claim that the influence and capability of the Chinese military have grown significantly. They point out that Chinese military spending has grown more than ten percent each year from 1989 to the present.27 Indeed, China’s military budget doubled from 1991 to 2001, when it was estimated to be as high as sixty-five billion dollars. Meanwhile, the military’s capital stock was estimated at one hundred billion dollars in 2002.28 Beginning in the late 1990s, China’s weapons purchases from Russia also greatly increased. They have included Su-27 and Su-30 fighter jets, and high altitude missile defense systems.29 According to John C. K. Daly, the PRC also purchased supersonic 3M-80E missiles, Moskit SS-N-Sunburn missiles and SA-N-7 missiles.30 From 2003 through 2004, the PRC purchased thirty-eight percent of Russian arms exports totaling US$2.2 billion, as well as US$1.8 billion in exports from Belarus and Ukraine.31

In particular, the ability of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to project its power further and more effectively in the East China Sea has been increased through this pouring
of resources. In 2004, PLAN’s share of the military budget increased by over thirty percent.\textsuperscript{32} It has since purchased Sovremenny destroyers and Kilo-class submarines, and currently plans to expand its submarine fleet by adding seventeen new stealthy diesel submarines and three Project 094 nuclear submarines in 2010.\textsuperscript{33} This is despite the fact that its submarine fleet is already formidable with seventy submarines.\textsuperscript{34} In 2004, PLAN’s resources already included two hundred and sixty thousand personnel, fifty destroyers and frigates, fifty landing craft, several hundred auxiliary, and small patrol vessels.\textsuperscript{35}

\textbf{The Senkaku Islands and East China Sea}

Japan leans toward the defensive realist approach when contemplating the growth of China’s political and military power in East Asia. In the framework of defensive realism, a nation that feels threatened and insecure will increase its security by pursuing ambitious military, economic, and diplomatic strategies. This can be seen in facets of Japanese policy such as its informal alliance-building with Taiwan, formal alliance-building with India, and tacit remilitarization.\textsuperscript{36} Defensive realism also emphasizes economic security. According to Stephen Brooks, nations seek to protect and enhance their share of economic resources to strengthen their military capacity and increase their influence with other nations.\textsuperscript{37} However, the pursuit of economic security can lead to increased agitation among opposing nations. This can be seen in relations between Japan and China concerning the Senkaku Islands and East China Sea.

The Senkaku Islands (referred to as Diaoyu Islands by China) are a group of eight islands on the continental shelf with a total land space of 6.3 square kilometers. These islands are located one hundred and twenty nautical miles (nm) northeast of Taiwan, two hundred nm east of the Chinese mainland, and two hundred nm southeast of Okinawa.\textsuperscript{38} Surveys by non-governmental organizations and private companies in 1968 showed large deposits of oil and natural gas in the islands – roughly one hundred billion barrels in oil and trillions of cubic feet in gas.\textsuperscript{39} Japan’s reliance on imported energy, and China’s economic growth and corresponding increase in energy consumption since the 1980s, have fueled a search for new sources of energy.\textsuperscript{40} It is not surprising that both governments see the Senkaku Islands and East China Sea as a potential source of energy.\textsuperscript{41}

Competing claims to the islands have been a source of tension between China and Japan since the nineteenth century. Japanese leaders perceived the East China Sea as a strategic sea lane of communication (SLOC) by the late 1800s and sought to control it. After Japanese victory in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Treaty of Shimonoseki gave Taiwan and the Pescadores Islands to Japan. However, in 1895, the Japanese government surveyed and annexed the Senkaku Islands which were not part of the treaty, claiming they had never been inhabited and showed no sign of Chinese control.\textsuperscript{42} Under the control of Japan, the islands were administered as part of Taiwan until the end of World War II (WWII). After WWII, the islands were placed under United States (US) administration as part of the Nansei Shoto Islands under Article III of the 1951 San Francisco Treaty, but reverted back to Japanese
Japan's claim to the Senkaku Islands rests on many points. First, the 1951 San Francisco Treaty does not specifically list them as possessions Japan must relinquish. Second, the PRC did not verbally object to administration by the US, and therefore the islands are not part of Taiwan or China. Finally, the islands were never technically administered as part of Taiwan by Japan. Japan further asserts that the islands were leased in 1896 for thirty years to businessman Tatsuhiro Koga and then purchased in 1932 by his son Zenji. This is corroborated by the US government's (American Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands) Basic Leasing Contract with Zenji for military use of the islands. Further, Japan objects to China's use of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III) to claim the islands. It argues that overlapping claims must be resolved by negotiations in good faith, which China rejects.

China has several claims to the islands as well. First, it points to the administration of the islands dating back to the fifteenth century. Second, the islands were used for centuries as navigational aids and bases for Chinese sailors and fishermen. Third, the Qing dynasty Dowager Empress Cixi granted three of the islands to herbalist Sheng Xuanhuai, demonstrating ownership. Finally, the islands were administered as a part of Taiwan for more than three centuries. The Nationalist government of Taiwan, which was considered the government of all of China by major Western Powers after the Chinese Civil War, technically controlled the islands due to their placement as part of Taiwan at the 1943 Cairo Conference. However, by 1948, complex political issues between the US and China as well as the Cold War precluded Taiwan or China from controlling the islands. China has also argued that the southernmost island of Okinotorishima does not qualify as an island, thereby nullifying Japan's claim of a two hundred mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ), in accordance with UNCLCS III. It cites the 1951 San Francisco Treaty, which required the return of Taiwan, and the 1952 Treaty of Peace between China and Japan, which voided all pre-1941 Japanese conquests or seizures. The 1958 Geneva Convention of the Continental Shelf seems to support China's position. In 1992, China passed the Law on the Territorial Waters and Contiguous Areas of the People's Republic of China (LTWCA), which placed 800,000 square kilometers of the East as well as the South China Seas under Chinese jurisdiction and authorized eviction of trespassers by force if necessary.

We note that the Senkaku Islands are only part of a larger dilemma concerning the entire East China Sea. Both Japan and China claim a two hundred mile EEZ indicated in the UNCLS. This is problematic because the East China Sea is 360 miles at its widest. Japan's EEZ claim and its offer to divide the sea equally includes portions of the continental shelf China claims, and the Chinese EEZ claim overlaps with Japan's. There have been attempts by both countries to peacefully resolve this situation – Japan has offered to divide the sea equally and engage in joint exploration of the disputed areas, while China has offered to jointly develop resources, but only in what it perceives as the Japanese side of the border. However, the two parties interpret joint explorations differently. Japan demands that China share geological data and halt its current energy projects until the dispute
Japan and the East China Sea

Jason Blazevic

is solved. China has agreed to jointly develop a portion of the resources, but wants no interference with any projects in Chinese territory. Both nations depend on shipping routes through the sea for imports and exports – for example, with seventy percent of Japan’s oil imports shipped through the sea – and fear that the other could use its power to close shipping routes should hostilities commence.

Clearly, the resolutions offered by China and Japan are self-serving and based on concerns over relative power in the present and future. Waltz explains that cooperation between opposing nations is difficult due to such sensitivities. Japanese leaders are concerned that Chinese policies are aggressive and revisionist. They see China seeking to project power rather than self-preservation. Indeed some Japanese leaders fear that if such policies are not countered, Chinese ambition would increase. They point to an escalation of aggressive Chinese military actions after passage of the LTWCA. At least seventy-eight such incidents in the East China Sea were reported between 1992 and 1993. The incidents involved Japanese and non-Japanese merchant vessels which were either boarded or fired upon by Chinese naval vessels. Japanese SDF Lieutenant Colonel Katsushi Okazaki stated:

"The main reason for China’s seaward expansion is to gain control over areas containing desperately needed resources, especially oil. It is evident by her actions that China does not plan to maintain the status quo; she appears to be developing her maritime power, her military, and her prosperous economy. China, therefore, presents a dangerous dilemma for all of Asia with regard to territorial issues."

Carr notes that the exercise of power in an offensive realist manner “always appears to beget the appetite for more power.” Japanese leaders take this view and see the Senkaku Islands and a significant part of the East China Sea as a defensive zone essential to Japan’s survival. They believe that a desire to dominate the sea has led to aggressive and revisionist Chinese policies that arise from an offensive realist approach.

Japanese Reaction

Great powers often believe the best method to attain security is to rapidly achieve hegemony. According to Mearsheimer, “A great power that has a marked power advantage over its rivals is likely to behave more aggressively because it has the capability, as well as the incentive, to do so.” Offensive realism concurs and posits that a nation may formulate policies which increase its relative power compared to its nearest competitor, in order to acquire more power. Meanwhile, defensive realism predicts an opposing nation will adjust its policies to further its own national security interests. Certainly, China’s military buildup has caused some Japanese leaders to perceive Chinese policy as enabling it to expand opportunistically. They see tension with the Chinese military as arising from weak and ineffective Japanese attempts at deterrence. Indeed, some believe that China is attempting regional hegemony while Japan is militarily weak, and have expressed a desire to adopt a more aggressive approach to policy-making and military deployment.

As a defensive realist deterrent strategy, Japan appears to be formulating a defensive perimeter involving the East China Sea. This perimeter
including the Senkaku Islands as well as Taiwan, which is located astride crucial sea lanes and is one hundred and seventy-five miles from the southernmost Japanese island of Ishigaki. According to a senior Japanese Defense Ministry official, “Japan is very close to Taiwan and if something happened in this area it will undoubtedly affect Japanese security. It is naïve to suggest that a cross-strait conflict would not affect Japan.”

Christopher Preble, the CATO Institute’s Director of Foreign Policy, agrees: “Japan would look upon Chinese annexation of Taiwan as a national security threat.” Relevant policies have included reforms in 1981 and 1983, which allowed JMSDF to defend strategic sea lanes up to one thousand nautical miles away from Japan, and authorized SDF to meet US forces embarking to defend Japan. Policies allowing for a much more active SDF were initiated in the 1996 National Defense Program Outline (NDPO), which called for increasing naval and air capabilities for the defense of Japan’s surrounding regions. The NDPO enabled changes to the 1952 United States-Japan Mutual Security Treaty (UJMST). Changes to the UJMST in 1997 covered a broad geographical and contingency range in which the SDF may seek involvement. The 1997 Japan-US Defense-Cooperation Guidelines (Guidelines) broadened the range of contingency involvement by the SDF and defined its sphere of interest as “Japan’s surrounding areas.” The Guidelines also enabled the SDF to cooperate and work with the US military in regional conflicts in Northeast and East Asia in case Japan’s security is threatened. According to the 2000 US-Japan Declaration, Japan would provide military support if the US were to use force to prevent an armed offensive against Taiwan.

Relations were further strengthened between the two nations through agreements to jointly develop Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) in 2003. In 2005, Japan and the US jointly stated that Taiwan was a mutual security concern and a “common strategic objective.”

Increasingly, there is a consensus among certain political actors in Japan, for example the Liberal Democratic Party and the Democratic Party of Japan, that Article 9 of the nation’s postwar constitution, which prohibits Japan from waging war and maintaining offensive forces, should be revised. A key clause in the constitution states:

> Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leaders appear to formulate legislation from a defensive realist approach and advocate more ambitious strategies to ensure security. In 2003, the Diet, led by the ruling LDP, passed legislation giving the Prime Minister and the cabinet the ability to dispatch SDF without consulting them in the event of a national emergency. Former LDP Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made it clear that constitutional revision involving Article 9 was a focus of his administration from 2006 to 2007. In May 2007, the Diet passed legislation to hold a national referendum to revise the constitution.
and amend Article 9. Proposed revisions included easing constitutional limits on the deployment of the SDF as a means of self-defense.\(^{71}\) However, political forces against revision proved stronger as Abe resigned shortly after.

**Perception and Interpretation**

Japanese leaders interpret Chinese policies and military incursions as aggressive behavior. Chinese leaders perceive Japanese policy as aggressive as well.\(^{72}\) Offensive realism predicts that a revisionist nation will strive to attain relative gains until it has “the capability to overcome the defenses and conquer a territory or state.”\(^{73}\) Japan and China may both perceive each other as engaging in this type of conduct.

Japanese leaders fear that China intends to dominate the sea, energy resources, and the islands referred to by some Chinese leaders as the “Diaoyu Blockade.”\(^{74}\) According to Oxford University Professor Rosemary Foot, military purchases are part of a policy meant to increase Chinese influence not only in the Senkaku Islands but in the whole of East China Sea. Former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski explains, “The Chinese navy has already adopted a strategic doctrine of offshore active defense seeking to acquire within the next fifteen years an ocean-going capability for effective control of the seas within the first island chain.”\(^{75}\) It is pointed out that larger military forces could “exert power across key shipping lanes used for moving much of Northeast Asia’s imported energy and raw materials as well as manufactured exports,”\(^{76}\) and further, that China may be seeking a change in the East Asian balance of power by weakening Japanese presence and resolve through intimidation.\(^{77}\)

China alleges that Western and Japanese imperialist designs carved up its seas, looted its maritime resources, and occupied its reefs and islands. In this light, Chinese policies are “a long overdue and legitimate action to protect its territorial integrity.”\(^{78}\) Chinese leaders further assert that Japan is attempting to dominate East Asia while China is still weak, enhancing relative strength to assure and acquire more power.\(^{79}\) In their view, the 1997 Guidelines and the Diet’s passage of the 2003 War Contingency Law transformed the Self Defense Forces into an offensive army with authority to defend US forces in and around Japan.\(^{80}\) They also stipulate that the 2003-2004 joint US-Japan military drills in Taiwan were a precursor to the opening of military bases serving SDF.\(^{81}\) Joint SDF/US Marines island-landing training sessions involving the Senkaku Islands began in 2005 and have undoubtedly raised tension in the region. The 2005 Joint Statement of the US-Japan Security Consultative Committee, which called for peace, stability and the encouragement of dialogue in settling issues such as those concerning the security of Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait,\(^{82}\) also seemed to strike a nerve.

In 2006, Chinese fears increased as Japan sent its first military attaché to Taiwan, followed by a stunning statement by the principal Japanese diplomat — “Now the Taiwanese can say that both the US and Japan are on their side.”\(^{83}\) JMSDF capabilities, which included nine squadrons of F-15 fighters, fifty destroyers, ten frigates, and sixteen submarines, could be utilized for Taiwan.\(^{84}\) By 2007, Japan strengthened its TMD commitments while the JMSDF deployed PAC-3 missile interceptors
on its Aegis cruisers, causing Chinese anxiety on the possible inclusion of Taiwan under a missile defense shield. China seems to believe it must construct a powerful “green” and “blue” water navy in order to “break out” of the East China Sea, which is dominated by superior US and Japanese naval forces. Leaders fear that without a powerful navy, shipping routes through the sea can be dominated by other nations, which will disrupt Chinese trade and threaten national security.

Aggressive statements by Japanese leaders, such as former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, who believed that Japan should study the option of going nuclear, have also increased tension. In 1996, former Prime Minister Morihito Hosokawa stated, “There is a need for Japan to pay sufficient attention to the latent desires of the Chinese state and the instability this introduces to the whole Asia-Pacific region.” In 1997, Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiroku Kajiyama declared that the Guidelines “should include the Taiwan Strait.” In 2005, to-be Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, “It would be wrong for us to send a signal to China that the United States and Japan will watch and tolerate China’s military invasion of Taiwan . . . If the situation surrounding Japan threatens our security, Japan can provide US forces with support.” Defense Minister Taro Aso declared in 2006 that Taiwan was a law-abiding country and that “firm relations between Japan and Taiwan should be maintained.”

The reciprocal perception and interpretation of Japan and China regarding the other’s intentions of power expansion, along with their consequently aggressive actions, can be explained by defensive realism. Essentially, Chinese leaders have taken steps that they believe will ensure China’s security, and there is no reason to expect a reversal in its military expansion motivated by such reasoning. The leaders anticipate full remilitarization of Japan, commencement of Japan’s offensive capabilities, and strengthening of the military alliance between Japan and the US, as well as the strengthening of tacit military ties between Japan and Taiwan. Certainly, just like their Japanese counterparts, they are capable of interpreting the opposing nation’s policies as aggressive, and of formulating even more aggressive policies. Indeed, policies stemming from defensive realism can be misconstrued as threats of force, causing opposing nations to mirror each other’s behavior.

**Conclusion**

This paper connects Japanese policy-making concerning the East China Sea to the defensive realist approach in international relations. Japan, feeling threatened by the expansion of the Chinese military, has enhanced the projection of the SDF and commenced alliances and treaties. Military preparedness is increasingly understood by Japanese policymakers as necessary in order to deter “powerful incentives for aggression” influencing Chinese policy making. However, both China and Japan have similar security concerns involving sea lanes, the Senkaku Islands, and Taiwan, and both have consequently engaged in aggressive military, economic, and diplomatic strategies.
This pursuit of ever more ambitious policies could set in motion a chain of events which leave both Japan and China increasingly less secure. Nations that consistently misperceive each other's policy may escalate their movement toward a zero-sum contest. This contest is already present in relations between Japan and China, as neither desire to acquiesce. Their security dilemma stems from, and leads to, the acceptance of generalized and incorrect assumptions over methodical, logical, and systematic approaches to policymaking. Indeed, the dilemma can limit political discourse and inadvertently increase hostility. Here, the words of George Kennan may be particularly applicable: "Hopeful approaches have always been dialectical ones, embracing contradictory elements, embracing both repulsion and attraction, pressure and conciliation, the readiness to defend where defense is the only answer, but also readiness to receive, to listen, to concede, to be generous, to take chances, and to give confidence, even while defending." I foresee that relations between Japan and China will most likely continue to emanate from defensive realism. Certainly, Japan's engagement in ballistic missile defense and China's growing submarine fleet are worsening their security dilemma and could possibly lead to dire circumstances. However, both Japan and China can improve relations by giving heed to the dilemma, while simultaneously showing a sincere readiness to engage in diplomacy.

ENDNOTES

2 Past Prime Ministers from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Taro Aso and Shinzo Abe, viewed China's claims and military growth in the East China Sea with alarm, but current Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and Defense Minister Naoto Kan have yet to visibly solidify their stand.
14 Ibid., 21.
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Southeast Asia

But

Chair
The Normative Power of the “ASEAN Way”

Potentials, Limitations and Implications for East Asian Regionalism

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ASEAN’s survivability and its ability to spread cooperative frameworks in the region, both stem from ASEAN’s norm, the “ASEAN Way.” It functions as a conflict management mechanism through “consultant” and “consensus decision-making” methods, which has become a useful tool to induce cooperation among member states as well as external states. Admittedly, since the ASEAN Way is essentially the by-product of ASEAN’s institutional objective, which is to maintain stability in the Southeast Asian region, it faces its own genetic political dilemma between maintaining ASEAN’s solidarity and deepening cooperation in East Asia. Also, if one of ASEAN’s current institutional objectives is to further enhance cooperation in East Asia, reformulation of the ASEAN Way will be inevitable. These limitations notwithstanding, the ASEAN Way has contributed to the establishment of the initial stage of East Asian regionalism by introducing the framework by which East Asian states can cooperate.

Introduction

Two years after the 40th anniversary of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), East Asian regionalism is taking its next important step. Driven by ASEAN, the term, “East Asian Community,” has been coined to further foster cooperation among East Asian states in ASEAN+3 and East Asia Summit (EAS), while ASEAN attempts to further consolidate its solidarity with the ASEAN Charter through the establishment of the “ASEAN Community” by 2015.

However, it is still unclear to what extent ASEAN’s institutional evolution has promoted cooperation amongst its own members, as well as with external states, in security, economic, and social-cultural fields. It is true that ASEAN has established a plethora of cooperative frameworks in various fields, ranging from ASEAN Ministerial Meetings to the ASEAN summit, which expand the types of cooperation between member states. Nonetheless, according to some scholars, these are often considered “talk shops” that have yet to result in meaningful outcomes, especially with regard to security issues. While ASEAN has produced official communiqués, joint declarations, and
treaties among member states, the language used is too broad to articulate the methods for cooperation. In this context, a certain question arises: what has enabled ASEAN not only to survive, but also to expand the area of its cooperation in East Asia, and to what extent is it an effective means to enhance cooperation in the region?

In this paper, I argue that ASEAN’s survivability and its ability to spread cooperative frameworks in the region both stem from ASEAN’s norm, the “ASEAN Way.” It functions as a conflict management mechanism through “consultant” and “consensus decision-making” methods, and has become a useful tool to induce cooperation among member states as well as external states. Admittedly, since the ASEAN Way is essentially the by-product of ASEAN’s institutional objective, which is to maintain stability in Southeast Asia, it faces its own genetic political dilemma between maintaining ASEAN’s solidarity and deepening cooperation in East Asia. Also, if one of ASEAN’s current institutional objectives is to further enhance cooperation in East Asia, reformulation of the ASEAN Way will be inevitable. These limitations notwithstanding, the ASEAN Way has contributed to the establishment of the initial stage of East Asian regionalism by introducing the framework by which East Asian states can cooperate. However, it is likely to face the necessity of modification in the future given the changing political climate in the region.

For this argument, I will first discuss ASEAN’s function as a conflict management mechanism and its history. Second, I will discuss the ASEAN Way from the perspective of cooperation theories and describe its past performance. Third, I will analyze its functional limitations due to two factors: a shallow cooperative approach and the non-interference principle. Finally, I will conclude with future implications for East Asian regionalism.

**The Overview of “ASEAN Way”: Function and History**

The “ASEAN Way” is ASEAN’s institutional norm and was developed as a conflict management mechanism. The principles of the “ASEAN Way” are informality, non-interference, *musyawarah* (consultation) and *muafakah* (consensus-building), which are based on Malay cultural practices that have developed within ASEAN. In this norm, if a consensus cannot be reached on a contentious issue, the ASEAN member states agree to disagree and go their separate ways, with ASEAN assuming no official position on the issue. ASEAN has also trained its members to work around conflict. When intra-ASEAN issues cannot be resolved, they can be put aside so that they do not interfere with cooperation on other matters. This non-confrontational approach to decision-making has become the model for the so-called “Asian way” of diplomacy.

Based on this norm, the ASEAN Way plays a role in both the decision-making process and conflict management mechanism. As a decision-making process, with its emphasis on consensus-building, the ASEAN Way encourages the removal of contention, allowing member states to focus on issues that have the potential for cooperation, though the decision-making is likely to be slow. As a conflict management mechanism, the ASEAN Way dictates that the member states choose to temporarily set aside contentious issues, agreeing
to solve them “in due course.” Thus, this norm serves not as a conflict resolution method, but as a conflict management method.

The original basis of the ASEAN Way as an institutional norm was set forth before ASEAN was established in 1967. In the early 1960s, Southeast Asian states dealt with an intra-regional division that began in the pre-colonial period, namely their preoccupation with the perception of loss of self-determination and territorial disputes. First, Southeast Asian perceptions after independence continued to be influenced by the experience of European colonialism, which solidified within the region by orienting the colonized states toward their colonizers. Indeed, even after Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore became independent in the post-war era, the experience of colonialism deeply affected their perceptions of the regional environment, and influenced their foreign policies. For example, Indonesia and Malaysia had a political and military conflict between 1963 and 1966, when Indonesia attempted to prevent the establishment of a “colonialist conspiracy” of the Federation of Malaysia due to strong British influence over the Federation. To differing degrees, the leaders of the region saw the international and regional system as anarchical, with powerful states exploiting the weaker states. Second, after gaining independence, Southeast Asian states attempted to consolidate their own territorial integrity. However, because national borders were still blurred, territorial disputes between Southeast Asian states persisted, namely over Pedra Branca between Malaysia and Singapore, over Sipadan and Ligtan between Indonesia and Malaysia, over the Miatan Islands between Indonesia and the Philippines, over Sabah between Malaysia and the Philippines, and over the Spratly Islands between Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. These two elements combined the suspicions and concerns of Southeast Asian states and affected their relationships with one another. This led Southeast Asian states to attempt to contain these potential conflicts.

For these reasons, there were attempts to create a regional organization during the 1950s and 1960s. However, these earlier attempts failed because of continued territorial disputes and because the cooperation was initiated by outside powers and could not enjoy significant commitment from those powers. For example, Southeast Asia attempted to establish the Association of Southeast Asia (ASA) in 1961 and Malaya-Philippines-Indonesia (MAPHILINDO) in 1963 but neither institution lasted long. ASA collapsed mainly because of the conflict between Malaya and the Philippines over the territorial claim to British North Borneo (Sabah). This dispute hampered ASA’s operations, and it was further marginalized by the amalgamation of Malaya, Singapore, Sabah, and Sarawak into the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. MAPHILINDO did not survive because neither Indonesia nor the Philippines recognized Malaysia due to the territorial dispute with Malaysia over Sabah and Indonesia’s belief that the creation of Malaysia would set a precedent for imperial power, Britain, to expand its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia.

Following Indonesia’s political shift after 1965, in which Suharto began to acquire political power and alter Indonesian foreign policy priorities, Sukarno’s konfrontasi (confrontation) policy came to an end and allowed the beginning of regional
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cooperation, ASEAN was formed in 1967 amidst the aftermath of Indonesia’s confrontation with Malaysia and Singapore and during a time of high internal tensions, particularly in Indochina. The uncertain outcome of the Vietnam War and the need for cooperation amongst non-communist states in preparation for a possible withdrawal of the United States from the region also prompted the establishment of ASEAN. At the time of its establishment, the greatest threats to the national security of its individual states were indigenous insurgencies, including communist insurgencies that had the potential to invite external intervention in the region; these perceptions were shared among Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. ASEAN’s founding purpose was, therefore, to ensure the survival of its members, concentrating on their own internal political stabilization by promoting regional stability and by limiting competition between the states. This is well illustrated by the Bangkok Declaration of 8 August 1967, which proclaims that ASEAN’s purpose is “[t]o promote regional peace and stability through abiding respect for justice and the rule of law in the relationship among countries of the region and adherence to the principles of the United Nations Charter.” The United Nations Charter notably adheres to the principle of non-intervention. Thus, the ASEAN Way became the appropriate diplomatic tool to ensure this principle, striking the balance between solidarity to avoid conflict and freedom from interference.

In this sense, the concept of the ASEAN Way was an optimal institutional norm for the member states. The ASEAN Way could respect each member state’s sovereignty and independence while aiming not at solving but at containing intra-regional conflicts among the member states over issues such as territorial disputes. This was realized because the member states perceived a common threat in communist insurgencies and potentially unstable regional security, and their first priority became state-building and development. Despite worries over the loss of sovereignty, ASEAN held together because if it were to fall apart, there would be both large destabilizing regional security costs as well as the member states’ internal security costs. Therefore, in the initial stage the ASEAN Way served as a diplomatic tool to pursue member states’ national interests.

The ASEAN Way, nevertheless, began to be utilized for different purposes over time, including the expansion of ASEAN membership and the enhancement of ASEAN’s relationships with external states. During the Cold War, ASEAN did not move towards membership expansion partly due to its anti-communist posture. However, in the post–Cold War era, the disappearance of the immediate communist threat backed by the Soviet Union promoted ASEAN to include officially communist states such as Vietnam and Laos, as member states by keeping to the principle of the ASEAN Way. With regard to ASEAN’s relation with external states in the post–Cold War era, the diminishing US political and military commitment to the region and the emergence of China, which has become a military and political concern for all ASEAN member states, particularly Vietnam, due to China’s unclear political intention toward the region and the lack of military transparency, led ASEAN to create the ASEAN Regional Forum to include both the United States and China.
Within this framework, the ASEAN Way is a useful tool to bind diverging interests of different states. Through the ASEAN Way, ASEAN aimed at preventing US disengagement from Southeast Asia, while engaging and including the PRC into the multilateral framework to constrain its behavior. In other words, the utilization of the ASEAN Way is effective not only for intra-member purposes, but has also expanded to external actors. As such, the ASEAN Way was embedded into ASEAN-led institutions, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN+3, and EAS. Since the ASEAN Way functions as a conflict management tool, with ASEAN’s non-interference principles, it provides cohesion opportunities for East Asian states.

ASEAN’s Power to Induce Cooperation: Theoretical Perspectives

In analyzing the functions of the ASEAN Way in depth, it is important to understand the underlying rationale of the effectiveness of the ASEAN Way in managing disagreements and inducing cooperation. In fact, from theoretical perspectives, the “ASEAN Way” has three main advantages for fostering cooperation among states: first, it negates the consideration of relative gains, at least within the institution; second, it promotes a limited type of “issue linkage” and creates a cooperative norm; and third, iterating the ASEAN Way creates shared interests among member states that lead to the establishment of a shared identity.

First, the “ASEAN Way” negates the consideration of relative gains, at least within the institutions. The theory of cooperation admits the assumption of the basic realism theory that since the international setting is an anarchic world, where no central world government exists, states pursue maximization of their utility, and thus, they consider relative gains, especially in military-security issues. As Axelrod and Keohane argue, “the greater the conflict of interest between the players, the greater the likelihood that the players would in fact choose to defect,” the states are likely to play the prisoners’ dilemma, which is often regarded as “the key metaphor of international politics.” Therefore, the fact that ASEAN is neither a military alliance nor an institution which deals specifically with security issues can be explained by this theoretical assumption. However, with the “ASEAN Way,” ASEAN’s stance toward cooperation among member states is to put feasible cooperation into practice, and to table issues that affect relative gains considerations among member states. In this sense, the ASEAN Way tends to clarify the demarcation line between relative-gains and absolute-gains issues: it does not mechanically aim at tackling any potential relative-gains problems, but focuses on any issue areas where their absolute-gains consideration exists. For ASEAN, the defection through veto does not become a problem. The ASEAN Way is a norm to seek and induce cooperation among states, and even if the institution does not figure out issue areas where cooperation is possible, it does not do any harm.

Second, the ASEAN Way creates a norm in which the member states seek potential fields of cooperation between themselves by promoting a limited type of “issue linkages.” Axelrod and Keohane point out that issue-linkage “involves attempts to gain additional bargaining leverage by making one’s own behavior on a given issue...
contingent on others’ actions toward other issues.” There are two methods to tactically induce cooperation through issue-linkage: “backscratching” and “blackmailing.” While blackmailing uses threats, backscratching basically employs compensations for cooperation. Since ASEAN does not have a blackmailing capability due to the ASEAN Way, it entirely depends on backscratching, which provides opportunities to link other issue areas where states can easily cooperate when they face a political stalemate. In doing so, the compensation that ASEAN could provide entails producing the international image of ASEAN as a monolith organization to the member states, and of heightening its international reputation to external actors. Iterating these practices due to the ASEAN Way, the ASEAN member states tend to seek potential cooperative issue areas. Consequently, the cooperative fields in the ASEAN-led institutions are versatile, ranging from social-cultural issues, including cultural exchanges, to non-traditional security fields, including combating piracy.

Third, iterating the ASEAN Way within the ASEAN-led institutions has become a means to create shared-interests, which leads to potential cooperation among the member states and, in turn, promotes a shared-identity. According to social constructivist theory, ideational factors in international relations promote the formulation of identities and interests through interaction among actors and between actors and structures. In this sense, institutions are regarded as a relatively stable collection of practices and rules defining appropriate behavior for specific groups of actors in specific situations. Because “ASEAN Way” consensus decision-making does not oblige member states to restrain their behavior, but rather to seek cooperation, the ASEAN Way was internalized within ASEAN and beyond through the Cold War and the post–Cold War eras. With these ASEAN-led institutions, ASEAN took a building-block method of cooperation to accumulate its agreements among member states through socialization based on a plethora of conferences, joint statements, and declarations in Track I and Track II levels. This practice contributed to helping individual member states’ self-interests become shared-interests, which then became the ideational basis for its shared identity. The culmination of these practices is illustrated by the Second Joint Statement on East Asian Cooperation: Building Foundations of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation, which stipulates the goal of “forging a sense of an East Asian identity and consciousness,” and the ASEAN Charter, which stipulates “one identity” as ASEAN’s identity. Particularly, the ASEAN Charter stipulates:

Convinced of the need to strengthen existing bonds of regional solidarity to realise an ASEAN community that is politically cohesive, economically integrated and socially responsible in order to effectively respond to current and future challenges and opportunities.

Considering ASEAN’s initial political posture to “[make] no impassioned call for the ASEAN member states to take common political position,” its members’ attitude toward the institution has shifted from their own national interests to a sense of community, albeit not completely. Therefore, the ASEAN Way becomes a cooperative norm within ASEAN-led institutions.
Given these rational and ideational factors, the “ASEAN Way” has become a useful norm to induce inter-state cooperation. The effects of this norm are well-illustrated by ASEAN’s past performances in three areas: regional institutional-building, diversification of the cooperation fields, and promotion of East Asian regionalism.

**Impact of the ASEAN Way in Three Areas**

**Regional Institutional-Building in East Asia**

As the ASEAN Way has no coercive power to constrain state’s behavior, states are comfortable with following such norms in ASEAN-led institutions. This rationale led states to join ASEAN-led institutions, while ASEAN gains the capability to create the institutional nexus, the webs of Track I (official meetings) and Track II (non-official meetings), in the Asia-Pacific region. Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, ASEAN has established numerous institutions in the Asia-Pacific region, such as ARF in 1994, ASEAN+3 in 1997, and East Asia Summit in 2005. Within the ARF framework, ASEAN has included non-member states beyond Southeast Asia, such as East Asian, North American, European, South Asian, and Oceanian states. Additionally, ASEAN+3 and the East Asia Summit not only focus on security issues but also economics, cultural and social issues.

These ASEAN-led institutions also created other mechanisms in order to deal with security problems: Track II mechanisms. “Track II” refers to “unofficial, informal interactions between members of adversary groups or nations which aim to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help to resolve their conflict.”23 In this sense, even if it is difficult for government officials to discuss contentious issues at official meetings (Track I), through the backdoor line of communications, government officials or researchers can discuss issues in their private capacity. In addition, the exchange of views itself plays a confidence-building role for each participant. Thus, Track I and Track II creates a double-track security mechanism in the post–Cold War Asia Pacific region (Figure 1).

Track II is useful in terms of socialization, as well as research development. According to Jobs, there are six positive features: first, it promotes the advancement of common interests among member states; second, it is a mechanism of socialization; third, it facilitates dialogue regardless of the status of member states’ bilateral relations at any moment; fourth, it offers backdoor channels of communication; fifth, it fosters a broad understanding of security; and sixth, it creates a core group of policy elites.24 Admittedly, Track II also has its drawbacks. Most notable are its independent status and authority.25 Because Track II is connected to Track I, most of its funding comes from government organizations, and its agenda is usually influenced by Track I. Further, even though Track II is intended to produce creative ideas, given Track I’s influence over Track II, it is sometimes politicized and unable to pursue its objectives. Nonetheless, given what it can achieve, the benefits of Track II cannot be entirely ruled out.

Although it is true that ASEAN Way–based institutions are unlikely to produce binding agreements among member states, the institutional webs of Track I and Track II produce a profound level of interaction among participants from the member states. According to the ASEAN
Secretariat, more than 700 ASEAN-related Track I and Track II meetings were held in 2007. Through these dialogues, Jones and Smith argue that “the language of trust building, identity, norms, and community found their way into official documents.” Therefore, Track I and Track II complement each other and produce interconnected institutions.

**Diversification of Cooperative Fields**

Cooperation fostered by the ASEAN Way provides compensation, such as projection of emphasis on “the economic and social stability of the Southeast Asia” and “peaceful and progressive national development.” To this end, ASEAN expanded its cooperation among the member states though not in the field of security. Consequently, today, ASEAN meetings have increased to include the ASEAN Economic Ministers Meeting, ASEAN Finance Ministers Meeting, Senior Economic Officials Meeting, and the ASEAN Standing Committee. Through the proliferation of these meetings, ASEAN enmeshes government officials at various levels of member states and promotes a positive self-image within the international community, for member states as well as external states. Two examples illustrate this point. First, the ASEAN Way expands the fields of cooperation among ASEAN member states. At its inception, ASEAN had only one official meeting, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, for which foreign ministers of member states gathered. However, as the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) 1967 put

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**Figure 1**

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means to diversify the fields of cooperation not only among its member states, but also between ASEAN and external states. This is well illustrated by the experiences of the ARF that had some success in using dialogue to induce cooperative behavior from external states in security-related issues. For example, the ARF promoted the increase in defense transparency through a confidence building measure, which is illustrated by the ARF agendas that have included creating a “great transparency,” such as the publication of “Defense White Papers or equivalent documents” since its establishment in 1994.30 This seems to result in the fact that China published the first Defense White Paper at the end of 1995. Admittedly, it is difficult to establish a causal linkage between the ARF agenda and the publication of China’s Defense White paper, and its military posture was still unclear because of its military encroachment over the Spratly Island in the South China Sea in 1995. Moreover, this paper still lacks specifically in some key areas, such as the military weapons list, force deployments and defense purchases, and the ASEAN member states still feared China’s real intention.31 Nevertheless, the ARF suggested that member states publish defense white papers every two years, albeit on a voluntary basis,32 and since then, China has followed this guideline and published its white papers in 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006.

**Promotion of East Asian Regionalism**

The ASEAN Way has also become a useful diplomatic tool to foster East Asian regionalism, which has led ASEAN to play a role of “Diplomatic Hub” in East Asia. On December 14, 2005, the first East Asia Summit (EAS) was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, gathering ASEAN member states, Japan, PRC, ROK, India, Australia, and New Zealand. After the summit, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the East Asia Summit defined EAS as a “dialogue on broad strategic, political and economic issues of common interest and concern with the aim of promoting peace, stability and economic prosperity in East Asia.”33 Also, EAS would be held every year in ASEAN member states. The hallmark of this declaration was, in fact, that ASEAN would play a leading role in the burgeoning concept of an “East Asian Community.”

One of the important reasons that ASEAN could play a central role for East Asian regionalism is that the “ASEAN Way” became a useful tool to include politically and economically divergent member states into one regional framework. For example, although ASEAN admits that universal values such as human rights and democracy should be respected, as the polity in East Asian states differs extensively, they are pursued at each state’s own pace. Also, even when it becomes difficult to reach a consensus on certain political issues, the ASEAN Way diffuses political tensions among member states by drawing mutual concession from them. The political tensions that rose in 2005, when the division of labor over the role of ASEAN+3 and EAS was discussed, illustrates this point. On the one hand, Japan was reluctant to allow ASEAN+3 to become a core institution in community building, as most of the member states were not consolidated democracies, thus allowing China to dominate the institution. Therefore, Japan eagerly included other democratic states, namely India, Australia, and New Zealand, in EAS in order to increase its influence, or at least, to decrease China’s
political influence over East Asia. On the other hand, China took an initiative on ASEAN+3 to gradually increase its influence, at first in ASEAN and later in the region.

Due to these political maneuvers, ASEAN could not firmly maintain a monolithic policy toward the institutional roles of EAS and ASEAN+3 within its member states. The outcome resulted from the first East Asia Summit, which describes EAS as having a "significant" role and ASEAN+3 as being a "main vehicle" in achieving community building in East Asia. Although this statement is ambiguous, ASEAN gained political support from all the member states through mutual concession. Accordingly, the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on EAS confirmed that ASEAN was “the driving force working in partnership with the other participants of the East Asia Summit,” maintaining the effectiveness of the ASEAN Way as a political tool for community building in East Asia.

Limitations of the ASEAN Way:
Shallow Cooperative Approach and Non-Interference Principle

These past performances notwithstanding, the ASEAN Way does not and has not guaranteed cooperation due to two notable limitations on the use of the ASEAN Way. First, ASEAN’s consensus decision-making process limits the scope of cooperation and agility towards cooperative actions, especially when the institution confronts differing opinions. For example, the ASEAN-led institutions have never successfully discussed high-politics issues, such as the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. Though the institution could function as a forum for those disputing states to discuss contentious issues bilaterally, the institution itself does not function as a focal point for cooperation among member states. Also, as for the establishment of EAS in 2005, differences of opinion on the membership of EAS delayed its inauguration, and the ASEAN summit functioned only as a forum for discussion. On the primary role of EAS, even the opinions of the ASEAN member states were divided: Indonesia, Singapore, and Vietnam supported the idea, proposed by Japan, that EAS membership should include Australia, New Zealand and the United States. While Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and Myanmar argued that only ASEAN+3 members should participate in EAS, an idea proposed by PRC. Although this is not a critical schism within ASEAN, it delayed the setting of agendas and other EAS functions. Moreover, today, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (formerly “East Timor”) has gained independence from Indonesia, and it has sought to gain membership in ASEAN. The increase in ASEAN members is likely to cause “collective action problems,” where some members set their objectives to focus on their national development and other members seek to develop institutional functions, which eventually makes it ever more difficult to reach consensus.

Second, ASEAN’s principle of “non-interference” hinders cooperation with states outside ASEAN. As the 1976 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) illustrates, ASEAN’s political principle is set by the code of conduct of “non-interference in the internal affairs of one another” and “settlement of differences or disputes by peaceful means” on the basis of mutual respect for each other’s independence, sovereignty, equality,
territorial integrity, and national identity. In other words, by respecting state sovereignty, ASEAN has attempted to contain ideological and military conflicts springing from different polities existing within ASEAN, such as authoritarian, communist, socialist, and capitalist. Contentious issues among ASEAN member states, such as territorial disputes, were tabled from ASEAN’s agenda for the time being, and they established valuable cooperative relations among themselves, whereas ASEAN member states have concentrated on their own national development. To cite another case, soon after Myanmar was admitted as an ASEM (Asia-Europe Meeting) member state in 2004, Myanmar’s military coup and human rights violations provoked severe criticism from the EU. Yet ASEAN, which did not have authority over member states’ internal affairs, only showed “concern” over Myanmar’s international behavior. While the EU’s and ASEAN’s reactions toward Myanmar led to Myanmar’s withdrawal from its ASEAN chairmanship in 2005, the regime’s repression against the anti-government protest in 2007 shows that Myanmar’s domestic policies have not improved since then. In the future, the more ASEAN exercises its role as a diplomatic hub in the region, the more it promises to strengthen its diplomatic contacts with diplomatic bodies outside of ASEAN, such as the US and the EU, and the more diplomatic pressure it will face on rule of law, democracy, and human rights issues. Although the ASEAN treaties have, for the most part, upheld these values, it is not yet feasible for ASEAN to enforce them through the ASEAN Way, due to its principle of “non-interference.”

ASEAN realizes these limitations, and there have been efforts to alter the nature of the ASEAN Way. With regard to the principle of non-interference, the concept of “enhanced interaction” has been informally agreed upon. It allows member states to publicly comment on “intrastate developments that [have] a perceived detrimental social, economic or political impact on other members or the Association as a whole.” However, ASEAN member states have had little impact in pressuring Myanmar to democratize. In 2006, the Eminent Persons Group (EPG), which was established with the goal of providing recommendations on the directions and nature of the “ASEAN Charter,” considered loosening the consensus decision-making process and the political non-interference clause in the charter. Nonetheless, the ASEAN Charter, which was officially concluded in November 2007, maintained the principle that the basic decision-making process is “consultation and consensus” although it indicates that this rule may be altered when there is “a serious breach of the Charter or non-compliance.”

The ASEAN Way as Direct and Indirect “Cooperation Promoter”

Considering these strengths and limitations of the ASEAN Way, it can be argued that they exist at the extreme ends of a continuum. The power of the ASEAN Way rests on its soft cooperative norm, allowing states to freely participate in ASEAN-led institutions. Conversely, it is extremely difficult for the ASEAN Way to induce deeper cooperation on contentious issues due to this very softness. However, the arguments on the ASEAN Way often
fall into a dichotomy: it either serves to promote effective cooperation among member states, or it promotes an excuse for relegating ASEAN to being nothing more than a “talk shop.” Both arguments explain the characteristics of the ASEAN Way, but only partially. Thus, to understand its normative power, it is necessary to synthesize these arguments by exploring the origin and the raison d’être of the ASEAN Way.

Since the ASEAN Way was initially created in order to contain potential regional conflict by binding the ASEAN member states together, its main institutional objective is not to enhance cooperation in specific fields among the member states or with the external states. In this sense, it can be argued that the ASEAN Way is created as a by-product of ASEAN’s institutional purpose to maintain stability in the Southeast Asian region. However, notwithstanding the institutional constraints caused by the slow decision-making process and the principle of non-interference, ASEAN has been promoting cooperation in the region through its institutional building capability, diversification of cooperative fields, and role as regional diplomatic hub. Practicing a cooperative posture among the member states and beyond have provided opportunities for the member states to nurture the sense of the diplomatic community within East Asia.

Furthermore, even if the ASEAN Way itself has not induced deeper cooperation among states, the institutions derived from this norm offer East Asian states platforms to discuss crisis-management strategies and to demonstrate their cooperative posture. For example, the ASEAN+3 summit served as the discussion forum among its member states to respond to the East Asian financial crisis in 1997, although ASEAN did not plan to establish it for such a purpose. Also, China signed the “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea” in 2002. Despite the fact that the political tension has yet to disappear, this was a remarkable achievement because China had refused ASEAN’s attempts to establish a multilateral code of conduct in the South China Sea since 1990 and dismissed their concerns expressed in the ARF. Regardless of where China’s real intention lies, China has also enhanced its image to the international community as a cooperative state through this ASEAN-led institution.

In this sense, the ASEAN Way functions as both direct and indirect “cooperation promoter,” and due to such strengths, ASEAN has currently been a driving force to formulate East Asian Regionalism. Yet, in the process of the creation of East Asian Regionalism, ASEAN again faces a dilemma over the practicality of the ASEAN Way. On the one hand, if ASEAN maintains the ASEAN Way, it can benefit member states’ political solidarity while it continues to face the limitation of cooperation. On the other hand, if ASEAN abandons the ASEAN Way, it may foster more cooperation with a certain state, but it is likely to erode the member states’ political solidarity, which may further weaken cooperation among East Asian states.

Conclusion: Implications to East Asian Regionalism

Currently, the ASEAN Way functions well for East Asian regionalism. The very reason that ASEAN can play a significant role in East Asian regionalism is that East Asia does not have a
clear leader or organization to promote such regionalism. The paucity of trust that China's lack of military transparency causes between China and Asia's other leading regional power, Japan; the differing perspectives on the Second World War; and territorial disputes over the East China Sea all hinder their ability to recognize each other's leadership in the region. Admittedly, China became Japan's number one trading partner, surpassing the United States in 2005, while Japan was China's third leading trading partner in 2005, after the EU and the US. The economic relations between them have become stronger than ever before, and both recognize a need to establish a good relationship with each other in the interest of further fostering economic cooperation. However, the political mistrust between Japan and China has become an unnecessary obstacle to promoting cooperation in the region. ASEAN is concerned about its own relationship with each of the two nations as Japan and China are likely to compete for ASEAN support, splitting the framework of ASEAN+3. Under such a circumstance, if Japan or China eagerly pursues a leadership role in East Asia, it is likely to adversely affect East Asian cooperation. Consequently, despite the fact that ASEAN does not play a direct mediating role between Japan and the PRC, ASEAN has remained at the forefront of efforts to promote regional cooperation and establish political communication networks between states through the ASEAN-led institutions, thereby maintaining regional cooperative activities.

At the same time, ASEAN faces other political pressures to modify or abandon the ASEAN Way. Democratic states, especially Western democratic ones, will likely continue to have difficulty accepting the method. This problem was highlighted in the post–Cold War era, particularly when ASEAN pursued two strategies: the enlargement of ASEAN membership and the establishment of ASEAN's links with non-member states through the ARF and ASEAN+3. On the one hand, the enlargement was relatively successful because the new member states had different polities, and they are comfortable with the principle of non-interference, while not discouraging cooperation with each other. On the other hand, the establishment of ASEAN's links with non-member states, including democratic states such as the United States, is not successful as an enlargement strategy. This is because democratic states are not comfortable with a norm that sometimes means neglecting democratic values and human rights violations committed by ASEAN member states.

Furthermore, if the regional powers, Japan, China, and the United States, were to take a leadership role in East Asia, ASEAN would be politically marginalized. In this sense, ASEAN's dilemma is that either it will be abandoned by these three states or become entangled in great power politics among them. On the one hand, if the United States, Japan and China start to cooperate more actively, ASEAN is likely to remain a subordinate organization in the region. Neglected by these powers, ASEAN would lose its regional political influence. On the other hand, if ASEAN states become involved in contentious issues among great powers or among member states, such as the democratization of member states or the security issues involving the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan Strait, they are unlikely to remain neutral.
Becoming entangled in these issues may also cause political divisions within ASEAN itself.

In order for ASEAN to play a relevant role in the future of East Asian regionalism, it needs to define what type of regionalism it needs to promote and understand what domain the association can and will play most effectively. It is true that most cooperative frameworks currently in existence in East Asia have been created by ASEAN. As long as political tensions exist between the regional great powers, Japan, China and the United States, the ASEAN-led institutions will remain useful forums; and the ASEAN Way will remain a useful tool to prevent political destabilization in the region, and does not necessarily require modification. Nonetheless, without defining the objectives of the creation of East Asian regionalism, ASEAN’s pressure for the establishment of East Asian community is likely to end up mere advocacy. Although ASEAN currently aims at establishing the ASEAN Security Community by 2015, along with the ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, the underlying concept of the ASEAN community is still immature: it does not discuss how to further deepen and diversify cooperation through the ASEAN Way or how to deal with the vast diversities in political systems and the levels of economic development which exist within the member states. Furthermore, once the political rivalries among regional powers are mitigated, albeit not completely, it would be likely that ASEAN can be politically marginalized in the region and may no longer play the regional role that it enjoys today. To avoid this worst-case scenario, ASEAN needs to establish the objectives of East Asian regionalism, ASEAN’s role in it, and to this end, the association may need to start research on the potential and feasible modification of the ASEAN Way.

Thus, ASEAN continues to confront the necessity to walk a fine line between managing outside political pressures and preserving solidarity among member states. In facing the external pressure for the modification of the ASEAN Way, the timing to do so will be crucial. If modification comes too soon, ASEAN will sacrifice political solidarity among member states; if it comes too late, ASEAN will lose its political influence in the region. To avoid these consequences, ASEAN first needs to strengthen an incentive mechanism for member states to conform to universal values – for instance, persuading external states to increase economic assistance in return for buttressing human rights protection. Once ASEAN member states decide to conform to the values to a certain degree, the ASEAN Way can be modified in accordance with the political progress they make by altering the consensus decision-making process in social and economic fields. Admittedly, this will be a difficult task for the association. However, on a step-by-step basis, ASEAN needs to begin serious consideration on the modification of the ASEAN Way to facilitate cooperation beyond states in the region without undermining its value as a norm of cooperation in the region.
ENDNOTES


5 Kivimaki, p. 9 and p. 20. Malaysia at this time includes Singapore as part of Malaysian Federation.

6 Leifer, p. 6.

7 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

8 The members of the ASA were Malaya, the Philippines, and Thailand.


10 Leifer, p. 6.


12 Goh, p. 129.


21 ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Charter, p. 2.


25 Ibid., pp. 272-274. Jobs asserts that there are four setbacks; first, agenda setting, in which though Track II expands its agenda to include not only traditional security issues to non-traditional security issues, none has accomplished due to their lack of creative ideas; second, Track II autonomy, which produces “autonomy dilemma”-while gaining independent from government influence, Track II loses funds, their influence and credibility to governments. While dependent on government, they lose their autonomy and susceptible to government influence; third, limited capacity, where Track I are ‘less willing to give their Track II counterparts any decision-making or investigative or monitoring capabilities’; and fourth, detachment, in which Track II institutions have come to be perceived as exclusive club, divorced from civil society, and become a reflection of political climates.

26 ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN Calendar of Meetings & Events," (From January 2007 to December 2007) at <http://www.aseansec.org/>. Accessed 29 April, 2008. In 2007, there were 76 meetings in January, 39 in February, 65 in March, 73 in April, 89 in May, 50 in June, 92 in July, 91 in August, 37 in September, 60 in November, and 16 in December.

27 Jones and Smith, p. 158.


29 The ministerial bodies of ASEAN Political-Security Community Council includes: first, ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting (AMM) with ASEAN Senior Official Meeting (ASEAN SOM); ASEAN Standing Committee (ASC); second, Commission on the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (SEANWFZ Commission); third, ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) with ASEAN Defence Senior Official Meeting (ADSM); fourth, ASEAN Law Ministers Meeting (ALAWMM) with ASEAN Senior Law Officials Meeting (ASLOM); fifth, ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) with Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime (SOMTC), ASEAN Senior Officials on Drugs Matters (ASOD); and Directors-Generals of Immigration Departments and Heads of Consular Affairs Divisions of Ministries of Foreign Affairs Meeting (DGICM); and sixth, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) with ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Official Meeting (ARF SOM). ASEAN Secretariat, *The ASEAN Charter*, pp. 41-42.


31 “Beijing should be more transparent about defence posture,” *The Straits Times*, 5 September, 1996.
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The present paper explores the position of tribal minorities in Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as their connection to the indigenous peoples’ rights movements all over the world. The term “tribality” is used as proposed by Geoffrey Benjamin – it refers to a peoples’ socio-politically autonomous way of life which exists as an adaptation to, and in close contact with, more centralized and stratified political entities. With the classical civilizing process, according to Benjamin, we can differentiate between three basic socio-cultural types: rulers, peasants, and tribal groups. He argues that “tribal circumstances have not existed from time immemorial, but came into being with the emergence of centralized polities.”

These types are not evolutionarily ranked (with tribal groups having the earliest and/or lowest level of cultural development), but instead resemble one single complex entity in which populations adopted various lifestyles in response to the emergence of states. Opposing the view that tribal hunter-gatherers are stone-age survivals living in isolation from outer influences, I will first examine two case studies of forest-dwelling peoples - the Batek of Taman Negara (Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan state, Peninsular Malaysia) and the Orang Rimba (or Anak Dalam/Kubu) of Bukit Duabelas National Park (Jambi province, Indonesia). Afterwards, I will discuss whether the concept of indigeneity is a viable analytical tool for anthropological or sociological studies. Finally, I conclude by examining the substance and results of government programs that aim to support the socio-economic development of tribal peoples.

**Case Studies: the Batek and the Orang Rimba**

Living in or close to the remaining lowland
tropical forests in the states Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan in Peninsular Malaysia, the Batek currently number about 1,500 individuals (i.e. they account for about 0.0054 percent of all Malaysian citizens numbering 27.73 million according to the 2008 population estimation). In all of these three states, they are surrounded by a mostly Islamic Malay mainstream society. In Terengganu and Kelantan many Batek, like other former mobile hunter-gatherer groups in Malaysia, have (voluntarily or by force) to some degree adopted Islam, settled down, and lived as small-scale horticulturalists, collecting forest products for only a few months each year. In Pahang, approximately 450 Batek have been able to largely maintain their forest gathering based way of life and continue to live as mobile foragers and traders of forest products, primarily inside Taman Negara area.

The Batek are part of the so-called Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia, a term normally translated as indigenous, aboriginal, or original peoples. Contemporary Orang Asli consist of at least 19 culturally and linguistically distinct groups, varying in size between about 75 and 34,000 individuals. For administrative purposes, the Malaysian government has classified various Orang Asli groups into three major categories, i.e. the Aboriginal Malays (about 43 percent), the Senoi (about 54 percent) and the Semang (about 3 percent). At present more than 150,000 Orang Asli live in the Malaysian Peninsula, therefore comprising a little bit more than 0.5 percent of the total Malaysian population.

In the past, the Batek (a Semang group) subsisted mainly by hunting and gathering in the rainforests and trading forest products for food (rice, flour, etc.) and commodities (metal tools, tobacco, cloth, etc.). Ethnohistorical research shows that the Batek, like other Semang groups, have maintained relations with their neighbors for as long as records are available, sometimes to their benefit (trade), at other times to their disadvantage (slave raids, epidemics). To retain their hunting and gathering way of life after most of their traditional lands were lost to encroaching loggers and farmers, the Batek retreated further and further into Taman Negara, a conservation area that spreads over 4,343 square kilometers and lies almost entirely on the Batek's traditional land. When in 1987 the so-called Taman Negara Master Plan was released, the policy aims were explicitly based on the American National Park Service model, which privileges biodiversity conservation over local peoples' livelihoods that depend on resources inside national park boundaries. Therefore, locals were not legally allowed to utilize their lands in the same way they used to before the establishment of the conservation area. I will return to this point later.

The Orang Rimba are a forest-dwelling population in Indonesia that has been the subject of study by both anthropologists and civil servants since the end of the nineteenth century, when the Sumatran Sultanates of Palembang and Jambi came under Dutch colonial control. Initially known as Kubu, they were described as either untouched aboriginal peoples or culturally regressed Malays. By arguing that the Kubu were threatened and exploited by the Muslim Malays living around them, researchers legitimized Dutch colonial rule to “protect” the “lower-cultured peoples” of Sumatra and to help them to find their way (back) into modernity.

Not until the 1970s, when the transition from
a peasant-agricultural tribute-based society to an industrial-capitalist nation state had already been in progress for some time, was further documented anthropological research among the Orang Rimba carried out. Øyvind Sandbukt eventually documented that the label Kubu had been used in the past for two culturally distinct populations. The first were shifting cultivators and collectors living in the peneplains between the major river systems of Batang Hari (Jambi) and Musi (South Sumatra). The second category described small groups of mobile foragers inhabiting the small interfluves of these two major river drainage basins. While the first category of Kubu became assimilated into the Muslim Malay settler population (after the plains had been opened up for resource extraction in the early twentieth century), the mobile forest dwellers took refuge in the dwindling remains of the rainforest. Living there they called themselves Orang Rimba (people of the forest) or Anak Dalam (people of the interior) and limited their contact with their Malay neighbors. In today's society the term “Kubu” has a pejorative connotation implying backwardness. Therefore, in this paper, this term is only used when referring to earlier publications.

There are no exact demographic figures on the Orang Rimba, because for a long time the Indonesian census did not recognize ethnic distinctions and state authorities could not accurately count the numbers of mobile forest peoples. However, in the 1990s the Indonesian Ministry for Social Affairs estimated the total number of Kubu in the provinces of South Sumatra and Jambi to be around 15,000 individuals (i.e. approximately 0.00007 percent of the more than 200 million Indonesian citizens). Only a fraction of them still live as mobile rainforest hunter-gatherers, as the majority had lost their traditional lands due to massive logging, plantations and state-sponsored migration from other parts of Indonesia. Today these former hunter-gatherers make their living as wageworkers, beggars, or small-scale horticulturists. The Bukit Duabelas region is one of the few spots where about 2,000 to 3,000 Orang Rimba largely maintain their self-governed way of life. Yet, even though a territory approximately 650 square kilometers – roughly the size of the Special Capital Territory of Jakarta (Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta) – was declared a national park in 2001, the loss of forest continues, as the conservation area is encroached upon by oil palm and pulpwood plantations.

Indigeneity and Its Complications

Before examining the concepts of tribality and indigeneity in Malaysia and Indonesia and applying them to the two aforementioned case studies, it will be useful to provide a short overview of the mobilization of indigenous peoples’ movements all over the world, which experienced a rapid increase ever since the International Labor Organization (ILO) released its Convention 169 in 1989 and the United Nations (UN) declared an International Year of Indigenous Peoples in 1993. These sorts of official recognition were followed by the UN International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (1995 to 2004). In 2007, the UN General Assembly ratified the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with 144 votes in favor, 4 votes against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States), and 11 abstentions. Before the ratification, representatives from certain countries wanted the states to have the right to decide whether or not there indeed were indigenous
peoples living within their national boundaries, while indigenous peoples’ representatives insisted on self-definition. The agreement affirmed the importance of taking into consideration the variety that existed between regions and countries, the significance of national and regional particularities, and the various historical backgrounds of these areas. The final version of the declaration can therefore be understood as a compromise, found for the sake of gaining the approval of the major parties entitled to vote at the cost of agreeing upon a clear definition of “indigenous peoples.”

As Michael Dove states, “formal international definitions [of the term indigenous] focus . . . on historic continuity, distinctiveness, marginalization, self-identity, and self-governance.” Although this definition seems clear, matters are not simple at all. In his criticism of such essentialist notions of indigeneity and their implications, Adam Kuper questions the empirical validity of “being indigenous” in a primordial sense and warned that accepting the logic of special indigenous peoples rights based on assumed traditional (i.e. unchanged and stable) ways of life and autochthony poses a great risk for the interests of groups concerned. Kuper argues that “traditional” peoples may lose credibility if they do not conform to romantic images manifest in idealized forms of the unchanged ways of “traditional” life that the public and state policy makers expect to see. Even though Kuper accepts that claims for indigenousness and certain rights due to this status can be understood as a means to gain political recognition which would otherwise not be granted, he argues that academics should not censor themselves for political reasons, since “activism, however well-intentioned, does not always work out for the best,” especially if it is based on “ideas that have no intellectual justification.”

Kuper theorizes that if indigeneity ultimately becomes the legal basis for claiming special indigenous rights, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) would identify some people in a region as truly indigenous while others would be left out. This would then undermine the “claim that support for indigenous peoples’ movements is just a way of helping the poor and underprivileged.” With this critique in mind, we can also recognize another important aspect of the debate. There is not only a political dimension to indigeneity, but a sociological one as well. As Benjamin remarks, social scientists can “distinguish between the unselfconscious ‘true’ indigency as an embedded social dimension, and the self-conscious ‘Indigenous’ identity that is often involved in asserting . . . autonomy from the state. Sociologically, these are quite different phenomena.” Benjamin proposes calling the former “indigency” and the latter “indigenousness,” and asserts “indigency has to do with family-level connections to concrete places, and not with the connection of entire ethnic groups (whatever they may be) to broad territories.”

Exogeny, as indigency’s counterpart, follows from people’s migratory movements which can take place due to a variety of reasons, the most common of which are linked to the exhaustion of one’s resource base or to forced resettlement. Exogeny is accompanied by the degradation of culturally inherited (cognitive) ties to concrete places of residence, first and foremost because those very places are left behind and a fresh start is sought somewhere else. Scientifically, therefore, it is possible to refer to real indigeneity as “the real-thing – taken-for-granted, and embedded in people’s daily activities,” and not skip the debate over indigenous authenticity by focusing on
“the articulation of indigeneity,” which politicizes the understanding of indigeneity.

Many academic discussions, however, have treated the political and legal definitions of indigeneity as if they were analytical sociological categories. In a rejoinder to Kuper, for example, Werner Zips argues that some NGOs’ perceptions of pure, authentic, and primitive indigenous peoples bear little or no resemblance to those in international law. Yet, he reasserts that having a common foundational understanding of indigeneity has “opened a window of opportunity to promote [indigenous peoples’] political and legal recognition under the law of nations.”

While Zips’ propositions are well-intentioned, his argument is still mired within the legal and political sphere. Only Benjamin’s aforementioned theory offers a hint at how to proceed answering this question in a scientific manner. He suggests that it might be more reasonable to reduce the unit of analysis to families in concrete places, instead of lumping whole ethnic groups in less concrete territories. It might furthermore be useful to see indigeneity as a graded, not absolute, phenomenon, where people can be classified as being more or less indigenous (and therefore more or less exogenous as well). Highly indigenous cultural traditions can be associated with a socio-political organization based on kin-groups with a lack of a migratory family history, and which are less willing or able to commodify their own social and natural environment. However, as Benjamin emphasizes, the “mechanisms underlying the socio-economic differences between indigenes and exogenes . . . are likely to be very complex” and “indigenes’ relative lack of [socio-economic] success may result both from the absence of the toughening mechanism of a migratory history and from their relative inability to treat their home places as exploitable commodities.”

Yet, while it is essential to recognize that the situation of non-tribal as well as tribal indigenes differs profoundly from that of exogenes, it is as important to see that the “difference cuts right through ‘societies’, and not as commonly thought just between them.”

A failure to acknowledge the difference between political and sociological categorizations of indigeneity may result in analyses that resemble political pamphlets. After all, aside from multinational donor agencies, NGOs, or minorities, national governments also have definitions of indigeneity. With the current version of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, these interpretative variations cannot be unified. State authorities reject or adapt the concept for the sake of strengthening their position, and reserve the right to decide whether there indeed are indigenous peoples living within their national boundaries, and if so, how to deal with them.

**Being Indigenous in Malaysia and Indonesia**

Under the Malaysian Federal Constitution (Article 153), the King is in charge of assuring that the Malays and the natives of Malaysian Borneo are allotted a certain share of scholarships, public service positions, or licenses for trade and business in order to improve their socioeconomic standing. While these discriminative policies have been criticized during recent years both from political parties and civil society actors, the official Malaysian position today is that the so-called bumiputera (“sons/daughters of the soil”), i.e. non-Chinese and non-Indian Malaysians, need to be given a share of economic wealth appropriate to their numbers.
Christian Wawrinec

In this view, Peninsular Malaysia forms the tanah Melayu (land of the Malays), a long-standing concept dating perhaps as far back as the pre-colonial period, that aims to assimilate the Orang Asli into the Malay style of life. The rationale behind this idea of a Malay homeland is based on the kuih lapis (layered cake) concept, an outdated ethnological theory going back to at least the early twentieth century that stratifies the region’s population into various “races.” According to this layered cake concept, during the last several thousand years different populations migrated one after another out of China (or elsewhere), with the “cumulative effect of characterizing the peoples themselves as the passive exponents of preformed, evolutionarily-ranked cultures.”

In the case of the Batek (as well as all other Orang Asli groups), the argument that they were the first inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula does not contradict the government’s view. However, the official government position is that since civilization began only with the arrival of the Malays, who then created a “Malay homeland,” only the Malays qualify as real indigenes. Consequently, state authorities claim that the descendants of those “races” who had arrived earlier (and are still viewed as pursuing a backward lifestyle) can only achieve modernity by becoming Malay. When talking about the Semang, some scientists and official authorities still call them Malayan Negritos (literally: little Negroes). This term’s racial connotation is entirely misleading. Semang livelihoods are distinct from other groups not because of any racial differences, but because of their adaptation to a life as rainforest hunter-gatherers and collectors. Social evolution, therefore, did not result in the survival of earlier (lower) cultures in the midst of later (higher) ones, as assumed by the layered cake model. Instead, all Orang Asli “are contemporary human beings whose ways of life are not mindless replications of ancestral cultural forms established thousands of years ago. Their lives are lived now . . . with constant regard for how their neighbours [sic] live now as well.”

Furthermore, all “Peninsular Orang Asli have long had the choice of becoming Malay peasants, even in pre-Islamic times.” Some of them did so and intermarried with members of other groups. Malay origins are therefore ultimately rooted in the Orang Asli population. Meanwhile, others opted for ways of tribal livelihood by setting up their own societal patterns and retaining their socio-political and cultural autonomy in upstream regions, while at the same time sustaining relations with the dominant downstream centers. The Semang pattern is a way of life followed particularly in the northern parts of the Malay Peninsula by low-density and rather egalitarian populations that live not only by hunting and gathering in the rainforest environments, but also by foraging off “other polities and economies in their vicinity.”

In Indonesia, the layered cake model does not play any significant role in current political affairs, and for decades state authorities attached no practical value to the international concept of indigeneity, as they claimed that all ethnic groups (with the exception of – once again – people of Chinese origin and other immigrants) are pribumi, i.e. indigenous or native. The pribumi concept, just like the bumiputera concept of Malaysia, derived from colonial categories of citizenship (Europeans, Foreign Orientals, and Natives), and affiliation to these different categories was crucial to how a person could participate and be treated under the colonial legal system. The third category,
at first also called bumiputera, but eventually renamed pribumi (a term borrowed from Javanese language), remained an integral part in the legal system after independence. Its initial aim was to strengthen local peoples' positions compared with foreign interest groups, but after the military gained increased political influence in 1965, pribumi policies mainly strengthened the military elite who cooperated with big non-pribumi businesses. From the outset, all of the nation's territory was the locus of pribumi politics, and members of nearly all ethnic groups were seen as belonging to the Indonesian nation. The lack of integration of certain groups into modernity was understood as a result of geographical isolation and cultural backwardness, exemplified by the lack of adequate clothing, faith in one of the government-recognized world religions (i.e. Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism; Confucianism has only recently been added to this list), and wet-rice agriculture. These groups were perceived as culturally regressed members of the Indonesian nation, not necessarily as lower-cultured “races.” However, calls for affirmative actions towards those marginalized ethnic groups were seen as disrespecting the doctrine of SARA, an acronym for ethnic or tribal differences (suku), religion (agama), race (ras) and inter-group/class relationships (antargolongan). Addressing these topics was forbidden during President (General) Suharto's autocratic regency (1966-98) for the sake of guaranteeing national stability. International regulations towards indigenous peoples, it was said, would be ignored as long as the international community did not recognize Indonesia's exceptional situation as a country whose indigenous peoples made up ninety-eight percent of the population. However, even though there was no change in the international community's attitude, some new opportunities for marginalized groups expressing their demands arose with the political reforms after President Suharto's resignation from office in 1998. One recent outcome is the passing of the citizenship law in 2006, which mentioned only Indonesian citizens (warga negara Indonesia) and has abandoned completely the pribumi category.

**Development Programs for Aimless Wanderers in the Forest?**

Governmental departments for the development and welfare of tribal groups in Malaysia and Indonesia had developed under different post-colonial circumstances, but both regarded the populations concerned merely as minors who had to been taken care of in their best interest.

A few years after the end of World War II, various political factions were trying to shape British Malaya's future. When communist forces there commenced an armed struggle against the police and European citizens, the government announced a State of Emergency and declared all communist activities illegal. Party members and sympathizers who had not been caught went underground or retreated into the jungles, where they established permanent bases. During the Communist insurgency, which officially lasted from 1948 to 1960, the tribal peoples' role in the struggle was initially ignored. After some years, realizing that the Orang Asli played some role in supplying guerilla troops with food, shelter, and manpower, the British Malayan military resettled some of them by force to prevent such further co-operations. However, the consequences of these resettlement projects were
disastrous for the Orang Asli, resulting in the death of thousands due to lack of shelter, poor nutrition and improper sanitary conditions. When it became clear that the policy of resettlement had failed, the government eventually decided to regain the Orang Asli’s support by winning their hearts, and therefore allowed them return to their homelands, supplying them with commodities and basic health care along the way. Direct governance over these people became the task of a Federal Advisor on Aborigines. Responsibility then shifted in 1954 to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. This was eventually renamed the Department of Orang Asli Affairs (Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli, JHEAO), which continues to function to this day.41

In Indonesia, even though the Dutch had already encouraged and forced some interior populations to resettle in more accessible areas for the sake of easier taxation and extraction of labor force, a major step towards the so-called development of marginalized populations can be seen in the Indonesian government’s creation of the Directorate for the Development of Isolated Tribal Groups in 1951. The Indonesian government viewed the so-called suku-suku terasing (literally: isolated, alienated, exotic tribes) as departing from the desired norm of a modern Indonesian way of life. The directorate was eventually renamed the Program for the Development of Social Prosperity of Isolated Communities, a name it kept until 1999, when it was dissolved for a short time and then reestablished as the Program for the Development of Social Prosperity of Geographically Isolated Adat Communities.42

Even though the programs for the development of the tribal peoples in Malaysia and Indonesia have continued to this day, improvements have been rather unsubstantial. It is, for example, 119 times more likely that an Orang Asli mother will die in childbirth than another Malaysian mother. Also, an Orang Asli’s life expectancy is nearly twenty years less than that for the national population.43 Referring to the Indonesian case study, the government argues that the resettlement of the Orang Rimba outside the national park borders is necessary, as their previous land use rights inside the national park was only a temporary solution to the larger problem of their assimilation into mainstream society’s way of life. The Agenda for the use of Bukit Duabelas National Park envisions the segmentation of the national park into four zones (core, rehabilitation, forest and use zone), with different access rights for both locals and outsiders – even though in reality this is hard for state authorities to control due to the lack of money, power and initiative.44 The Indonesian and Malaysian governments follow a conservation paradigm modeled after the American national parks system, in which it is deemed necessary to remove people from the landscape in order to preserve areas considered rich in biodiversity.45 Settling down mobile peoples away from their native habitats, it is said, would further increase their access to the state’s educational and health care facilities – a public service they have a right to just like any other citizen.

As Endicott notes for the Malaysian case, the official argument that the Batek have no legal or moral claim to their lands because they are nomadic, aimless wanderers in the forests, is nothing more than a stereotype.46 The empirical evidence shows that although some individuals “may migrate to different areas in search of spouses, groups generally confine their movements to river valleys.
that they know well, where they know the locations of food and other resources and where most of their kin live.” Yet, notwithstanding the fact that almost all Orang Asli live in settled communities today (the Batek of Taman Negara being one of the few exceptions), state authorities maintain the argument that all Orang Asli are part of the most marginalized communities due specifically to their nomadic lifestyle. Thus, it is their duty to first become “normal” before the government can actually do anything for them. Mobility is not the same as migration – the hunter-gatherers’ lives are cognitively and ritually affiliated with concrete places. Indigenous socio-political organizations are based on kinship and do not participate in the state’s bureaucratic structures.

**Bureaucratic Organization**

National governments, whether in Malaysia, Indonesia or elsewhere in the world, are motivated by remarkably different interests than those of tribal populations, as their political economies are based on different modes of production. Political benefits and (short-term) goals that increase the legitimacy and growth of bureaucratic institutions remain the centerpiece of state authorities’ decisions. Policies aimed at the development of marginalized peoples enable the governments to not only control those very peoples, but also access their traditional lands by loosening their cultural and spiritual connections to the land. It should, however, be kept in mind that it is the rule and not the exception that individuals living in complex societies are normally excluded from everyday decision-making processes. Their livelihoods are instead often decided by bureaucrats. As Frank Elwell suggests, bureaucratic elitism is an organizational centerpiece of complex societies, since “[e]litism is not the result of conspiracies . . . [but rather] is endemic to social organization.”

Nevertheless, marginalized peoples, whether tribal or non-tribal, do not remain passive in this struggle for cultural rights and economic improvement. In Indonesia, with the establishment of the Alliance of the Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, or AMAN) in 1999, the former so-called isolated communities or tribes expressed their demands that the state respect their traditional affiliations to their respective lands and call them by a more honorable term, i.e. *masyarakat adat* (“adat communities”). By stressing their historic continuity, distinctiveness, and marginalization, the advocates align themselves with the international political definition of indigenous peoples. The term *adat*, often translated as “customary way of life,” has a flexible meaning and does not necessarily affect all aspects of everyday life. Consequently, it can be said that every person in Indonesia is in some way influenced by his or her group’s *adat* (be it Islamic, Hindu, Protestant, Javanese, Arabic, Balinese, Minangkabau, or that of any other religious or ethnic membership). By making clear that even they, the most marginalized communities, have traditional ways of life and affiliations with their lands, these minorities hope to gain support from national and international donors, human rights agencies, and others.

In Malaysia, some employees of the Department of Orang Asli Affairs founded the Peninsular Malaysia Orang Asli Association (Persatuan Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia, or POASM) in 1976. During the first years it cooperated closely with the JHEAO, but by the end of the 1980s – after more
outsiders (i.e. educated Orang Asli who were not employed in the JHEAO) joined the Association – a more independent and critical line towards the Department’s programs was adopted, especially as the JHEAO was seen as an administrative arm of the state. This, and the fact that membership to the POASM was “open to all Orang Asli and other ‘bumiputera’ who are fully-interested in developing the Orang Asli,” resulted not only in a rapid increase of members, but also in calls that the Association should be made a political party to act more powerfully for the interests of the Orang Asli.

**Conclusion**

Even though the public perception of the worldwide indigenous peoples rights movements often focuses on its quest to protect “traditional” cultures, which according to popular discourse would otherwise be lost in the process of globalization, in reality the groups concerned are often trying to gain recognition because they are impoverished and exploited by the mainstream societies surrounding them. Populations presenting themselves as indigenous peoples are very often marginalized, but not necessarily indigenous or tribal in a sociological sense.

While both the AMAN and the POASM focus strongly on cultural rights issues, they do also pursue political and economic goals, as the contest for cultural rights is also a contest for material resources which marginalized local populations and dominant state authorities – as well as NGOs, conservationists, etc. – have interests in. However, the discussion over the marginalization of certain groups should not distract our view from the fact that these populations are not homogenous and that there are inequalities both within and between groups. Two major points can therefore be kept in mind when looking at the indigenous peoples’ rights movement – not only in Malaysia and Indonesia, but also elsewhere in the world.

First, the empowerment of (assumedly) indigenous peoples can be an opportunity for local indigenous and non-indigenous elites to profit from the fruits of development while “their” groups remain marginalized, i.e. indigenous empowerment does not automatically result in good local governance. Social scientists and other actors might end up in a muddle of contradictions by working exclusively with a political or legal concept of indigeneity, which focuses on fixing the boundaries of a particular ethnic group within a certain territory, as opposed to a sociological analytical category of indigeneity, which focuses on family-level connections to concrete places. As Li mentions, “[w]hile AMAN’s focus is on people still residing on their ancestral land, it is not clear that the definition excludes the intellectuals and aristocrats who identify themselves as masyarakat adat but happen to live in cities, or people such as the Dayak who have been migrating out from the interior of Kalimantan towards the coast for the past century.”

Secondly, poverty and marginalization do not only concern indigenous or tribal groups, but are also experienced by vast numbers of individuals living at the lowest strata of mainstream societies. Socio-economic inequality is, after all, a matter of classes and not of cultures. If cultural differences are emphasized while the overall common interests of marginalized parts of societies, regardless of their indigenous or non-indigenous labels, are ignored, the well-intentioned activism for indigenous peoples rights can indeed backfire. Thus, if we
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examine the struggle for cultural rights without also examining the context of economic and political relations, we miss the most essential points of it.

ENDNOTES


2 The Malay term “Taman Negara” in fact translates as “National Park.” Hence a denomination as Taman Negara national park (as it is often used, for example in tourist brochures) is redundant.

3 Whereas anthropology and sociology can be distinguished from each other by their respective disciplinary histories, academics from both subjects aim to explain social phenomena holistically. Hence, real-world research can put aside disciplinary boundaries and focus on concrete problems. In this article, I use the terms anthropological and sociological interchangeably.


17 Oldham and Frank, 6-7.


19 Kuper, 395.


21 This approach—following Gayatri C. Spivak’s “strategic essentialism”—could be called strategic indigeneity, as Erwin Schweitzer suggested to me.

22 Kuper, 400.

23 Guenther et al., 21.

24 Benjamin, On Being Tribal in the Malay World, 63.

25 Ibid., 15.


27 Dove, 193.

28 Guenther et al., 27.

29 Benjamin, Indigene-exogeny, 10.

30 Benjamin, On Being Tribal in the Malay World, 15.

31 See for example “Ready to review race policy” (The Straits Times, 10 February 2009), where Malaysian Minister of International Trade and Industry Mohyiddin Yassin talks about reviewing the race-based New Economic Policy (NEP).
32 Dentan et al., 20. See also Sharon Siddique and Leo Suryadinata, “Bumiputra and Pribumi: Economic Nationalism (Indiginism) in Malaysia and Indonesia,” Pacific Affairs, vol.54, no.4 (1981/82), 674. The authors also trace back the fostering of the bumiputra (Malaysia) and pribumi (Indonesia) categories to the early twentieth century and assert that its major implications at that time were not improving the economic condition of the "natives," but bringing administrative order into a chaos of migrant and non-migrant populations ("races").
33 Benjamin, On Being Tribal in the Malay World, 18.
34 Ibid., 19.
36 Ibid., 10.
37 Siddique and Suryadinata, 663.
41 Dentan et al., 61-64.
42 Duncan, 87-88.
46 Endicott, 33.
47 Ibid., 49.
49 Nicholas, 60 and 102.
51 The Indonesian word aman means safe, peaceful, secure, or calm; therefore the acronym AMAN has probably been opted for very intentionally. Martin Slama pointed my attention to this fact.
53 Already twenty years ago, Benda-Beckmann noted that Indonesian villagers often present their adat in more legalistic and old-fashioned terms than it is actually lived. In interactions with state authorities, they argue that their behavior is bound by adat and their non-compliance with the bureaucratic demands is due to that. However, it is often the case that the real reasons for villagers' behaviors can simply not be said openly as they would be unacceptable for state authorities. Referring to adat is therefore a way to promote one's interest if it contradicts state authorities’ viewpoints, even though the success of this strategy is not guaranteed. See Franz von Benda-Beckmann, “Scape-Goat and Magic Charm. Law in Development Theory and Practice,” Journal of Legal Pluralism, vol.28 (1989), 138.
54 Dentan et al., 153-154.
55 Nicholas, 158.
56 Kuper, 400.
57 Li, 647.

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