

# Harvard Asia Quarterly

*A Journal of Asian Studies Affiliated with the Harvard University Asia Center*



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# Harvard Asia Quarterly

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The Center sponsors a number of seminars, conferences, lectures, and programs during the academic year, including the annual Tsai Lecture, the Modern Asia, Southeast Asia, and Islam in Asia seminar series, the Ezra F. Vogel Distinguished Visitors Program, and the Asia Vision 21 conference. In addition to its award-winning Publications Program, the Center issues a weekly bulletin featuring Asia-related events at Harvard and in the greater Boston area, as well as an online newsletter.

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF TEXTUAL SCHOLARSHIP IN ANCIENT CHINESE STUDIES



BEN HAMMER · SHANDONG UNIVERSITY

## ABSTRACT

All the various branches of classical Chinese studies have an important common denominator, and that is they all begin with Chinese texts. Whether our discussions favor ancient literature, history, or philosophy, the ancient text is the first and most important obstacle that one must overcome. Since the texts that we base our research on are hundreds if not thousands of years old, they present to us unique problems of understanding and interpretation. Textual scholarship, or documentology, is the field that deals specifically with textual problems, helping us both to identify the problems in ancient texts (whether they be mistakes or particularly obscure passages), as well as confidently navigate our way through them. Though textual scholarship is an often under-appreciated and under-utilized branch of study, a basic understanding of its methods and reference books is in fact a necessary complement to any “higher” discussions. This article introduces just such basic principles and reference tools of documentology that consistently prove to augment the sinologist’s chosen field of research.

...

In 1998 a mainland Chinese publishing house specializing in ancient books published a book entitled *Wen Zhi* 《文致》. *Wen Zhi* is a literary anthology originally compiled at the end of the Ming Dynasty during the reigns of Emperors Tian Qi and Chong Zhen by a scholar named Liu Shi Lin 刘士麟. It contains more than eighty works from over sixty authors, from the Han Dynasty up to the Ming.

In the preface to this new 1998 edition, the editor wrote that this was an “unknown, lost work that is difficult to come by” (一部难得的明人不传秘笈) which he recovered accidentally while on a trip in South Korea. He brought his new discovery back to China and promptly had it published in the form of a modern book.

Unfortunately for the editor, not only is this not a “lost” book, it is not even rare. In fact it can be found in dozens of public archives throughout China. If we pick up just one, common reference book, *A Catalogue of Superior Versions of Chinese Books* 《中国古籍善本书目》 and search for *Wen Zhi*, we will find that there are nine different versions of this book located in one hundred different institutions in mainland China. These do not include the less-than-superior editions stored in countless library stacks or other editions possessed by private and overseas collectors. And if that were not enough, the public library in the city where the publishers

and editor are located contains at least two of these editions.

This is a telling example of someone in the field of ancient Chinese studies who was unaware of the importance of bibliographic research.

Bibliographic research is but one part of the textual scholarship arsenal with which we need to arm ourselves in order to overcome any textual issues or problems that may arise with every Chinese text we encounter. As sinologists who wish to understand and explicate myriad aspects of China's rich cultural history, we are first faced with the texts. As numerous as they are ancient, Chinese texts present us with many layers of obstacles which lie between the ancient author's original intent and the message that we read and perceive today.

The simple childhood game of "Telephone" or "Grapevine" illustrates well this point. A random sentence is whispered from one participant to the next until the final person in the chain reveals aloud the message that was finally received, only to hear how far it has strayed from the originator's. This is an example of the corruption and distortion inherent in the process of transmission. If this corruption is extrapolated to a text being copied and recopied over the course of hundreds and even thousands of years, among the hands of scholars and scribes who at any point may intentionally or unintentionally alter the text itself based on their misreading, then the need for rigorous textual analysis and reconstruction is obvious. Herein lies the reason for textual scholarship.

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Textual scholarship may be seen by some as a very dry aspect of sinological research, but it is essential, and even interesting. When we say textual scholarship, we are referring to its broadest sense, also called documentology 古典文献学. We must first take these ancient texts themselves as the object of study and meticulous research before we can safely move on to the philosophical (or historical or literary) ideas transmitted by them.

The scope of texts which lends itself to this discipline is equally broad. To use the traditional Chinese method of bibliographic classification, the "four-branch system," it encompasses the (Confucian) Classics, history, philosophy, and literature 经史子集. This article allots one section to each subdivision of traditional Chinese textual studies: bibliographic research; bibliology, or the study of different versions of a text; textual collation, or comparing variant texts; paleography; phonetics; and hermeneutics, or glossing ancient words. We end with a relatively new subdivision, the study of unearthed texts.

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Let us begin with a brief explanation of documentology and follow up with examples to illustrate why it is not only helpful but indispensable to us.

While historians, philosophers, and classicists expound on a work's deeper meaning, the documentologist's job, as the name suggests, has at its center the document itself. Anyone who engages in the research of ancient China and its texts must approach each new project first as a documentologist, second as a philosopher, historian, or literary critic.

There are two levels to documentological work. The first level attempts to ascertain the various versions of a text. This level has three main disciplines: bibliography 目录学, bibliology 版本学, and textual collation 校勘学. The collective goal of these three disciplines is to find the most reliable version of the text we wish to study and use. Reliable here means most faithful to an ancient or original version, so that what we comment and philosophize on is in fact a fair representation of the author's/authors' original, and not a distortion of their words and ideas.

Once one or more quality versions have been established and located, we then engage in a critical analysis of the written content of the text to obtain a correct understanding of what we are reading. This must be done at the most basic level, from the most basic units of the text—the characters 字 and words 词. This, too, is work that must be done prior to any discussion of the philosophy which we perceive the words to carry.

This second level also comprises three disciplines: paleography, or the study of ancient characters 古文字学, phonology, the study of the sounds of a language 音韵学, and glossing, defining the meaning of words 训诂学. Taken together, these fields constitute philology. Sometimes referred to as historical linguistics, philology observes the properties and meanings of words—or for our purposes, characters—especially as they develop throughout history. Adopting a historical and text-critical approach to all the works we use is the best way to ensure that we can maneuver past these linguistic obstacles, scribal errors, and sometimes misleading commentaries that have accrued layer upon layer and even become canonized, and finally arrive at a faithful rendering and accurate reading of the text. "However mysterious and impenetrable the Chinese jungle may have appeared to the early missionaries, its underbrush has been somewhat cleared by generations of devoted scholars, and pathways have been opened here and there. But these ways are nothing else than methods, and those that serve the translator best are the methods of philology."<sup>1</sup> Though we would be quick to point

<sup>1</sup> George Kennedy, review of William Charles, *An Album of Chi-*

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Ben K. Hammer, researcher and lecturer at Shandong University's Advanced Institute for Confucian Studies; assistant editor of "Journal of Chinese Humanities"; graduated from Beijing University's Chinese Department with a doctorate in Classical Chinese Documentology. Areas of specialty include pre-Qin and Han Dynasty Confucian classics and philosophy, Western sinology.

out, the rewards of philology are by far not limited to the translator, but rather belong to anyone who takes the time to study and resolve textual issues before attempting to tackle the historical, philosophical, or sociological ones.

Knowledge in these fields, and knowing how to answer questions and resolve problems in these fields, will allow us to understand the author's words and the intention with which they were written some hundreds and even thousands of years ago.

After we have done sufficient work on both of these levels of the text we are researching, we can then speak of its ideas, depth, beauty, and shortcomings with confidence and authority.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC STUDY: RESEARCHING CATALOGUES 目录学

To emphasize the importance of textual scholarship is not to do so at the expense of any subsequent philosophical discussion. There is no need to choose between meticulous textual research and the more humanitarian goals of historical and cultural understanding. Rather they are, or at least should be, collateral. Textual scholarship is the necessary preparatory work that needs to be done at the beginning of all sinological endeavors. This is because “the successful application of the methods of either the sociologists or historians is predicated, at least on one level, on the skillful handling of texts. The question is, of course, not a matter of superiority of one discipline over another but of timing and appropriateness to the task at hand.”<sup>2</sup> Within this broad field of work, bibliographic research is the first step. To avoid a mistake similar to that of our unfortunate scholar from the introductory anecdote, who mistook a common book for the rediscovery of a “lost” book, we must first reach for the catalogues.<sup>3</sup>

The single Chinese word *mulu* 目录 comes from two: *mu* 目 (or 书目, 篇目, 子目) is simply a list of entries-- in this case, names of books. *lu* 录 (or 序录, 叙录) is a brief description of the book, usually entailing information about the work's content, author, critical commentary, and editions. Put together we can see the usefulness of *mulu*. Bibliographies tell us what books there are for our topic of study, and how useful they might be to us. This list of books can include what books have ever existed, and of those, which have been lost and which are still fully or partially extant.

Bibliographies are often selective about the type of information they provide, and thus themselves can be divided into different categories. For example, annotated bibliographies supply a synopsis of a work's content, sometimes along with the compiler's subjective appraisal of its literary merit

or academic value; descriptive bibliographies, on the other hand, describe the physical attributes of specific editions, taking into consideration not just formal or structural features such as size, binding, and printing format, but also more normative characteristics like overall quality of printing, ink, and paper, and the frequency of errata. Descriptive bibliographies often also remark on an edition's provenance and filiation, that is to say, its origin and relationship to earlier versions upon which it has been reproduced.

There are numerous bibliographies from China's long history, so we shall limit our discussion to a few of the most influential and, more importantly, useful ones.

Let us say we are in the field of studying Chinese Confucian Classics, 经, and need to research one of the thirteen classics. We can start by searching a specialized “classics” catalogue. The early Qing Dynasty scholar (born in the Ming), Zhu Yi Zun 朱彝尊 compiled *Jing Yi Kao* 《经义考》, an extensive annotated bibliography of works on all of the thirteen classics from the Han up to his own time. The *Jing Yi Kao* lists a total of more than 8,400 works by more than 4,000 authors. It is neatly divided into twenty-four separate categories for easy reference, the first thirteen of which are simply the classics of the *Shisanjing Zhushu* 《十三经注疏》. They are followed by comprehensive categories like “the complete classics” or “collection of classics” 群经, “The Four Books” 四书, and then more specific categories such as “lost classics” 逸经, “Han Dynasty alternative classics” 讖纬, “stone inscriptions” 石刊, “wall inscriptions” 书壁, “general discussions of the classics” 通说, etc. Each entry states the length of the book, given in *juan* 卷, and whether the book is wholly or partially extant, completely lost, or not seen by the author. It also reproduces the original prefaces and postfaces to each book as they have accrued and appeared in all the historical editions, in order to provide us with an idea of the work's content and value.

One of the great advantages of a catalogue such as this is that not only can we find different versions of the text we are researching (for example, for *The Analects* there is 古论语, 齐论语, 鲁论语), but more importantly we can find a sizable corpus of commentary and related literature on our text, allowing us to stand comfortably on the shoulders of the prolific scholars who came before us.

Up until recently the most common version of *Jing Yi Kao* was the one from 中华书局 publishing house. It is a photocopy print of a Qing Dynasty woodblock version, with small, dense characters and unpunctuated text, making it somewhat unwelcoming to many readers. In 2010, Taiwan scholars Lin Qing Zhang 林庆彰 et al. came out with *Jing Yi Kao Xin Jiao* 《经义考新校》, a newly collated and expanded version of the original in clear typeset format with western style punctuation, making it much more accessible to the modern reader. There is also additional commentary to the entries based on recent research.

However, Zhu Yi Zun's *Jing Yi Kao* presents us with two limitations. The first is that this monumental work of his is a bibliography only, which means it is just a catalogue

*nese Bamboos*, in Li Tien-yi, ed., *Selected Works of George A. Kennedy* (New Haven: Far Eastern Publications, 1964), p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> David B. Honey, *Incense at the Altar: Pioneering Sinologists and the Development of Classical Chinese Philology* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 2001), p. 83.

<sup>3</sup> While one can make a distinction between catalogues and bibliographies based on the amount or detail of information they provide, we will be using the terms relatively interchangeably.



or list of works along with some limited information about them. His work does not give us the texts themselves. Once we find a work or several works on the Confucian classic we are researching in the *Jing Yi Kao* that seems to have the potential to be useful, we would do well to look them up in the *Zhongguo Congshu Zonglu* 《中国丛书综录》<sup>4</sup> (or in a later, similar supplementary *congshu* catalogue such as 《中国丛书广录》 or 《中国近代现代丛书目录》, to accommodate more recently published *congshu*), and find the specific *congshu* in which the whole work can be found.

The other limitation to the *Jing Yi Kao* is that since Zhu Yi Zun lived in the very early part of the Qing Dynasty, the books in his catalogue are restricted to pre- and early Qing. Needless to say many valuable commentaries to the classics have been written since then. To solve this problem, and at the same time solve the first problem of knowing only the book we want without having the book itself, we can search directly some well known “classic” themed *congshu*. The first collection we should look for is *Huang Qing Jing Jie* 《皇清经解》, also called *Qing Jing Jie* 《清经解》 or *Xue Hai Tang Jing Jie* 《学海堂经解》. This is a collection of Qing Dynasty studies on the classics from mostly highly reputed Qing Dynasty scholars. It was compiled by one of the most famous, most accomplished, and most outstanding classicists of the Qing Dynasty, Ruan Yuan 阮元. (His studio name was Xue Hai Tang, thus *Xue Hai Tang Jing Jie*.) He also did the collation work for the version of the thirteen Confucian Classics that we most commonly use today, 《十三经注疏校勘记》. This work, *Huang Qing Jing Jie*, is organized by author and reproduces the works in their entirety, and in their Qing Dynasty, woodblock print original form.

If we want to view a collection of commentaries on the classics from before the Qing Dynasty, we can look through the contents of *Tong Zhi Tang Jing Jie* 《通志堂经解》, a classic-specific *congshu* similar in form to Ruan Yuan's *Jing Jie*, but containing commentaries and expositions from the Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties. The putative compiler as listed on the *congshu* itself is Nalan Xing De 纳兰性德 (sometimes 纳兰成德), but in reality it was put together by his teacher, the more famous scholar Xu Qian Xue 徐乾学.

If we want to know of more Qing Dynasty classic studies which are not limited to pre-Ruan Yuan times, there are two follow-up compilations to the original *Jing Jie*. The late Qing Dynasty scholar Wang Xian Qian 王先谦 compiled *Qing Jing Jie Xu Bian* 清经解续编, and modern Shan Dong scholars Liu Xiao Dong 刘晓东 and Du Ze Xun 杜泽逊 compiled *Qing Jing Jie San Bian* 《清经解三编》. For

<sup>4</sup> A *congshu* 丛书 is a collection of independent and usually complete works which are published together as a set or series, usually in order that the works do not become lost, or in order to provide wider circulation. Thematically speaking, some *congshu* are miscellaneous in content while others are limited to one subject, e.g. just 经 or 子, or one person, era, or geographic region. It is safe to say that a majority of all the works throughout China's history that have been successfully saved and passed down to today, owe their survival to having been collected in one *congshu* or another.

more recent work on the commentaries from the Republican Era, there is Lin Qing Zhang and Du Ze Xun's *Mingguo Shiqi Jingxue Congshu* 《民国时期经学丛书》.

The studies on the classics from these few collections alone would give us more than ample material to produce a comprehensive, well-informed study on our own chosen topic, and plenty of authoritative, textual evidence to buttress our claims.

If we are doing research into an ancient Chinese philosophical work (子部), the preparatory work is the same, just with slightly different books. When we decide to make a new critical interpretation of Lao Zi or translation of the *Dao De Jing*, for example, we need to be aware of the different versions already in existence, their differences (a tricky question for the *Dao De Jing* in particular), and their relative usefulness to us. A Taiwanese scholar, Yan Ling Feng 严灵峰, compiled an extensive bibliography of major Chinese philosophical works, entitled *Zhou Qin Han Wei Zhuzi Zhijian Shumu* 《周秦汉魏诸子知见书目》. Just like Zhu's *Jing Yi Kao*, this detailed catalogue not only shows us versions of the text itself (《河上公本老子》 and 王弼《老子注》), but it also lists even more commentarial work done by scholars throughout the ages, both philosophical (e.g. 程俱《老子论》) and exegetical (e.g. 焦竑《太上老子道德经注解评林》).

While area-specific bibliographies, such as the ones mentioned above, are usually the most helpful, there are many comprehensive catalogues as well. They can be frequently used as our fall back catalogues if we do not know of or have access to a specialized one. The 《中国丛书综录》 already mentioned is one such reference book.

*Shumu Dawen* 《书目答问》 is one of the best known and widely used general catalogues of ancient Chinese book titles. Its authorship is attributed to Zhang Zhi Dong 张之洞, but in reality it is more likely that it was under his auspices that another late Qing Dynasty book collector and scholar, Miu Quan Sun 缪荃孙, compiled it. This work is organized by the traditional four branch system, plus a fifth section, *congshu* 丛书.<sup>5</sup>

The *Shumu Dawen* has two major shortcomings worth mentioning up front. First, it is by no means exhaustive. In fact, the compiler was highly selective, choosing to include only well-known books with extant, superior editions. (This could also be considered a strong point of the book.) Second, it is devoid of any annotation in the individual entries. It was originally intended to be a handbook for elementary students to study and probably memorize, and thus it gives no information on the author (it usually provides the author's name) or content of the book. It does however provide basic information on a superior edition of each of the carefully selected entries.

Fortunately for us, this catalogue has undergone the redaction and supplementary work of later scholars. These “new and improved” versions of *Shumu Dawen* are much more helpful to us. The original compilation was edited and

<sup>5</sup> This marks the first time in China's academic history that *congshu* was delineated as its own individual bibliographic category.

expanded (in terms of information provided about the entries, not in the number of entries) in the 1920s by Fan Xi Zeng 范希曾. His extended version is called *Shumu Dawen Buzheng* 《书目答问补正》. While he provides slightly more detailed information on the extant versions of many of the books listed, the two main shortcomings of the original still remain. In 2010, Sun Yang Wen 孙泱文 came out with an exhaustive supplemented edition of *Shumu Dawen Buzheng*, called *Zengding Shumu Dawen Buzheng* 《增订书目答问补正》. The two additions of this book which are most beneficial to us are its very detailed bibliographic research and its annotative descriptions. Sun's book tells us in which specific modern collections we can find each book, using updated *congshu* catalogues as opposed to the difficult-to-locate Qing Dynasty wood block versions given by Zhang and Fan. Furthermore, his supplementary annotation offers information on the author, content, and value of the entry. All of this information is extremely valuable in our search for material for our own research.

One of the largest annotated bibliographies of ancient Chinese books is the *Siku Quanshu Zongmu* 《四库全书总目》 (sometimes incorrectly written as 《四库全书总目提要》). This is an annotated and descriptive catalogue (it provides information on both the content and the editions of each entry) of books collected in the *Siku Quanshu* 《四库全书》, one of the largest single collection of books in China's history (compiled as one *congshu*). *Siku Quanshu* was compiled under the auspices of Qing emperor Qian Long 乾隆 and headed by the scholar Ji Yun 纪昀. So armed with these two, the *Siku Quanshu Zongmu* and the *Siku Quanshu*, we can search for and locate works under certain topic headings (also the four brach system, with detailed subdivisions), read the detailed description to learn about the author, the book's history, content, and editions, and then if so desired access the book itself for our study.

Much work has been done to add new books and new descriptions to the already large collection, such as 《四库全书存目丛书》, 《续修四库全书》 and its corresponding 《续修四库全书总目提要》, and Yu Jia Xi's 余嘉锡 《四库提要辩证》.

## BIBLIOLOGY: VERSIONS OF THE TEXT 版本学

There can be great differences between two or more versions of the same work, and our understanding of a book's content or a philosopher's philosophy may depend on which version we read.

If we are studying Han Fei Zi 韩非子, the most representative figure of China's ancient Legalist School, and in particular if we study his famous essay *Shui Nan* 《说难》, "On the Difficulties of Persuasion," we will quickly notice that the version of this essay as transmitted by Sima Qian in *The Grand Historian* 《史记·老子韩非列传》, is much different than the one found in the complete collection of the philosopher's works 《韩非子》.

An even more telling example is the story of one Dai

Yuan Li 戴元礼. Dai Yuan Li was a famous doctor in the early part of the Ming Dynasty. He took a trip to Nanjing where he happened to pass by a local clinic. He noticed that it was full of patients waiting to see the local doctor inside, and he concluded that this must be quite an excellent doctor. Dai decided to observe the traffic in and out of this clinic for a few days. One day, as a patient was leaving the clinic, the local doctor rushed outside after him, for he had apparently forgotten to give the patient the full instructions on how to prepare the herbal medicine that he had prescribed. The doctor was very clear in his instruction: Do not forget to put a piece of tin in the broth when cooking the medicine. Upon hearing this, Dai was taken aback at such an odd formula, and proceeded to inquire to the local doctor why this was necessary. The local doctor said that this was an old and true formula. Still skeptic, Dai requested to see the book of prescriptions he was using. Upon looking at the text, Dai realized where the mistake occurred. The book that the local doctor was using indeed listed tin, 锡, as one of the ingredients, but it was a misprinted character, a slight aberration from the correct ingredient-- sugar 饴. (For anyone who has taken Chinese medicine, we know that sugar is an ingredient quite necessary to offset the bitterness!) These two characters are similar in their traditional form, 锡 and 饴, even more so when copied in a running or cursive script. Some scribe or woodblock engraver had accidentally replaced "sugar" with "tin". The Nanjing doctor had not taken the time to procure a reliable book of medicine, instead blindly following the one copy he had on hand, to the detriment of his patients.

Thankfully, in questions of pure scholarship, textual discrepancies are not usually a matter of life and death, but they are nonetheless important to our issues at hand.

After searching through the catalogues discussed above, we have found the names of a few books that we think might be useful to our personal project. Now we need to know what different versions there are of these books and discern which are relatively accurate and which are incomplete or full of errata. Indeed, a good descriptive catalogue will provide this information for each entry. There can be much overlap between our search for titles and our search for their respective editions. Many good catalogues, including some of those mentioned above, are both annotative and descriptive in nature.

It is usually the private scholar, collector, or book seller who can give us the most helpful information when it comes to the description of editions. Many of these types of bibliographies carry the words 知见书目 or 经眼书目 in their title, meaning, respectively, a catalogue of books that the compiler has either seen or heard of, 知见, or that they all are books that the compiler has seen with his own eyes, 经眼. Some famous examples of these are 《邵亭知见传本书目》 by 莫友芝, 《藏园群书经眼录》 by 傅增湘, and 《贩书偶记》 by 孙殿起. Note that these catalogues are comprehensive, not specialized. That is to say, these catalogues contain books in all the categories of classics, history, philosophy, and belles-lettres.

There are even some bibliographies which take the an-

notation and description process one step further and research the authenticity of the books that have been passed down to us. Of this type of bibliography, 辨伪书目, the four most famous works are 《诸子辨》 by 宋濂, 《四部正讹》 by 胡应麟, 《古今伪书考》 by 姚际恒, and 《考信录提要》 by 崔述. The most commonly used and comprehensive one today is 《伪书通考》 by 张心澂.

There is an expression in the field of Chinese textual scholarship: *lie yi tong, duan shi fei* 列异同, 断是非. Roughly it means to enumerate the similarities and differences between things, and then determine their respective veracity and value. This can be applied to many fields and activities. In terms of searching for materials that we intend on using for our personal project, this should be our first goal, our first step. It can be achieved by using the two kinds of reference books and methods described above. We use catalogues and bibliographies, that is, lists of books, or even better, annotated bibliographies, to find out what different books there are out there related to our topic of interest. These could be in the form of the book itself or direct commentary on it or general discussions on pertinent topics. *Lie yi tong*. Then we use studies of specific versions of these books, descriptive bibliographies, to find out which versions have been collated and corrected by savants, which are still full of mistakes (or which have gained new errors though sloppy engraving and poor collation), which are printed fully and clearly, which are incomplete and unclear, and which editions are copies or derivatives of other editions and thus not worth seeking out. In a word, they tell us which versions we should base our work on and which should we avoid. *Duan shi fei*.

Hence regardless of what our ultimate goal is regarding the text we study, whether it is historical investigation, philosophical analysis, aesthetic appreciation, or translation, we must first ensure that we are working with the proper tools and best material available. As the famous Qing Dynasty classicist and paleographer Duan Yu Cai 段玉裁 reaffirmed, “必先定底本之是非, 而后可定义理之是非.”

#### TEXTUAL COLLATION: COMPARING AND CORRECTING TEXTS 校勘学

We have already alluded to the superior editions of books as those which have passed through the hands of scholars who have collated and redacted erroneous texts. This is another important example of how we can reap the benefits of the arduous work done by generations, indeed centuries, of scholars before us.

Often what determines whether a certain text contains many errors or not is precisely whether it has been emended by later scholars. Considering that so many of the texts we read and rely upon to engage in “authoritative” and polemic discussion are thousands of years old, we should not hold out hope that the particular one we are studying has been copied from scribe to scribe, transmitted from teacher to student over countless generations completely intact and with no textual changes, accidental or otherwise.

The Qing Dynasty, especially early to middle, was a time when the academic and social atmosphere was hostile to open philosophical discussion, leaving most academics too timid to engage in discussions of the political philosophy or morality stemming from the ancient classics and philosophical texts. As a result, the safe disciplines within textual scholarship became the stomping grounds for academics to exercise their intellects, and these fields flourished to new heights. Armed with an ever-growing number of catalogues, *congshu, leishu* 类书, and a highly developed printing industry which made books widely accessible, many Qing Dynasty bibliophiles would collect and compare various editions of books. They would make notes pointing out the mistakes in texts and use the various editions, as well as their extensive knowledge in paleography (discussed below), to correct each other. The end result would be notes on the errata and their respective corrections.

This process itself is yet another example of *lie yi tong, duan shi fei*. They obtain different versions of one work and put them side by side for a detailed comparison. *Lie yi tong*. They then use their knowledge of ancient Chinese history, philosophy, and most of all characters, to decide, in any given discrepancy, which version of a text (if any) is correct and which are erroneous. *Duan shi fei*.

In this golden age of textual criticism, the Qing Dynasty, some scholars were most well known for their achievements in textual collation and their works are still helpful to us today. Two such scholars are Lu Wen Chao 卢文弨 and Gu Guang Qi 顾广圻. Both Lu and Gu meticulously collated and emended texts from all of the four branches of Chinese literature. Lu's collation work can be found in his 《群书拾补》, 《中山札记》, and 《龙城札记》, all of which are included in his complete collection 《抱经堂丛书》. Gu's work is more scattered, with some examples being 《国语札记》, 《战国策札记》, 《说文条记》, and 《说文考异》. His 《思适斋集》, 《思适斋书跋》, and 《思适斋集补遗》 also contain collation notes. Other well known collectors and collators include Sun Xing Yan 孙星衍, Huang Pi Lie 黄丕烈, and Hu Ke Jia 胡克家 for his work on *Zhaoming Wenxuan* 《昭明文选》.

While these scholars were known first and foremost as book collectors who excelled in textual collation because of their knowledge of paleography (in the broad sense), there were other scholars who were known primarily for their outstanding paleography, and whose literary contribution includes collation. Some of the most prominent classicists of this type are Wang Nian Sun 王念孙, his son Wang Yin Zhi 王引之, and Yu Yue 俞樾. Wang Nian Sun's *Du Shu Za Zhi* 《读书杂志》 (this “*zazhi*” means miscellaneous notes, not magazine) provides concise and incisive notes on scattered words and phrases from 《逸周书》, 《战国策》, 《史记》, 《汉书》, 《管子》, 《晏子春秋》, 《墨子》, 《荀子》, and 《淮南子》. Wang Yin Zhi's *Jing Yi Shu Wen* 《经义述闻》 is similar in format, providing collation and glossing for abstruse passages in 《周易》, 《尚书》, 《毛诗》, 《周礼》, 《仪礼》, 《大戴礼记》, (小戴)

《礼记》，《国语》，《尔雅》，and all three canonized commentaries of the 《春秋》.

The late Qing Dynasty scholar Yu Yue, who faithfully carried on the rigorous textual scholarship tradition of Dai Zhen 戴震, his student Duan Yu Cai 段玉裁, and his students, Wang Nian Sun and Wang Ying Zhi, did extensive collation work on a variety of subjects. Two of his most well known works are on the classics, *Qun Jing Ping Yi* 《群经平议》，and on the philosophers, *Zhuzi Ping Yi* 《诸子平议》.

While not all of their emendations are conclusive or even necessarily correct, they provide the modern student of ancient Chinese with very insightful interpretations from erudite scholars of the past.

## PALEOGRAPHY: THE STUDY OF OLD CHARACTERS 古文字学

The term *wen zi xue* 文字学 has two meanings, one general and one narrow. In its broad sense, it encompasses all aspects of the study of ancient characters, or more accurately, all aspects of the character itself: its shape, its sound, and its meaning. These three ideas can be represented as 形音义. In this broad sense of the term, *wen zi xue* can also be called *xiao xue* 小学.

As these three fields developed and deepened, each became its own discipline. *Wen zi xue* 文字学 took on a more narrow meaning, referring only to the shape of characters; *yinyun xue* 音韵学, phonology, refers to their ancient sounds; *xungu xue* 训诂学, glossing, refers to their ancient meanings.

We need a basic understanding of Chinese paleography for two reasons. First, when a character or characters are written wrong, we can recognize this mistake and possibly figure out how to rectify it. This is one of the tasks of the collators explored above. Second, when the text is written correctly, we need to be able to read and understand it, correctly.

When dealing with ancient characters and their three component parts, one of the most important books that we need to keep in mind and close at hand is Xu Shen's *Shuo Wen Jie Zi* 许慎《说文解字》. Xu was a Han Dynasty paleographer and classicist of the "old text" camp. *Shuo Wen* was the first Chinese dictionary to analyze characters and provide definitions based on their component parts, and the first one to arrange the characters into groups based on common radicals.

Much important commentary and annotation were done to *Shuo Wen* in the Qing Dynasty, and this series of books is very helpful to us in trying to understand the meaning and usage of words from Han times and before. Wang Yun's *Shuo Wen Ju Dou* and *Wen Zi Meng Qiu* 王筠《说文句读》，《文字蒙求》 focus mainly on the structure of the characters; Zhu Jun Sheng's *Shuo Wen Tong Xun Ding Sheng* 朱骏声《说文通训定声》 focuses mostly on the ancient pronunciation; Gui Fu's *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Yi Zheng* 桂馥《说文解字义证》 focuses on the characters' meaning. Each of these works is valuable in its respective field, but the most celebrated and most commonly cited commentary is Duan

Yu Cai's *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Zhu* 段玉裁《说文解字注》，also called *Shuo Wen Jie Zi Duan Zhu* 《说文解字段注》 or *Duan Shi Zhu* 《段氏注》. This works analyzes each character on all three levels, and is thus the most comprehensive.

Let us look at an example of the importance of being familiar with the shape or structure of ancient characters. In a recent issue of the academic journal 《古籍整理研究学刊》 (Jan. 2012, 总第155期), there is an article by Xu Guang Cai 徐广才 and Zhang Xiu Hua 张秀华 critically interpreting a small number of textual issues with Qu Yuan's *Chu Chi* 屈原《楚辞》. In the 《九章·惜往日》 chapter, there is an unclear phrase: 心治. Xu and Zhang rehearse explanations set forth by previous scholars before offering their own. One of these previous scholars, a Mr. Wu, asserts that 心 is an incorrect form of 必. The two characters are nearly identical, being separated by only one stroke, thus a seemingly easy transcription error to make. The problem is, however, that when this text was composed more than two thousand years ago, and for hundreds of years following, the characters 心 and 必 looked nothing alike. Xu and Zhang recognized this and proceeded to gather pictorial evidence of these characters both from *Shuo Wen* and from unearthed material of the appropriate time period. Through a direct comparison of their respective shapes, the reader can easily see that these two characters lacked any visual or structural similarity, thus the purported scribal error does not seem possible, and Mr. Wu's subsequent explanation is no longer feasible.

## PHONETICS: ANCIENT PRONUNCIATION 音韵学

Grasping ancient Chinese pronunciation is one of the most difficult and obscure parts of textual scholarship. But if we can become even mildly versed in it, it will open up many more and much deeper avenues to understanding ancient Chinese.

One of the founders of the Qing Dynasty textual criticism movement was Ming-born Gu Yan Wu 顾炎武. Himself an expert in *xiao xue* as well as history and philosophy, he once said of the task of reading ancient Chinese texts: "When one reads the Nine Classics, one must start by analyzing the characters; to analyze the characters, one must first know their sounds. In regard to the Hundred Philosophers, it is no different."<sup>6</sup>

In Chapter 34 of Lao Zi's *Dao De Jing* 《道德经》，there is the line “大道泛兮，其可左右。万物恃之以生而不辞。功成不名有。衣养万物而不为主。” The question at hand is the correct glossing for 衣养. Traditional commentaries (e.g. Wang Bi 王弼, Wei Yuan 魏源) define 衣养 as meaning 衣被, so now (大道) 衣被万物而不为主 would be roughly translated as “The Great Way covers all creation without claiming to be its master.” Unfortunately, to go from 衣养 to 衣被 is a great hermeneutical leap, one not supported by any textual precedent or paleographic evidence. The aforementioned Qing Dynasty classicist Yu Yue says that

<sup>6</sup> “读九经从考文始，考文自知音始，以致诸子百家，亦莫不然。”（《答李子德书》）

it is the 衣 that needs to be reconsidered. This 衣 is interchangeable with 爱. Yu begins by citing the Han Dynasty *He Shang Gong* edition 《河上公注》 of Lao Zi (as do the other scholars, right before they dismiss it). In the *He Shang Gong* version, the original text reads 爱养万物. How is it that this version uses 爱养 and others use 衣养? It is because in ancient Chinese, 爱 and 衣 had a similar pronunciation. Based on the rules and principles of borrowed characters (假借字, 通假字), characters with identical or approximate pronunciation were often used interchangeably. Yu first sets out to demonstrate that 衣 and 隐 had the same pronunciation, and then that 隐 and 爱 also had the same pronunciation. Therefore by the rules of simple syllogism, 爱 and 衣 had similar or the same pronunciation.<sup>7</sup> If we are familiar with the ancient sounds of characters and realize that characters with similar or identical sounds are sometimes substituted for each other, then we can see that in the *He Shang Gong* version of Lao Zi, the 爱养 is not a mistake or aberration, but rather a closer approximation to what Lao Zi originally meant, which would be “The Great Way nurtures all creation without claiming to be its master.”

In this instance of Yu Yue’s phonetic exegesis, it would seem that we need a prior familiarity with ancient pronunciation so that we could recognize when two characters might share a phonetic propinquity. This is true. It would be best if we did have a certain amount of familiarity, which can certainly be acquired with any of the numerous modern publications on ancient phonetics. Short of that, we at least need to be able to recognize conventions and constructions in exegetical writing that would enable us to distinguish when commentators are noting the meaning of a word, and when they are noting its sound.<sup>8</sup>

For example, if we look at a 《十三经注疏》 version of 《礼记·文王世子》, there is the phrase 亲亲之杀也. Directly underneath this line, in smaller characters representing commentary, is Zheng Xuan’s 郑玄 commentary which reads 杀, 差也. Underneath that is the commentary of a Tang Dynasty scholar named Lu De Ming 陆德明 which says 杀色戒反. Zheng’s commentary is straight forward: 杀 means 差, here rank or gradation. Lu’s notation, on the other hand, is informing us of this character’s specific pronunciation. The reason why Lu would go out of his way to

<sup>7</sup> 榘谨案：“《河上公》本作爱养，此作衣养者，古通字也。盖衣字古音与隐同。故《白虎通·衣裳篇》曰：衣者，隐也。以声为训也。而爱古音亦与隐同。故《诗·烝民篇》毛传训爱为隐。《孝经》疏引刘炫曰：爱者隐惜而结与内。不直训惜而必训隐惜者，亦以声为训也。两字之音本同，故爱养可为衣养。傅奕本作衣养，则由后人不通古音者，不达古义，率臆妄改耳。”（《诸子平议》卷八）

<sup>8</sup> In fact a command of the conventions and constructions of Chinese exegetical writing and the accompanying “jargon” and idiosyncrasies found in all the fields mentioned above and in critical interpretation (训诂学) discussed below, is necessary for a proper reading of philological analyses and discussions. A pioneering American sinologist George Kennedy’s *An Introduction to Sinology: Being a Guide to the Tsu Hai (Ci Hai)* [辞海] is an attempt at just such an introduction.

provide the pronunciation for such a common word as 杀 is because this is an uncommon usage. When pronounced sha1, in modern Mandarin, it means to kill. But when it represents a different meaning, its pronunciation changes. To put it another way, if we are only told that the pronunciation is different from the norm, that signifies a change in meaning. That is what Lu is pointing out to us. 杀, 色戒反 means the sound of the character 杀 is a combination of the initial sound of 色 and the final sound of 戒. This method is called “*fan qie*” 反切. In modern Mandarin, it would be pronounced shai4, and means decrease, difference, or here, gradation.

When we see these two types of notation from these two scholars appearing adjacent to each other as they do in this passage, it is not hard for us to put the pieces together in our mind and connect the meaning with the pronunciation. If we turn to a later chapter in the same book, *The Doctrine of the Golden Mean* 《礼记·中庸》, we see a similar passage, yet we are provided with only partial, phonetic commentary. *The Golden Mean* contains the line 亲亲之杀. Under it there is no Zheng Xuan commentary to tell us what 杀 means. There is only Lu’s commentary which reads 杀, 色界也. Seeing this we must be able to come to the conclusion ourselves that this alternate pronunciation of 杀 represents an alternate meaning, namely, the “gradation” mentioned above.

#### GLOSSING: CRITICAL INTERPRETATION OF ANCIENT TEXTS 训诂学

This is the end game of all the work outlined above: to use our knowledge of all the disciplines to arrive at a correct reading of an ancient text, including (and especially) obscure passages.

Let us take an example from *Mencius*: 《孟子·滕文公上》“有为神农之言者许行”.

Mencius is talking with Chen Xiang 陈相, a disciple of Xu Xing 许行, who was a well-known and respected philosopher and contemporary of Mencius. Xu believed strongly in the importance of agriculture in daily life. Chen Xiang reiterated to Mencius something that Xu Xing had told him earlier, that the Duke of Teng was a wise ruler, but was still not enlightened in terms of “The Way.” (滕君则诚贤君也；虽然，未闻道也。) Why? Because the Duke of Teng did not do farm work alongside the commoners. Mencius, using a very Socratic method of question and answer, proceeds to demonstrate the flaw of this argument, and explains the rationale behind society’s division of labor. We cannot expect anyone to be a full-time farmer *and* a craftsman *and* administrative leader at the same time. You do one job and buy or trade for everything else you need. Otherwise, Mencius said, 如必自为而后用之，是率天下而路也.

One of the earliest and most important (and later canonized) commentators of *Mencius*, Zhao Qi 赵歧 of the Han Dynasty, explicated the latter half of this sentence as “是率导天下人以羸困之路，” which means “To do this would be leading everyone onto a path of utter exhaustion.” Overall this is a correct understanding of what Mencius was trying

to say, but not a very precise rendering of the actual text. The problem lies in the word 路 in Mencius' original. The word 路 itself means road or path, and Zhao Qi in his commentary expands it to mean the path to exhaustion. For Zhao Qi to add on this idea of exhaustion seems faithful if not absolutely necessary to Mencius' point; this idea is so critical, in fact, that it seems strange that it would not be mentioned in the original text. Instead, the original text seems simply to end by saying "to the path."

So we are left with two questions. Where did this strange character 羸 lei2 in Zhao's commentary come from? And how are we to interpret the 路 in the original passage?

In a Song Dynasty exegetical work on *Mencius*, *Meng Zi Yin Yi* 《孟子音义》, after this line of text there is the ostensibly unhelpful note 路与露同. So what does 露 mean here? (Certainly not the morning dew!) In the *Book of Odes* there is a poem with the line "串夷载路." Zheng Xuan's commentary to this states that 路 means 瘠 ji2, thin and weak.<sup>9</sup> In the *Zuo Commentary of the Spring and Autumn Annals* there is another line 以露其体. Du Yu's exegesis reads 露 as meaning 羸, thin or emaciated.<sup>10</sup> Thus far, the commentaries have showed us that (1) the character 路 in some instances means thin and weak, (2) that the character 路 in Mencius' text can be read as 露, and (3) that 露 can also mean thin and emaciated.

The Tang Dynasty classicist Kong Ying Da 孔颖达, who added another layer of hermeneutic explanation to many of the classics and their canonized commentary, explained this brief annotation of Du Yu by saying: "To be robust means that the muscles and flesh are thick, and one's bones can not be seen; to be skinny (or emaciated. Notice that the Chinese character for skinny derives its meaning from the radical meaning sickness 疒) means the muscles and flesh are thin, so one's bones are exposed, thus it is said 'The body is emaciated. (羸露)' Lei lu 羸露 is the word used when one's bones are exposed. .... Being emaciated is necessarily being in a state of lei (with bones visible), therefore lei is another name for emaciated."<sup>11</sup> From this we see that 露 means "exposed" as in 揭露.

We also have extended and derived meanings for 羸 such as poor, destitute, and even defeated. In his *Du Shu Za Zhi* 《读书杂志》, Wang Nian Sun explicates a phrase found in the *Guan Zi* 《管子》, "路家." Just like the *Meng Zi Yin Yi* 《孟子音义》, Wang says that this 路 should be read as 露, so 露家 means a poverty-stricken household. He then cites the Han Dynasty linguistic classic *Dialects* 《方言》 as defining 露 as meaning 败, defeated, and he uses a line from *Zhuang Zi* 《庄子》 as evidence of this meaning: 田荒芜露. "The fields are barren and the homes are in disrepair." Wang points out that the character is sometimes also written as 路, but retains the same meaning. He cites the

<sup>9</sup> 《诗经·大雅·皇矣》：串夷载路。郑玄笺曰：路，瘠也。

<sup>10</sup> 《春秋左传·昭元年》：以路其体。杜预注云：露，羸也。

<sup>11</sup> 孔颖达疏曰：“肥则肌肉厚，骨不见；瘦则肌肤薄，故体羸露。羸露是露骨之名。……瘦必羸，羸亦瘦之别名。”

*Zhan Guo Ce* and then the *Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lu*. The latter's original text is 士民罢（疲）路。“The nobles and commoners are exhausted and emaciated.” The Han Dynasty scholar who supplied commentary for this, Gao You, states, “This 路 means 羸.” (We can see these commentaries slowly leading us back to our original line in Mencius.) Wang finally points out that this same meaning can also be written simply as 路. The example he gives as evidence is precisely the line from Mencius that we started with. Thus our exegetical scavenger hunt has led us full circle.<sup>12</sup>

Now we can see that the 路 in *Mencius*' original line is 率天下而路 does not in fact mean road at all. It is a borrowed character representing the character 露. This “borrowing” is permissible since these two characters clearly have the same pronunciation. We should read 路 as 露, and understand 露 as 羸, thin, emaciated, gaunt from being overworked.

It would seem that Zhao Qi made an error in his interpretation of this line by translating 路 both into its borrowed meaning, 羸困, and into its literal meaning, 道路, at the same time.<sup>13</sup>

Once we understand this one word, the whole passage, including the commentary and its mistake, becomes clear. This is precisely what the preeminent Qing Dynasty scholar Dai Zhen meant when he said, “At the heart of the classics is the Dao. What clarifies the Dao are the words. What constitutes the words are the individual characters. Through the characters we understand the words, and through the words we understand the Dao.”<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> 《读书杂志·管子·戒篇》“路家”条，王念孙按：“路读为露。露家，穷困之家也。〔杨雄〕《方言》：‘露，败也。’《庄子·渔夫篇》曰：‘田荒芜露。’字亦作路。《秦策》曰：‘士民路病与内。’《吕氏春秋·不屈篇》曰：‘士民罢路。’高注并曰：‘路，羸也。’亦作路。《孟子·滕文公篇》曰：‘是率天下而路也。’”

<sup>13</sup> As an aside we should point out that this may not be the fault of Zhao Qi himself but rather that of later scribal error. Wang Nian Sun also quotes Zhao's commentary, though he quotes it differently from the way we see it in the 《十三经注疏》 version today. He quotes it as 是率天下人以羸路也. This is the same 羸路 like we encountered in Kong Ying Da's commentary when he said, 羸露是露骨之名. Wang then notes, 俗本改作‘羸困之路’. That is to say, common editions of *Mencius*, as opposed to superior editions, write out Zhao's commentary as saying “leading everyone on the path to emaciation.” This is the version that we encountered. However the better versions of this text still read “leading everyone towards emaciation/exhaustion.” Clearly, some scribe along this text's long history of transmission came upon the 路 in the original text and the 羸路 in the commentary and did not correctly grasp their meaning. Instead he understood 羸路 simply as 羸的路, “the path to emaciation,” and thus attempted to clarify by rewriting Zhao Qi's words as 是率天下人以羸困之路.

<sup>14</sup> “经之至者，道也。所以明道者，其词也。所以成词者，其字也。由字以通其词，由词以通其道。”（《戴东原集·与是仲明论学书》）

Sometimes the best way to resolve a textual dispute is to cheat: to go back in time and look at how the ancients actually wrote a certain passage. Studying unearthed texts allows us to do just that.

This field encompasses a range of different media, such as stele and wall inscriptions, oracle bones, bronze vessel and weapon inscriptions, and excavated manuscripts in the form of wood and bamboo strips, silk, and paper scrolls. Using excavated material for textual issues adds another layer of credence to one's argument.

Unearthed texts can be works that have long since been lost to the academic world, or they can be ancient versions of our redacted, highly modified received texts. Scholars have long understood the importance of comparing received texts (those that have been passed down through the generations) with unearthed texts. This research surged at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the Republican Period with foreign-trained savants who acquired a penchant for archeology and skepticism, such as Guo Mo Ruo 郭沫若, Wang Guo Wei 王国维, Luo Zhen Yu 罗振玉, and Gu Jie Gang 顾颉刚, to name a few.

Let us look at an example to see how this research can aid us in our projects.

In *Lao Zi* Chapter 31 there is the famous but troublesome passage: 夫佳兵者，不祥之器。 There has been much dispute over what exactly this line means and how it should be corrected. As it is in this version, we can render it loosely as “Those people who cherish weapons and warfare are unpropitious instruments.” The problem is “people” should not be categorized as inanimate objects such as instruments.<sup>15</sup>

Wang Nian Sun believes the 佳 is an erroneous form of 隹, which was the ancient form of 唯. We thus see a 夫唯 ..... 故 ..... structure in the full passage, which is in fact a set structure employed many times throughout the entire book. Changing it thusly, this sentence would then roughly mean “Weapons are instruments of ill-fortune.” As long as we change the 佳 character, the sentence makes sense.

Lu Wen Chao, the famous textual collator, disagrees with Wang, saying that the 夫唯 ... 故 ... structure is not appropriate for this passage, so we should not change the 佳 to 隹 in an attempt to use this structure. Furthermore, all of the numerous received editions of *Lao Zi* have used the word 佳 or one of its synonyms such as 嘉 or 美, so the 佳 must be correct. If the “夫佳兵者” part of this passage is correct, then this line is not referring to weapons per se but rather the people who wield them. More specifically, it would be a person who yields and even celebrates weapons and warfare. But looking at the second half of the passage, a person still can not be an implement or instrument, so the “之器” according to Lu must have been mistakenly added. If we take it out,

<sup>15</sup> Though there have been a few exceptions, such as when Confucius was intentionally employing the use of metaphor to describe one of his students: 《论语·公冶长》“子贡问曰：‘赐也何如？’子曰：‘女，器也。’曰：‘何器也？’曰：‘瑚璉也。’”

we are left with 夫佳兵者，不祥。 “People who celebrate weapons and warfare are not auspicious.” This, too, makes sense. Both Wang and Lu have relatively convincing textual reasoning to support their respective claims, but neither have direct (or indirect) textual evidence.

In 1972 at the Ma Wang Dui 马王堆 site in the southern Chinese province of Hunan, two versions of *Lao Zi* were unearthed. Both were written on silk, so they are collectively called the “Silk Versions” 帛书本. One was written pre-Han Dynasty, the other was written in the early Han Dynasty. They represent two separate lines of transmission of the *Lao Zi*. In both of these silk versions, more than two thousand years old, the passage in question is written 夫兵者，不祥之器。 There was no 佳, 隹 etc. in front of 兵者. From this we can see that this line was in fact referring to weapons themselves as being inauspicious instruments, not people. It is probable that some earlier versions wrote 夫兵者, and others wrote 隹 (唯) 兵者, and since both 夫 隹 are structural words (虚词) with no critical meaning, they became combined and early scribal error changed 夫隹 into 夫佳, thus causing two thousand years of confusion.

## CONCLUSION

China's long, unbroken written history dating back more than three thousand years to the oracle bones of the Shang Dynasty, has bequeathed to us a corpus of texts so massive that it often feels like a gift and a curse. These texts need to be sifted through, analyzed, collated, and redacted, and all this before we can begin to mine them for the valuable historical, cultural, and philosophical messages they carry. The sheer amount can seem insurmountable, and the layers of accrued commentary and textual corruption, impenetrable.

Fortunately for us, many of these books themselves were written and compiled specifically to help us facily maneuver through this jungle. “Much more than command of classical Chinese is required to make a scholar. Among the most important tools are bibliography, both in traditional sources and in modern secondary studies, and a methodical, scientific approach.”<sup>16</sup> Bibliographic compilations organize these texts in a way manageable to us, allowing us to make narrow and fruitful searches based on our own specific research parameters; philological work allows us to read the texts as they were intended to be read by the ancient authors. But even the helpful field of textual research possesses its own corpus of works with which we need to familiarize ourselves. Many of the more important ones have been briefly introduced in this paper. For the most part all are in Chinese. One English-language introduction to important historical reference books for Chinese studies is *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works*, by Ssu-yu Teng and Knight Biggerstaff.<sup>17</sup> It provides helpful descriptions to many

<sup>16</sup> Honey, *Incense at the Alter*, 200.

<sup>17</sup> Ssu-yu Teng and Knight Biggerstaff, *An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Chinese Reference Works* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

different kinds of reference works, but the largest chapter is devoted specifically to traditional bibliographies.

The methods introduced in this essay are by no means new, nor are they meant to be monopolized by the lonely textual scholar who stands outside of larger, philosophical debates. They have, however, become unpopular and fallen into a state of relative disuse. Textual research has, in a large part, lamentably become the sole domain of textual researchers. As a major or specialty in institutions of higher learning, it is usually located in departments set up specifically for just such research. To be an optimist, we could say that the existence of such departments provides textual research with its own abode to establish itself and flourish. But I believe, however, that such institutional divisions are also placing it in opposition to its corresponding fields, namely the departments of history, literature, and philosophy.

This was not always the case, in the east or the west. For most of China's history, the outstanding achievements in all of those above-mentioned fields were attained in conjunction with textual scholarship. Feng You Lan and Hu Shi are both scholars of the first half of the twentieth century who are best known for their studies on the history of Chinese philosophy. Their grasp of the metaphysical aspect of Chinese thought allowed them penetrating insight into the essence and evolution of Chinese philosophy. Their work, however, was predicated on an equally expert grasp of documentology. We can safely say that they were only able to penetrate so deeply into Chinese thought precisely because they knew what texts to read and how to read them. They knew how to use bibliographies, compare editions, collate texts, and analyze ancient characters, all to the benefit of their philosophical musings. Such skills are rarely taught in philosophy or history departments today.

As we have mentioned above, textual research and the more abstract humanitarian studies of history, philosophy, and literature should be seen in processional terms—they are all parts of one long research process. Textual investigation is the preliminary work that must be done to lay a solid foundation for the “thought” oriented work to follow. When one skips over the preliminary work and dives right into a philosophical discussion, such a work, while it may attain temporary popularity, will eventually be replaced by a new, more fashionable philosophical explanation. And so on and so forth. The philosophical and literary commentaries with more permanence and universality are the ones grounded in the sometimes dry, but ultimately rewarding and scientific methods of textual scholarship.

Dai Zhen 戴震 was a famous scholar from the early Qing Dynasty, who lived at a time when China experienced a renaissance in all forms of textual scholarship. He, too, is best known for his accomplishments in such fields, with text-critical editions of many Confucian classics as well as linguistic and philological exegeses. The culmination of his lifetime of learning, however, is his *Mengzi Ziyi Shuzheng* 《孟子字义疏证》. This short monograph is a trenchant exposition of the key philosophical terms and concepts found in the *Men-*

*cius*. There were many scholars before him who attempted such a discourse, and many after, but the reason why this work still stands above the rest in the great corpus of material aimed at elucidating *Mencius*, is that Dai's discussion of philosophy is rooted in his background as a textual scholar.

Beijing University scholar Li Ling 李零 is a modern example of the same type of accomplishment. His academic background is in archeology and paleography. As such, his research has always been a fact-based approach to China's history and culture, not a metaphysical one. So when he published his commentary on the *Analects of Confucius* in 2007, despite being immediately criticized for using such an ostensibly disparaging title (丧家狗, *The Lost Dog*), it reads as one of the most unadorned and authoritative explanations of Confucius' thought. He finds resolution to many of the obscure passages by sifting through the old commentaries, carefully comparing variant texts, and utilizing his knowledge of unearthed documents and ancient inscriptions. He rarely invokes any Western “-isms” to infuse Confucius' thought with philosophical leanings that were not originally there.

Even Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr.'s *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* references the bamboo strip fragments of the *Analects* unearthed at Ding Zhou in an attempt to understand Confucius' words and deeds as they were recorded back then, as opposed to how we want to interpret them today.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Ames' recent monograph *Confucian Role Ethics* is a philosophical reinterpretation of Confucius' system of thought, but he begins his discussion of each key concept of Confucianism with an analysis of the character behind it—*shenti* 身体, *pengyou* 朋友, *xue* 学, *xin* 心, *de* 德, *he* 和, *li* 礼, *ren* 仁, *xiao* 孝, *zhi* 智, *zhongshu* 忠恕, *yi* 义, *tian* 天, *di* 帝, *sheng* 圣—drawing upon their variant forms found in *Shuo Wen Jie Zi*, bronze inscriptions, and oracle bones.<sup>19</sup> Their arguments carry that much more credence because of the fact that they are grounded in textual evidence.

Credence is indeed what we strive for in our argumentation and writings. Such credence stems from a solid grasp of the facts. In sinological studies, the texts are the facts; our subjective interpretation of them is the argumentation. What documentology aims to do is to help us close the gap, to the best of our abilities, between the text itself and our subjective reading of it. This is the inescapable importance of textual studies.

<sup>18</sup> Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont Jr., *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> Roger Ames, *Confucian Role Ethics: A Vocabulary* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2011).



# TRADITIONALISM AS A WAY OF LIFE: THE SENSE OF HOME IN A SHANGHAI ALLEYWAY



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## ABSTRACT

Taking inspiration from major cities such as New York and Tokyo, the government of Shanghai has sought to convey a mixture of modernity and high culture through a blend of high-rise construction and historic preservation. City branding is a major part of Shanghai's urban development program. Apart from the building of multiple modern skyscrapers, the local government sees protection of distinctive "architectural artifacts" as essential to the branding of a city with global ambitions. The drive behind preservation, however, raises lingering questions regarding the residents currently living in these historic "monuments." Through ethnography, I show the lives of three different groups of residents whose sense of home is defined by completely different factors. "Traditionalism as a way of life" can be defined as practices that can only be understood within a highly contemporary framework, in which enacting or embodying "the past" has value in contemporary Chinese economic and globalized structures.

## INTRODUCTION

"I wouldn't be able to imagine my wife and me being anywhere but here," said Teacher Hu when asked about their imagination of the future.

Teacher Hu (*Hu laoshi*) was born and has lived in Shanghai ever since he could remember. He and I got along with each other quite well, as I have been a regular visitor to his neighborhood for the past two years. Living in a traditional Shanghai alleyway neighborhood known as a *lilong* (literally "neighborhood lane"), Teacher Hu was, to me, a local historian who always enjoyed sharing all kinds of stories about the place in which he had lived for more than seven decades.

My fascination for his neighborhood began two years ago as I was searching the city looking for a site for my research on the gentrification of the inner city of Shanghai. Teacher Hu's neighborhood was one of those *lilong* neighborhoods that was not only in good physical condition, but

*All photography has been provided kindly by Sue Anne Tay.*

also had a unique architectural style. Most importantly, it had lively residents, with whom I could casually engage in conversation. Not only was the Teacher himself loquacious and outspoken, but he was also the liveliest among the residents. His *lilong* neighborhood occupied a block in the business district of Shanghai. The periphery of this block consisted of luxury stores facing pavements populated by tourists and local shoppers. Surprising to many (myself included), Teacher Hu's neighborhood was one of the few *lilong* that had yet to be demolished given the value of the prime business area in which it was located. It was my fascination of his *lilong* neighborhood as well as of Teacher Hu himself that kept bringing me back to see him there.

Since the economic reform in the early 1980s, Shanghai has been a city in flux. Shanghai's urban structure is always changing thanks to relentless political and economic forces that, since the reform, have shaped its patterns of urbanization.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, due to its status as China's most economically viable city (i.e., highest gross domestic product or GDP), Shanghai's cityscape today is changing at an unprecedented pace. Old and traditional buildings are constantly being replaced by new, modern buildings that are usually much higher in their spatial efficiency, allowing the city to service higher income residents who are attracted to the city by its dynamic tertiary industries. Like many big cities, lands in the city are reclaimed from the original residents and resold by the local government to real estate developers. The broadly defined "public good" is usually the key argument for the local government's use of eminent domain to reclaim valuable lands for higher income residents or businesses.<sup>2</sup>

Stories of residents fighting against the government to maintain their rights to receive adequate compensation are not new. In fact, as a researcher who has been working on the issues of housing rights and gentrification, I felt that I knew a great deal not only about the brutality of the local government's forced eviction practices.<sup>3</sup> Many residents are already

looking to move elsewhere due to changes in lifestyle and employment, and seek to take advantage of the compensation money to help them make this move. Hence, although I usually felt sympathetic when I heard a story of people being displaced, another part of me attempted to maintain some level of objectivity because I did not really know the entire story.

Nevertheless, looking into Teacher Hu's unusually deep, expressive and sad eyes when hearing him say that he would not be able to imagine his life anywhere else but here, I could not help but feel sad and sympathetic about such an anticipated loss. The Teacher Hu I knew always smiled and laughed. His heavy pounding on my shoulder every time we saw each other always reminded me that he was healthy and lively. He always called home a small and narrow row house, half of which he and his wife rented out for extra income. "In a couple of years, if not less," said Teacher Hu, "the government will turn our houses into high-end shops just like the others." Teacher Hu and his wife were not naïve, as he knew quite well their destiny from many of the old neighbors who had been moving out from their 80-year-old neighborhood in the inner city to apartments in the suburbs. The situation he described is highly possible given that a new metro station and a shopping complex were in the process of construction right outside the wall of the community. "Perhaps, I'll join them in the suburbs," he said. But still, his deeply sad eyes told me that there was something about this place he called home that nothing else could replace. There seems to be a discrepancy between the quantitative goal of the state and the qualitative needs of the residents in their basic right to dwell in the city.<sup>4</sup> The question in this essay is: how do we understand the sense of a place aspiring to become a global city? In this essay, I use ethnography to shed light on the meaning of home, and a sense of place, in the socio-spatial context of China's most economically dynamic city.

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<sup>1</sup> Shahid Yusuf, Weiping Wu, and World Bank., *The dynamics of urban growth in three Chinese cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); John R. Logan, ed. *Urban China in transition* (Oxford: Oxford : Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *Evicted from eternity : the restructuring of modern Rome* (Chicago, Ill. ; London: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Arjun Appadurai, "The Right to Participate in the Work of the Imagination," in *TransUrbanism* (Rotterdam: NAi Pub, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Mayra Gomez and Bret Thiele, "Housing Rights Are Human

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Rights," *Human Rights* 32(2005); Qin Shao, *Shanghai gone : domicile and defiance in a Chinese megacity*, State and society in East Asia (2013); Hyun Bang Shin, "The Right to the City and Critical Reflections on China's Property Rights Activism," *Antipode* (2013).

<sup>4</sup> David Harvey, "The right to the city," *New Left Review* 253(2008); Li Zhang, "The Right to the Entrepreneurial City in Reform-Era China," *China Review* 10, no. 1 (2010).

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## HOUSING IN A GLOBAL CITY

Taking inspiration from major cities such as New York and Tokyo, the government of Shanghai has sought to convey a mixture of modernity and high culture through a blend of high-rise construction and historic preservation.<sup>5</sup> City branding is a major part of Shanghai's urban development program.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the building of multiple modern skyscrapers, the local government sees protection of distinctive "architectural artifacts" as essential to the branding of a city with global ambitions.<sup>7</sup> The drive behind preservation, however, raises lingering questions regarding the residents currently living in these historic "monuments." As China rushes to modernize, one may wonder how the image of urban globalization affects the citizens whose lives the city government is ultimately seeking to improve.

At the heart of this issue are the traditional alleyway houses of Shanghai known as *lilong* (里弄). Literally meaning "neighborhood lane," the *lilong* are the legacies of Shanghai's Treaty Port era (1842-1946), representing the Chinese take on the British row house aesthetic. The *lilong* house was originally conceived by British developers as a British row house transplanted to Chinese soil to house a large number of Chinese laborers, which later became the city's dominant form of housing.<sup>8</sup> The *lilong* also constituted the primary housing stock found in Shanghai up until the early 1980s, with multiple generations having occupied the same dwellings for a

hundred years or more.<sup>9</sup> The dual nature of the *lilong* as both artifact and site for community places it at the center of various socio-political debates regarding China's attitude toward urban redevelopment at the state and local levels. The city and the state's image-conscious definition of civic improvement stands at odds with community leaders who equate such "improvement" with "state-led gentrification" inevitably leading to the displacement of current residents from their homes.

Just as the *lilong* can be both a monument and a home, I argue that housing strategies are not simply a matter of providing space to a certain number of people, but should take into account socio-cultural processes as well. Teacher Hu and his wife's story is a vivid example. It might well be the case that he would get to live in a larger and more convenient apartment if he agreed to move out of his *lilong* house, but only if we do not take into account their deep attachment to place.<sup>10</sup> Teacher Hu and his wife had lived in the neighborhood for more than 40 years. They lived through the highs and lows of Shanghai under communism: throughout the hardship from devastating political campaigns to see the new Shanghai rising again in the early 1990s with the economic reform moving forward at full speed.

Located in physical space, housing occupies a key role in the organization of Chinese society. Not only is housing about the "physical" accommodation of the population, it also concerns the "social and moral" organization of family, lineage, marriage, and the possession and maintenance of property as a whole.<sup>11</sup> The rhetoric of historical preservation juxtaposed with the city's goal to project a global image represents a contradiction between ideology and city planning. The local governments of large cities hoping to achieve recognition from the international community using words like "historic preservation" and "development" often risk neglecting other important issues such as the provision of adequate housing.<sup>12</sup> These euphemistic buzzwords take a particularly dangerous tone when concerning the *lilong* and the existing communities there, as "historic preservation" spells the de-

<sup>5</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large : cultural dimensions of globalization*, Public worlds v. 1 (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Saskia Sassen, *The global city : New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, N.J. ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> Brook Larmer, "Shanghai Dreams: China's global city tries to recapture the glories of its past—this time on its own terms.," National Geographic 2010; Albert Wing Tai Wai, "Place promotion and iconography in Shanghai's Xintiandi," Habitat International 30, no. 2 (2006); Fulong Wu, "Globalization, Place Promotion and Urban Development in Shanghai," Journal of Urban Affairs 25, no. 1 (2003).

<sup>7</sup> Edward L. Glaeser, *Triumph of the city : how our greatest invention makes us richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011); Sharon Zukin, *Landscapes of power : from Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley ; Oxford : University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Much research has been done on the historical aspect of this form of housing. For more detailed research on the historical and architectural aspects of the *lilong* houses and housing see Non Arkaraprasertkul, "Towards Shanghai's Urban Housing: Re-Defining Shanghai's Lilong" (paper presented at the The 6th China Urban Housing Conference, Beijing, China, 2007); Wenjun Ge, "Social congestion in Shanghai : an urban housing project designed on its sections" (S.M., 2008); Qian Guan, "Lilong Housing, A Traditional Settlement Form" (M.Arch Thesis, McGill University, 1996); Paul Harley Hammond, "Community Eclipse and Shanghai's Lilong" (University of Missouri-Columbia, 2006); D. Louise Morris, *Community or commodity? : a study of Lilong housing in Shanghai* (Centre for Human Settlements, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1994); Wan-Lin Tsai, "The Redevelopment and Preservation of Historic Lilong Housing in Shanghai" (M.S. Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Samuel Y. Liang, "Where the Courtyard Meets the Street: Spatial Culture of the Li Neighborhoods, Shanghai, 1870-1900," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 67, no. 4 (2008).

<sup>10</sup> Tianshu Pan, "Place attachment, communal memory, and the moral underpinnings of gentrification in postreform Shanghai," in *Deep China : the moral life of the person, what anthropology and psychiatry tell us about China today*, ed. Arthur Kleinman, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Bryna Goodman, *Native place, city, and nation : regional networks and identities in Shanghai, 1853-1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Julie Y. Chu, *Cosmologies of credit : transnational mobility and the politics of destination in China* (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2010); Myron L. Cohen, *House united, house divided : the Chinese family in Taiwan*, Studies of the East Asian Institute (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976); Ronald G. Knapp, *China's living houses : folk beliefs, symbols, and household ornamentation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Herzfeld, "Spatial Clensing: Monumental Vacuity and the Idea of the West," *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 1/2 (2006).

mise of the former, and “development” spells the demise of the latter.<sup>13</sup>

In this paper, I will present stories of three residents in the Tranquil Light neighborhood (a pseudonym), a *lilong* neighborhood in the upper quarter of Shanghai, which is surrounded by luxury stores and high-rise buildings. Earlier I sketched the picture of Tranquil Light in my narrative about Teacher Hu. The picture of this neighborhood will become more vivid as I narrate the stories of two other residents: Rob and Xiao Wang. I have come to know these three residents well after my multiple research trips to Shanghai from 2010 to 2014. Their lives – the original, the incoming, and the floating resident – are snapshots of housing situations in urban Shanghai today. I hope to show that even in the same neighborhood, their senses of place are defined by completely different factors.<sup>14</sup>

### THE HOME OF TEACHER AND MRS. HU

“Everyone [in this community] calls me Teacher Hu,” he said. But he never told me where and what he used to teach. Since he was already retired and running a small grocery shop with his wife when my expatriate friend introduced me to him two years ago, I automatically assumed that before he retired (almost always at sixty years of age in the Chinese public school system) he was once a teacher – a title that, especially in a society rooted in Confucianism focusing on the respect for the elderly such as China, stayed with him for life. My expatriate friend who introduced me to him did not know better: “Everyone always calls him Teacher Hu – I don’t know why – he must have been a teacher,” he said.

A house played a central role for the vanishing traditional Chinese family. Not only was it physically important as a shelter for the multiple generations of the family, but also symbolic in that it represented the power of the leader of the household who is providing for the members in harmony. Analytically speaking, the spatial arrangement of the house represented the “inherent” hierarchy of a traditional



Chinese family. For instance, the head of the family (usually the oldest male) occupied the largest room at the most private part of the house (usually on the upper floor if the house had more than one story), whereas the other members and the wives that were married into the family stayed on the lower level. “Older sons are given preference over younger sons,” said Teacher Hu as he remembered quite well what it was like when his parents were still alive. Unlike a traditional Chinese courtyard house, a *lilong* house was narrow and small, but was still organized within a spatial constraint with a clear hierarchical division between the space for the head of the house and the rest of the household. As a son, Teacher Hu slept with his parents on the third level of the house. His father’s younger brothers and their relatives who came to Shanghai to find jobs stayed on the lower level. At one time, there were more than a dozen people in his house, which was originally built for half that number (three bedrooms).

“Life was not convenient as there was no bathroom inside the house,” said Teacher Hu. The way the house was constructed did not include an indoor plumbing system, thus before the pipelines were installed in the late 1970s, everyone had to go to a communal well to get water or buy it from the seller who would go door to door to deliver water. After the Communists took over the city from the Nationalists in the late 1940s, his neighborhood was transformed into a part of a large *danwei* (also known as work unit), or a place of employment to which the socialist workers were bound to for life and which in turn provided them with housing, child care, schools, clinics, shops, and other services. Before moving to the Tranquil Light neighborhood, Teacher Hu lived in his original house in the lower quarter of Shanghai, which was then being re-distributed to other families. In 1964, ten years after he moved into Tranquil Light, he was moved again, this

<sup>13</sup> James Ferguson, *The anti-politics machine : “development,” depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho* (Cambridge [England] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>14</sup> In this short piece, I can only do so much in providing the details of the full picture of Shanghai’s urban situation. For instance, while a full discussion of the nature of municipal preservation strategies may be helpful to the understanding of how the residents make use of the discourse around them to their own advantage, I have to restrain myself from further complicating the situation since the strategies themselves are tremendously varied and complex. They range from the modest infrastructural improvements without disrupting residential tenure patterns (the Tranquil Light’s case), to the use of eminent domain leading to a brutal eviction of the original residents and destruction of the existing structure followed by *lilong*-style modern luxury homes, and to quasi-legal commercial redevelopment such as the famous high-end retail district in the upper quarter of Shanghai. Some of these strategies are known to those who are well-read thanks to the recent writings on the issue, but are not playing a critical role in the ways in which the residents themselves think about their sense of place, which is the main focus of this paper.

time into his present home after he could prove to the local cadre in charge of the *danwei* that he and his wife needed a larger apartment (he did not say how such need was calculated). But he was given only a small bedroom, not the spacious one on the third floor, and a small elongated allotment space on the first floor of the building, which was usually used as a corridor leading to a stairwell communally used by the residents in the same unit.

In the early 1980s, Teacher Hu was sent by his *danwei*, specializing in industrial equipment quality control, to one of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the southeastern coast of China to help set up a handful of factories needed to fuel its newly established labor intensive and export economy. He returned only a few years after because of his chronic health problem. His wife was also no longer employed because her *danwei* was dissolved. Their daughter was born a few years before Teacher Hu left Shanghai for work. When he returned, the family found themselves in a difficult situation, as the small monthly pension given to them by the local government was barely enough to support the couple, let alone their teenage daughter. The couple had to make extra income to support the family. Thus, Teacher and Mrs. Hu turned the elongated allotment space on the first floor – with five-foot-wide frontage and about 20-foot-deep (it was originally a corridor) – into a small grocery shop, selling all kinds of items but mainly cigarettes, liquors, and candies. When I met him for the first time in 2012, he had been running his small shop for more than twenty years.

As modern 24-7 convenient stores are ubiquitous in Shanghai, the couple did not really make money from their local grocery store business. However, it was precisely this business that gave them, according to Teacher Hu, “something to look forward to in the morning.” Having spent time sitting on a small wooden stool in front of the shop that he provided for people to come sit, drink tea, play cards, and smoke with him (although he no longer smoked because of his chronic disease), I felt that the shop was more a venue for conversation than anything else. In fact, many elderly with whom I spoke called his shop a “platform” (*pingtai*) to engage in all kinds of conversation, from the local politics in the district, to collective reminiscence, and gossiping about their neighbors and the new residents. People did not really come to buy anything, but to talk, share, and chat with Teacher Hu and his wife about politics, law, and reminiscing about all kinds of nostalgic stories (usually about Mao’s China). As the late afternoon arrived, children would bring their homework to the shop and gather around a small knee-height folding desk that Teacher Hu kept right by the entrance of the shop to give the children a communal place to do their homework.

## SHANGHAI TRADITIONALISM

The post-high socialist China – some scholars call it “late-socialist China”<sup>15</sup> – is a period of experimentation, rang-

<sup>15</sup> Li Zhang and Aihwa Ong, eds., *Privatizing China : socialism from afar* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008).

ing from the highly geographically imbalanced “let some people get rich first” economic agenda to a dubious one child policy family planning program. Older generation residents like Teacher and Mrs. Hu basically received almost no support from the government and had to take care of themselves, but how? This treatment of retirees was increasingly the case after the market had replaced the state in the provision of basic social infrastructure such as housing and employment.<sup>16</sup> While the economic reform program has dismantled the social safety net, which was a much-needed source of support for the elderly who could no longer work in a factory, the one child policy has disrupted traditional family relations. Teacher Hu recalled how, when he was young, he and all of his siblings were very close to their parents and grandparents as they were all living under the same roof taking care of each other.

Though the couple’s house and shop were both very small and dilapidated, the ownership of both essentially upheld their sense of dignity. This was because their social life revolved around the house and the shop. Every morning, I saw people, young and old, walking by Teacher and Mrs. Hu’s house and greeting them while they were watering their plants in the front of the house. Teacher Hu usually invited everyone to sit down with him for a tea, but really just so that he could have someone to chat with. What struck me in my last visit to Teacher and Mrs. Hu’s neighborhood was, what the urban theorist and activist Jane Jacobs calls “the sense of community.”<sup>17</sup> With around a hundred residents living in the branch lane, that part of the neighborhood was small enough for all residents to know each other. Walking from a typical hectic commercial street of Shanghai where everyone was a stranger to each other into Teacher Hu’s neighborhood where everyone was a neighbor of one another, I felt that I was in a completely different Shanghai.

Having said that, there was another intriguing aspect of space-time continuum – the concept of time where there is simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present. Although time has changed, the sense of community I felt was rather similar to that in the close-knit alleyway house neighborhood that the historian Lu Hanchao portrayed in his classic historical ethnography *Beyond the Neon Light: Everyday Shanghai in the Early Twentieth Century*.<sup>18</sup> *Lilong* neighborhoods then were like a dense collection of villages with residents rarely leaving the locale of their alleyway houses to go elsewhere. Older residents like Teacher and Mrs. Hu did not travel outside the neighborhood, except when they had to go out to buy goods to sell in their shop. This tie to their locale, in turn, created a strong sense of belonging, lo-

<sup>16</sup> Dorothy J. Solinger, *Contesting citizenship in urban China : peasant migrants, the state, and the logic of the market*, Studies of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

<sup>17</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The death and life of great American cities* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Jonathan Cape, 1964).

<sup>18</sup> Hanchao Lu, *Beyond the neon lights : everyday Shanghai in the early twentieth century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

cal moral world, and place attachment among the residents.<sup>19</sup> When asked about his friends who had moved elsewhere and whether or not he would go out and see them in their new apartments, he replied: “Why would I go out to see them... they all come here from time to time – I know they all miss our neighborhood.”

There is a critical point to be made here about this spatial sense of the past. Rhetorically speaking, one might say that when in the neighborhood, one feels as if one were “going back in time,” moving away from the chaos of modern life into the local communal world where everyone knows and helps each other. As I have argued elsewhere, this type of romanticization is, in fact, a common attitude among historians of Shanghai, overlooking many other issues such as conflicts, violence, and the health hazards resulting from living in an unsafe environment of a rundown structure.<sup>20</sup> It is often the historians, architects, and planners – the outsiders – who paint the picture of a romantic urban place due to the nature of their archival research methodologies that seem to accentuate certain aspects of the past. This particular emphasis of the selected portion of the past, or what the anthropologist Tianshu Pan calls “Shanghai nostalgia,”<sup>21</sup> is a doubled-edged sword. On the one hand, it documents some of the important aspects of the past that would otherwise be forgotten. On the other hand, this romanticization comes in handy for the local government’s efforts to stress its cultural capital in the effort to make Shanghai a global city.<sup>22</sup> As a result, the government made a few preservation programs that only focus on the preservation of the physical structure of the “romantic neighborhoods” without caring for the residents living in them. In fact, the use of Shanghai nostalgia usually results in state-led gentrification of the neighborhood. Thus, I had always found suspiciously rosy historical accounts questionable if not misleading, and thought that the discourse of nostalgic sentiment did more harm than good to the original residents living in the neighborhood.

Teacher Hu emphasized this romantic past, especially when speaking about the future of his neighborhood. “There is no place like this...we maintain the tradition of the community,” he said, pointing out the stark contrast between his neighborhood and a typical community living in high-rise

towers. For more than a decade, he always wore the same clothes. He always got up early to water his plants in front of the house, sat in front of his shop talking to his friends and neighbors during the day, and resumed the role of a “homework teacher” for the children in the neighborhood from late afternoon to the early evening. This might be the reason why people still called him teacher despite the fact that he might not have had been a teacher at all. That said, as noted by the anthropologist Andrew Kipnis, after the 1980s the term “teacher” (*laoshi*) has become a generic term of respect, replacing the term “comrade” (*tongzhi*) used in the high communist period (1949 – 1976).<sup>23</sup> According to Kipnis, the term “teacher” can also be used to address people one does not recognize, especially when asking for assistance from a stranger (the de facto reason why I call him Teacher Hu). Both of these reasons probably play a role in how the community recognized him as a respectable figure in the neighborhood. This homework teacher role had diminished greatly because most of the kids in the neighborhood preferred to use the internet to help them with their homework. Once the sun had set, he would be sitting outside of the house, sometimes working on his “mini project” such as building a wooden chair on demand or fixing small electrical appliances for his friends and neighbors, sometimes just reminiscing about his good old days to anyone who walked by (including me). He had never wanted to change this daily routine and refused all forms of technology, including a computer, or even a calculator. (I have been keeping in touch with him through writing letters.) He only had a small frequency radio that he listened to every morning (of course, he always listened to traditional/classical Chinese music). While one could see the Teacher as an old man who was living in the past, one could also see his lifestyle as a survival strategy, an important point which I will further elaborate. Teacher and Mrs. Hu were not the only ones reenacting the lifestyle of the past times as a statement in support of the importance of their lifestyle. In other words, their daily enactments of the unchanging past/present have political potential. They represent the ways in which residents themselves become implicated in the state’s projects of traditionalism.

According to the anthropologist Theodore C. Bestor, *traditionalism*, in this sense, is a collective discourse of the present in support of the past that particular members of an urban community use to create meanings vis-à-vis social forms around which people organize their lives.<sup>24</sup> For instance, in the neighborhood of *Miyamoto-cho* where Bestor conducted the study of social organization of an ordinary urban neighborhood in the lower quarter of Tokyo, older members of the neighborhood used the past as a tool for the present. Rituals and certain idealized forms of traditional events and exchanges were maintained by the group of people who used them

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Kleinman, *What really matters : living a moral life amidst uncertainty and danger* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Non Arkaraprasertkul, “Urbanization and Housing: Socio-Spatial Conflicts over Urban Space in Contemporary Shanghai,” in *Aspects of Urbanization in China: Shanghai, Hong Kong, Guangzhou*, ed. G. Byrne Bracken, IIAS Series (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012).

<sup>21</sup> Tianshu Pan, “Historical Memory, Community-Building and Place-Making in Neighborhood Shanghai,” in *Restructuring the Chinese City: Changing Society, Economy, and Space*, ed. Laurence J.C. Ma and Fulong Wu (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Fulong Wu and Shenjing He, “Property-Led Redevelopment in Post-Reform China: A Case Study of Xintiandi Redevelopment Project in Shanghai,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 27, no. 1 (2005); Albert Wing Tai Wai, “Place promotion and iconography in Shanghai’s Xintiandi,” *Habitat International* 30, no. 2 (2006).

<sup>23</sup> Andrew B. Kipnis, *Governing educational desire : culture, politics, and schooling in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> Theodore C. Bestor, *Neighborhood Tokyo* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford, Calif : Stanford University Press, 1989).

strategically to position the neighborhood in the context of the city's fast-pace urbanization. In the Tranquil Light neighborhood, while the low and middle income residents were using history as a way of claiming the importance of their neighborhoods as "heritage," in contrast to *Miyamoto-cho*, residents did not try to harken back to historical rituals or events.

Many seniors in the neighborhood and a few middle age residents were also important actors in this process of maintaining a "traditional" lifestyle, or what the geographer Fulong Wu calls the process of "place-promotion."<sup>25</sup> There are many ways to "perform" a place, but in the case of the Tranquil Light, we might say that it was the traditionalistic place-promotion that defined the character of the neighborhood. In urban China, although there is neither an official neighborhood nor homeowner association with actual political or financial power to instigate change, the informal gathering group among the senior residents is what plays an important role in building personal relationships among the residents and between the state at the local level and the members of the community. The political scientist Benjamin L. Read argues that a form of "administrative grassroots engagement," or the involvement of the state in local community life through the state's sponsoring of networks and organizations at the community level, helps to empower the society.<sup>26</sup> It seems to be the case that this traditionalistic place promotion was acceptable to state actors, as it neither posed financial burden nor political risk. In fact, the discourse of maintaining the traditional lifestyle has thus far supported the state's policy on urban conservation.

As in the case of Teacher and his wife, the close proximity of the houses to each other and the architecture of the lanes between the houses reinforced the sense of neighborly feeling or conduct.<sup>27</sup> However, what goes against the argument to save the community using the edifice that both the local government and the residents commonly agreed to preserve is the inevitable physical dilapidation of the *lilong* houses themselves. While the residents want to protect their neighborhood (since it does not only mean the protection of their lifestyle but also their survival) they also have to tolerate the ever-worsening condition of a century-old building. On the one hand, the discourse of traditionalism helped to maintain the lifestyles of the older residents such as Teacher and Mrs. Hu and to re-assure the "cultural importance" of his

neighborhood. On the other hand, it was this discourse that backfired on them because they had to live in this "traditionally dilapidated" condition. Anything new they brought into the neighborhood, including amenities for the convenience of life, would provide an excuse for the local government to come in and re-evaluate their ability to live in a historical neighborhood. This negotiation was something Teacher Hu constantly talked about. As the sociologist Louis Wirth notes in his classic essay in urban sociology, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," or the way in which the personal familial relationship is replaced by a mediated transaction of a large city, we may understand this aspect of traditionalism as "traditionalism as a way of life."<sup>28</sup>

## ROB: TRADITIONALISM FOR SALE

I was introduced to Teacher Hu through Rob, a 28-year-old American expatriate whom I came to know through a former student of mine who was working in Shanghai. Rob and Teacher Hu got to know each other from the first day Rob moved into the Tranquil Light. "This neighborhood is small...we know right away when someone is moving in," said Teacher Hu. Both Rob and Teacher Hu were living in the same branch lane and seeing each other on a regular basis since the frontage of Teacher Hu's shop was opposite to the door leading to Rob's room on the top floor of the building. He had a bachelor's degree from a college in the US. He moved to Shanghai around three years ago. Like many educated Americans who speak "Standard American English," he made a living by teaching English to school kids in the business district that was in a walking distance from his *lilong* apartment, earning enough to rent a rather spacious apartment about four times the size of Teacher and Mrs. Hu's. Rob was attracted to the *lilong* neighborhood by historical accounts he read about Shanghai. In fact, he read one of my earlier writings on the romance of the *lilong* neighborhood and wanted to try to live in one ever since!

It was the "connection with the past" that inspired Rob to rent a room in a renovated *lilong* house that the original residents revamped to specifically rent out to foreigners in this neighborhood, instead of a cheaper modern room in a high-rise building. Unlike Teacher Hu's apartment, which was dense, packed and dark because of the solid walls on both sides of the house that were put up to divide up the space for other extra renters, Rob's apartment was bright, clean, and spacious – changed to be more "modern." Unlike Teacher Hu's house, which looked like it had been frozen in time for more than half a century, Rob's apartment was equipped with broadband high-speed Internet, air-conditioner, and a flat screen TV.

Rob enjoyed living there, to the point that, when getting introduced to a new friend, colleague, or business collaborator, his first line had become "I live in an old *lilong* house in the Tranquil Light." He never openly accepted that it was

<sup>25</sup> Fulong Wu, "Globalization, Place Promotion and Urban Development in Shanghai," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 25, no. 1 (2003).

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin L. Read, "Democratizing the Neighbourhood? New Private Housing and Home-Owner Self-Organization in Urban China," *The China Journal*, no. 49 (2003). And see also Jiang-gang Zhu, "Between the family and the state: An ethnography of the civil associations and community movements in a Shanghai *lilong* neighborhood" (The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2002); Tianshu Pan, "Neighborhood Shanghai: Community building in Five Mile Bridge" (PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 2002).

<sup>27</sup> As also explored in Deborah Pellow, "No place to live, no place to love: Coping in Shanghai," in *Urban anthropology in China*, ed. Gregory Eliyu Guldin and Aidan Southall (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 1993).

<sup>28</sup> Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1938).



this “symbolic value” of the place that was most important to him, along with its central location which made it convenient for him to walk or bike to work. He mentioned that he was about to extend the contract to stay there for another year, and his partner might also move in with him. Rob enjoyed both the privacy he got from this top floor apartment, and all the attention from the children and other residents who wanted to speak to a “white foreigner” (*laowai* or *bairen*). In fact, Rob was not the only foreigner in the Tranquil Light. He was among dozens of foreigners living in other lanes. When I asked Teacher Hu what he thought about Rob’s romantic attitude toward his neighborhood, he replied, “See...even foreigners want to live here!”

At any given time, there were usually about 10-15 apartments ranging from RMB3,000 – RMB5,000 per month (US\$428 – US\$700) available “exclusively for foreigners” to rent out. These rooms were renovated by the original residents, who themselves had moved somewhere else, usually to live with their children’s families. A local senior resident was asked by these residents to put up a sign on the community’s board whenever there was a room available. This same senior resident was the one who had the key to all the available rooms, as his job was also to show the interested renters the rooms. He received a small commission whenever someone decided to rent a room, which was available for both a short (two weeks to three months) or long period of time (three months to one year). When I asked him why these rooms were “exclusively for foreigners,” he replied with a chuckle: “No Chinese would want to live in an old house like this...besides, for RMB3,000, they could live in a decent high-rise apartment!”

Rob did complain from time to time that there was no hot water or the water pressure was too low when he needed it. Besides, the water toilet did clog from time to time, as there was only so much infrastructural improvement that

could be done to a century-old house. When I asked Rob whether he knew that he could live in a modern high-rise apartment for the premium price he paid for his *lilong* apartment, he replied, “of course I know...but this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience...I am going to have a lot of stories to tell after these years in Shanghai.” Here we see another form of traditionalism, which benefited both the residents and the foreign renter. Rob was attracted by the “façade” of an authentic Shanghai life, which he believed to be the only way to access the exotic tradition.<sup>29</sup> His upbringing might have influenced his decision to live there. Yet, among dozens of foreigners who lived in the Tranquil Light who also knew each other, it seemed to be that the excitement of living in a traditional Chinese house with modern amenities was what got them sold.

The Tranquil Light’s neighborhood committee had little role in a community development, thus it did not have the authority to orchestrate the marketization of the neighborhood in this way. It was the residents themselves who had made a careful observation of other gentrified *lilong* neighborhoods in the city and then adopted a similar strategy to attract the target customers. One of the first foreigners who lived in the neighborhood from 2009 – 2010 told me that she was introduced to this community by a Shanghainese friend who was looking for someone to rent out her room, as she was moving in with her husband. Back then the rent was not very high since the condition of the room was almost hazardous, and there was a rumor that the neighborhood might be torn down to make way for high-rise buildings. Apart from spending her own money to refurbish the room herself, she also had to adjust her lifestyle to fit that of the residents of the community. For instance, she had to learn to live with a thin wall through which she could listen to the TV program being watched next door, with a “quasi-shared” bathroom (meaning it was her bathroom but anyone in the building could also use it), and so on. But after making several adjustments, she found herself to be living in a “dream apartment,” according to her. The success of her story went viral in the social media among expatriates, which led to a staggering interest in the neighborhood. Since the Tranquil Light was a historical neighborhood, it also received direct benefit from the “Better City, Better Life” city beautification campaign of the local government to prepare the city for the Shanghai Expo in 2010. The Tranquil Light basically received a series of free face-lifts and refurbishings from the local government, so that it would look presentable to the eyes of the record number of 73 million visitors. The neighborhood also benefited from the presence of the foreigners, as Teacher Hu often implied, since it reinforced the claim about the importance of the neighborhood to both the outsiders and the local government. In what Herzfeld calls “global hierarchy of value,”<sup>30</sup> “the westerner’s

<sup>29</sup> Similar to the authenticity discourse and practice that the anthropologist David Grazian shows. See David Grazian, *Blue Chicago: the search for authenticity in urban blues clubs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> Michael Herzfeld, *The body impolitic: artisans and artifice in the*



taste” represents the universal value –in this case, through the discourse of heritage conservation. Moreover, the local government also operated a dual-track evaluation of *lilong* houses: while the original residents had to live in the houses in their original conditions, the foreigners were allowed to modify their apartments to their taste and need. The sense of place for Rob was the sense of being part of tradition, though only superficially.

XIAO WANG: “TRADITIONALLY, EVERYONE WAS EQUALLY POOR.”

Finally, there was also Xiao Wang, a 25-year-old master’s degree graduate from a university in Shanghai who had a part-time job working in a restaurant. She was not originally from Shanghai but from another province. Xiao Wang rented a room in the Tranquil Light. Her “room on the stair flight” (*tingzijian*) was not originally a room but a space used as storage between two floors, which was later turned into a room. It was about three-fourths the size of Teacher Hu’s bedroom, but it basically had everything that she would need, including a study desk, a wooden box in which she stored belongings, and a tiny bed. Because she still relied on her parents’ financial support, she had to be economical about the living expense. Unlike Teacher Hu or Rob, who lived in the Tranquil Light because they wanted to, she lived there because it was the only choice: it was the only affordable place in the city at a distance that she could walk to work in order to save money. Like many university graduates in China today, she aspired to become successful in life, thus she was keen to learn English, and my offer to help her with her English was how we got to know each other. Xiao Wang was not very close to Teacher Hu.

I visited her room a few times. Because it was so small (though it did have a tiny window) it was usually dark. The door to Xiao Wang’s room was also very small. I felt as if I was walking into a cave when I walked into her room. A small desk that was attached to the wall was where she did everything from studying to eating dinner, and to watching television shows online. A small plastic closet next to the desk was where everything else went. She turned a bunk space supported by a doubled-cross wooden lintel into a personal storage space, where she kept all of the books, packs of instant noodles, energy drinks, as well as other things. Visiting Xiao Wang’s room donned on me an entirely different living experience and meaning of home. Teacher Hu’s place may be small and dark, but at least he had the shop that was completely open to the lane downstairs where he basically did everything else except for sleeping. Although Teacher Hu had to come downstairs every morning to empty his urine collector (since there was no bathroom on his floor and he was too old to walk down to the first floor every time he needed to use the bathroom), I could still imagine myself living in his

*global hierarchy of value, Artisans and artifice in the global hierarchy of value* (Chicago ; London: Chicago ; London : University of Chicago Press, 2004).



place. I, however, could not imagine myself in Xiao Wang’s room in any way. There was a window but she barely opened it because of the noise and mosquitos in the summer, and cold wind in the winter, which meant lack of sunlight as well as ventilation, leading to poor indoor air quality.

“What choices do I have – none,” said Xiao Wang. “But, it’s OK, *traditionally*, everyone was equally poor, so why shy away from it?” Despite her strong moral position, I sensed that there was more to the story:

You just have to get used to it... I had a room a bit bigger than this size at my house in my hometown, but there were a couple of windows opening to a small park, which was nice. This room was the only one that I could afford. I’d tell people that I have a room in downtown Shanghai! (*laughing*)... but no, I wouldn’t bring my loved one here... but admit it, it is not that bad. It’s close to the university and everything.

As I have already graduated I could no longer live in the university’s housing, and this place is the cheapest one I could get in the city. I could live in the suburbs and sit on the train for an hour to get to the city, but why would I do that? It’s not convenient, but where else is convenient? I don’t have money. Here, at least I am in the heart of the city. People don’t need to know that I am living here. They only need to know that I work in the city! Trust me, if you live here for a month you’ll get used to it just like me!

Characterized as migrant workers seeking temporary employment, the *liudongrenkou* (literally “floating population”) have become an integral source of cheap labor since China’s “coming out” period in the early 1980s, despite the unwillingness of the local governing bodies to recognize them

as legitimate (if temporary) residents.<sup>31</sup> The legacy of the high-socialist era household registration system or *hukou* labels each citizen either as rural or urban, tying each citizen to their place of birth if they want the benefits of healthcare and education. Xiao Wang was from another part of China and so did not have a Shanghai *hukou*. So, in Shanghai, she was only a half citizen. Additionally, China's post-1980s economic reform program shifted the role of supplying welfare housing from the state to private developers – ultimately providing the members of the *liudongrenkou* limited access to public housing, and consequently pushing them to the outskirts of the city.

Here I employ ethnography as a way to shed light on the construction of the *liudongrenkou* as a sociocultural category, and to provide an account of the special challenges faced by this class of worker in China. For a *liudongrenkou* such as Xiao Wang, a sense of a home was all about basic needs. She neither wanted to engage in any of the neighborhood activities, nor wanted to help promote traditionalism to the outsiders because, in her own words, “it doesn't matter... I'll move when I find a cheaper place...there is no home for me in this city.” Xiao Wang spent about 16 to 20 hours a day outside of the room. Apart from working part-time, she hung out at the workplace or elsewhere in the city. “I only come back to sleep...you know, you see my room...it's a hole...it's not the kind of space you want to be in very much (*laughing*).” In her situation, the way in which the concept of home analytically works for my ethnography is rooted in the financial and socio-economic constraints with which a *liudongrenkou* has to deal. For the more than five million *liudongrenkou* in Shanghai who are originally from other parts of China traveling to the big city by themselves with the goal to send money home, a house is merely a space that accommodates the physical needs of a person. I got to know Xiao Wang quite well through many interviews and interactions, most of the time in her room. On the one hand, Xiao Wang almost always referred to her own background in another city where “everybody was poor” (*dajia dou hen qiong*), and that was the so-called “tradition” to her. On the other hand, from what her mother, whom I met when she came up to Shanghai to help her move out, told me, Xiao Wang's life was not that bad when she was a child. When I asked her about the condition of poverty that she always referred to, her mother could not really make sense of it: “Maybe it's something that Xiao Wang's father encountered when he was sent to the countryside, but that's not what she had experienced directly. Xiao Wang was born when the family was pretty well-off already.”

And that was the story: Xiao Wang in fact confessed to me that she had not really been in contact with the referred condition of poverty directly, but she thought that it was an “imagined past” that would make sense, and could help to take the pressure of having to maintain the “face” (*mianzi*), given her status as a non-citizen in Shanghai. I was interested

in her story not just because it helped to paint a realistic picture of straitened living circumstances, but also because of the way in which an aspect from the past – whether real or imagined – was used as a coping mechanism to deal with the present.

The twists of the plot here are as follows: even though I did not think I could live in Xiao Wang's place, I ended up renting her room after she moved out, as she eventually found a place across town which she could afford with just a little bit more money than she used to pay for the room on the stair flight. Since she is the only child, her family could pull together family's resources to support her. Xiao Wang's family put in the initial down payment for her, now a graduate with a job at a securities company, to pay the mortgage. I would end up staying in Xiao Wang's former room for the next 10 months of my research in Shanghai. Xiao Wang was right: it only took me a month to get used to it.

## CONCLUSION

While I would be inclined to think that the traditional system of lineage and kinship still matters in modern China, my ethnography has shown that economic reforms have altered the social foundation of an urban neighborhood. I spent months in the Tranquil Light, speaking to a handful of people and became very close to these three people. Unlike both Teacher Hu and Rob, Xiao Wang did not have any choice but to accept the home that her economic status allowed her to afford. Although all the houses looked the same in the Tranquil Light, it was a highly class-oriented neighborhood. While older residents were living in the old part of the *lilong* houses often at the ground level, foreigners who paid premium rents were living on the renovated higher floors. A floating population of unskilled laborers rented a space in a room “within a room” – by this I mean a room that was divided several times to house up to four times the number of original residents designated to occupy that room. For instance, Xiao Wang was living in a portion of a room that was not meant to be inhabited by human beings.

This situation illustrates how the discourse of history is often put to the service of sentimentalism – evoking a yearning for the past.<sup>32</sup> In other words, the notion of “significant architectural heritage” becomes a political tool in the city of Shanghai with the implication that it represents the benign efforts of the state to preserve the history of the city for both the residents and the visitors. The preservation of the *lilong* façade symbolizes the efforts of ostensibly caring local authorities to maintain a dialogue between Shanghai's past and present. This preservation process overlooks many problems, ranging from macro-planning problems such as inadequate housing units for the working class and migrants, to urban infrastructural issues such as mounting spatial congestion, as well as safety and health hazards. Armed with this discourse of historic preservation, the local government utilizes the *lilong* in its city branding strategies, especially through gentri-

<sup>31</sup> Li Zhang, *Strangers in the city: reconfigurations of space, power, and social networks within China's floating population* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Herzfeld, *The Body*.

fication and the use of eminent domain.

Hence, many residents are living in a state of uncertainty, in constant fear of eviction, and in a seemingly unending process of negotiation with various government agents to receive compensation for the foreseeable loss of their homes. In order to maintain their right to dwell in the houses, the local residents have adopted survival, monitoring, and negotiating techniques, which include forming a neighborhood association, initiating campaigns to inform the public about the importance of their neighborhoods, and utilizing the image of a successful gentrified neighborhood in order to seem supportive of the state's "global city" discourse. Residents express their resistance by various means, utilizing all available channels of information. For instance, as in the case of the Tranquil Light, some neighborhoods rent out space to foreigners and use their presence to claim the neighborhoods' cultural capital. These dynamic interactions among various actors (i.e., local governmental officials, historians and journalists, developers, architects and planners, and residents) from multiple levels of society (i.e., urban planning vis-à-vis state policy, community, and individual citizens) are played out in the physical space of *lilong* neighborhoods.

In previous studies of *lilong* communities, many scholars have seemed to focus on the architecture of the *lilong* houses and neighborhoods, which is fascinating for a variety of reasons. In my ethnography, I still think that the architecture of the *lilong* houses and neighborhoods matters – either because the residents have to cope with the dilapidated condition as in the case of Teacher Hu and Xiao Wang, or because the architecture itself symbolizes the romance of the neighborhood life, as in the case of Rob. In the current socio-political context of China, the residents' struggle and resistance against the local government, whose goal is to maximize profits from existing land property, define the residents' individual sense of home. In this ethnographic paper, I have shown the lives of three different groups of residents: the original, the incoming, and the floating resident, whose sense of home is defined by completely different factors. On the one hand, we see Teacher Hu, who was not "living in the past." In fact, his practices can only be understood within a highly

contemporary framework, in which enacting or embodying "the past" has value in contemporary Chinese economic and globalized structures. On the other hand, Rob was drawn to the idea of traditionalism because of the symbolic value he associated with historical artifacts, and by way of his preconception of life in a traditional Chinese neighborhood. These two examples work well together, because while Teacher Hu's refusal to incorporate the modern lifestyle asserts a sense of traditionalism as a survival strategy, Rob's traditionalism represents the ways in which embodying the "past" can be a financial boon to a community.

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# KESSEN MUSUME: WOMEN AND JAPAN'S RECORD INDUSTRY AT WAR



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## ABSTRACT

All of Japan's popular culture industries were deeply involved in propagandizing the war effort during the years of Japan's long, fifteen year war. The record industry tried to find a delicate path between the demands of the government and its usual practices of tailoring content for a specific audience. The removal by conscription of young men from the consumer base put the record industry in a bind. The masculine doctrine of dominance over Asia, while supported completely by the record companies, didn't fit well with their traditional sales tactics. Young people generally use pop songs to define their emotional selves. With the "proper" roles for women restricted under wartime social attitudes, images of women in pop songs provide an insight into both the industry's chafing under government control and consumers' attempts to maintain a normal life.

## INTRODUCTION

Popular music, as an industry, is always deeply propagandistic. Pop music tries to teach its audience, made up predominantly of young people, common sense notions of how their lives should ideally be lived. In the world of the pop song, aspirations are overwhelmingly romantic and personal, placed in a context of a "normal" society where everyone else shares the same desires. Fulfillment comes with the purchase of records, which stand in as an articulation of the individual's dreams, but that fulfillment must continually be repeated until a point is reached where the consumer outgrows the need for this alternate voice. Though the status quo is always changing, the pop music industry always supports "the normal life." If the status quo suddenly and dramatically changes, the pop music industry is thrown into confusion, trying to find an acceptable voice to sell to the young people of troubled times.

Popular culture was taken seriously as a cultural weapon by the government in wartime Japan. It was seen as a motivational force capable of keeping the people's solidarity and support for the war effort, and as a way to make Japan seem appealing to foreign or conquered lands. It could also be a

small vestige of a “normal” cultural life. With young men mostly gone to the military, the body of pop music consumers would have changed to being almost exclusively female. Government censors claimed gradually larger roles in the decision making processes of each company. Record companies’ adjustments in the face of such changed circumstances, though superficially cooperating in every way with the authorities, show a deeply conflicted industry, trying desperately to continue business as it had been before the war years. This necessarily entailed a kind of resistance to the war, not from any philosophical position but merely because the war interfered with the production of popular, commercial music.

Tailoring cultural product to fit a perceived audience is the essence of all popular culture industries. With an audience dominated demographically by women, the pop music industry would have tried in its lyrics to reflect the real or imagined hopes and desires of that audience. This could potentially create conflicts with government censors who were more directly trying to persuade young people in an ideological manner. Ideally, pop songs are a kind of mask that consumers try on. If the persona of the song fits a large audience, the song will be a hit record. If the persuasion is too close to the surface, consumers have difficulty seeing themselves in the song.

There is no reason to doubt the patriotism of the record companies, if that is taken to mean their support for the war effort. They cooperated with the government’s attempts to use music for purely propaganda purposes. That most “pure” propaganda did not sell well, however, sent the industry searching for ways to compromise, that is, to find a way to make hit records that would also be acceptable to government censors. Stated another way, the industry tried to maintain some aspects of prewar music culture even in wartime.

Though there are many works on the history of the Japanese recording industry<sup>1</sup> and many focusing specifically on the war years<sup>2</sup>, none of them looks at the content of the songs, sticking strictly to the business strategies of the industry and its relationship with the government’s propaganda and censorship efforts. This essay looks at the entirety of

popular music on record of the war years (1931-1945) using Fukuda and Kato’s massive database of song titles,<sup>3</sup> as well as CD reissues and the author’s collection of 78rpm records. In many cases, only titles could be checked, but lyrics and sounds were considered as much as possible. In that sense, both content analysis and literary critical approaches have been used. After a brief history of the record industry during the war years, focusing on images of women in pop songs, this essay will continue with discussion of the most common and important female character types that appear in popular music of the era.

## THE RECORD INDUSTRY AND WOMEN IN WARTIME

At the time of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, Japan’s record industry had barely entered its modern era. The establishment of Victor, Columbia and Polydor, with foreign capital and ideas of how a modern record business should be run, had taken place only five years before.<sup>4</sup> Those five years had been enough to create a popular music culture with strong similarities to western countries. Like European and American music industries, issues of modernization, urbanization, “new women,” and internationalization (or not) were worked out in the lyrics and music of popular songs. Even though these issues have a strongly political nature, a popular song tends to avoid overt political content, focusing on romance and fashion, willingly tailoring itself to the real or perceived needs of an audience made up mainly of young people, who consume records and songs as a way of expressing their identities, hopes and desires. This structure had scarcely been established when Japan entered into its long 15-year war era.

Record companies are nothing if not opportunistic, so with the eruption of war on the continent, songs with patriotic content experienced a sudden boom in early 1932. Particularly notable was the media frenzy surrounding the “three human bullets,” three army engineers who blew themselves up (or possibly were accidentally blown up) while trying to rig charges to destroy Chinese defenses outside of Shanghai. They quickly became icons of heroic self-sacrifice, with their story elaborated in all of the modern media—film, record, and radio—as well as more traditional media—print and stage. The most significant aspect of the three human bullets story was not military in nature. In the telling of the story, the mothers of the unfortunate engineers took on a large role. The way that they had raised their sons and their willingness to send their sons to war (even though they expected the worst)

<sup>1</sup> Komota, Nobuo with Yoshibumi Shimada, Tamotsu Yazawa, and Chiaki Yokozawa, *Nihon Ryukokashi* (History of Popular Song in Japan) (Tokyo: Shakai Shisoshu, 1970), Kurata, Yoshihiro, *Nihon Rekodo Bunkashi* (Cultural History of Records in Japan) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 2006), Ogawa, Kazusuke, *Shoka, Sanbika, Gunka no Shigen* (Origins of Western-style Songs, Hymns and Military Songs) (Tokyo: Arts and Crafts, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> Hori, Masaaki, *Ikusauta ga Utsusu Kindai* (The Modern Era as seen in War Songs), (Tokyo: Asahi SHobo, 2001), Omura, Koji, *Nihon no Gunka: Senso no Jidai to Ongaku* (Japan’s Military Songs: Music and the War Era) (Tokyo: Gakushu no Tomosha, 2011), Tonoshita, Tatsuya, *Ongaku wo Doin Seyo* (Mobilize Music) (Tokyo: Seiyusha, 2008), etc.

<sup>3</sup> Fukuda, Shunji and Masayoshi Kato, eds., *Showa Ryukoka Soran* (Directory of Popular Songs of the Showa Era) (Tokyo: Takushoku Shobo, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Komota, *Nihon Ryukokashi*, 77.

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became exemplary, and the mothers themselves were actually awarded medals by the government. In *Images of Women in Wartime*, Wakakuwa Midori says that the first target of war propaganda must be mothers.<sup>5</sup> Without the support of mothers, and their willingness to send their sons to war, the total war project is not possible. Mothers feature prominently in popular song throughout the war era, and the songs about the mothers of the human bullets were hugely successful.<sup>6</sup>

Virtually contemporary with the human bullets boom, *Tōjin Okichi* (Chinese Okichi) became a similar multimedia hit. Loosely based on a true story from the opening of Japan to the West in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, its plot of a supposedly Chinese woman abused and abandoned by western, in this case American, villains helped to support the government's official version that their business in Asia was liberation from colonialism. Like the human bullets, this story crossed over music, film, stage and fiction.

As part of the frenzy surrounding the three human bullets, newspapers hit on lyric and songwriting contests as a way of involving the public in the patriotic fervor. Kurata Yoshihiro, in his *Cultural History of Records in Japan*, lists thirty "main" examples between 1938 and 1943.<sup>7</sup> With significant prize money on offer for winning entries, lyric contests would remain a significant part of the public's experience of the record industry throughout the war years. Tonoshita Tatsuya argues that this was a calculated method of encouraging people to actively spread militarist ideology, even if direct government involvement was not common.<sup>8</sup> The winning entries seldom showed any sign of individuality or deviance from the established media and government line, but they would create at least a feeling that the music industry was responding to the wishes of its audience. The record industry was in a difficult position, choosing songs to record based on suppositions about the audience's taste, which they can never be sure of. This "top-down" approach could easily have led to estrangement of that audience, which, actually, had no part in the process. The song contest could not only create a sense of audience participation and of industry concern for the wishes of that audience, it could be a valuable tool for gauging the mood of the consumers. In this case, it showed that the consumers (at least the ones who sent in lyrics) were satisfied at this point with the government's position. There is no data showing the gender of the contest entrants, but it would also be a rare case of giving women a chance to express their patriotism loudly.

Hits are, by their very nature, transient, and though the excitement of war fever and patriotism is very real, in a business that is based on continued consumption of novel content, no hit can be sustained indefinitely. Indeed, according to Omura Koji, the public's preference soon reverted to

*kouta* (a term from the popular repertory of geisha performers that simply means "songs") and *sasuraimono* (songs about or sung from the standpoint of wandering scoundrels, stock characters in drama and film.)<sup>9</sup>

In 1934 the Information Department of the Interior Ministry expanded its censorship activities to include movies and popular music.<sup>10</sup> Record companies were required to submit the lyrics of proposed recordings for approval. One of the biggest hits of the 1930s, "*Shima no Musume*" ("Island Girl") (Columbia 52533 January 1933<sup>11</sup>) was found to be unwholesome the year after its release, in 1934, and revisions were ordered. The song is sung on record by geisha Kouta Katsutaro, one of several geisha (or technically, former geisha) who helped the record industry make it possible to be both modern and Japanese at the same time. Geisha singing style has its roots in traditional folk music, but as professional urban entertainers, geisha, like the recording industry itself, were willing to take chances on novel approaches. "*Shima no Musume*," while sounding convincingly Japanese to contemporary ears, actually included many western touches. The accompaniment is by guitar, for example. Katsutaro sings about her lover who has gone off to sea and left her alone at the marriageable age of 16. Presumably, the censors felt that the original content would damage the fighting spirit of young men, making them prefer the company of someone like Katsutaro to the privilege of serving in the imperial military forces. The censors construed their duty, obviously, as purifying popular music, since they were reconsidering something already on the market. They did not try to ban the record, but they managed to change future performances of the song. This would be the last major hit in the geisha style, although many geisha continued to record and have moderate success.

The record industry, working mainly with partners in movies and stage entertainment, continued to create a modern culture that was, in many ways, international and cosmopolitan. The modern culture seen in movies or magazines, and heard on record, tends to have more similarity among various countries of the world than previous, more nationally centered versions. This certainly led to some resentment on the part of the censors, who were nothing if not Japan-centric. Fashions in movies set in contemporary times were clearly western. Hollywood movies and foreign music, and the attitudes expressed therein, were widely available, at least in the larger cities.

For the relatively isolated Japan, however, the international city of romance was not Paris or New York. It was Shanghai, pacified rather quickly after the events of 1932. Censors could allow this internationalism because it was clearly under Japanese guidance. The establishment of a state in Manchuria also encouraged Japanese citizens to look to the continent as a location where Japan could be most modern.

<sup>5</sup> Wakakuwa, Midori, *Senso ga Tsukuru Joseizo* (Images of Women in Wartime) (Tokyo: Chikuma Gakugei Bunko, 2000), 82.

<sup>6</sup> Judging solely by the number of different records released with this theme and on the extreme commonness of their survival to this day.

<sup>7</sup> Kurata, *Nihon Rekodo Bunkashi*, 234.

<sup>8</sup> Tonoshita, *Ongaku wo Doin*, 150-1.

<sup>9</sup> Omura, *Nihon no Gunka*, 137-8.

<sup>10</sup> Komota, *Nihon Ryukokashi*, 90; Kurata, *Nihon Rekodo Bunkashi*, 217.

<sup>11</sup> Record label, catalog number and release date will be provided parenthetically in the text.

Although emigration was actually rather limited in numbers, in the popular imagination, Manchuria was a frontier for agricultural development (with free land!) and a laboratory for the social engineering of a modern state. It could also be an escape for Japanese who wished to avoid war fever or police suppression of liberal thinking.

Consequently, songs about life on the continent became common in the mid-thirties. Lyricists were keen to drop names of streets, hotels, and nightclubs, and to throw in a few Chinese words, but the emotional content of the Shanghai songs is virtually indistinguishable from the Tokyo songs of the late 1920s. Specific examples of these will be discussed later in the essay. Shanghai was seen as a place of urban romantic possibilities that usually end in loneliness. Women cry secretly, men cannot forget that special someone, the horns of ships leaving port moan in sympathy.

Back in Japan, “*Wasurecha Iya Yo*” (“Doncha Forget Me”) (Victor 53663 February 1936) with Watanabe Hamako teasingly singing, “Don’t forget me when I’m in this mood,” was the biggest hit of 1936, clearing showing a preference for escape over topical or patriotic content. It was widely imitated by other singers and record companies.

The China Incident of 1937 created another round of war fever, as the battles escalated to include all of China. The need for soldiers to fight on this huge front meant that most young men, exempting only students and the unfit, were conscripted and disappeared from daily life in Japan. Although musical styles changed very little, it must be assumed that the target audience for new records was, from this time until the end of the war, for the most part, young women. With the men gone to the armed forces, a subsequent labor shortage meant that women began working in more industries and at increased wages.<sup>12</sup> It is not surprising that 1936-1939 were the peak years of the era for both number of titles released and total sales.<sup>13</sup> Clearly women continued to buy records.

In 1937, the censors clarified their approach to popular song content as part of the “General Mobilization of the People’s Will” (*Kokumin Seishin Soundo*) campaign. Their stated purpose was not to abolish pop music, but to cleanse it and make it “wholesome.” Consequently, there were to be no defeatist topics, sad sounding music was to be avoided, and singing styles should be “robust.” The last could be seen as a reaction against the crooning style of western swing music, but it also must be part of the decline in songs performed in the geisha style. Arguably, the image of geisha was considered too feminine for the government of a country that was pushing a masculine image as it expanded its borders. Also, the geisha is clearly a type of servant, which would also be a negative image as representative of the culture of the new masters of Asia. They also included in their list a provision

<sup>12</sup> Sasaki, Yoko, *Soryokusen to Josei Heishi* (Total War and Women Soldiers) (Tokyo: Seiyusha, 2001), 38-40.

<sup>13</sup> According to Fukuda and Kato, Columbia alone released more than 400 songs identified by the company as “popular” in 1937. Kurata, *Nihon Rekodo Bunkashi*, 227 has peak years of 1936 and 1939 for sales.

that advertising materials for records should also encourage fighting spirit.<sup>14</sup> This inclusion shows that the authorities were comfortable with the idea that the consumption of pop songs could be an expression of people’s patriotism.

In this new mood of censorship, the Interior Ministry backtracked and banned “*Wasurecha Iya Yo*,” which it had approved in 1936. Saying that it sounded as though a prostitute sang it, the Minister himself criticized the song. Naturally, the record industry had imitated the song and its singing style widely, as is its usual practice with successful songs, so the banning can also be seen as a campaign to reduce sexiness in all pop songs, which is in line with the authorities’ stated purpose of “cleansing” pop music. It seems likely that the combination of sexualized popular culture and masses of single women was seen as a potentially dangerous social force.

Also banned was “*Wakare no Blues*,” (“Separation Blues”) (Columbia 29384 July 1937) sung by Awaya Noriko. Although the theme of sadness at the departure of a lover was common in the songs of this era, this one used the specific place name of a pier in Kobe that had been converted into a naval base, showing that the woman is sad that her lover has gone off to war. That was going too far for the censors’ new sense of urgency. Again, it was banned *after* it passed its first session with the censors and became a hit.

Radio at that time did not broadcast records, only live music, and it was a fairly small fraction of total programming time. NHK, the government broadcasting company, joined the campaign to cleanse popular music by beginning a new program called “Songs for the People” (*Kokumin Kayo*), which seems to have been intended as a wholesome rival to the record industry. New songs were introduced every week, performed several times during the week’s broadcasts, with the process repeated continually. This mimicked the release schedules of record companies. The songs’ lyrical content is more clearly propagandistic, with indoctrination and motivation as obvious aims. Although its rejection of jazz and other pop styles made it seem didactic in comparison, some of these songs did appear on records and some were hits.<sup>15</sup>

With sexiness out of favor, the record industry tried a few new genres to appeal to consumers. The most successful were two types of “continental” pop music. *Tayorimono*, songs purporting to be letters home from soldiers and usually addressed to mothers, were released one after another. The common features would be geographical reference—it is easy to imagine listeners getting out their maps to see what part of China was being referenced—and local color. Potentially,

<sup>14</sup> Their list, quoted in Tonoshita Tatsuya, “*Kokuminka*” *wo Showa Shita Jidai* (When We Sang “Songs for the People”) (Tokyo:Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2010), 50: The complete list: “1, Make jazz and popular song more wholesome, 2, Avoid expressing defeatism or pessimism, especially with regard to military subjects, 3, Avoid songs that sound sad, 4, Songs should be performed with an appropriately robust style of singing, 5, Advertising of popular songs should encourage the fighting spirit of the people, 6, Composers and lyricists should make efforts to cooperate with the censors.”

<sup>15</sup> Tonoshita, “*Kokuminka*” *wo Showa Shita Jidai*, 28, 68

these songs could also be considered damaging to fighting spirit. It is a small step from missing home and mother to wishing that the war was over and the soldier was not in the army. Therefore, each song includes some lyrical content denying that feeling. Often the soldier will directly state that he will try his best in the next battle. “*Shanghai Tayori*” (“Letter from Shanghai”) (Polydor 2551 January 1938) ends with the soldier telling his mother to listen to the war news on the radio, where his exploits will surely be reported.

Of course, this is thinly disguised propaganda. Showing what an ideal soldier’s letter to home should resemble is tantamount to instructing soldiers what to write in their letters home. It also tells the home front family how to read and what to write back. Indeed, answer letter-songs are fairly common, and share the same propaganda feeling. There is not any individual emotion here. In fact, the lack of any emotion other than a vague nostalgia for home stands out sharply. In a sense, these songs attempt to banish love from the family, or at least, to replace it with duty to the nation.

Crying, missing home, loneliness are all standard subjects of popular song, so it is not difficult for professional songwriters and lyricists to adapt their *metier* to the circumstances of war. Indeed, failed romance may be the single most common subject of pop songs in all of Japan’s cultural history.<sup>16</sup> This is a fortunate confluence of censors’ and record companies’ desires, where the record companies are able to sell lots of records without causing the censors to fear that they were undermining the war effort.

The other type of continental songs merely places ordinary Japanese pop music conventions in exotic locations. In a sense they also serve as travel guides, with famous locations often noted as backdrops for romantic content. Again, the record companies can have their normal content and the East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, too.

Since the sexual attractiveness of Japanese women had become a contentious issue, new definitions of the ideal young woman began to be the topic of more and more songs.<sup>17</sup> As had happened at the beginning of the decade, the patriotic song fervor faded after several months.<sup>18</sup> In a large way, Asian women were moved into a position as a replacement for the sexy Japanese woman. Censorship was strict, so none of the Continental songs were actually overtly sexy, but there were fairly obsessive descriptions of dancers or girls selling flowers, their fashion, their beautiful black eyes and hair.

“*Aikoku no Hana*” (“Flower of Patriotism”) (Columbia 29717 May 1938) rehabilitated the reputation of Watanabe

Hamako (of “*Wasurecha*” fame)<sup>19</sup> and this song deserves a closer look. It was first introduced on the *Songs for the People* radio program and crossed over to become a successful record. The association of women with flowers is a well-established tradition in Japanese literature<sup>20</sup> but this song makes all of the associations quite direct. Each stanza uses one flower. The first is the wild cherry blossom that, with the grandeur of Mt. Fuji as its shield, devotes itself wholeheartedly to country. Second is the plum blossom that, though apparently weak, shows its strength by blooming in winter, overcoming adversity and cheering all around it. Third is the camellia, burning bright red with passion for protecting family and home after sending the brave soldiers off to war. Last is the chrysanthemum, symbol of the emperor, for whom women are willing to sacrifice all. Clearly sexiness and physical beauty have disappeared as ideal qualities of women, replaced by servitude to family and country (Ironically, there is a strong emphasis in many media on the need for large families, which would, theoretically, have some connection to sex). This helps to explain the continental woman descriptions. But if the audience for these records is mainly young Japanese women, what does it mean for sexual attraction to move overseas? It would seem to be destabilizing. Young Japanese women might object to sharing their men with Asian women, unless pan-Asian propaganda had worked so well that they included themselves in this image.

One of the ideal female characterizations of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan was the *Shojo* (“young lady”) basically an upper middle class or above young woman who is of marriageable age but still in education. This character had exceptional beauty, loving kindness and purity. As an ideal, she was not normally sexualized, and was indeed, a contrast to other popular culture female characterizations in that respect.<sup>21</sup> The ideal woman of “*Aikoku no Hana*” is clearly in this tradition, but the image had, in this era, become accessible to all young Japanese women, regardless of social class or educational level. This was the image the censors preferred. Record companies’ commitment to this image was unlikely, given their experience of what kinds of songs sell best.

The Chinese girl appears as an object in several *tayorimono* (letter home songs) of the early war years, but she is given a subjective voice at the end of 1938 in “*Shina no Yoru*,” (China Nights) (Columbia 30051 November 1938) another big hit for Watanabe Hamako. With plenty of local color descriptions—junks on the river while lanterns sway under the willows, she sings of sadly waiting for “you,” while knowing that there is nothing she can do to change her sad situation. The romantic setting is more appealing than the prosaic “home” of “*Aikoku no Hana*” (no parents to take care of!) but the basic position of the woman is the same, waiting and hoping for the best. While the authorities might have

<sup>16</sup> A movie with that theme, *Aizen Katsura* (Katsura Tree of Love) was the box office champion of 1938. It also had a strong tie-in with the record industry, which would imply that record companies were trying to maintain their prewar “normal” business practices.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the Ministry of Education moved in 1939 to remove all mention of love from textbooks, including discussion of marriage. They also banned all elements of fashion for students, mandating hairstyles as well as school uniforms. Wakakuwa, *Senso ga Tsukuru Joseizo*, 76.

<sup>18</sup> Based on content analysis of Fukuda and Kato, 358-434.

<sup>19</sup> Omura, *Nihon no Gunka*, 139.

<sup>20</sup> There is extensive discussion of this trope in Watanabe, Shuko, *Shojozo no Tanjo* (Birth of the “Young Lady” Image) (Tokyo: Shinsuisha, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Watanabe, *Shojo*, 31-58.



approved of Japanese women identifying with colonial Asian counterparts, this is only possible when the Asian woman is equally dependent on Japanese men. When Watanabe sings, “I am a Chinese Girl,” the audience knows she is playacting and that the song occurs in a fantasy world. Indeed, the song is used as the title of a 1940 film starring Ri Ko Ran as a Chinese woman who learns to accept and love the Japanese occupation (and occupiers) of China.

Ri will later become the apotheosis of this “China Girl,” with no little irony. A Japanese woman raised in Manchuria and fluent in Japanese and Chinese, she was presented to Japanese audiences as the incarnation of the Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. On record from 1939 and in many films, she played variations on this role, which she was simultaneously acting out in public or media space. Her personal beauty and the physicality of her acting restored a type of sexiness to Japanese womanhood, although displaced by the fiction of her Manchurian background. Clearly, the media wanted to have sex as one of the weapons in their cultural arsenal.

The “China Girl” created a sustainable genre that would continue into the wider war years of the early 1940s (where it might transform into Burma Girl or Indonesia Girl.) Like good pop music, and unlike propaganda, this image depended on a romantic imagination creating a space that the audience could vicariously enter. The continental girl songs clearly showed the music industry trying to assert its instincts. Propaganda of an indoctrination and mobilization nature is, on the other hand, relentlessly practical and grounded in a familiar reality, and therefore not really suitable for an escapist medium like the pop song.

The reorganization of society in 1940, called the *Shintaisei* (New Order) goes a long way to shutting down the record industry.<sup>22</sup> Use of language that had an “enemy nature” (meaning English, mainly) was banned, requiring several performers to change their names.<sup>23</sup> Under the New Order, representatives of the police, posted inside the record companies, were involved in all stages of decision-making about new songs. This resulted in an exaggeration of the tendency toward pure propaganda that became more and more noticeable as the Pacific War began in late 1941.

The lyric contest trend reached its peak with more than 128,000 entries for the contest to write words for “*Shussei Heitai wo Okuru Uta*” (Song for the Departing Soldiers.) (King 40021 January 1940) This was clearly the most personal of all the lyric contest themes, since virtually all families would have had the experience of sending a son, brother or father off to war by this time.<sup>24</sup> But there was no personal content in the lyric, no familial love. This was a song for public, group performance of patriotism, not at all like the individual experience of pop music.

Industrial restrictions also began to bite rather hard at this time. Production of records declined to the level of 1935

in terms of titles released and number of records sold. Record player and needle production ceased completely.<sup>25</sup>

Even before open warfare between Japan and the United States began, the government had begun moves to ban music “of an enemy nature.” In the first issue of a new music industry newsletter, *Ongaku Bunka Shinbun* (“Music Culture News”)<sup>26</sup>, the editors stated that the eradication of “popular song” was one of their aims. A representative of Columbia records warns that listeners may unconsciously absorb enemy ideology, becoming a kind of fifth column. (20 December 1941, 10) Later, there are specific warnings about “individualism” in western music. (1 May 1942) In an article in the weekly report of the Ministry of Information from 1943, an unnamed writer explained how American music is full of ideals that are inimical to proper Japanese thought and behavior and called not only for a ban on sales but also for destruction of the records already in Japan.<sup>27</sup> Famously, this article also listed by catalog number a few hundred records that should be destroyed. This is quite interesting, because Victor, Columbia and Polydor continued to release a limited number of songs by American artists well into 1940.<sup>28</sup>

Neighborhood cooperative groups established as part of the New Order were encouraged to report fans of American music to the authorities, but it is unlikely that this was a priority, because far too many of those records survived for there to have been a concerted effort for their destruction. A weekly photo news magazine had an article about turning western records into positive war resources that shows a fanatic taking bayonet practice against a jazz record hanging from a tree.<sup>29</sup>

Colonial or continental themed songs were very common in 1940 and 1941, but by 1942, active government control of content was apparent and most songs were exhortations, some with very specific content, such as celebrating victory in Singapore or Pearl Harbor, others of a more general, “let’s all work harder for victory together” nature.

By 1944, industry output had shrunk to only about 150 new popular music records for the whole year, well below half of the output of just one company, Columbia, in the late 1930s. The last factory was destroyed in March of 1945 and Japan’s war era record culture came to an end.

<sup>25</sup> Kurata, 227.

<sup>26</sup> Reprint edition (Kanazawa: Kanazawa Bunpokaku, 2011)

<sup>27</sup> “Beiei Ongaku wo Tsuiho” (Drive Out American Music) in *Shubo* (weekly Report) of Office of Information, Ministry of the Interior, 27 Jan 1943, 16-20,

<sup>28</sup> Yamada, Takeo, *American Popular Music on Japanese 78 rpm Record*, (Tokyo: self-published, 2002), 69, etc.

<sup>29</sup> Reproduced in Omura, 180; Earhart, David C., *Certain Victory: Images of World War II in the Japanese Media* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2008), 361.

<sup>22</sup> Komota, 103.

<sup>23</sup> Kurata, 228.

<sup>24</sup> Kurata, 230-8, Omura, *Nihon no Gunka*, 124.

## FEMALE CHARACTER TYPES IN WAR-ERA POPULAR SONG

### *Mothers*

The idea of *gunka* (military songs) as a genre of music was well established in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan.<sup>30</sup> Originally, the canon of *gunka* was limited to songs actually sung by soldiers while marching, training or working. Before records became common, public performances or parades by military bands led to recognition, if not measurable popularity, for many of these songs. Omura Koji argues that, despite the militaristic image associated with them today, in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan they were truly popular, and in some ways were responsible for popularizing western musical ideas.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Hori Masaaki argues that *gunka* were so important culturally in the early years of modernizing Japan that, without knowledge of them, understanding the era is impossible.<sup>32</sup>

Over time, sentimental songs about war and soldiers' experiences became known as *gunka*, too. For example, "*Senyu*" ("Battle Friend") is about shared hardships and overcoming grief at the death of a friend in battle. Dating from the Russo-Japanese war, it remained well known and often was performed into the Pacific War years. By the mid-thirties, a separate sub-genre, *hoso gunka* (broadcast *gunka*) had become fairly well established.<sup>33</sup> A march beat was, therefore, not a requirement of *gunka*.<sup>34</sup>

When the "human bullets" incident happened, all of the record companies were quick to try and capitalize on the craze. The basic strategy of record companies was to sell a kind of romance (or at least romantic aspiration) in the hope that it will become popular, with popularity measured in sales. The political and propaganda needs of the government were to create fighting spirit and solidarity, which is another kind of popularity, though much more difficult to measure. Record company professionals happily tailored their approach to match that of the government. The first releases were very much like real *gunka*, performed by male choruses with march tempos. As the story was adapted to film, radio drama and prose, the roles of the mothers of the three soldiers, adding elements of normal melodrama to the story, became more prominent. Record companies, ever ready to milk more sales out of any popular subject, followed suit. "*Chizome no Hankachi*" ("The Bloodstained Handkerchief") (Nitro 5622 May 1932) emphasizes a conversation between one of the soldiers and his mother before his departure. She tells him that

duty is more important than life, to which he answers that he wants to sacrifice himself for his country. This content is even more exaggerated in *naniwabushi* versions of the story. *Naniwabushi* is a musical genre of longer songs (typically requiring both sides of two 78 rpm records) that tell a story in more or less traditional language. They were still very popular among lower class audiences well into the 1930s. The human bullets story was so popular a subject for *naniwabushi* that Victor alone released three different versions. (Victor 52258-52265 June 1932)

In all of these, the scenes between mothers and sons were heavily emphasized. While the above conversation is universal, in some versions, the mother directly told her son, "Please die for me."

Wakakuwa Midori, in her book on visual images of women in war, emphasizes that the association of mother with home and peace is central to all images of women.<sup>35</sup> This is an essentially negative definition, as Mother is passively at home in a quiet place. The polar opposite of this, and by default the definition of non-mother, is far from home and at war. The soldier is thus the anti-mother, and an oppositional set of characteristics follows: giving birth—killing, life—death, nature—civilization, private—public, anonymity—honor, timelessness—historicity.<sup>36</sup> These all have a large place in the lyrics to war songs.

The human bullets' mothers seemingly choose, for patriotic reasons, to deny what is normally the essence of their definition, a caring relationship with a child. This passive, objectified, denied and self-denying figure would dominate the image of "mother" in the songs of the remaining war years. Soldiers think of her, write to her, miss her, but she very rarely answers or acts in any way.

This image is likely derived rather directly from the film genre, *habamono* ("mother film"), where the mother "must suffer and sacrifice," in isolation and unable to communicate any of her desires to children or husbands.<sup>37</sup> This could occasionally be used to express resistance to the war, as in *Rikugun* ("Army"),<sup>38</sup> so it is possible that popular song *habamono* similarly express the record business' desire to operate free of propaganda strictures, which is not quite the same as resisting the war effort. That is, songs concerned with home and peace could be considered a type of resistance to war, unless handled very carefully. On the other hand, the prioritizing of peaceful home and family images may simply reflect the music business' preference for strong emotional content.

In war, there is lots of suffering to go around, but public displays of grief are officially frowned upon. The mother who patriotically offers her sons' lives to the state remained a strong image. As late as 1943, "Wakawashi no Haha" (Mother

<sup>30</sup> Ogawa, *Shoka, Sanbika, Gunka*, 81-93.

<sup>31</sup> Omura, *Nihon no Gunka*, 1-5.

<sup>32</sup> Hori, *Ikusauta ga Utsusu Kindai*, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Tsuganesawa, Toshihiro, "Media Event toshite no Gunka, Gunkoku Kayo" (Military and Patriotic Songs as Media Event), in *Senso to Guntai* (War and the Military) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), 79.

<sup>34</sup> Indeed, a 1942 songbook called *Hyojun Gunka Zenshu* (Complete Collection of Standard Military Songs) (Tokyo: Nobarasha), includes many songs from both radio and records that have no direct connection with the military.

<sup>35</sup> Wakakuwa, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Wakakuwa, 50-1.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, Joseph L. and Donald Richie, *The Japanese Film: Art and Industry* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1982), 318-9.

<sup>38</sup> High, Peter B., *The Imperial Screen: Japanese Film Culture in the Fifteen Years' War, 1931-1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 402.

of Young Eagles) (Victor A4485 June 1943) shows the same basic image, a widowed mother, proudly telling the spirit of her late husband that she has sent their son off to the South to defend Japan. Since the experience of war deaths in the family had become more or less universal by this time, this sentiment, or more appropriately, this way of dealing with grief by changing it into duty one can be proud of, was thought to be a necessary message. Mothers of soldiers, then, are isolated and in some ways tragic figures, whose active role has ended with the conscription of their sons.

The other important image of mothers is as the wives of soldiers who have gone off to war. They are invariably depicted as the mothers of more sons. Mentions of female children are extremely rare.

This mother character appears most prominently in several lullabies. It seems counterintuitive that lullabies would be released in significant numbers in wartime by a record industry under more or less direct control by government authorities, but again considering that the audience for these records was mainly home front women, whose child-care workload had not decreased with the acceptance of other war-related work, idealization of the parent-child relationship makes sense.

The basic setting of these lullabies is, of course, that the infant son will not sleep. In a typical version “Tone no Komoriuta” (“Lullaby of Tone [place name]”) (Polydor 2845 November 1939) Yuki Michiko sings that she and her son will wait together for father’s triumphant return, that boys must not cry, that they must indeed smile while thinking that father is using his gun on a distant battlefield. The wife’s current sacrifice, losing a husband for the duration—if he returns at all—is used to prepare her for a future sacrifice of this son.

This speaking voice, with rare exceptions, from mother to son creates another version of the communication theme of the *tayorimono* letter songs. Just as they taught soldiers how and what to write to family at home, and families how to read and react to soldiers’ letters, the lullabies teach a proper attitude for young mothers, centering on willing sacrifice of the very thing that defines a mother.

In rare cases where men performed “lullaby” titled songs, they transformed into a type of *tayorimono*. In “*Kokoro no Komoriuta*” (“Lullaby in my Heart”) (Polydor 2758 April 1939) the singer, in the part of a soldier in the war zone, overhears a lullaby that sends his mind racing home, comforted in thoughts of family even though he is far, far away. A more extreme dramatic setting appears in “*Senjo no Komoriuta*” (“War Zone Lullaby”) (Polydor 2641 August 1938) where a soldier is singing to quiet a war orphan. This is a difficult task, because, being a battleground, there are “only men and no breasts here.” He tries powdered milk (from comfort packages sent from Japan to soldiers) to quiet the angelic baby. This powerful scene not only humanizes the soldier, rare in itself in war era songs, it allows him a feminine side, bringing sharp contrast to the war zone where the comforting soldier could very well have been responsible for the death of the baby’s parents. It encourages the audience to feel sympathy

for the children of the enemy as innocent casualties of war. It is difficult to imagine the censor’s thinking in allowing this song, but it seems to prove that the record industry’s priority remained the sale of records (and emotions) and not simple propaganda.

Memory is central to all of these uses of motherhood. Mothers remember their sons and sons remember their mothers. While prayers for soldiers fighting overseas are often mentioned, more important in the propaganda war were prayers for soldiers who have died. “*Kudan no Haha*” (“Mother at Kudan”—Kudan is the Tokyo location of Yasukuni Shrine, dedicated to the war dead) (Teichiku N275 April 1939) is a kind of manual for mothers of dead sons. In the song, sung by Shio Masaru, who as a male is obviously not a representative of mothers, the mother has come from far in the country to Tokyo to meet her son at Yasukuni Shrine. She is awed by the beauty of the shrine, too good for her son, she thinks modestly, and cries tears of joy. She tells him the news of home and shows him his medals. The idea that family can meet dead relatives at Yasukuni Shrine is an important part of indoctrination of soldiers, who were, after all, expected to die for country.

Other songs, like “*Chichi wa Kudan no Oka*” (“Father is a Cherry Blossom at Yasukuni Shrine”) (Victor J54649 November 1939) brought the whole family into the remembrance theme. There is no death or loss of family in these songs. Mothers tell sons, wives tell husbands, children tell fathers about the flowers blooming in the garden at home, family news and most importantly, that their resolve and support for the war are unshaken. There may be private tears, but in public, only smiles. The father may have been transformed by war ideology into a flower at Yasukuni Shrine, but he is also transformed into his mother’s tears. This transformation grants him eternal life. Of course this is a propaganda attempt to turn real human emotion into a mysticism that was merely convenient to the government and thus should have been offensive to the mothers of the war dead, if they allowed themselves to think about it.

Similar to *tayorimono* letter songs, there were other songs that related soldiers’ memories of mother. “*Mabuta no Haha*” (“The Mother I See When I Close my Eyes”) (King 77013 March 1943) and “*Haha to Heitai*” (“Mothers and Soldiers”) (Polydor P5168 August 1941) simplified the image of mother that soldiers remember to someone cooking and waiting. For this simplified mother they can continue fighting, with gratitude and nostalgia in their hearts, but not so much that they would doubt their duty.

One other policy-related image of mothers was the heroic mother who had given birth to many children. There were medals and prizes and recognition for large families, but these mothers seldom appear in song. Even “*Homete Kudasai*” (“Praise Me”) (Teichiku A4, July 1939), in which a geisha singer named Michiyakko specifically asks for praise for having given birth to a son, does not mention mass production of sons. The very last Teichiku record released before the end of the war, “*Kodakara Bushi*” (“Big Family Song”) (Teichiku

X5112, January 1945) is the only clear example of this ideal. It is also a rare case where girls are mentioned. This would seem to imply that music professionals avoided the topic, perhaps thinking that it had limited appeal to their audience. Certainly, the censors would not have encouraged songs that presented sex as central to the nation's needs.

### *Young Women*

Available roles for young women to enact were similarly limited. As mentioned in part one, the central image was that of the prewar *shojo*, an upper class girl who was able to extend her days as a girl (that is, postpone marriage) because of the economic circumstances of her family. Freed from concerns about income or marriage, if only for a few years, she could devote her pure self to beauty, friendship and helping others.

In her wartime incarnation, the *shojo*, or more properly *musume* (which literally means daughter but was the most common word for "girl" at the time) was as pure as the prewar *shojo*, but due to the war needs of the nation, her range of activities was greater. The class aspect also disappears since, in the absence of young men, postponing marriage was almost universal. In "*Aikoku Musume*" ("Patriotic Girl"), (Teichiku A002 June 1939) Hattori Tomiko cheerfully ties her hair up and goes to work in a factory. She listens to news reports on the radio and marks her map with victories, wondering if Big Brother has fought well. She not only helps Mom, she volunteers to help the wounded soldiers when they return. Even though she is of marriageable age, she does not think of herself. Like many of the mother songs, this functions as a manual of activities for "normal" girls. The need for laborers had put many young women into factories and other jobs that were normally the preserve of men. Stressing the volunteer activities helps to keep her pure, even if active in a male sphere.

Another similar song that was also a hit was "*Otsukai wa Jitensha de*" ("Doing Errands by Bicycle") (Columbia 100687 April 1943). Other than shopping at the market, the errands are not specified, but her cheerfulness and simple charm are very clear. This is the girl everyone wants as a daughter. One more blatantly propagandistic "manual" song was "*Mura no Hyoban Musume*" ("The Girl Loved by All the Village") (Teichiku T3151 May 1941). Added to her cheerful work and general helpfulness, she is seen to pray at the shrine every day, which makes the village wonder if she is praying for that special someone.

The simplest measure of purity is, of course, sexual, so young women were often referred to as "*otome*" ("maiden") in songs of this era. In "*Otome Kokoro*" ("Maiden's Heart") (Polydor 2794 July 1939) she emphasizes that though she is at an age where she thinks about her looks, she does not use any makeup. She is thinking about a boy, however. When a bomber flies overhead, she wishes she could send her thoughts with it to her boyfriend at the front lines.

The record industry has always been good at capturing and selling the moods of young people. It is easy to see these

good girls as sublimating their sexual energy into the war effort, but they probably did not see that themselves. The *otome* records skillfully work war references, pleasing the censors, into dreamy girl songs that have counterparts in any era. They are propaganda, but only in the sense that most commercial pop music is propaganda. They tell girls what to think and feel, and how to behave, but that is what songs for young women always do.

The last role available for young women was bride or fiancée. There were not many of these songs, which seems odd since such a heavy emphasis was placed on having sons and since it is a theme that the record business should have been more eager to use than exhortation. Notably, in song, the idea of becoming a bride is connected to immigrating to the continent. The government had encouraged immigration, especially to Manchuria, as a policy to solidify colonial control, to alleviate overpopulation in some rural areas, and to ease tensions between sharecroppers and landowners in rural Japan. In its propaganda version, emigration to Manchuria was tacitly compared to pioneers, as they were known from American western films. At least that seems to be the idea behind references to covered wagons, as in "*Hobasha no Uta*" ("Covered Wagon Song"). (Columbia 66349 March 1934)

In "*Tairiku Fufu Hayashi*" ("Continent Couple's Festival Song"), (Polydor 2808 August 1939) sung in a traditional folk style, the bride sings with pride about coming to the continent as a bride, breaking new land and raising a crop. A daughter of Japan has made the continent productive, all for the sake of the country. The devotion of effort to country is a motif usually assigned to men fighting in the army. Since women were second-class citizens in Japan, and since the armed forces never established women's corps, crossing to the continent may have been the most direct, active way for women to participate physically in the great East Asian project.

In "*Tairiku Hanayome no Uta*" ("Continent Bride's Song") (King 47049 December 1940) she sings of giving up fantasies about wonderful bridal costumes. Though called weak by some, by raising a crop in newly broken land she will show real strength. Even though it is cold in Manchuria, the seeds she sows will bear flowers of love.

Neither of these songs has any reference to the husband. Indeed, service for the empire in Manchuria may involve marriage, but the period's official aversion to sexuality makes it seem like another type of military service. Also, the idea of leaving home to prove your commitment to home was common in the *sasuraimono* ("wanderer") songs that were popular before and during the early days of the war, and reflect the realities of population shifts in Japan. This is, therefore, another example of the industry using something from previous practice and adapting it slightly to the censors' wishes.

Though a picture from a women's magazine of female students practicing with spears in anticipation of an American invasion is often quoted,<sup>39</sup> there is virtually no mention

<sup>39</sup> Earhart, 179, for example.

in any song of women actually fighting to defend Japan. Even a song with the title “*Kessen Musume*” (“Decisive Battle Girl”), (Columbia 100882 November 1944) while talking about firm resolve and fighting spirit, emphasizes that girls are “behind the gun” and ends with the “decisive battle girls waiting with friends for the blooming of a green Asia.” Since the location of the “decisive battle” had, by late 1944, moved to the Japanese homeland, it seems odd that girls are still being urged to wait.

The only exception among the hundreds of songs examined in this research is “*Otachi wo Tsukau Onna*” (“The Woman who Uses a Short Sword”) (Victor A4499 February 1944) which was the theme song to a film of the same title. In the film, all of the men of the village have gone off to war, when suddenly, the village is attacked by a group of bandits. A young wife who was trained in swordsmanship by her father fights them to defend her home and family. Set in early modern times, despite the obvious parallels to contemporary circumstances, this must have had enough distance from reality to excuse the transgressive behavior. In the words of the song, “A soldier’s wife can overcome the gathering storm... raised in a warrior’s house...spring will come, sisters!” In the film, she apparently returns to being just another girl at the end. This represents a forbidden wishful thinking that women can kill and may aid in the defense of the country, but it is beyond normal common sense. In any case, there seem to be no more examples of this.

### ***Empire Girls***

In general, real women had no voice in popular music of the war years. Apart from a few exceptional lyric contest winners, there were no female lyricists active in the music industry. Lyrics purporting to represent mothers, wives and girls were actually the work of men, with that work censored by other men. The ideological nature of pop music is normally hidden, but so many of the songs seem to teach “common sense” wartime behavior to women, the main audience, that the coercion ought to have created more resistance than seems apparent.

Professional lyricists and songwriters must have chafed against Interior Ministry interference in their craft. They knew from experience what made good music and good sales. They had also learned that didactic content usually did not. The continental songs, and in particular, the image of the China Girl seems to have been a tactic used by the industry professionals to make truly popular songs that could pass censorship. Indeed, many of the bestselling songs of the era are from this genre. No matter how much authority says, “Be a good girl,” being sexually attractive is still considered a desirable quality. Propaganda may try to control what constitutes that attraction, but popularity shows how it is really received by an audience.

Watanabe Hamako’s “*Shina no Yoru*” (China Nights, discussed above) was such a big hit that it spawned dozens of imitations, in two main sub-genres.

The most common representations of China Girls were as objects of desire or fascination, as subjects of a male gaze. Typically, these women are noticed by soldiers who write home about them, especially in the local market. “*Shanghai no Hanauri Musume*” (“Shanghai Flower Girl”) (King 30058 May 1939) is typical. The description of the flower seller begins with wondering about who gave her her cute earrings, and then moves on to list her white basket, pink ribbons, satin dress, and yellow shoes. In the final verse, she vanishes (into memory?) in a haze of smoke from sailors’ pipes. This was a big hit, and was naturally therefore much imitated. Flower girls from Northern Manchuria (King 30104 October 1939), Canton (King 40005 January 1940) and Nanking (King 47001 May 1941) followed quickly along. All of them commented on her cuteness or beauty, sometimes even her scent.

This was potentially dangerous content. Japanese women waiting patiently at home might have found the China Girl to be a potential rival. They might have been less than happy that the romantic possibilities of military service in a foreign land had not ended with the expansion of the war. Young men hearing this might have gotten the impression that Chinese girls were or should be available to them, which might even have been an acceptable idea to the censors, as it would have inflated an image of Japanese masculinity.

The professional songwriters were more likely merely exploiting an opportunity to use a tried and trusty theme for romantic pop music—unrequited love. Indeed, the character of the Market China Girl has some affinities with the good girl images in domestic themed songs, where she might be the girl at the cigarette store on the corner (as in “*Tabakoya no Musume*” [“Girl at the Cigarette Shop”]) (Victor 53999 June 1937). After all, she is working, and not trying to be attractive, so she has a purity that is all the more attractive. This sub-genre continues as the range of Japanese soldiers’ activities expands, with one good example being “*Tai no Musume*” (“Thai Girls”), (King 57058 September 1941) where the soldier wants to dress the locals in Japanese clothes because they look so much like his sister. These all preserve a sense of reserve and purity on the part of the observer of the girls, no matter how obsessive his observation may seem.

This was less true when the subject was dancing girls. Dance halls had been closed in Japan in 1940 as part of the New Order regime, but the audience would have been familiar with the character of the taxi dancer from movies and popular fiction. She was often sentimentalized but there was no escaping the fact that she was trying to make a living from her physical attractiveness. She may not have been a prostitute, but the difference was more a matter of degree than essence. In “*Shanghai no Odoriko*” (“Shanghai Dancer”) (King 47002 May 1940) she is described as dreamily crying, her lovely dark eyes wet. We learn in the last stanza that she cries as she cherishes a souvenir from her lover, a small Japanese flag. The dubious nature of her profession forces the audience to imagine a sexual connection. This is more direct in “*Canton no Odoriko*” (“Canton Dancer”) (King 47024 September 1940) where her black eyes are “searching for dreams” as she

sings what is in her heart. She ends up alone and sad in the last verse, too. These songs also found an audience in Japan. Perhaps the sad ending is key—the lover, Japanese or not, has left the dancing girl for another, possibly more pure, girl. Or perhaps the notion of romantic possibilities, difficult in wartime and largely missing from much of censored popular culture, was nostalgically thrilling, even if it suggests foreign rivals for the affections of young Japanese men.

It must be remarked that Watanabe's "*Wasurecha*" had been banned for sounding like a prostitute's song, while these dancing girl songs were not banned, even though the hint of prostitution is stronger. That there was a double standard of allowable behavior of women, between domestic and foreign, is not surprising in a racially charged war culture.

The second sub-genre of the China Girl song is, like "*Shina no Yoru*," sung in first person, with the Japanese singer impersonating a Chinese (or Manchurian, etc.) girl. With overt expressions of romance and sexual attraction banished in the homeland (or with an attempt at that), Shanghai, and later anywhere in Asia, became a romantic fantasy zone where prewar ideals were allowed to continue.

Even before "*Shina no Yoru*" there were depictions of Shanghai romance. "*Shanghai no Machikado De*" ("On a Shanghai Street Corner") (Polydor 2630 July 1938) neatly combines romance and propaganda. The singer tells the girl to go back to Japan and take care of her mother, that he will quit his gambling sailor ways and go to north China to become a pioneer. He loves her, but must seek his fortune on the continent, while she should wait for him in Japan.

The woman of this situation is given voice in "*Blues 'Shanghai-Tokyo'*" (Polydor 2783 June 1939) by Yuki Michiko. Escaping from the flames of war, she has come to the blue sky of Tokyo from Shanghai. Thinking of those days makes her sad, and it will take time for her to recover. "Please be kind to me," she sings, "until the pain in my heart heals, I'm a woman from Shanghai." But she is clearly also Japanese.

"*Shina no Yoru*" states directly that she is a Chinese girl, although she is similarly waiting and remembering. The audience, though knowing that Watanabe is not Chinese, is able to accept this performance. Clearly there is some interesting racial thinking going on here. Pan-Asian ideology was strongly pushed in the media, but part of the Japanese understanding of Pan-Asianism was that the Japanese themselves were first among equals.<sup>40</sup> A Japanese woman could therefore perform Asian-ness in a way that was acceptable to an audience mainly consisting of Japanese women. It is doubtful that that audience would have been willing to accept an Asian performer pretending to be Japanese.

In "Manshu Musume" ("Manchurian Girl") (Teichiku N207 December 1938) Hattori Tomiko's Manchurian girl (she sings "I'm a sixteen-year-old Manchurian girl") is just like the girls at home, looking forward to the coming of spring and to her marriage with a boy from a neighboring village. The only politicized aspect is her wish that the cold wind

would blow in Russia and not in Manchuria. The empire is all one here, and this girl is no threat to Japanese women. In fact, they can easily identify with her.

The dominant example of the China Girl is, of course, Ri Ko Ran. Subject of books,<sup>41</sup> stage plays, documentaries, and even manga, her career is fascinating as much for the high quality of her singing and acting as it is for the strange racial/ethnic politics embodied in her performances. The facts of her biography are less important than the presentation of her character in the media. Film, record, and print media were well integrated, and crossovers among them by various performers were extremely common.

Shortly after her film debut in Manchuria, Ri (actually a Japanese woman named Yamaguchi Yoshiko) began her career in Japanese films, on records, and on stage. Since she was actually a Japanese person choosing to pass as Manchurian, her "stage" was all of her public life. Public relations campaigns pushed her image as a Japan-loving Manchurian to solidify support for the Great East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere project that was central to government propaganda about the war. Thus, stories about her appeared in newspapers and magazines in Japan before anyone there had had a chance to see or hear her perform.

This prior "knowledge," which was actually a management-created fiction, established belief in the character called Ri Ko Ran. This is the same strategy that the government was continually following as it reported war news to the populace. The fiction was thorough, and therefore believable. Or it was believable because it felt good. Neither the government nor her managers fooled everyone, but they fooled most of the audience.

By a matter of months, Ri's record debut preceded her debut in Japanese movies. Her early recordings for Teichiku, with titles like "*Saraba Shanghai*" ("Farewell Shanghai"), (Teichiku A028 September 1939) were fairly typical continent songs, but sales were not good. After her appearances in *Byakuran no Uta* ("Song of the White Orchid," 1939), *Shina no Yoru* ("China Nights," 1940, with Watanabe Hamako's song recycled for the theme music) and *Nessa no Chikai* ("Promise in the Desert," 1940) she had become an established movie star. She moved to Columbia records, and with several songs written by popular composer Hattori Ryoichi, became a star recording artist, too.

In those three movies, and in many other later roles, she played the part of a continental woman, either Manchurian or Chinese, who at first resists and hates the Japanese. In the course of the plots, she learns that she has been mistaken about Japanese motives and character and learns to love and support them. She has a romantic relationship with a Japanese star, although the ending is not always happy. According to Yomota Inuhiko, the physicality of her acting was identified with an "Asian earthiness" and compared to "the liteness of a small animal, active and erotic."<sup>42</sup> It is in sharp contrast

<sup>40</sup> Dower, John W., *War Without Mercy: Race and power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 203-5, etc.

<sup>41</sup> Yomota, Inuhiko, *Ri Ko Ran to Hara Setsuko* (Ri Ko Ran and Hara Setsuko) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2011) for example.

<sup>42</sup> Yomota, 19-20.

to the *shojo* character and ideal.

Her first Columbia record, and a big hit, was “*Akai Suiren*” (“Red Lotus”). (Columbia 100101 September 1940) She says directly “I’m a Chinese girl,” and goes on to describe the flowers outside of her window, where she is waiting for her lover. In the last stanza, she sings, “You, as a Japanese boy, are a cherry blossom. I am a white lily. Though our flowers are different, our thoughts are one. We await a blossoming morning for Asia.” Though not overtly sexual, this is more direct than any of the other China Girl songs. Clearly, her success in popular movies established a basis for this. She had become “our” Asian girl for Japanese audiences, who, naturally, saw more commonality than difference in the rather familiar storylines. The character she played, like the audience, was convinced by Japanese propaganda.

She followed “*Akai Suiren*” with a big production number called “*Koa Sannin Musume*” (“Three Girls of East Asia”) (Columbia 100218 December 1940). She represented Manchuria, Byakko (a minor artist who seems to have been planned as a Chinese version of Ri) represented China, and Okuyama Ayako represented Japan. The song uses the same conceit about different flowers growing together and complementing each other, but it was not popular. The romantic boy-girl aspect seems to have been a necessary component for any success of her songs. Her later hit records are almost all in that vein. Yomota finds that “despite the romantic, even sentimental nature of the material she was given, the songs are lifted by a mystical quality.”<sup>43</sup> This is likely caused by association with knowledge of her physical image.

Her perfect Japanese ability (“proof” of her perfect assimilation) makes it acceptable for her to have a romantic relationship with a Japanese man. It is the consummation of pan-Asianism pushed by government and media. In another sense, it is also a return by the record industry to successful prewar ideas. Japan, by modernizing, became more international, and that international aspect was useful as an ideal for young people to embrace. It brought with it a western consumerism that suited the film and music industries perfectly. An East Asian version of internationalism solved the problem of lack of respect for Japan on the part of westerners.

Ri Ko Ran was the ultimate modern Japanese woman (and not a *shojo*), which really means, no one could know just what she really was. Her malleable identity, freely changing from Chinese to Manchurian to Taiwanese to Japanese, also questioned the very concept of home, which could only have confounded the wishes of the censors, who, after all were trying to emphasize what the soldiers were fighting for.<sup>44</sup> She could easily be interpreted as representing a deeply disguised antiwar sentiment, namely that Japan would be better off marrying Asia than fighting there.

<sup>43</sup> Yomota, 132.

<sup>44</sup> Washitani, Hana, “Ri Ko Ran Nichigeki ni Arawareru” (Ri Ko Ran Appearing at Nichigeki Theatre) in *Ri Ko Ran to Higashi Ajia* (Ri Ko Ran and East Asia) ed. Yomota Inuhiko (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2002), 47-52.

## THE POSTWAR LIFE OF WAR ERA POP SONGS AND AN INDUSTRY REBORN

Ri Ko Ran transitioned smoothly from her continental pseudo-identity into a new role as Yamaguchi Yoshiko, Japanese actor and singer. She would go even farther, becoming Shirley Yamaguchi to represent Japan in several Hollywood movies.

During the postwar American occupation, the public broadcast system had a novel idea for a pro-democracy music program. On *Nodo Jiman* (“Proud of my Singing”) amateurs performed songs in a type of gentle competition. Only the most innocuous songs of the preceding eight years were actually performed.<sup>45</sup> Despite having been popular in terms of sales, songs with patriotic content were self-censored out of memory. Though they had once had important emotional resonance for consumers, they, too, were victims of war. Indeed, the lack of acceptable “oldies,” or the need for a new popular canon, led to a very active and eclectic music industry in the postwar years.

The Japanese record that occupying American servicemen were most likely to have taken home to America as a souvenir was a new release of Watanabe Hamako’s “*Shina no Yoru*.” It was often packed in an album with “*Tokyo Boogie-Woogie*.” Its propaganda nature was lost on Americans, unless the ideal female collaborator image had somehow been communicated without translation into English.

The record companies continued what they had been doing for most of the war years—trying to cooperate as far as possible with the censoring authorities while simultaneously seeking to bring back the business practice of the prewar music industry.

After the American occupation ended and record companies became free to do as they wished without censors for a change, real *gunka*, meaning songs that soldiers and sailors actually sang while working and marching, experienced a small boom. They are mostly associated today with right wing fringe groups that play them from sound trucks on patriotic holidays. The rest of the patriotic songs are gone from popular memory.

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Translations are mine, and may differ from other translations published elsewhere.

*Nihon Rekodo Bunkashi-Showa SP Ban Jidai Kiroku Dai-zenshu* (Japan Record Culture History- Showa Era 78rpm Record Databook) (Tokyo: Daicel Chemicals Corp., 1990) was, along with Fukuda and Kato below, regularly consulted for dating records.

<sup>45</sup> Ueda, Yasuo, “Bangumi ‘Nodo Jiman’ no Media Bunka Kenkyu—Maiku ni Utau Nihonjin” (Broadcast Program ‘Proud of my Singing’—Japanese Face the Microphone) in *Communication Kenkyu* (Communication Research) no. 36 (Sophia University), online at [www.infor.sophia.co.jp/sophiaj/Communications/CR-no36-ueda.pdf](http://www.infor.sophia.co.jp/sophiaj/Communications/CR-no36-ueda.pdf) accessed 28 March 2012, 29, 32.

# THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF KASAI MASAE: THE MOTHER OF JAPANESE VOLLEYBALL



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## ABSTRACT

Nakamura (nee: Kasai) Masae (July 14, 1933 – October 3, 2013) was Captain of the Japanese women’s volleyball team, popularly nicknamed the “Oriental Witches” (*Tōyō no Majo*) that won the Gold Medal at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. This victory propelled Kasai into the Japanese media spotlight and she spent the remainder of her life actively promoting the sport. Kasai was an instrumental figure in the emergence of volleyball as a popular sport for women of all age groups across Japan. Following an interview by the author in May 2012, Kasai sadly and unexpectedly passed away in October 2013. This article reflects on her remarkable life, her commitment to the sport of volleyball, and her legacy as one of Japan’s most famous sporting personalities to date.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I use two key sources for the personal perspective taken in this article. The first source is Kasai’s memoir-style book: Masae Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru* (Tokyo: Gakken, 1992), and the second source is a semi-structured interview I conducted in Japanese with her on 30th May 2012. For the full record of this interview, see Helen Macnaughtan, “An interview with Kasai Masae, captain of the Japanese women’s volleyball team at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics”, *Japan Forum*, 24:4 (2012): 491-500. Although she changed her surname to Nakamura when she married, she continued to be widely known under her maiden name of Kasai, so I have chosen to refer to her by this surname

## THE MAKING OF AN “ORIENTAL WITCH” AND THE ROAD TO OLYMPIC VICTORY

Kasai was born in Yamanashi prefecture in 1933, and started playing volleyball at school aged thirteen. In 1951, while playing in a tournament for her high school team, she was scouted by a recruiter from Nichibō Corporation, who noticed her height and potential on the court.<sup>2</sup> At that time, Nichibō was one of the Big Ten cotton spinning corporations and had established a reputation for having one of the strongest corporate volleyball teams in Japan, so when offered employment in the company Kasai described it as being “like a dream”.<sup>3</sup> Although corporate sports teams were originally established as a recreational activity and to promote

in this article.

<sup>2</sup> At 174cm in height she was very tall for a Japanese woman at that time.

<sup>3</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 183. Volleyball was a key recreational activity, together with other hobby and educational initiatives, that was invested in by large Japanese textile companies as a way not only of keeping young girls busy and occupied during non-working hours within factory residential compounds but also as a way of promoting the physical health and wellbeing of young female workers. See Helen Macnaughtan, *Women, Work and the Japanese Economic Miracle: the case of the cotton textile industry, 1945-75* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005)



worker physical wellbeing, by the early post-war decades they were evolving to promote skills such as teamwork and organisational commitment amongst employees. They were also increasingly being used for corporate public relations as Japanese companies sought to establish competitive strength not only in a growing economy but in expanding national sports leagues.<sup>4</sup> After graduating high school, Kasai entered Nichibō employment in Spring 1952 at their Sekigahara factory, but was relocated a month later to their Ashikaga factory, Nichibō's strongest factory volleyball team at that time. The following year, in a strategy aimed at strengthening their competitiveness in national volleyball, Nichibō united its factory teams to form a new headline corporate team called Nichibō Kaizuka, and Kasai joined this team in 1954.<sup>5</sup> Recruited for her sporting skills, Kasai did not work on the factory floor doing shift-work like the majority of young females employed in Japanese textile companies (including Nichibō) at this point in history. Instead, she was employed in the company's office until 3pm daily when she would leave her desk to attend several hours of volleyball practice.<sup>6</sup> Kasai and her teammates were company employees, but over time they would evolve to become competitive amateur sportswomen playing for the Kaizuka corporate team.

The Nichibō Kaizuka women's volleyball team was coached by a man called Daimatsu Hirofumi. Born in Kanagawa prefecture in 1912, he entered employment at Nichibō in 1941, having played volleyball at both high school and university. However, shortly after joining Nichibō he was called up by the Japanese army and during WWII fought in China, Burma and Rabaul, Papua New Guinea. This wartime experience had a profound effect upon him and would affect his ideas on volleyball training. Rejoining Nichibō after the war ended, he was chosen in 1953 to become the manager of the newly created Nichibō Kaizuka team, and would go on to coach this team for the next twelve years. In 1957, Daimatsu chose Kasai to be captain of the team, and together

<sup>4</sup> For more on the corporate history of volleyball within the textile industry see Helen Macnaughtan, "The Oriental Witches: Women, Volleyball and the 1964 Tokyo Olympics", *Sport in History*, 34:1 (2014), 134-156

<sup>5</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 183-4

<sup>6</sup> The majority of young female textile employees at this point in history in Japan were recruited out of middle school rather than high school like Kasai, who was clearly recruited specifically for her volleyball skills. Special recruits such as Kasai were often assigned administrative rather than factory work and had volleyball training daily, but they did continue to undertake work for the company so can be considered amateur players right up until the Olympics.

they would prove to be an extraordinary duo that went on to establish the Nichibō Kaizuka team not only as the strongest women's volleyball team in Japan for several consecutive years, but also the strongest team in the world by the time of the 1964 Olympic Games.

In the 1950s, the goal of the Nichibō Kaizuka team was to be the best women's volleyball team in Japan. In 1958, the team accomplished the unprecedented feat of winning all four of Japan's top volleyball tournaments – the Inter-City, the Corporate Team, the National Sports Festival, and the All Japan tournaments. In 1959, the stakes were raised again. In May of that year Tokyo was awarded the rights to host the 1964 Olympic Games. This was historically significant as Tokyo had been due to originally host the 1940 Summer Olympics, but after Japan's invasion of China this right was instead passed to Helsinki, and later cancelled altogether due to WWII.<sup>7</sup> Japan was subsequently not invited to London in 1948 for the first post-war Games. The granting of the 1964 Olympics to Tokyo was therefore very symbolic, and inherently political; an acceptance that Japan was back on the post-war world stage, and had risen from the defeat of WWII in under twenty years to be able to host the Olympics and be seen as a leading modern, technological and peaceful nation.<sup>8</sup> The Tokyo Games were therefore significant as the first Olympics to be held in Asia, but, less well known, were also the first Games to include women's ball games and team sports, including volleyball.

Volleyball as a sport was growing in popularity after WWII, not only in Japan but worldwide. The International Volleyball Association was established in 1947, and the world championships were held the first time for men in 1949 and for women in 1951, but at this point in time limited only to European countries. A decade later, in 1959, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided that men's volleyball was to be an Olympic sport, so in 1960, Japan resolved to send teams for the first time to the world championships held that year in Brazil in order to test the international competition. The Japan Volleyball Association (JVA) had limited funds at this point, so funded a Japan men's team, but asked Nichibō to fund their Kaizuka team's trip, as they were the strongest women's team in Japan having won the domestic national championships. The Japanese men's team took eighth place in

<sup>7</sup> See Sandra Collins, *The 1940 Tokyo Games: The Missing Olympics: Japan, the Asian Olympics and the Olympic Movement*. (London: Routledge, 2006)

<sup>8</sup> Christian Tagsold, "The 1964 Tokyo Olympics as Political Games", *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, 23-3, June 8, 2009

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the world competition, but the women's team unexpectedly won second place after playing the Soviet Union in the final. After winning second place in Brazil, Nichibō subsequently decided to fund the team on a European expedition in 1961, where they went on to play and win 24 consecutive games.<sup>9</sup> Following this success on the volleyball court in Brazil and Europe, the team set their sights on the next world championships scheduled for Moscow in 1962. Kasai commented that after returning from Brazil, she and her teammates began to train for longer hours than before, from 3pm in the afternoon until 2 or 3am daily. With Coach Daimatsu at the helm, they had their sights firmly set on not just maintaining their status as the number one team in Japan, but potentially becoming the number one team in the world.

Daimatsu's notorious approach to training no doubt greatly contributed to the team's unexpected success in volleyball in Brazil in 1960. The coach became infamous for his highly disciplined and strenuous training regime for his volleyball players and was nicknamed "Demon Daimatsu" (*Oni no Daimatsu*) by the Japanese media. His instructive phrases used during training sessions at Nichibō were later immortalised in the titles of his own publications: *Follow Me (ore ni tsuiteko)* published in 1963, and *If you try, you will succeed (naseba naru)* published in 1964. After observing his team's defeat at the hands of the Soviet team in 1960, Daimatsu devised several new techniques for volleyball play. These techniques included moves such as: "move and attack" (*idō kōgeki*), "falling leaves serve" (*konohaochi sōbu*) and "time lag attack" (*jikansa kōgeki*). But his most infamous move was the technique known as "receive and rotate" (*kaiten reshibu*) which would become the signature move of the Nichibō Kaizuka team. Reflecting on the difference in physical stature between the Japanese and USSR women's teams, Daimatsu was convinced that agility and speed were the key to defeating the Soviet champions, and so he devised a move, often likened to a jūdo move in nature, whereby a player could receive the ball without touching their bottom on the floor and then rotate immediately into a defensive position. This "receive and rotate" was a difficult technique to master. Some players damaged their spine and kidneys as their bodies hit the floor hard during the learning process. Later in his life, Daimatsu reflected that his training regime and techniques had indeed been harsh, but also commented that volleyball was not about physical techniques alone and required a "fighting spirit" (*konjō*).

In October 1962, at the volleyball world championships in Moscow, the Japanese women's team (the Nichibō Kaizuka team) again met the USSR women's team in the final, and in a surprise upset beat the Soviet world champions. Commenting on that victory, the Russian media described the Japanese team as "Oriental Witches" who had used some form of "magic" in their victory. The Japanese media translated this into *Tōyō no Majo* and ran with it, resulting in a popular nickname for the team that has remained to this day.

<sup>9</sup> Masahiko Sawano, *Joshi Barēbōru no Eikō to Zassetsu*, (Hokkai Gakuen University, 2008): 161

When asked about the nickname and how she felt about being called a "witch" in interview, Kasai said that she and her team mates did not take any offence at the name and that it had simply been used by the Soviets to describe their play, which had included the never before seen techniques devised by Daimatsu. Although delighted with their victory in Moscow, Kasai and others in the team were intent on retiring from volleyball after these championships, because they were of marriageable age. At this time in history, most Japanese women married by the age of 25, and indeed it was perceived as socially more difficult for women to find a marriage partner after that age.<sup>10</sup> The eldest in the team, Kasai was already 29 years old when she played in Moscow, and her ability to marry was playing on her mind. However, Japanese volleyball was already on a path that was leading to the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.

When it was announced in April 1962 that women's volleyball would be an Olympic event for the first time at Tokyo, the Nichibō Kaizuka team were intensely questioned by the Japanese media. Kasai recalls that she was decisive in her response at that time, stating that she had already decided to retire after Moscow later that year. However, after their victory in Moscow, Kasai comments that she felt persuaded from all sides to continue playing and aim for the Olympics. She records that this was not an easy decision given her age and the hard training that would lie ahead between 1962 and 1964, by which time she would be 31 years old. However, the public expectation was immense, and the team received some 5,000 letters from fans urging the "Oriental Witches" to continue. In early 1963, the team members got together and most decided to stay until the Olympics. Kasai decided to give up her ambitions to marry for the time being and to aim for the gold medal at the Tokyo games.<sup>11</sup> In interview, Kasai recollected that she decided to continue because she felt that the public at that time would "not allow her to retire", and that the only way to respond to the public's expectation that the national team could win the gold medal was to try and deliver that victory for them.

Despite his strict and "demon like" reputation, Daimatsu clearly felt a strong sense of personal and paternalistic responsibility for his female players. Conscious that they could only endure a few years of his harsh training regime, as well as conscious of their ages, Daimatsu had also intended to retire after the 1962 world championships, thereby allowing his players the opportunity to retire and be free to potentially get married. When questioned by the media in 1962, Daimatsu commented that although he was confident that they could win the Olympics in two years time if all players continued, many players were of marriageable age, and thus he could not comment on the team's viability for Tokyo.<sup>12</sup> However, as noted, there was immense pressure for the in-situ team to continue, not least from the Japanese Olympic

<sup>10</sup> Yoko Tokuhiko, *Marriage in Contemporary Japan* (Routledge, 2010): 3-5

<sup>11</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 72-3

<sup>12</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 59

Committee, who were reluctant for such a successful team to disband. Daimatsu agreed to stay another two years as coach of the national women's team until the Olympics. After these decisions in 1962, Kasai recalled Daimatsu's instructions to his team:

We have two years, so let's do the very best that we possibly can. We cannot betray the expectations of the public. As we have decided to carry on playing, I would like to make us the team that can take gold. In order to do that, practice will have to be severe and we'll have to challenge each other to our very human limits.<sup>13</sup>

During Daimatsu's twelve-year stint as coach of the Nichibō Kaizuka team they were the strongest volleyball team in Japan, winning 175 consecutive games. In the build-up to the Tokyo Olympics, his training techniques steadily gained attention both nationally and internationally, and his training regime was documented in a short film which later won the Grand Prix at the 1964 Cannes Film Festival.<sup>14</sup> However, his approach was not without critics. In March 1964, the magazine *Sports Illustrated* carried an article titled "Driven beyond Dignity" written by a Western journalist who had visited the Nichibō Kaizuka team in training. The following is excerpts from that article, which was fiercely damning of both Daimatsu's demeanour and his training regime:

I had come to see the sensational Nichibo Kaizuka women's volleyball team: world champions, winner of 137 consecutive contests since 1960 and the favorite to retain its upstart mastery over the powerful Communist bloc—long the hotbed of world volleyball—at October's Tokyo Olympics....  
...Whisked to a cluttered reception room jammed with souvenirs and trophies, I met the coach, Hirofumi Daimatsu. Daimatsu, [sic] 43, is a short, lean, muscular man with a shaggy crew cut over cold features. Talking softly through an interpreter, he told about his team.... "There is time for nothing else. The players know absolutely no other life. They do it because they choose to. The preparation for winning is a personal, individual challenge. It is accepted without question."

[The gymnasium] is a bleak, chill, poorly lit building heated by three small charcoal pots. The girls are already on the floor. They are big, strong, rangy, averaging around 5 feet 7. Their fingers are heavily taped and they wear knee and elbow pads. Engaged now in a playful, boisterous scrimmage, they move the ball with an astonishing acrobatic dexterity and slam it across the net with a jarring power, screaming in shrill unison at every "kill." The scrimmage switches to a warmup drill in which an assistant drives them through a grueling, nonstop half hour of dives, rolls and tumbles. Then Daimatsu takes over. He mounts a platform at center

net, flanked by a huge wire basket filled with balls, tended by a girl assistant. The squad queues in separate lines at opposite ends of the gym's rear wall, facing the net.

Daimatsu signals, and in rapid rotation the girls charge toward the net, crisscrossing from their respective corners. With the ball girl feeding him swiftly, silently, Daimatsu swings his fist in a swift, rhythmic motion, slamming the balls first to one side and then the other as the girls come charging in. The balls are aimed deliberately short so that the girls must hurl themselves headlong in a desperate, often futile attempt to retrieve and keep them in the air. They land jarringly on their chests and shoulders, then roll out and recover with a sprawling, judo like somersault. As each girl recovers, she dashes back to the wall to charge in immediately for the next retrieve, sometimes as many as six times before the next girl comes hurtling in.

An hour of this and the girls are sweat-sodden, soiled and gasping with the exertion. After two hours Daimatsu, expressionless, his arm still swinging like a piston, closes the range. He now imparts a vicious spin to the ball. A heavy-set girl lumbers in, overcharges, slams onto her shoulder and grimaces in pain as she hobbles drunkenly back to the wall, where she bends in agony. Daimatsu, his motion unbroken, is now gibing softly.

"If you'd rather be home with your mother, then go. We don't want you here."

*[After observing the training until after midnight, the article goes on to recount the next morning]*

At 9 a.m. the next morning, barely eight hours after the girls had staggered back to their dorms, I visited the mill office and, incredibly, they were already at work. Dressed in neat blue smocks, they have been here as usual since 8, demurely fingering the abacus board, filing, answering the telephone. Daimatsu sits nearby at his office manager's desk, engrossed in accounts. That these serene young women are one and the same with the wild-eyed creatures I had seen just a few hours ago brutalizing themselves almost beyond human dignity seemed truly unbelievable.... The team's captain, tall, graceful Masae Kasai, smiles shyly from her desk. Little stories like hers tell the big one. Two years ago, at age 28, Masae was in love and engaged to a young man from Osaka. She had a choice: marriage and a home, or a continuation of the daily torture under Hirofumi Daimatsu. She chose the latter, for at the 1964 Olympics the glory of Japan will flicker again, and glory is everything. Perhaps Masae had said it all the previous night when I asked her about the team's chances at the Olympics. "You must understand," she said gravely. "We have never experienced defeat. We must win."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 72

<sup>14</sup> Nobuko Shibuya (director), *Le Prix de la Victoire*, Grand Prix, Short Film Category, Cannes, 1964

<sup>15</sup> Eric Whitehead, "Driven Beyond Dignity", *Sports Illustrated*, March 16, 1964, accessed August 6, 2013, <http://sportsillustrated.com>

While there is more than a hint of Western sensationalist reporting in this article, Daimatsu's volleyball play was considered "dangerous" and was banned in many high schools across Japan by 1964 as young girls tried to emulate the moves of the "Oriental Witches". On the other hand, Kasai and her teammates were fiercely loyal to Daimatsu and dedicated in their practice under his formidable leadership. Kasai commented in interview that she and the team were happy to take direction from him, despite the well-reported severity of his training regime, because they trusted him. She commented that he had a "great human nature", and that she herself held a lot of trust and respect for him as a person, but that there was also a close bond between him and the team. Kasai said that every time their team won, they were further convinced that his hard training regime was right, and were all prepared to practice hard again in order to win again. Daimatsu's bond with his players was extremely strong, and none of the players have ever said anything negative about him in any interviews.<sup>16</sup> The Japanese media were also captivated by the Daimatsu-Kasai partnership by 1964.

The pressure intensified massively on the Japanese women's volleyball team in the lead-up to the 1964 Games. After defeating the Soviets in 1962 and becoming world championships it became headline news across Japan, and almost a *fait accompli* for the forthcoming Olympics in the minds of the Japanese press. For Kasai and her team it must have felt as though there was little option other than to win. Kasai recorded how the press commentary in 1962 after their win over the Soviets included statements such as "victory is confirmed for the Tokyo Olympics" and "the brilliant achievement by the Oriental Witches decides public mood for a gold medal win by the Witches at the forthcoming Olympic Games". Kasai also describes how after the 1962 win it was much more difficult, as world champions, to be "chased" by the Soviet team rather than "to chase" and that she felt immense pressure to deliver.<sup>17</sup>

As the Olympics progressed in October 1964, the Japanese public were buoyed by medal results, particularly in judo, athletics and wrestling, and this increased the pressure on the women's volleyball team. By late afternoon, on October 23, 1964, people and taxis were disappearing off the streets across Japan, and the telephone switchboard operated by Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corporation almost ground to a halt, as everybody rushed to be near a television set to watch the final of the women's volleyball. To say that a gold medal was expected for Japan was an understatement. One of the team members had commented anxiously the previous day that, "if we lose, we might have to leave the country".<sup>18</sup> At 7 pm, the excitement emanating from the Komazawa indoor sports hall in Tokyo began its televised broadcast across Ja-

pan. The Japanese and Soviet teams arrived on the court, with the Soviet players looking a physically opposing presence and height. The Japanese players won the first two sets decisively: 15–11 and 15–8, and in the third set were leading 13–6, but then lost points consecutively as the pressure of winning became closer to reality. When the score reached 14–13, Daimatsu requested a time-out to talk to his team. After play resumed, the Japanese served the ball and an over-the-net foul from a Soviet player secured the elusive fifteenth point and served up Olympic history. The 4,000 spectators in the auditorium all stood up with thunderous applause, while the six players on the court stood upright for a moment then cried and embraced each other.<sup>19</sup>

This final match was, in the end, a decisive victory for Kasai and her team, winning in three straight sets (15-11, 15-8, 15-13).<sup>20</sup> As a new sport, it was the first gold medal in women's volleyball in Olympic history, and the first gold medal in a women's event in 28 years for Japan.<sup>21</sup> It was also the end of an Olympic Games that had put Japan back onto the international stage after their WWII defeat, and a sporting event that served to unite and restore the spirit of a nation and its people. For Kasai and her team mates it was the end of a personal journey that had taken them from playing the sport as young employees in a corporate team to representing their nation at the first Summer Olympics ever to have been held in Japan. Describing the moment the whistle blew in that final match, as her team mates cried and came to hug her, Kasai recalls how she was choked with deep emotion, and filled with tears but that she tried not to cry "until her mission as team captain finished".<sup>22</sup> While receiving the gold medal in the awards ceremony and watching the Japanese flag raised with the national anthem, she felt very emotional and moved, and very glad that she had been able to meet the expectations of the Japanese people. She recorded that, if she had quit two years previously, she would not have felt that deep emotion nor received the gold medal, and was happy that she had made the decision to continue.<sup>23</sup> Commenting on the victory after the match to the media, Kasai made a rather personal statement, commenting: "I would like to choose a happy life as a woman from tomorrow, with all my experience of volleyball up until tonight".<sup>24</sup>

[cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1075740/index.htm](http://cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1075740/index.htm)

<sup>16</sup> Sawano, *Joshi Barēbōru no Eikō to Zassetsu*, 162

<sup>17</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 64-5

<sup>18</sup> Sankei News Archive, Osaka no 20 Seki (31), *Kaiten Reshiibu 'Tōyō no Majo' Sekai ni Kōfun to Kandō*, October 20, 2011, accessed August 7, 2012, [http://sankei.jp.msn.com/west/west\\_sports/news/111020/wsp11102010010002-n1.htm](http://sankei.jp.msn.com/west/west_sports/news/111020/wsp11102010010002-n1.htm)

<sup>19</sup> The Yomiuri newspaper's morning edition on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1964 described the victory moment as the 'moment of ecstasy' Yomiuri Online, *Ano Hi Ano Toki: 10 gatsu 23 nichi, 1964 nen 'Tōyō no Majo' ga Kinmedaru Kakutoku*, October 23, 2011, accessed August 8, 2012, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/otona/history/october/20111011-OYT8T00803.htm>

<sup>20</sup> The final results in the women's volleyball competition at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics were, in winning order: Japan, USSR, Poland, Romania, USA and South Korea. Although the Japanese men's volleyball team was not expected to win a medal, they took the bronze medal.

<sup>21</sup> Maehata Hideko won gold in the 200 metres women's breaststroke at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, making her the first Japanese woman to win an Olympic gold medal

<sup>22</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 90

<sup>23</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 90-91

<sup>24</sup> Yomiuri Shinbun, *Ano Hi Ano Toki: 10 gatsu 23 nichi, 1964 nen*

## KASAI'S LIFE AFTER THE 1964 VICTORY: VOLLEYBALL AND MOTHERHOOD

Despite a seemingly decisive victory, the emotion of the gold medal win and the decision to continue to that Olympics had clearly been a difficult personal decision for Kasai. Cited in the Yomiuri newspaper the day after the win, Kasai confessed that she had the feelings of any “normal young woman”. She told how a good friend of hers from high school had come to the competition with her daughter to cheer on the team. Seeing her friend with an 8-year-old daughter, Kasai said she felt mixed feelings, thinking that if she had not continued with competitive volleyball she might have been in the audience with a child like her friend. She was conscious that her father, who had passed away in July of that year, had wanted to see her as a bride.<sup>25</sup>

After the Olympic victory, it is not an exaggeration to say that Kasai became something of a national celebrity in Japan. Although her wish was to retire immediately after the Olympics, she played in subsequent friendly games against Romania and in China, and recorded that she was busy attending a lot of celebratory events.<sup>26</sup> Daimatsu was also busy appearing on TV and giving lectures, but he took his “paternalistic duties” very seriously and made time to visit the parental homes of his team in order to help their families seek potential marriage partners for his players. Soon after the Olympic victory, Daimatsu and the team met the then Prime Minister, Satō Eisaku, whereupon Kasai mentioned her inability to marry due to her years of volleyball training, and Daimatsu asked for the PM’s help in introducing potential husbands for his players.<sup>27</sup> Kasai was then famously introduced to an officer from Japan’s Self Defence Force, arranged by Prime Minister and Mrs Satō, whom she would later marry. In January 1965, Daimatsu announced his decision to retire from Nichibō Corporation. Although he was asked to stay on as the manager of the national team after the Olympic victory, he refused the offer, and Kasai and five other players announced their resignations the following day once Daimatsu’s resignation had been accepted by Nichibō.<sup>28</sup> Even after these official retirements from the sport, the Japanese media continued to follow the lives of the players, particularly with regard to their possible marriage moves. Kasai recorded how she was followed around by the media all the time after the Olympics, and that it was difficult to meet up with her fiancé without the media noticing.<sup>29</sup> Kasai’s wedding to Nakamura Kazuo in May 1965 made national media headlines. The Japanese prime minister and his wife attended the wedding as official matchmakers and he gave a speech at the wedding commenting: “I think Kasai Masae is more well known in Japan than me”. The newlywed couple were

<sup>25</sup> *Tōyō no Majō ga Kinmedaru Kakutoku*

<sup>25</sup> Yomiuri Shinbun, *Ano Hi Ano Toki: 10 gatsu 23 nichi, 1964 nen*

<sup>26</sup> *Tōyō no Majō ga Kinmedaru Kakutoku*

<sup>26</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 33

<sup>27</sup> Sawano, *Joshi Barēbōru no Eikō to Zassetsu*, 162

<sup>28</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 35

<sup>29</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 24&33

interviewed on television following their ceremony, and were followed around by the Japanese media on their honeymoon to Hakone.<sup>30</sup>

Although Kasai officially retired from the Olympic and Nichibō teams in 1965, she would never really retire from her involvement with or promotion of the sport of volleyball. In her memoir she reflected that, even though she and her teammates were expected to marry and become *kateijin* (member of a household), they couldn’t forget about volleyball which had defined their youth. She wrote that they tried to take any opportunity to get together to enjoy playing – in fact more than just “enjoy” they wanted to still “compete and win”.<sup>31</sup> In 1965, Daimatsu was asked to help establish a national volleyball team in China by the Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlai, and Kasai went with Daimatsu to China to train both men’s and women’s national teams. Among those who participated in this training was Yue Wai Man, the Chinese volleyball coach who would later lead the Chinese women’s team to five world titles. In the same year, Kasai and other ex-Nichibō players also formed Fuji Club, a team which went on to win the national tournament in 1965 and 1966, though the club was later dissolved as Kasai and her team mates got busy with motherhood and families.<sup>32</sup> After marrying in May 1965, Kasai and her husband initially lived with her husband’s parents in Kawasaki, but set up their own home in 1968 when her husband was transferred to Chiba. She gave birth to their first child, a boy, in July 1966, then a daughter in March 1969 and a second son in April 1970. She recorded that her babies and home life were her major interest in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In her memoirs she recorded that she definitely didn’t want to be a *kyoiku mama* (education mother) and imprint on her children, but rather, raise them as free spirits, but later reflected that before she knew it she had, in reality, been pulled into being a *kyoiku mama*.<sup>33</sup>

However, in 1973, she was asked to feature in a weekly television programme called Saturday Deportes (*Doyō Deporute*),<sup>34</sup> in which a six-a-side team of “Oriental Witches” would be pitted against various nine-a-side amateur *mama-san* (mother’s) volleyball teams. In her memoirs, she recalled that she asked herself whether it would be okay for her to return to volleyball, reflecting that her children were a little more off her hands, and her mother in law was healthy. Asking herself whether she could do it, she told herself that of course she could play at any age, as there were women older than her playing *mama-san* volleyball. So at 39 years of age she called upon her “witch sisters” and formed a team after a

<sup>30</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 50-53

<sup>31</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 99

<sup>32</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 98

<sup>33</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 137&143. *Kyoiku mama* was a popular term and social phenomenon from the 1960s to 1980s in Japan. The domestic partner to the “salaryman”, an “education mother” had the key responsibility (and somewhat obsessively portrayed role in the media) of raising successful children within the competitive Japanese education system.

<sup>34</sup> Deportes is the Spanish word for sports.

seven year absence from volleyball.<sup>35</sup> The popularity of this television programme greatly contributed to the spread of the sport to Japanese women of all ages during these years.

From the mid-1970s, over the next two decades, Kasai was a coach for various teams, including some in the *mama-san* league, and widely promoted the sport by giving lectures across Japan. In 1982, she began to coach volleyball classes for Itō-Yōkadō club, a volleyball school that would subsequently spread across Japan, and in 1988 she coached classes for a *mama-san* club in Edōgawa-ward, Tokyo. In 1991 she brought a volleyball team over from China to play against the Edōgawa club and was influential in promoting nine-a-side volleyball for elderly people in China. She sat on the board of the JVA and was Vice-Chair in 2003-4, charged with strengthening Japanese women's volleyball. At 70 years of age, forty years after her victory in 1964, Kasai went to the 2004 Athens Olympics as the manager of the Japanese women's team. Attending the Games for the first time since she had captained her team to the inaugural Olympic volleyball title, she was quoted as saying:

"The memory of returning to the Olympics is amazing. I was stunned by the great reaction of the spectators and the fans. There are quite a few Japanese followers here so it is quite emotional. I'm very proud of what this team has achieved over the past year and hopefully we can continue with some of that great form here at the Olympics. The team is still in the process of improving but for an inexperienced, young side they are achieving remarkable things."<sup>36</sup>

Kasai and Daimatsu continued their partnership in the sport after retiring from the Olympic and Nichibō teams. In 1968, Kasai supported Daimatsu when he stood as a Member of Parliament for the Liberal Democratic party. Daimatsu won his seat and served until a subsequent election defeat in 1974, when he returned to volleyball coaching, but died in 1978 at only 57 years of age. Kasai was shocked at his sudden death, and in her 1982 memoirs recalled how at his funeral she had imagined what he would be saying to her and her team mates, writing:

"You have all become wonderful mothers. Continue to enjoy and play volleyball for me. Continue to meet without me."

She also recalled her last good bye to her teacher:

"Even though you will go to heaven, I will continue your leadership in volleyball, without you, and maybe you will create another witches team in heaven".<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 138-40

<sup>36</sup> Fédération Internationale de Volleyball, *Two Volleyball Greats take in the Olympic spectacle*, August 21, 2004, accessed February 1, 2014, [http://www.fivb.org/EN/volleyball/competitions/olympics/2004/men/Press/Press\\_21.asp?sm=30](http://www.fivb.org/EN/volleyball/competitions/olympics/2004/men/Press/Press_21.asp?sm=30)

<sup>37</sup> Kasai, *Okāsan no Kinmedaru*, 147

Daimatsu was long viewed after the Olympic gold medal victory as a national hero in Japan. Inducted into the Volleyball Hall of Fame in 2000, his record notes that he was "the coach who revolutionised training for all women's sports".<sup>38</sup> Kasai, too, was inducted into the Volleyball Hall of Fame in 2008. Contemporary academic and media debates on sports training in Japan continue to refer to Daimatsu's legacy.<sup>39</sup> While he certainly left a legacy of sports training ideology, I would argue that Kasai's influence on the sport of volleyball was more pervasive, and resulted in the widespread popularity of the sport across Japan, particularly for women.

## THE LEGACY OF THE WITCHES' VICTORY FOR WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

The growth of volleyball, particularly as a sport for women, was immense following the 1964 Olympics victory by the 'Oriental Witches', with volleyball now not only a "medal promising" competitive sport, but emerging as a growing social phenomenon.<sup>40</sup> The sport was portrayed in two popular series, "*V is our Sign*" and "*Attack No.1*" which both started as cartoon series (*manga*) in rival girls' magazines in 1968. They were both launched in 1969 as television series, and "*V is our Sign*" in particular became a hit series, with its plot focused on a fictional Witches team.<sup>41</sup> Less obvious than the popular dramatisation of the series, but, I would argue, even more influential and long-lasting, was the spread of the sport to women of all ages in Japan, notably the establishment of *mama-san* volleyball. Previously the domain of young women, volleyball became an acceptable and accessible sport for older, married, Japanese women as well after the 1964 victory. Kasai commented in interview that, prior to the Olympics, Japanese housewives (*shufu*) concentrated on housework and looking after children, reflecting that it was "unthinkable" that a housewife would engage in sports or have a job or hobbies outside the home. After the Olympics, however, women of all ages were inspired to take up the sport, and as leisure activities became more acceptable amidst a growing and affluent Japanese middle-class, teams for older women emerged most prominently organised by PTA groups and by local government community centres across Japan. In 1970 a *mama-san* volleyball national competition was

<sup>38</sup> Volleyball Hall of Fame, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://www.volleyhall.org/daimatsu.html>

<sup>39</sup> For example, see Japan Times, *Severe sports training methods became taibatsu in time*, June 2, 2013, accessed August 20, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/sports/2013/06/02/baseball/severe-sports-training-methods-became-taibatsu-in-time/#.UhhQt9wYdU>

<sup>40</sup> Sawano, *Joshi Barēbōru no Eikō to Zassetsu*, 143-4

<sup>41</sup> '*V is our Sign*' (the V standing for Victory) was created as a cartoon series by Shiro Jinbo and Akira Mochizukiin, requested by the publisher of a girls' magazine in response to the popularity of '*Attack No.1*' created by Chikako Uruga which had begun earlier that year in a rival publication. In 1969, '*V is our Sign*' became a televised drama series, while '*Attack No.1*' begun as a televised animated series, and later in 2005 re-launched as a drama series.

launched by the JVA in cooperation with sponsorship from the Asahi Newspaper, and the *mama-san* clubs remain popular throughout Japan today, with national competitions held annually, and the sport split into various leagues including veteran leagues defined by age categories: *Isoji* for the over 50s, *Kotobuki* for the over 60s and *Ofuku* for the over 70s. By 2009 there were 771 *mama-san* volleyball teams across Japan with over 11,000 players.<sup>42</sup> Although for many women across Japan, *mama-san* volleyball is a leisure activity or hobby, the top “V-league” competition is a serious national league and includes players who have retired out of competitive corporate or other teams. Indeed the term *mama-san* itself has evolved to be somewhat misleading. Players in the V-league are required to be 35 years or older in age but it is not a requirement that they be married or indeed be a mother. Although there is criticism that the term *mama-san* continues to locate Japanese women and sport within gendered norms of maternity and ideal female roles,<sup>43</sup> at the same time it is evident that the growth of *mama-san* volleyball did open up sporting activities to women of all ages during the decades following the Tokyo victory. Volleyball remains the most popularly played sport today for Japanese women, and the growth of *mama-san* volleyball also inspired the emergence of other *mama-san* clubs in sports such as basketball, table tennis, badminton, and more recently a rapid growth in *mama-san* soccer.

#### LOOKING FORWARD TO TOKYO 2020

After the 1964 gold medal victory, the Japanese women’s volleyball team won the Olympic silver medal in Mexico in 1968 and in Munich in 1972. They then went on to win the gold medal for the second time in Montreal in 1976. However, after taking the bronze medal in Los Angeles in 1984, the team’s ranking continued to go down and went into a slump. They failed to qualify for the Sydney Olympics in 2000 for the first time since 1964. After missing the Sydney Games, they competed at Athens in 2004 (with Kasai as manager) and Beijing in 2008, both times losing in the quarter finals. The decline of textiles as a key industry in Japan from the 1970s led many to speculate that perhaps the glory days of corporate sports and women’s volleyball might have come to an end in the 1980s and 1990s. It is certainly true that with the decline of the industry, the domain of competitive women’s volleyball gradually no longer resided in corporate teams from the textile companies.<sup>44</sup> Nichibō, now renamed Unitika Ltd., took the decision to dissolve

its corporate volleyball team in 2000.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Japan’s economic problems after the 1990s meant that many sports had to shift their emphasis from corporate teams to sports teams comprising other forms of sponsorship. However, at the same time, competitive women’s volleyball in Japan has retained its “corporate sport” nature, albeit with the type of corporations having changed over time, moving from the textile firms, to electronics firms and now increasingly to firms in the service sector.<sup>46</sup>

At the London Olympics in 2012, after twenty eight years without an Olympic win, the Japanese women’s volleyball team took the bronze medal. At a press conference held in London on August 12, 2012, the team manager Manabe Masayoshi commenting on the bronze win noted the “triumph of teamwork” and commented that the strength of Japanese women’s volleyball lies in the solidarity of their team members and in persistent pursuance of technique, because with an average height of 1.75 metres the Japanese have the lowest height out of all the 12 teams that competed in London.<sup>47</sup> This statement resonates with the commentary that surrounded the Japanese team in the 1960s. At 79 years of age in August 2012, Kasai was also quoted in the Japanese press on the day of the bronze win, congratulating the team and commenting that after twenty eight years without a medal she was happy the Japanese team was getting steadily stronger after a long slump period.<sup>48</sup>

One year later, on September 7, 2013, the IOC announced that Tokyo had won the bid to host the 2020 Olympic Games. Kasai sent a message to Japanese volleyball fans stating: “I hope Tokyo 2020 will be successful and will bring many dreams and hope. I am pretty sure that I am the happiest person to welcome the return of the Olympics Games to Tokyo.” Sadly, less than a month later, on October 3, 2013, Kasai died in Tokyo from an intracranial haemorrhage. Her sudden death was reported by all the major media channels across Japan, and reflected her status as one of Japan’s most beloved and renowned athletes.<sup>49</sup> Obituary reports commented that she was an iconic and respected sportswoman who

<sup>42</sup> Sasakawa Sports Foundation, *Supōtsu Hakusho: supōtsu ga mezasu beki mirai*, February 15, 2011

<sup>43</sup> One Japanese author argues that *mama-san* volleyball has been the key sport for married women in Japan, and that while it did liberate them from their isolated domestic life, it has also served to perpetuate their role as housewives. See Haruko Takaoka, “Katei Fujin Supōtsu Katsudō ni okeru “Shufusei” no Saiseisan: barēbōru no hatten katei to seido tokusei o chūshin ni”, *Research of Physical Education* 53(2), December 10, 2008, 391-407

<sup>44</sup> Sawano, *Joshi Barēbōru no Eikō to Zassetsu*, 162

<sup>45</sup> Nichibō changed its name to Unitika in 1969, following a merger with Nippon Rayon.

<sup>46</sup> See Hiroyuki Kurosaka and Sumie Ōyama, “Kigyō Chimu no Hensen kara Nihon Keizai ga mieru: barēbōru Nihon rīgu o rei toshite”, *Seikatsu Kagaku Kenkyū*, 17, 1995, 47-55. Current women’s volleyball teams competing nationally, from which Japan’s national team draws players, include teams such as the Toray Arrows (owned by a chemical fibre company) and the Hisamitsu Springs team (owned by a pharmaceutical company). When Unitika ended their team in 2000 all their team members moved to the Toray team, but have since all retired.

<sup>47</sup> Yomiuri Online, *Mottomo shinchō bikui barējoshi, kono tsuyomi de ‘dō’ kakutoku*, accessed August 15, 2012, <http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/olympic/2012/news/ballgame/volley/1/20120812-OYT1T00571.htm>

<sup>48</sup> Sanspo News, *Joshi barē ni 28nen buri dōmedaru! Kankoku ni setsujoku*, accessed August 12, 2012, <http://www.sanspo.com/london2012/news/20120811/vol12081119390005-n3.html>

<sup>49</sup> Kasai’s death was reported in the Nikkei, Yomiuri, Asahi, Sankei and Mainichi newspapers as well as on the main television channels in Japan.

had widely contributed to volleyball education across the country, and had actively supported the 2020 Tokyo Olympic bid. The Nikkei Shimbun recorded the following:

“It is with great sadness that the Japan Volleyball Association announced the passing of Masae Nakamura (née Kasai) on Thursday. She was 80 years old. Yuichiro Hamu, the President of Japan Volleyball Association, commented, “We are all deeply shocked to hear the sudden death of Ms. Nakamura (Kasai). Our thoughts are with her and her family at this most difficult time of loss. We have no words to express our gratitude for her effort to the development of volleyball in Japan. In particular, she led the Japanese women’s volleyball team to the gold medal at Tokyo Olympics in 1964. She was the person who established the foundation of volleyball in Japan. I promise that we won’t give up our effort to make volleyball popular in Japan to respond to Nakamura’s wishes.”<sup>50</sup>

The Fédération Internationale de Volleyball also issued a press release the following day stating:

“It is with great sadness that we received the news of the passing of the volleyball legend Masae Nakamura. On behalf of the FIVB and the volleyball community around the world, I pass on our sincere condolences to her family and the Japan Volleyball Federation. She was a leader of her time and set the bench mark not only for Japanese volleyball but volleyball around the world.”<sup>51</sup>

When the selection of the 2020 Olympic Games was announced in September 2013, the IOC President Jacques Rogge had commented that:

“...in the end it was Tokyo’s bid that resonated the most with the IOC membership, inviting us to “discover tomorrow” by delivering a well-organised and safe Games that will reinforce the Olympic values while demonstrating the benefits of sport to a new generation.”<sup>52</sup>

Fifty years after hosting Tokyo 1964, one might argue that, as a nation, Japan has more on its plate than just the Olympics to deliver by 2020. After two decades of economic stagnation and the 3/11 Triple Disaster, the optimism that existed in 1964 appears less than evident in 2014. Abenomics has yet to prove that it can deliver on its own 2020 pledges,

while the focus on the Tokyo Games may serve to divert resources from—and deepen the gap between—the capital city and an ailing rural Japan, not least in the tsunami-damaged north-eastern prefectures of Japan, while the question of the full impact of the Fukushima nuclear disaster rumbles on.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, hosting an Olympics Games can never be relied upon to provide resolution to all the concomitant ills facing a nation, but could, as in 1964, once again provide a sense of unification or boost national spirits. What is certain is that the Japanese women’s volleyball team have their sights set on recovering their momentum in the sport at an international level, and both the team and the Japanese media will no doubt be recalling the famous 1964 victory of Kasai and her team mates. In that sense, Kasai’s legacy will not fade anytime soon, and her unbridled passion and optimism for the sport will remain. It is therefore only fitting to end this article with Kasai’s own spontaneous reflections on her life, as recorded in my interview with her in May 2012.

“The gold medal changed my life a lot. My subsequent forty-eight years have been a really happy life. Many people who watched TV that day and cheered for the volleyball team in the Olympics have now passed away. But I am still remembered by a lot of people when I attend volleyball classes and activities all over Japan. The fact that the Olympics were held in Japan had a huge impact. People all over Japan watched the games on TV. Even people who didn’t have a TV watched them somewhere. The viewing rate of our final match is still unbeatable. It has been forty-eight years since then, but I am still recognised everywhere – in the train, on the streets or in the department store. I’m very grateful. I think that I am the luckiest volleyball player in the world.”

<sup>50</sup> Nikkei Shimbun, *Nakamura Masae san ga shikyo barē “Tōyō no Majo” shushō*, accessed October 4, 2013, [http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG0302F\\_T01C13A0CC0000/](http://www.nikkei.com/article/DGXNASDG0302F_T01C13A0CC0000/)

<sup>51</sup> Fédération Internationale de Volleyball, *Volleyball world mourns passing of Japanese great*, accessed October 6, 2013, <http://www.fivb.org/en/media/viewPressRelease.asp?No=43106&Language=en>

<sup>52</sup> Olympic.org, *IOC selects Tokyo as host of 2020 Summer Olympic Games*, accessed, February 6, 2014, <http://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-selects-tokyo-as-host-of-2020-summer-olympic-games/208784>

<sup>53</sup> Peter Matanle, “Why the 2020 Olympics won’t solve Japan’s problems”, *Prospect Magazine*, October 7, 2013, accessed February 2, 2014, <https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/politics/2020-olympics-japans-problems/#.UvYoajbisdU>



# ISLAMIC BANKING IN THE MALDIVES

BANKING LAW, PRUDENTIAL REGULATION AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE OF A NEW SECTOR



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## ABSTRACT

The Maldives Monetary Authority granted the first banking license ever conferred on an Islamic bank in the Republic of the Maldives in 2011. This article examines the stages that preceded the initiation of Islamic banking in this Indian Ocean archipelago nation and culminated with the opening of the Maldives Islamic Bank. The article describes banking and company law for non-Islamic (conventional) banks, outlines the powers of the Maldives Monetary Authority and the countervailing mechanisms of political accountability and judicial review available to banks. The article then details the legal and regulatory framework specific to Islamic banking, examines the development (essentially occurring since 2009) and the current state of the prudential regulation of Islamic financial institutions, with special attention accorded corporate governance and the two-tiered system of Shari'ah Advisory Councils charged with new product development and the enforcement of Shari'ah compliance by Islamic financial institutions in the Maldives.

## I. INTRODUCTION: THE INAUGURATION OF ISLAMIC BANKING IN THE MALDIVES

### *A) A Belated Beginning*

Two considerations render surprising the fact that this jurisdiction never hosted Islamic banking ("IB") before 2011: the character of Maldivian polity and the age of IB globally. Firstly, the state and constitutional identity of the Maldives is unequivocally Sunni Muslim. The Constitution of the Maldives 2008<sup>1</sup> stipulates that the state religion is Islam [s 10(a)] and that "No law contrary to any tenet of Islam shall be enacted in the Maldives" [s 10(c)]. Only Muslims may become citizens [s 9(c)]. Members of the People's Majlis (the Maldives' Parliament) must be Sunni Muslim [s 73(a)3]; the same is true of other high office. Although official and unofficial statistics are not wholly reliable on this issue, it seems clear that the population is (or at any rate approaches) total ho-

<sup>1</sup> Dheena Hussain, trans., "Functional Translation of the Constitution of the Maldives," accessed October 2, 2013, <http://www.maldivesinfo.gov.mv/home/upload/downloads/Compilation.pdf>.

mogeneity in self-identification of the Maldivian body politic as Muslim.<sup>2</sup> The pre-Republican political history of this atoll nation is one of a chain of sultans and sultanates, broken briefly by periods of colonial rule by the Portuguese and the Dutch, and punctuated by a period as a British protectorate (1887-1965);<sup>3</sup> the British era ended when in 1976 the Royal Air Force decamped from the island Gan (on the southernmost atoll, and now the second largest island by population) where it had maintained an airfield.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, IB and Islamic financial institutions (“IFIs”) globally have by now a rather lengthy history and -- while still in its adolescence in some respects -- IB is now quite established in a wide variety of jurisdictions. IB as a modern adaptation of moral and legal principles expounded in the scriptural and legal texts and intellectual traditions of Islam has existed in recognizable form in the Arab Gulf since the mid-1970s;<sup>5</sup> the wealthiest of the Gulf Cooperation Council (“GCC”) countries number among those nations who have hosted IFIs, such as the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar. In Southeast Asia, the Malaysian government enacted the Islamic Banking Act 1983 which together with the Financial Institutions Act 1989<sup>6</sup> regulated IB in the context of a jurisdiction with a dual banking system.<sup>7</sup> Malaysia has been an evident influence on the development of the IB sector in the Maldives; as will be demonstrated below with respect to the two-tiered system of Shari’ah Advisory Councils (“SAC”). Pakistan undertook legislative reform to usher in interest-free banking in the late 1970s although these efforts did not come to fruition until early in the current century.<sup>8</sup> As in the case of its South Asian

regional neighbour Pakistan, IB has only belatedly appeared in the Maldives -- belatedly when compared with the dates of its appearance in other societies where Muslims by nearly comparable levels predominate. In both Pakistan and the Maldives an official Islamic religious identity, codified by the constitution, and the identification of substantial majorities in the population with the faith, have not sped the formation of IB or IFIs -- as a sector that can compete with conventional interest-based banking -- as rapidly as an observer might anticipate.

The explanation of the relative tardiness of Islamic banking and finance in Pakistan and the Maldives probably lies in politics; in the case of the Maldives it is interesting to note that although the regime of President Maumoon Gayoom (1978-2007) relied upon an Islamic religious ideology to support itself,<sup>9</sup> effective progress toward IB did not occur until the administration of the first democratically elected government, led by President Mohammad Nasheed -- who assumed power in 2008. President Nasheed’s administration terminated on February 7, 2012 resulting in a transfer of power that took place under what subsequently became and still are disputed circumstances; on February 8, Mr Nasheed claimed duress, although subsequent enquiries have not accepted his portrayal of the events of February 7.<sup>10</sup> Although he never challenged the constitutional status of the Maldives as an Islamic state, President Nasheed was widely perceived to diminish the public importance of Islam or -- to put the point less innocuously in the Maldivian context -- to be a secular person and leader, if not one bent on marginalizing Islamic faith; or so his political opponents contended.<sup>11</sup> In point of fact President Nasheed had emphasized the symbiotic relationship of Islam with commerce and the economy at the

<sup>2</sup> N.a., “Indian Ocean Societies, Islam in” states the figure is 100%, *The Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003), accessed October 3, 2013, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195125580.001.0001/acref-9780195125580>. Under “religions” the *CIA World Fact Book* only states: “Sunni Muslim (official)” accessed October 3, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mv.html>.

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth, “Member countries,” accessed October 2, 2013, <http://thecommonwealth.org/ourmembercountries/maldives/history>.

<sup>4</sup> RAF, “RAF Timeline,” accessed October 2, 2013, <http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/rafhistorytimeline197079.cfm>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibrahim Warde, *Islamic Finance in the Global Economy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010) 71. Experimentation with IB occurred in Egypt and Pakistan as early as the 1940s, 70.

<sup>6</sup> Shanthy Rachagan, “Islamic Banking in Malaysia,” *Journal of International Banking Law and Regulation* 20:2 (2005): 88, 91.

<sup>7</sup> Valerie Low, “One Country, Two Systems: Banking in Malaysia,” *Journal of International Banking Law* 13:7 (1998), 236.

<sup>8</sup> State Bank of Pakistan, Islamic Banking Department, accessed

October 2, 2013, <http://www.sbp.org.pk/departments/ibd.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> As evidenced by his televised statements, as personally observed in the country by the author, July 2007-May 2008. Also, President Gayoom’s published speeches and writings: *Maldives, a Global View: Excerpts from President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom’s Speeches, 1979-1987* (Male’: Maldives Department of Information and Broadcasting, 1990) and *Maldives: a nation in peril* (Male’: Ministry of Planning Human Resources and Environment Male’ Maldives, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> BBC.co.uk, “Maldives report rejects Nasheed coup claims,” August 30, 2012, accessed October 2, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19417339>.

<sup>11</sup> N.a., “Translation: ‘President Nasheed’s devious plot to destroy the Islamic faith of Maldivians,’” *Minivan News*, January 20, 2012, accessed October 2, 2013, <http://minivannews.com/politics/translation-president-nasheed%e2%80%99s-devious-plot-to-destroy-the-islamic-faith-of-maldivians-30991>.

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World Islamic Economic Forum<sup>12</sup> and attended with some fanfare the opening ceremony of the first licensed Islamic bank in the Maldives, the Maldives Islamic Bank (“MIB”).<sup>13</sup>

### ***B. The Anatomy of a (Conservative) Revolution: IB in the Maldives***

During the last few years of President Gayoom’s administration, there was substantial popular support for IB among Maldivians, according to local informants.<sup>14</sup> Under President Nasheed political support emanated not only from the administration itself, but also from the outer fringe of national politics, including from an Islamist party called Adhaalath,<sup>15</sup> the name of that party means ‘justice’ in Dhivehi, the national language. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs also promoted IB.<sup>16</sup> The first publicly reported governmental negotiations with international banks dealing in the IB sector took place in May 2007 when the Finance Ministry stated that the MMA had been seeking to establish IB for one year. The Minister indicated that he anticipated a joint venture between the government and the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (“ICDP”), with which a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) had already been concluded. The Deputy Managing Director of the Maldives Monetary Authority (“MMA”), Ibrahim Naeem, said that in the Maldives Islamic banks would not lend to tourist ventures or casinos,<sup>17</sup> in recognition of some of the political sensitivities around IB.

<sup>12</sup> N.a., “President Speaks at the 6th World Islamic Economic Forum,” *Miadhu*, May 20, 2010, accessed October 1, 2010, <http://www.miadhu.com/2010/05/local-news/president-speaks-at-the-6th-world-islamic-economic-forum>; Laura Restropo Ortega, “Islam and commerce are synonymous,” *Minivan News*, May 20, 2010, accessed October 1, 2010, <http://minivannews.com/business/%e2%80%9dcislam-and-commerce-are-synonymous%e2%80%9d-president-nasheed-7360>.

<sup>13</sup> Abdul Latheef, “Opening of MIB provides opportunity to shape development according to Islamic principles-Pres,” *Miadhu*, March 8, 2011, accessed October 3, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2011/03/local-news/opening-of-mib-provides-opportunity-to-shape-development-according-to-islamic-principles-pres>.

<sup>14</sup> Personal communications with the author (autumn 2007). Two such informants were as he then was Dean of the Faculty of Shari’ah and Law, Fayyaz Ali Manik (who subsequently became a member of the Shari’ah Committee of MIB); also Ismail Athif, a local businessman. Being resident in Male’, the author lacks similar evidence from other islands.

<sup>15</sup> Then Finance Minister Gasim Ibrahim stated: “Two days back, Adhaalath Party sent a letter wanting to hold discussions on creating an Islamic Bank. Since Maldives is a 100% Muslim country, there are people who want to work with Islamic banks. They would benefit from this.” N.a., “Maldives to have Islamic Bank,” *Miadhu*, May 9, 2007, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2007/05/local-news/maldives-to-have-islamic-bank-2276>.

<sup>16</sup> N.a., “Islamic Bank would very soon be opened in the Maldives,” *Miadhu*, December 31, 2009, accessed October 3, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2009/12/local-news/an-islamic-bank-would-very-soon-be-opened-in-the-maldives>.

<sup>17</sup> Above, note 15.

In April 2008, the MMA announced that it became a member of the international harmonisation and standards-setting body the Islamic Financial Services Board (“IFSB”).<sup>18</sup> The MMA also established an Islamic Banking Unit.<sup>19</sup> The Governor of the MMA explored tie-ups with Bahrain; the largest Bahraini bank, among others, expressed some interest in investment in IB in the Maldives.<sup>20</sup> The MMA entered a partnership with Noor Islamic Bank of Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE), with plans of creating Noor Islamic Bank in the Maldives as a joint venture together with the Treasury and the Maldives Ministry of Finance, and the ICDP.<sup>21</sup> In July 2008 the parties signed an MOU to this effect.<sup>22</sup> However, it is evident that the MOU did not bear fruit; subsequent MMA Governor Fazeel Najeem stated that no parties had made formal applications to the MMA for bank operating licenses as of February 2009. He sought to parry objections received from the IDB that the MMA was obstructing efforts to introduce IB.<sup>23</sup> In June 2010, the MMA confirmed (without naming the parties) that two applications for an IB license in the Maldives had been received: one proposing a public-private partnership (“PPP”) between a multinational company and the Maldives government, and the other for a PPP between a UAE company and the Maldives government. The Finance Minister Ali Hashim blamed both the government and the applicants for delay.<sup>24</sup>

In the Islamic financial and banking services sector, viewed on a global scale, there are two distinct poles: the GCC and Malaysia. Although there is a great deal of overlap and cooperation concerning the core contracts and what is permissible, there are distinctions and disagreements at times, and even some rivalry when it comes to establishing or defending or augmenting international reputations as a leader of ideas and standards in IB. What occurred next constituted a swing in the direction of Southeast Asia -- away from the

<sup>18</sup> N.a., “Maldives gains membership of IFSB,” *Miadhu*, April 1, 2008, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2008/04/local-news/maldives-gains-membership-of-ifs5938>.

<sup>19</sup> N.a., “Islamic Banking to commence soon – Governor,” *Miadhu*, February 16, 2008, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2008/02/local-news/islamic-banking-to-commence-soon-governor-5432>.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> N.a., “Noor Islamic Bank, partners establish first Islamic bank in the Maldives,” *Gulf News*, July 22, 2008, accessed October 3, 2013, <http://m.gulfnews.com/noor-islamic-bank-partners-establish-first-islamic-bank-in-the-maldives-1.119586>.

<sup>22</sup> N.a., “Islamic banking to commence within months,” *Miadhu*, July 8, 2008, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2008/07/local-news/islamic-banking-to-commence-within-months-7011>.

<sup>23</sup> N.a., “MMA no obstruction to Islamic Banking in Maldives – Governor,” *Miadhu*, February 27, 2009, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2009/02/local-news/mma-no-obstruction-to-islamic-banking-in-maldives-governor-9427>.

<sup>24</sup> N.a., “Two banks applies [sic] for licenses to establish an Islamic bank in the Maldives,” *Miadhu*, June 22, 2010, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2010/06/local-news/two-banks-applies-for-licenses-to-establish-an-islamic-bank-in-the-maldives>.

Arab states -- and a harbinger of things to come. In October 2010 the MMA signed a Memorandum of Agreement (“MOA”) with the Islamic Banking and Finance Institute Malaysia (“IBFIM”), the purpose of which was the joint development of IB in the Maldives, together with the wider objective of encouraging the harmonisation of regulatory frameworks for the growth of Islamic finance. The Deputy Governor of Bank Negara Malaysia (Malaysia’s Central Bank) YBhg, Dato’ Mohd Razif Abd Kadir, witnessed the agreement -- signalling the involvement of the Malaysian banking authorities at a high level.<sup>25</sup> Then in December 2010, the Central Bank of the UAE signed an MOU with the MMA “for cooperation and exchange of information on banking supervision, technical assistance and training, as well as for combating money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/CFT).” The UAE offered to help the Maldives bring itself “in line with the international standards relating to exchange of information between banking supervisory authorities” and offered training to MMA staff in the UAE.<sup>26</sup> The UAE, acting through Noor Islamic Bank, had not succeeded in partnering with what would become the MIB, as the Malaysian parties had. However the UAE sought continued involvement with IB in the Maldives in an advisory and supportive capacity. The series of events and the (from a purely financial point of view) disproportionate interest in the Maldives reflects the fact that the commitment to IB, and the desire to lead or act as a pioneer in the industry are also salient considerations.

At the opening ceremony of the MIB on March 7, 2011, the Maldivian President said that the process of setting up an Islamic bank had in fact been under way at the commencement of his administration but that it had been halted due to political resistance that was bent on opposing the entry of foreign investment and foreign companies into the country. He stated that it was the local business community who favoured an open economy which, when combined with the democratic change in both regime (and regime type) became the decisive catalysts that culminated in the first appearance of IB in the Maldives.

## II. MALDIVIAN BANKING LAW AND REGULATION

### A. The Law: Its Recently Accelerated Development

The Maldives Monetary Authority Act 1981<sup>27</sup> (the “1981 Act”) accorded statutory recognition to the Maldivian Rufiyaa (“MVR”) as the national currency (s 12), which it remains; it also instituted the MMA, conferring upon it the

<sup>25</sup> N.a., “IBFIM In Pact To Set Up First Islamic Bank In Maldives,” *Miadhu*, October 22, 2010 accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2010/10/local-news/ibfim-in-pact-to-set-up-first-islamic-bank-in-maldives>.

<sup>26</sup> N.a., “UAE Central Bank signs MoU with Maldives Monetary Authority,” *Miadhu*, December 20, 2010, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.miadhu.com/2010/12/local-news/uae-central-bank-signs-mou-with-maldives-monetary-authority>.

<sup>27</sup> law no. 6/81, accessed October 3, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws/mmaact-english.pdf>.

functions of a central bank: printing, issuing and regulating currency and its value, regulating banks and banking, and advising the government (s 3 and s 4). The MMA regulates monetary and fiscal policy, liquidity, provisioning and foreign currency exposure limits,<sup>28</sup> and the capital requirements to which banks operating in the Maldives are subject. The 2010 Act provides for the prudential regulation of Islamic and any other banks by explicit reference to a repertoire of legislative techniques: authorisation (licensing), capital adequacy and large exposure requirements, foreign currency exposure limits, corporate governance, bank operations, and accounting, auditing and reporting requirements/publication and disclosure. These techniques encompass both protective and preventive measures: both prior authorisation and *ex post facto* revocations of licensing or other sanctions or penalties are expressly granted as powers held by the MMA. The 2010 Act is drafted in an open-textured style which provides the MMA ample discretion.

As companies, banks in the Maldives are subject to the provisions of the Maldives Companies Act 1996<sup>29</sup> (the “1996 Act”). That act requires private companies to have a minimum of two directors, whereas public companies require five directors (s 45); a company secretary is mandatory in either case (s 46). The court may pierce the corporate veil, and may hold directors personally liable, in case of illegality, fraud, and by other operation of law (s 74). Registration as a company in the manner stipulated by the 1996 Act is one of the conditions precedent for a domestic company to receive a banking license [s 4(b) the 2010 Act].

### B. MMA regulations

The MMA is unambiguously the regulator of core banking in the Maldives. It is the body solely vested with the power to license banks [s 3(a)]<sup>30</sup>, or to revoke those licences (which are otherwise open-ended in time) after issue. The MMA keeps the statutorily mandated public registry of banks. Mergers and acquisitions require prior approval of the MMA [s 21 ss (a) and (b)].

The MMA implements and as necessary adjusts and provides guidance and standards concerning capital requirements.<sup>31</sup> As in some other jurisdictions, in the Maldives a prohibition on banks participating in trades is in force. Banks may not participate “as an agent, partner, or co-owner in wholesale or retail trade, manufacturing, transportation, ag-

<sup>28</sup> MMA, ‘Prudential Regulation No 11-2009 Foreign Currency Exposure Limits No. 11-2009 “FX exposure limits.”’ Available on the MMA webpage, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>29</sup> law no. 10/96, accessed October 8, 2013, [http://www.trade.gov.mv/downloads/4dbe5307765de\\_Company%20Act%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.trade.gov.mv/downloads/4dbe5307765de_Company%20Act%20(English).pdf).

<sup>30</sup> Except as noted all statutory citations in this paragraph are to the 2010 Act.

<sup>31</sup> MMA “Prudential Regulation No. 01-2009 ‘Capital Adequacy’ and “No. 06-2009 ‘Limits on Inter-Bank Exposures,”” accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

riculture, fisheries, mining, building, insurance underwriting or other commercial activities” (s 26(a) the 1980 Act). The number of industries and trades comprising the Maldivian economy is -- as a result of myriad factors including its geographic character and location, its position in world trade and the global economy, as well as governmental policy decisions, and national history – constrained, with tourism and fishing foremost among the major economic and employment sectors: as the World Bank indicates “[m]arine resources play a vital role, with tourism and fishing the main drivers of growth.”<sup>32</sup> Banks in the Maldives may not invest in companies engaged in commercial activities (s 31 of the 2010 Act); the collaboration with the Bank Negara in Malaysia in this connection is evident in that in Malaysia the Banking and Financial Institutions Act 1989 also bans banks from engaging in “wholesale or retail trade, including import and export trade” (s 32).

A fit and proper persons test [s 16(c) the 2010 Act] applies to bank officials and major shareholders, as well as conservators and receivers.<sup>33</sup> The 2010 Act defines a fit and proper person as “a person who is regarded as honest and trustworthy and whose professional qualifications, background, experience, financial position, or business interests qualify that person, in the judgment of the MMA and in accordance with its regulations, to be an owner, administrator, conservator, or receiver of a bank” (s 115). The 2010 Act specifies grounds upon which an individual will automatically be deemed unfit including: bankruptcy, professional disqualification or a court or agency order judging a person as unfit (s 115 the 2010 Act.) Conviction of an imprisonable criminal offence has the same effect “unless such conviction was based on his political activities” [s 115(a) the 2010 Act]. On this point, some mention should be made of the political history of recent decades in the Maldives. The nearly three decade administration of Maumoon Gayoom, which had started with a coup d’état later perpetuated by uncompetitive elections, gave rise to a political opposition movement spearheaded by Mohammad Nasheed, who helped found the Maldives Democratic Party (“MDP”). As a result of the history of political organising and protest that preceded regime change, elected officials in the new government (even up to the level of the Presidency) had been political prisoners under the *ancien régime*,<sup>34</sup> necessitating the carve out for political prisoners. The same cast of bank personnel in an Islamic bank plus those involved in rendering judgments concerning Shari’ah compliance must satisfy the fit and proper persons test for conventional banks as outlined above.

S 29 of the 2010 Act touches upon the issue of related

<sup>32</sup> World Bank.org, “Maldives” (2013), accessed October 14, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/maldives>.

<sup>33</sup> MMA, “Prudential Regulation No. 09-2009 ‘Fit and Proper Requirements,’” accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>34</sup> As there is no contemporary political history written on the Maldives, the collective source for the summary of the recent political developments is personal observation, and reading of the Maldivian, Indian and other international press.

persons, and how they are identified for the purpose of applying loan and transaction limits. The MMA defines “related persons” as “any person who is related to an administrator by marriage, blood or kinship up to the second degree, including children of the administrator, and any other person residing in the administrator’s household who is dependent on the administrator for his support” or on any person with a qualifying holding in the bank, or any employee of the bank.<sup>35</sup> The related persons test is formulated in the same section as:

Two or more persons will be considered to be related if one person has the ability, directly or indirectly, to control the other person/s or to exercise significant influence over the financial and operating decision of the other person/s, or if both persons are subject to common control or common significant influence.<sup>36</sup>

The latter of these two tests is psychological and the former is based on familial or kinship ties or cohabitation. While the latter test might seem to obviate the former, the better view is likely that if any of these conditions are met, the persons are deemed related, and the addition of familial or kinship ties creates a presumption of relatedness without the need to enquire further into the particular facts.

The MMA has separate guidelines concerning the bank’s treatment of such persons: the granting of loans and other banking operations to a related (or to any single) borrower.<sup>37</sup> The prudential guidance on large exposure limits is, as in other jurisdictions, designed to reduce the chance of insider fraud and the transmission of funds to false or nominee borrowers. MMA guidance on corporate governance in conventional banks includes a flat ban of conflicts of interest which, while inclusive, may be insufficiently detailed to prevent and punish the intended mischief.<sup>38</sup> The 2010 Act includes measures against money laundering<sup>39</sup> and terrorism,<sup>40</sup> and pyramid schemes (s 67). The duty to preserve banking confidentiality is qualified on the basis of combating these global (and potentially local) issues, and in service of MMA prerogatives concerning the exchange of information between banks, credit bureaus and supervisory bodies in other countries (s 44). As in Malaysia, the exclusions to the bank’s duty not to disclose customer information are placed upon a

<sup>35</sup> Part I s 4 ss 12 (n 39); also MMA, unofficial English translation, “Prudential Regulation No. 03-2009 ‘Limits to Loans to Related Persons,’” accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>36</sup> MMA, Regulation No. 03-2009, above, n 35.

<sup>37</sup> MMA, “Prudential Regulations No. 04-2009 ‘Transactions with Related Persons,’” and “02-2009 ‘Single Borrower and Large Exposure Limits,’” accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>38</sup> Part III (1)c: MMA, “Prudential Regulation No. 10-2009 ‘Corporate Governance,’” accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>39</sup> Compare Ross Cranston, *Principles of Banking Law*, (London: Oxford University Press, second edition 2002), 72.

<sup>40</sup> Compare with the UN International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism 1999.

statutory footing.<sup>41</sup>

The countervailing rights of banks to redress against the MMA and their power to seek review of the MMA's decisions do not correspond to or match the rights and powers of the MMA, whilst the 2010 Act (s 66) allows for judicial review of the decisions of the MMA [including refusals to grant a banking license or revocations of a license – s 66(a)]. The scope of judicial review itself is restricted by the 2010 Act to “whether the decision of the MMA was adopted in accordance with lawful procedures, or was arbitrary or capricious, or was otherwise contrary to law” [s 66(c) ss 2].

In summary, the power of the MMA both as enumerated in the 2010 Act or by means of its exercise of residual duties and discretion demonstrates that the political decision was taken to cede substantial oversight of the banking industry to this body. The 2010 Act has the important effect of strengthening the hand of Maldivian banking authorities against the potentially overbearing or coercive influence of large international banks.

### C. The MMA and IB

Maldivian legislators gave some forethought to IB when they drafted the 2010 Act.<sup>42</sup> In a rough gloss on IB, the 2010 Act states that: “Islamic banks shall aim to provide banking services and engage in financing and investment operations on a non-interest basis in all forms and cases” (s 10). This formulation evinces an intention of holding a firm line against the pragmatic or expedient accommodation of conventional banking by Islamic banks operating in the Maldives. Windows for IB are explicitly permitted (s 11 the 2010 Act). The exclusion from participating in trade and other commercial activities does not apply expressly to IB [s 26(b) the 2010 Act]. A similar exemption is granted to IB in that such banks may expressly provide finance to commercial and industrial activities [s 31(a) the 2010 Act]. The necessity of these loopholes is a result of the ‘participation’ or ‘profit and loss sharing’ basis upon which the major transactions in IB are conducted. Islamic banks may take deposits, offer investment products, leasing (*ijarah*), debit/credit cards, safety deposit boxes, money transfers, and letter of credit facilities (s 11 the 2010 Act); they may also function as trustees, based on *wakalah* or agency agreements in Arab and Islamic law.<sup>43</sup>

The MMA's overarching regulation that supplements the 2010 Act is the Islamic Banking Regulations 2011<sup>44</sup> (the “2011 Regs”) which came into force the month before the

licensing of the MIB. These regulations broadly stipulate that “All operations of Islamic banks shall comply with all the requirements of Islamic *Shari'ah*” [s 5(b) 2011 Regs]; this subsection ignores the fact that *Shari'ah* is not monolithic, but is rather multifarious and sometimes contradictory. Such pluralism might be seen as a strength of Islamic law (in view of the sheer size and diversity of locales in which it has historically applied in whole or, more often, in part), with the existence of distinct (but largely overlapping and congruent) schools of law (*madhāhib*). Defining terms the 2011 Regs state

Islamic *Shari'ah* means, the Holy *Qur'an* and the ways preferred by the learned people within the community and followers of the *Sunnah* in relation to criminal, civil, personal and other matters found in the *Sunnah* [s 27(a)]



The *Sunnah* encompasses both the *Qur'an*, and the *hadith* – the words and actions of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad. This definition of *Shari'ah* effectively recasts the issue of mandatory compliance to **all** requirements – of a mixed or contradictory legal code. By doing so, it appears to solve one problem (the impossibility of compliance with an entire code, some provisions of which are inconsistent with others) but at the same time creates another problem. The definition at s 27(a) supposes the existence of a hierarchy of both delineations of the content of *Shari'ah*, and interpretations of that content. The concept of ‘preference’ invoked here implies a choice of ‘ways’; ‘ways’ in this context in turn implies particular rules. Therefore by exercising preference the authorities decide what rules *Shari'ah* consists in and which interpretations of those set of rules (and more broadly principles) ought to be ‘preferred’ (over others) and therefore applied. The invocation of the learned observer, as it was, and the faithful followers of the *Sunnah* thereby answers the ambiguity created by s 5(b), but creates another source of uncertainty: who are the learned and the faithful adherents of the *Sunnah*? How are they identified? MMA guidance alludes to the written material of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*),<sup>45</sup> which could pro-

<sup>41</sup> Malaysia Banking and Financial Institutions Act 1989 s 97 and s 99. Contrast English common law basis: *Tournier v National Provincial and Union Bank of England* [1924] 1 KB 461 (CA).

<sup>42</sup> s 115, definitions, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>43</sup> In what is likely a translation error, s 11(d) the 2010 Act states “Grant loan or debt based [sic] on contracts acceptable in Islamic *Shari'ah*.” This section references services “as being appropriate to be carried by Islamic banks” [11(j)].

<sup>44</sup> Link to the Act, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

<sup>45</sup> s 9(c) “Guidelines for the Approval of Islamic Products by the *Shari'ah* Council of MMA,” accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php>.

vide a further basis for resolving disputes regarding interpretation. However, determinations must also be made about which written material – for example, hadith (the exemplary actions of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad) – is relevant and should be followed. In summary, the issue of authority and interpretation reduces to an issue of corporate governance: the selection of the learned and the conditions under which they rule on *Shari'ah* compliance.

*Shari'ah* compliance necessitates a distinctive set of standards regarding the sources and determination of religious authority, undergirded by norms and standards of corporate governance. An additional explanation for the asymmetry between treatments of corporate governance in conventional and Islamic banks is the centrality of a supplementary body in IB, which the 2010 Act terms a *Shari'ah* Committee [s 10(c)] (the “Committee”). The success or failure of IB in the Maldives as elsewhere largely hinges upon the knowledge, diligence and effectiveness of the Committee. It must consist in at least three “members from among Islamic doctrinal specialists, who have previous experience in the area of Islamic financing” [s 13(a) the 2011 regs]. The previous experience required of Committee members is “a formal qualification” or the possession of “necessary knowledge, expertise or experience; in the area of Islamic jurisprudence (*usūl al-fiqh*) or Islamic transaction/commercial law (*fiqh al-mu'amalāt*)” [s 14(a) the 2011 regs]. The Islamic bank's board appoints the members of the Committee subject to MMA approval [s 13(b) the 2011 regs]. Members of the Committee must, like administrators and major shareholders of conventional banks, satisfy the same fit and proper persons test as set out in the 2010 Act.

The essential function of the Committee is the design and enforcement of new ‘products’ that comply with *Shari'ah*. Products are the base unit of analysis throughout the review process. Standard form products furnish banks of all kinds several advantages with respect to efficiency and marketing,<sup>46</sup> and offer a marginal decrease in transaction costs due to economies of scale and reduced compliance and enforcement costs. Following the example of Malaysia, the MMR has implemented a two-tier system of corporate governance, which is the channel through which new products receive review and prior approval before an individual Islamic bank can offer them to their customers or to the public. In addition to the Committee, the MMA has established a higher-level tribunal called the *Shari'ah* Council (the “Council”), which serves as a reference and advisory body to the MMA.<sup>47</sup>

The Council is responsible for validating all Islamic banking and finance operations to ensure their compatibility with principles and laws of *Shari'ah*. In addition, it advises MMA on any *Shari'ah* issues relating to Islamic financial activities or transactions of the Authority.<sup>48</sup>

[www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php](http://www.mma.gov.mv/laws.php).

<sup>46</sup> Cranston, above, n 39, 133.

<sup>47</sup> s 6, above, n 45.

<sup>48</sup> s 7, above, n 45.

Bank management is obligated to refer all *Shari'ah* issues to the Committee and is in turn bound by their determinations.<sup>49</sup> The Committee reviews and may propose new products at the level of the head office. It then submits all products that they themselves have approved in summary form to the Council [s 10(a) and 10(b)], the Secretariat of which determines whether or not the submission qualifies as a new product [s 10(e)]. ‘New’ products include those never approved by the Council and those already approved by the Council for other banks, or those products that combine or hybridise products available at the same or another bank [s 11(a) and (b)]. However, “as long as there are no material changes” to a product (relative to the products already available at the bank whose Committee is making the submission) re-submission and endorsement by the Council is not required [s 8(b)]. If the Secretariat decides that the submitted product is a new product, then that product must be forwarded to the full Council (s 10). There is no avenue of appeal regarding this determination. The Council must approve the product before the bank may offer it to (prospective) customers.<sup>50</sup>

In summary the written regulatory standards and prudential and corporate governance of IB in the Maldives is more highly developed and systematic than that governing the conventional banking sector. The 2010 Act constitutes a major shift toward a sounder, more modern and more sophisticated banking industry. Given the relative novelty of this Act and all MMA published standards and guidance it would be premature to assess here the efficacy of the framework, and there do remain lacunae in the areas of corporate governance – of conventional banks in particular.

### III. THE BANKING AND FINANCIAL SERVICES LANDSCAPE

#### A. *The Banking and Financial Services Environment prior to the MIB*

The Capital Market Development Authority (“CMDA”) of the Maldives was established in 2006. In addition to regulating the capital market, it also regulates pension funds, the Maldives Stock Exchange, the Securities Depository and credit rating agencies. The head of Islamic Finance at the CMDA observed that the banking system has not served the whole population of the country “in an even-handed way,” with rural customers (outside of Male’) poorly served, if at all by banks.<sup>51</sup> The Maldives consists in a

<sup>49</sup> [s 16 (g) 2011 Regs] The section references in the remainder of this paragraph are to the “Guidelines for Approval of Islamic Products” (above n 45).

<sup>50</sup> The “Guidelines for Approval of Islamic Products” (ibid) outlines the review process at the level of each tier, by means of flow charts and detailed procedures.

<sup>51</sup> Aishath Muneeza, in n.a., “The Maldives Edge Towards a Fully Fledged Islamic Capital Market,” *New Horizon*, January 1, 2012, accessed October 24, 2013, <http://www.newhorizonislamicbanking.com/index.cfm?section>

series of atolls, each composed of a number of islands, many of which are uninhabited and which are separated by many miles of the Indian Ocean. The population is divided among 201 populated islands, only two of which have populations over 10,000; 142 of these islands host populations under 1,000, with more than half of these being occupied by fewer than 500 people.<sup>52</sup> Compounded by the absence of swift and economical means of travel (with seaplanes the only viable option in many cases), supplying branch or even automated services across such an expanse is costly. The overwhelming concentration of wealth and economic activity takes place in Male'. The foreseeable rewards from a retail bank's perspective have not warranted investment in the development of a banking structure in other islands or atolls. The World Bank undertook the Maldives Mobile Phone Banking Project in 2008 (with a closing date of December 31, 2013) to help redress unequal banking access.<sup>53</sup>

When the MIB entered the Maldives banking scene there were six banks: the Bank of the Maldives Plc (in operation since 1982, partly owned by the government and regarded as the national bank); a branch of the State Bank of India (opened 1974); Habib Bank Limited (opened 1976); the Bank of Ceylon (opened 1981); a branch of the Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Corporation commonly known as HSBC Bank (opened 2002); and a branch of Mauritius Commercial Bank Ltd (opened 2008).<sup>54</sup> For much of its modern history, then, the Maldives was served by 2 or 4 banks, with two recent entrants from abroad since 2000, prior to the opening of the MIB.

The Maldives is the only upper middle-income level country in South Asia; it has a GNI per capita (Atlas method) of US\$5,750, whereas its closest rival in this world region is Sri Lanka at US\$2,920.<sup>55</sup> The population qualifies the Maldives as a microstate, with just fewer than 299,000 in total, with more than one third resident in Male'.<sup>56</sup> Compared to the developed world the financial resources available to Maldivians for deposit and investment is not very enticing to global banks, and these demographic and developmental factors surely help explain the limited banking infrastructure; and the monopoly Indian or Maldivian state banks held for decades. With the exception of HSBC all conventional banks in the Maldives are either domestic – or regional, with head offices in neighbouring Indian Ocean countries (India, Sri

Lanka, and Mauritius).

The chief precedent to Islamic finance or banking before the MIB was Islamic insurance (*takaful*) offered by Amanah Takaful, a company incorporated in Sri Lanka. It operated under a conventional insurance license, in lieu of any *takaful* law or regulation. The legislation, regulation and the prudential guidelines cited in section II are all of recent origin. The conventional banking law itself is under five years old, and to all appearances promulgated in contemplation of an expansion of the banking sector into IB. The gap available for the MIB to fill is a wide one, because of the constraints on the banking sector and its infrastructure historically in the Maldives, the novelty and unfamiliarity of the regulatory environment created by recent legislation and prudential governance, and as a result of the popular desire for the services that an Islamic bank can provide -- in a country where demand for many years went unmet.

### B. Maldives Islamic Bank Pvt Ltd

The MIB is a private limited company. ICDP – which is a subsidiary of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and is based in Jeddah – holds an 85% stake. The government of the Maldives holds the remaining 15%.<sup>57</sup> The Chairman of the Board of Directors of the MIB<sup>58</sup> is Khaled Mohammed Al-Aboodi, CEO and general manager of ICDP<sup>59</sup> and a Saudi national. According to the CEO (a Malaysian national) the bank entered the market with capital of MVR150 million (US\$9.7 million at current exchange rates).<sup>60</sup> The current total share capital is MVR165 million (US\$10.72 million).<sup>61</sup> The MIB states that it “shall participate actively in the development and promotion of an Islamic economic and financial system in the Maldives to run parallel with the existing conventional system as its contribution to the betterment of the economic well-being of the ummah generally.”<sup>62</sup> The ‘ummah’ refers to the community of the Muslim faithful; it can refer to a transnational community or, as is likely here, to the community in a single country. The bank positions itself as a parallel system, although it cannot be denied that the relationship implies some competition particularly since the market for banking deposits and customers is constrained. The effort to raise awareness about IB may tap into a pool of customers not previously patronizing banks, although the

=features&action=view&id=11254

<sup>52</sup> Maldives Department of National Planning, “Graph PP 26: Number of inhabited Islands by size of population, 2000 – 2006,” accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.planning.gov.mv/publications/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%202006/graphs/PP26.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Worldbank.org, accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P107981/maldives-mobile-phone-banking-project?lang=en&tab=overview>.

<sup>54</sup> Above, n 51.

<sup>55</sup> World Bank.org, above, n 32.

<sup>56</sup> As of the last census (2006), Maldives Department of National Planning accessed October 14, 2013, <http://www.planning.gov.mv/publications/Population%20and%20Housing%20Census%202006/home.htm>.

<sup>57</sup> MMR, “Financial Institutions Directory,” accessed October 14, 2013, <http://www.mma.gov.mv/fi.php?itm=6>.

<sup>58</sup> “The MIB Annual Report” (for year concluding 31 December 2011), accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.mib.com.mv/downloads>.

<sup>59</sup> ICDP webpage, accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.icdidb.com/irj/portal/anonymous?NavigationTarget=navurl://961c1346524442245db81ce090d55790>.

<sup>60</sup> JJ Robinson, “Maldives First Islamic Bank Opens for Business,” *Minivan News*, March 7, 2013, accessed October 28, 2013, <http://minivannews.com/news-in-brief/maldives-first-islamic-bank-opens-for-business-16875>.

<sup>61</sup> MIB webpage, accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.mib.com.mv/pages/view/about-us-introduction>.

<sup>62</sup> Above, n 60.



population unaccustomed to banking is more likely to reside outside of Male and thus may not be within the catchment area of the MIB.

As in other jurisdictions legislative and tax reforms are necessary for IB to compete with conventional banking. Before the opening, the MIB's CEO Harith Harun noted the existence of laws prohibiting the foreign ownership of land, which would cramp bank operations; he also noted the existence of a "disadvantageous" 15 percent tax on the transfer of property.<sup>63</sup> That tax remains in effect.<sup>64</sup>

As yet, the MIB has done little to increase the availability of banking services outside Male'. While the MIB promises E-banking, for now it only has two ATMs, located in the head office in Male'.<sup>65</sup> The MIB at present offers the core products of an Islamic bank, *murabaha*, *istisna* and *musharaka*; remittance services; and shipping, motorbike, phone, consumer goods and construction financing. In specific regard to the fishing industry, the MIB offers *murabaha* vessel financing. Considering the services the MIB provides, as well as its fee structure, it is apparent that it is working to respond to local needs. For example: motorbikes are the chief form of motorized transport in Male', and mobile telephone subscriptions number over 530,000 – with market penetration of 163%<sup>66</sup> -- so financing these implements of daily life is a valuable contribution. Facilitating the construction and purchase or lease of fishing boats also responds to the stated objectives of the bank with respect to the fishing industry. The MIB also offers home financing by means of diminishing *musharaka*.

On the finance side of Islamic banking in the Maldives, the CDMA seeks to develop an Islamic securities market, and is working to develop a legal framework to facilitate private and public issues of *Shari'ah*-compliant instruments, with a view towards emulating the Malaysian Islamic Capital Market model.<sup>67</sup> The CDMA's objectives for 2011-2014 also include the establishment of a *Shari'ah* Advisory committee to advise on an Islamic capital market, to develop and promote Islamic capital products, and to raise public awareness of Islamic finance. The training and education of personnel and compliance officers, who are responsible for generational projects, as much as any other consideration, may decide the success or failure of IB in the Maldives. Although there may be tension between the outside consultants, and questions that the Malaysian and the Emirati authorities would answer differently, the involvement of those with longer experience

in Islamic banking and finance is also a major change from the past when banking in the Maldives was the domain of a more limited range of players.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Far from creating demand for IB, and relieved of the necessity of doing so, the MIB entered a market which had been waiting eagerly for a bank that would allow a wide swath of Maldivian society to conduct their financial and banking affairs in a manner more consistent with their religious and moral beliefs. The MIB has therefore capitalized on a new market, and one where enthusiasm for IB exceeded knowledge about IB. That market is located, however, in a regulatory environment with a short history and a rapidly changing character.

The Maldives poses some difficult challenges to conventional banks, and Islamic banks encounter additional challenges due to the trading and commercial nexus, and the corporate governance difficulties attendant to *Shari'ah* compliance. There is no instant solution to the shortage of skilled bank employees and knowledgeable *Shari'ah* advisers from the Maldives. The inequality of banking access is a still greater challenge requiring further investment and ingenuity, although one which technological fixes (employing mobile phone and broadband) are beginning to meet. Lastly, the importance of the MIB as a local and domestic enterprise, and one which responds to the needs of Maldivians should not be ignored.

Whatever the shortcomings of the MIB and the legal and regulatory environment in which it is located, the commencement of IB in the Maldives and the symbolism attaching to the MIB responds to more than purely economic or commercial needs and begins to address the desires and aspirations of a people.

(All photos in this article are courtesy of the President's Office. Taken at the opening ceremony of the Maldives Islamic Bank, in Male', Maldives, on 7 May 2011.)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

<sup>64</sup> Doingbusiness.org (under auspices of the World Bank), "Paying taxes in the Maldives," accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploreconomies/maldives/paying-taxes>.

<sup>65</sup> MIB webpage, "MIB launches ATM service in Maldives," dated March 14, 2012, accessed October 28, 2013, <http://www.mib.com.mv/posts/view/mib-launches-atm-service-in-maldives>. Remainder of the paragraph draws on the MIB webpage.

<sup>66</sup> As at 2011 year's end, by Zulekha Ibrahim, "Communications Authority of the Maldives Report," accessed October 28, 2013, [http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/events/wtim2012/015INF-E\\_doc.Pdf](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/events/wtim2012/015INF-E_doc.Pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Interview of Fatimath Shafeega, CEO of CMDA (above, n 51).

# WHY SOUTH KOREA RATIFIED THE TREATY ON THE NON-PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS (NPT) IN 1975

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF NON-PROLIFERATION EFFORTS



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## ABSTRACT

On April 23, 1975, South Korea ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). With the decision to ratify the NPT, President Chung Hee Park imposed significant constraints on his clandestine plans to develop nuclear weapons. Considering Park's deep distrust of the United States and increased provocations by North Korea in the early 1970s, this decision had tremendous implications for South Korea's security. While this decision has important implications for the future of nuclear proliferation, most studies on South Korea's nuclear weapons program thus far have focused on how Park began his nuclear weapons program and do not address this issue. After the close examination of South Korea's decision to ratify the NPT, I argue that the U.S. pressure was the main constraint to South Korea's nuclear program. In addition, I assert that Park's intention with nuclear weapons program changed over time, which is why many scholars have been perplexed about whether he truly intended to develop nuclear weapons or not.

## INTRODUCTION

On April 23, 1975, South Korea ratified the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). With the decision to ratify the NPT, President Chung Hee Park imposed significant constraints on his clandestine plans to develop nuclear weapons. Considering Park's deep distrust of the United States and increased provocations by North Korea in the early 1970s, this decision had tremendous implications for South Korea's security. While some experts argue that South Korea made further attempts to develop nuclear weapons after 1975, the nation has continued to be a member of the NPT since ratification and still has not developed its own nuclear weapons. Why did Park decide to ratify the NPT in the middle of his ambitious plan to develop nuclear weapons? What implications does the case of South Korea reveal for U.S. policy makers? While these are research questions that have important implications for the future of nuclear non-proliferation, most studies on South Korea's nuclear weapons program thus far have focused on how Park began his nuclear weapons program and do not address these questions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kurt M. Campbell, Robert J. Einhorn, and Mitchell B. Reiss, ed., *The Nuclear Tipping Point : Why States Reconsider Their Nuclear*

To answer the questions outlined above, I seek to explain why South Korea decided to ratify the NPT in 1975 when its clandestine plans to develop nuclear weapons had achieved a certain degree of success. By closely examining the history of South Korea's nuclear weapons program and President Park's intentions behind the program, I argue that the U.S. pressure was the main constraint to South Korea's nuclear program. In addition, I assert that Park's intention with nuclear weapons program changed over time, which is why many scholars have been perplexed about whether he truly intended to develop nuclear weapons or not. In the early stages of South Korea's nuclear weapons program, Park sincerely hoped to develop nuclear weapons because he believed that the U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea was inevitable. As South Korea's enhanced nuclear knowledge and capabilities gave Park increased bargaining leverage against the United States, however, Park changed his position and used the program as a bargaining tool to ensure continued U.S. commitments to South Korea.

There are some challenges in assessing President Park's intentions behind his nuclear weapons program. First, South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s was under Park's authoritarian rule. Park executed constitutional reforms to allow his third term in 1969 and declared martial law in 1972, which made Park the ultimate decision maker in South Korea. This one-man system makes analyzing Park's intentions more difficult. Even Park's close associates at the time often debate over Park's intentions behind the nuclear weapons program.<sup>2</sup> Second, there are few sources covering the political decision making process in South Korea during this time. Not only was the media strictly controlled by the state, but government officials were also not free to express their opinions. Of the relevant documents that do exist, many remain classified. There is also a challenge with assessing the effectiveness of the

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*Choices*. (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004); Chul-ho Cho, "1970 nyōndae choban Pak Chōng-hūi ui dok-jajuk haekmugi gaebalgwa Han-Mi kwan'gye [Park Chung Hee's Unilateral Development of Nuclear Weapons in the Early 1970s and South Korean-US Relations]." *Peace Studies*, Vol. 9 (December 2000).; Sung Gul Hong, "The Search for Deterrence: Park's Nuclear Option." *The Park Chung Hee Era*. Byung-kook Kim and Ezra Vogel, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011); Young-Sun Ha, *Nuclear Proliferation, World Order and Korea*, (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1983); Wookhee Shin, *Sumŭng kwa chōhang ūl nōmōsō : Yi Sŭng-man kwa Pak Chōng-hūi ūi taemi chōngch'aek* [Beyond Compliance and Resistance: The Policies of Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee toward the United States], (Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: a Contemporary History*, (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1997), 73-74.

NPT using the case of South Korea. As Christopher Way and Karthika Sasikumar note, the NPT commands near-universal adherence, and its signatories have not pursued nuclear weapons with very few known exceptions.<sup>3</sup> These facts make it difficult to test whether signing the NPT makes any difference in a state's decision to pursue nuclear weapons.

While the aforementioned challenges present some difficulties, it is not impossible to examine why South Korea decided to ratify the NPT in 1975. Former South Korean government officials have shared their experiences with South Korea's nuclear weapons program, and various scholars have closely examined President Park's leadership style and decision making processes. A careful assessment of these relevant studies and documents helps enlarge the understanding of Park's decision to ratify the NPT in 1975. To achieve its intended objective, this paper proceeds as follows. First, the paper examines the history of South Korea's nuclear weapons program. This section seeks to explain why the South Korean government began the program in the early 1970s and examine steps that Seoul pursued to acquire nuclear weapons capability. Second, the paper analyzes factor(s) that may have led to South Korea's ratification of the NPT in 1975. This section identifies potential constraints to South Korea's nuclear weapons program and applies each factor to the case of South Korea. Third, the paper assesses President Park's intentions behind the nuclear weapons program. This section looks into studies on President Park's leadership style and various comments by Park's close associates to figure out whether Park truly intended to develop nuclear weapons or not. The fourth section then analyzes implications this research has on policy makers in South Korea and the United States. Finally, the last section concludes the discussion of South Korea's nuclear weapons.

## THE HISTORY OF SOUTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

### *The Beginning of South Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program (early 1970s)*

To understand the history of South Korea's nuclear weapons program, it is necessary to analyze how the program began. In this regard, South Korea-U.S. relations in the late 1960s and early 1970s played an important role as South Ko-

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Way and Karthika Sasikumar, "Leaders and Leg- gards: When and Why do Countries Sign the NPT?," Note De Recherche Working Paper 16, McGill University Research Group in International Security (2005).

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rea was heavily dependent on the United States for its own security. In the 1960s, South Korea-U.S. relations were in a period of relative closeness as President Park fully supported the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War by dispatching South Korean troops to aid in the war effort. In return for his decision, Park received increased economic and military assistance and public gratitude from the Johnson administration. These developments helped Park stabilize his domestic power base by strengthening South Korea's economy and ensuring U.S. commitment to South Korea's security. Park continued to demonstrate his confidence in South Korea-U.S. relations by increasing troop commitments to Vietnam despite North Korea's hostile reaction to Park's involvement in the Vietnam War.<sup>4</sup> South Korea-U.S. relations took a sharp turn, however, when 31 armed soldiers from North Korea attacked the Blue House and tried to assassinate Park on January 21, 1968. President Park was furious about this event and requested U.S. support for a major military retaliation against North Korea. The Johnson administration rejected this request and stated that the United States would not participate nor allow any retaliation. (At the time, not only was the United States heavily involved in the Vietnam War, but it also was engaged in secret, bilateral negotiations with North Korea over the release of the Pueblo crew who had been captured by the North Korean Navy on January 23, 1968.<sup>5</sup>) The South Korean government was shocked by the "unduly mild and selfish U.S. responses," and the feeling of betrayal towards the United States dominated the minds of policy makers in Seoul.<sup>6</sup>

The Nixon Doctrine intensified such feelings of betrayal towards the United States. On July 23, 1969, President Nixon announced a shift in U.S. foreign policy by sharing his intention to reduce U.S. commitments in Asia during an informal press conference in Guam.<sup>7</sup> Then, on November 3, 1969, President Nixon made this doctrine official through his address to the nation. In a speech known as "the great silent majority," he called on U.S. allies "to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense."<sup>8</sup> It is known that Park was initially relaxed about the Nixon Doctrine, but became very concerned when the U.S. government informed him about its troop withdrawal.<sup>9</sup> When Ambassador Porter notified President Park of the U.S. deci-

sion to withdraw troops, Park became enraged. Stating that it was too early to withdraw the U.S. troops from South Korea, President Park strongly disagreed with Washington's unilateral decision. He also insisted that the United States did not have the right to reduce troop levels from South Korea.<sup>10</sup> The South Korean government publicly denounced the U.S. decision. Accusing the United States of making "a breach of international faith," an anonymous high-ranking aide of President Park asserted that "President Johnson, former Secretary of State Rusk, a commander of United States military forces in South Korea and an American Ambassador to South Korea all promised that the United States would not pull troops out... now they are talking about pulling their forces out... and we are very disappointed."<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, the South Korean government insisted that it was not yet capable of defending itself from North Korea and needed more time to build its capacity. The aforementioned high-ranking official claimed that 1975 would be the earliest date by which the United States could safely withdraw its forces from Korea.<sup>12</sup> He emphasized that South Koreans did not wish the United States to stay in Korea forever, but argued South Korea needed more time to become stronger. He also noted that President Nixon was seeking to reduce U.S. forces from South Korea when Communist China was increasing its support to North Korea and warned Washington that the power vacuum created by the U.S. troop withdrawal could lead South Korean people to "consider an alternative commitment," suggesting a possibility of South Koreans taking a drastic precautionary measure.<sup>13</sup>

In response to the worsening relationship between South Korea and the United States, President Park began to consider alternatives to ensure the security of South Korea. In his January 1971 press conference, Park quoted from a Chinese military treatise, Sunzi's *The Art of War*, and argued that South Korea should not "assume the enemy will not come, but rather [should] rely on one's readiness to meet him."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, Park stated, South Korea should find ways to deter against the provocations from North Korea. In explaining how to achieve such deterrence, Park said that "the only method... is to develop South Korea's national power."<sup>15</sup> This is the evidence to show that the application of the Nixon Doctrine to South Korea had significantly altered Park's threat perception and that Park began thinking about measures to improve South Korea's capacity to defend its own territory and people against external threats.

<sup>4</sup> Tae Yang Kwak, "The Nixon Doctrine and the Yushin Reforms: American Foreign Policy, the Vietnam War, and the Rise of Authoritarianism in Korea, 1968-1973," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 12:1 (Spring-Summer 2003): 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>6</sup> Princton Lyman, "Korea's Involvement in Vietnam," *Orbis* 12 (Summer 1968): 570-571.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 394-395.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Nixon, *Richard Nixon: Speeches, Writings, Documents*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 181.

<sup>9</sup> "Henry Kissinger provides President Richard M. Nixon with a summary of Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) chairman General Earle Wheeler's conversation with South Korean President Park Chung Hee," *Declassified Documents Reference System (Gale Databases)*, Memo, (White House, Secret, Issue Date: Nov 25, 1969, Date Declassified: Jul 28, 2003).

<sup>10</sup> Cho, "1970 nyōndae choban Pak Chōng-hūi ui dokjajuk haekmugi gaebalgwa Han-Mi kwan'gye [Park Chung Hee's Unilateral Development of Nuclear Weapons in the Early 1970s and South Korean-US Relations]," 199.

<sup>11</sup> Philip Shabecoff, "Seoul Protests U.S. Plan for Withdrawal," *New York Times*, June 17, 1970.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Chung Hee Park, *Pak Chōng-hūi Taet'onngnyōng yōnsōl munjip [Compilation of Speeches by President Park Chung Hee]*, (Seoul: Office of the Secretary to the President, 1971), 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

President Park seemed to have found his answer in nuclear weapons program. On November 10, 1971, Park called his close aide, Won-chul Oh of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and told him that “our national security is vulnerable because of the U.S. troop withdrawal. To become secure and independent, we need to free ourselves from dependence on U.S. nuclear umbrella... Can we develop nuclear weapons?”<sup>16</sup> This is generally interpreted as an order to start developing nuclear weapons, not simply a question.<sup>17</sup> Geun-hye Park, the current president of South Korea and the daughter of Chung Hee Park, also recollected that her father launched the nuclear weapons program when the United States unilaterally withdrew its troops in 1971 despite his repeated requests to Washington to reconsider the decision.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Efforts to Acquire Nuclear Weapons and the Ratification of the NPT (early – mid 1970s)***

After making the decision to develop a nuclear weapons program, Chung Hee Park created the Agency for Defense Development (ADD) to begin research and development on nuclear weapons design and explosion technologies and made the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI) to assist the ADD with efforts to import nuclear reprocessing technologies and facilities from abroad. In May 1972, a South Korean delegation of scientists and bureaucrats led by Hyong-sop Choe made a visit to France to seek nuclear reprocessing technology.<sup>19</sup> France had significant economic interests in selling their nuclear technologies, thus the two nations considered each other to be partners. The delegation succeeded in making an agreement with France on the sale of nuclear reprocessing and fuel fabrication technology. In late 1973, the ADD submitted a secret plan to develop nuclear weapons. This plan proposed to develop a plutonium bomb of 20 kilotons, which was similar in size to the bomb dropped on Nagasaki, and estimated that \$1.5 to \$2 billion would be required to carry out this plan.<sup>20</sup> The most difficult hurdle for South Korea was the acquisition of weapons-grade fissile material. To overcome this problem, South Korea collaborated with France in the mid-1970s to produce the technical design of a reprocessing plant to manufacture fissionable plutonium.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, KAERI was negotiating a separate deal with Canada to construct a heavy-water reactor called CANDU (Canada Deuterium Uranium) reactor to acquire spent fuel required for the production of fissionable pluto-

nium.<sup>22</sup>

While South Korea was actively seeking the capability to develop nuclear weapons, India tested its nuclear weapons on May 18, 1974. This event suggested Washington increased possibilities of nuclear proliferation and greatly alarmed U.S. policy makers.<sup>23</sup> Suddenly, preventing further nuclear proliferation became a high-priority in the United States, and U.S. intelligence officials began intelligence analysis to identify countries with ambitions to develop nuclear weapons. In December 1974, U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Richard Sneider sent a highly classified intelligence assessment to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and said that South Korea had “decided to proceed with the initial phases of a nuclear weapons development program.”<sup>24</sup> This led to an interagency study in Washington, which concluded that South Korea could develop a limited nuclear weapon and delivery system within ten years.<sup>25</sup> With this conclusion, the United States began to put pressure on other nuclear supplier nations to prevent South Korea’s acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities.<sup>26</sup> For example, the United States pressed both France and Canada to get South Korea ratify the NPT.

When Canada acceded to the U.S. demand and placed the ratification of the NPT as a condition to South Korea, Park took measures to ratify the NPT to demonstrate its “peaceful intentions” with the purchase of Canadian reactor.<sup>27</sup> On March 14, 1975, Foreign Minister Dong-jo Kim attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee of the 91<sup>st</sup> National Assembly Meeting and stated that “by becoming a member of [the NPT], South Korea promises not to acquire, produce and transfer nuclear weapons.”<sup>28</sup> During this meeting, South Korean national assemblyman Young-kwan Choo asked why South Korea was ratifying the NPT when the North did not ratify the treaty and what would happen if North Korea unilaterally develops nuclear weapons.<sup>29</sup> Foreign Minister Kim answered that he did not believe North Koreans possessed the

<sup>16</sup> Joongang Ilbosa, Sillok Pak Chŏng-hŭi Sidae T’ŭkpyŏl Ch’wijaet’im [Joongang Ilbo’s Special Coverage Team], *Sillok Pak Chŏng-hŭi* [The Chronicles of Park Chung Hee], (Seoul: Joongang M&B, 1998), 260-261.

<sup>17</sup> Hong, “The Search for Deterrence: Park’s Nuclear Option,” 483.

<sup>18</sup> Yong-won Yu, “Park Geun-hye Chŭngŏn: Aboji ui chugum kwa haek kaebal [Park Geun-hye’s Testimony: Father’s Death and Nuclear Development],” *Wolgan Chosun* (April 1992), 228-229.

<sup>19</sup> Hong, “The Search for Deterrence: Park’s Nuclear Option,” 489.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 491.

<sup>21</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: a Contemporary History*, 69.

<sup>22</sup> Hong, “The Search for Deterrence: Park’s Nuclear Option,” 491.

<sup>23</sup> Immediately after India’s nuclear test, the U.S. National Security Council produced a classified assessment that re-examined U.S. non-proliferation strategy and analyzed influences on potential proliferators such as Japan and Pakistan. See “U.S. Non-proliferation Policy,” *Digital National Security Archives*, (U.S. National Security Council, Secret, Report, Excised Copy, NSSM 202 Related, c. May 23, 1974).

<sup>24</sup> “U.S. Ambassador Richard Sneider updates Secretary of State/National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger on evidence that South Korea plans to proceed with the initial phases of a nuclear weapons development program,” *Declassified Documents Reference System (Gale Databases)*, Cable, (U.S. Department of State, Secret, Issue Date: Dec 2, 1974, Date Declassified: Jun 23, 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: a Contemporary History*, 69-70.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>27</sup> Hong, “The Search for Deterrence: Park’s Nuclear Option,” 492.

<sup>28</sup> “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee at the 91<sup>st</sup> National Assembly Meeting,” *South Korea’s National Assembly Knowledge Management System*, March 14, 1975, <<http://likms.assembly.go.kr/record/index.html>> (accessed on June 5, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

ability to develop nuclear weapons at the time.<sup>30</sup> While there were some discussions about the ratification of the NPT at the Foreign Affairs Committee, this issue was not discussed extensively at the plenary session. Notes regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session of the 91<sup>st</sup> National Assembly Meeting state that opposition leaders were occupying the main chamber during the session, thus the ruling party members moved to a different venue and passed 26 agendas including the ratification of the NPT.<sup>31</sup> Korean newspapers noted that opposition leaders were occupying the main chamber to demonstrate their opposition toward the revision of the South Korean criminal law.<sup>32</sup> An unintended consequence of this protest was that the ratification of the NPT was not debated at the main session of the National Assembly meeting. In any case, it is necessary to note that Park's initial reason to ratify the NPT was to get CANDU reactors to make fissionable plutonium necessary to make nuclear bombs. In later sections, I seek to demonstrate that Park's intention behind his nuclear weapons changes dramatically after the ratification of the NPT in 1975.

### ***South Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program after the Ratification of the NPT***

After the ratification of the NPT, direct U.S. pressure to South Korea increased. The U.S. government's declassified documents suggest that there was a bureaucratic concurrence in Washington on pushing South Korea not to proceed with its plans to build plutonium reprocessing plant.<sup>33</sup> The United States threatened that purchasing reprocessing plants could "jeopardize U.S. peaceful nuclear assistance, particularly a pending Export-Import Bank loan for the KORII-II, [South Korea's] second U.S.-built power reactor."<sup>34</sup> In August 1975, Ambassador Sneider met with Hyong-sop Choe, then the Minister of Science and Technology, to convince Seoul to stop its efforts to build nuclear reprocessing plant.<sup>35</sup> When U.S. Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger met with President Park on August 25, 1975, Schlesinger pushed Park into giving up his nuclear weapons program.<sup>36</sup> In January 1976, a group of U.S. officials visited Seoul to discuss the cancellation of the French reprocessing deal and promised U.S. com-

mitment to assist South Korea's nuclear development for the peaceful use. It is known that the U.S. officials threatened to end military assistance if South Korea did not give up the program.<sup>37</sup> President Park finally declared that South Korea would not import reprocessing facilities from France. Furthermore, the plan to import NRX (National Research Experimental) reactor from Canada came to an end.

This, however, was not the end of Park's nuclear weapons program. When President Ford reconfirmed the U.S. security commitment to South Korea, Park temporarily ended his nuclear weapons program.<sup>38</sup> When President Carter actively pursued the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops in South Korea, however, Park resumed the program. KAERI's nuclear reprocessing program changed its name to the Chemical Fuel Replacement Project, and South Koreans decided to independently develop NRX reactor. Despite Seoul's efforts to conceal its nuclear weapons program, intensified surveillance by the U.S. intelligence officer made it almost impossible for South Korea to reprocess the spent fuel from light-water reactors. Robert Steller, a science attaché in the U.S. embassy in Seoul and a CIA agent with expertise in nuclear weapons, made unannounced visits to nuclear plants in South Korea to keep an eye on South Korea's reprocessing activities.<sup>39</sup> Such difficulties did not stop the Park government from pursuing nuclear weapons capabilities. Covert operations continued to seek nuclear capabilities, and Dr. Dong-hoon Kim, who was involved in the nuclear weapons program, suggested that the native NRX reactor was to be completed by 1981.<sup>40</sup> According to Park's close associates, if Park was not assassinated in 1979, South Korea could have acquired plutonium necessary for the nuclear bombs by 1985.<sup>41</sup> These potential developments, however, all ended with the assassination of President Park on October 26, 1979.

### **FACTOR(S) THAT LED TO SOUTH KOREA'S RATIFICATION OF THE NPT**

Was the U.S. pressure the sole reason for South Korea to ratify the NPT? To fully understand the history of South Korea's nuclear weapons program, it is necessary to further examine the factors that led to South Korea's decision to ratify the NPT. There are several potential factors that constrain a state's nuclear weapons program. Dong-joon Jo and Erik Gartzke suggest that technologies to manufacture nuclear weapons, acquisition of nuclear fissile materials and econom-

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> "The 4<sup>th</sup> Plenary Session at the 91<sup>st</sup> National Assembly Meeting," *South Korea's National Assembly Knowledge Management System*, March 19, 1975, <[http://likms.assembly.go.kr/kms\\_data/record/data1/91/091za0004a.PDF](http://likms.assembly.go.kr/kms_data/record/data1/91/091za0004a.PDF)> (accessed on June 5, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> "Ruling Party and Opposition Leaders Face One Another at the National Assembly's Main Chamber for the Revision of the Criminal Law," *Dong-a Ilbo*, March 19, 1975.

<sup>33</sup> "Memorandum to Secretary Kissinger from Jan M. Lodal and Dave Elliot concerning the U.S. approach to South Korea's intentions to purchase a nuclear reprocessing plant from France," *Declassified Documents Reference System (Gale Databases)*, Memo, (National Security Council, Secret, Issue Date: Jul 24, 1975, Date Declassified: Jun 13, 1995).

<sup>34</sup> Mitchell Reiss, *Without the Bomb: The Politics of Nuclear Non-proliferation*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 89.

<sup>35</sup> Joongang Ilbosa, *Sillok Pak Chŏng-hŭi* [The Chronicles of Park Chung Hee], 269.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>38</sup> Yu, "Park Geun-hye Chŭngŏn: Aboji ui chugum kwa haek kae-bal [Park Geun-hye's Testimony: Father's Death and Nuclear Development]," 228-229.

<sup>39</sup> Dr. Chul Kim, who was in charge of developing nuclear fissile material, revealed that Steller was a CIA agent and made unannounced visits to the nuclear industrial complex in Daeduk to keep an eye on South Korea's nuclear program. See Joongang Ilbosa, *Sillok Pak Chŏng-hŭi* [The Chronicles of Park Chung Hee], 271-273.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

ic capacity are factors that allow, but do not necessarily cause, a state to develop nuclear weapons.<sup>42</sup> This suggestion also means that the absence of these factors could constrain a state from developing nuclear weapons. Jo and Gartzke further assert that international counter-proliferation efforts could be a constraint.<sup>43</sup> Jacques Hymans then states that the number of institutionalized veto players presents significant constraints over a state's ambition to acquire nuclear weapons.<sup>44</sup> I apply these potential constraints to the case of South Korea to see which factor(s) played a restraining role in South Korea's nuclear weapons program.

The first factor is concerned with the technologies to develop nuclear weapons. I argue that this factor did not necessarily constrain South Korea's nuclear weapons program. In his cable to the U.S. embassy in Seoul in March 1975, Kissinger stated that "interagency study on South Korean nuclear capability... indicates that [the South Korean government] could develop limited nuclear weapons and missile capability within ten year time frame."<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, by the beginning of 1976, South Korean scientists were known to have possessed the theoretical knowledge and technical expertise to build nuclear explosives.<sup>46</sup> While the scientists in South Korea may have acquired technologies to develop nuclear weapons in the 1970s, the key hurdle for them was to acquire nuclear fissile materials, which is the second potential constraint to South Korea's nuclear weapons program. In this regard, South Korea certainly lacked indigenous capability. South Korea sought to overcome this constraint by negotiating with France to purchase a plutonium reprocessing plant and working with Canada to construct a heavy-water reactor using natural uranium. While both France and Canada were willing to sell their plants to South Korea for economic reasons, the United States fiercely opposed these plans. Due to strong U.S. pressure, the French deal was cancelled, and Canada reassured the United States that Canadians would ensure South Korea to abide by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and NPT regulations. Given that reprocessing plutonium became very difficult by the cancellation of the French deal and with the IAEA safeguards placed on the Canadian reactors, I conclude that U.S. pressure significantly constrained South Korea.

The third factor to assess is economic capacity. While South Korea in the 1970s was not considered to be a developed nation, it did not lack economic capacity necessary to

develop nuclear weapons. For example, constructing a French plutonium reprocessing plant was expected to cost \$51 million over four years. This amount of investment would not have been burdensome to South Korea.<sup>47</sup> Young-sun Ha, a South Korean scholar who assessed South Korea's economic capacity to build nuclear weapons using the UN Secretary General's 1967 report on proliferation, suggests that economic costs of a nuclear weapons program did not pose a major barrier to proliferation.<sup>48</sup> The fourth potential constraint to South Korea's nuclear program is the presence of domestic veto players. This constraint did not play a significant role in South Korea for two reasons. First, South Korea's nuclear weapons program was a top secret that only a few government officials knew. Second, as mentioned above, President Park took several measures to strengthen his authoritarian power in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result, it was systematically very difficult for government officials and intellectuals to oppose Park's decision. Moreover, between 1975 and 1977, the South Korean National Assembly demonstrated strong support for the development of a nuclear weapons program, which could be a product of the measures that strengthened Park's authoritarian rule or of South Korean politicians' genuine interest in developing nuclear weapons.<sup>49</sup> In any case, unlike Japan, South Korea faced almost no domestic veto players in its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

The fifth factor to consider is external pressure against proliferation. While the lack of nuclear fissile materials constrained South Korea to a certain degree, external pressure contributed the most to South Korea's ratification of the NPT. As mentioned above, the 1974 nuclear test by India alarmed Washington greatly. When the U.S. intelligence found out that South Korea was pursuing nuclear weapons program, Washington moved quickly to dismantle the program. In December 1974, Ambassador Sneider sent a cable to Kissinger and notified that "evidence...justifies strong presumption that the [South Korean Government] has decided to proceed with the initial phases of a nuclear weapons development program."<sup>50</sup> Sneider referred to the South Korean government's efforts to "diversify its nuclear reactor sources" and to "acquire a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant" as the evidence to support his claim.<sup>51</sup>

With this conclusion, the United States employed a two-pronged strategy to stop South Korea's nuclear weapons program. On the one hand, Washington directly pressed South Korea. In February 1975, Ambassador Sneider called

<sup>42</sup> Dong-joon Jo and Erik Gartzke, "Determinants of Nuclear Weapons Proliferation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:1 (2007): 167-194.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques E.C. Hymans, "Veto Players, Nuclear Energy, and Nonproliferation: Domestic Institutional Barriers to a Japanese Bomb," *International Security* 36:2 (Fall 2011): 154-189.

<sup>45</sup> "Cable from Secretary of State Henry Kissinger regarding South Korean plans to develop nuclear weapons and missiles," *Declassified Documents Reference System (Gale Databases)*, Cable, (U.S. Department of State, Secret, Issue Date: Mar 4, 1975, Date Declassified: May 27, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Reiss, *Without the Bomb: The Politics of Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 89.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Ha, *Nuclear Proliferation, World Order and Korea*.

<sup>49</sup> Young-sun Ha assessed the records from the South Korean National Assembly to see the debates among South Korean politicians at the time. *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> "U.S. Ambassador Richard Sneider updates Secretary of State/National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger on evidence that South Korea plans to proceed with the initial phases of a nuclear weapons development program," *Declassified Documents Reference System (Gale Databases)*, Cable, (U.S. Department of State, Secret, Issue Date: Dec 2, 1974, Date Declassified: Jun 23, 2010).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

on South Korea's acting foreign minister Sin-yong No "to urge [South Korea's] early ratification of [the] NPT."<sup>52</sup> The U.S. government also threatened to terminate all civilian nuclear energy cooperation and to end the bilateral security and political relationships.<sup>53</sup> On the other hand, the United States pressed France and Canada to set South Korea's ratification of the NPT as a condition for the sale of nuclear technology.<sup>54</sup> When France and Canada were persuaded by the United States, Park ratified the NPT in April 1975. These developments do not reveal whether Park's true intention was to develop nuclear weapons or he simply hoped to use it as a bargaining leverage, but it demonstrates that U.S. pressure was the main constraint that led to South Korea's ratification of the NPT. In regards to the constraint posed by the lack of nuclear fissile materials, South Korea certainly did not possess independent materials, but it is important to note that South Korea was very close to reaching a deal with France to acquire a plutonium reprocessing plant. Since the U.S. pressure ultimately blocked this deal, I argue that U.S. pressure was a *de facto* constraint to South Korea's nuclear weapons program that led to South Korea's ratification of the NPT in April 1975.

#### ASSESSING CHUNG HEE PARK'S INTENTIONS BEHIND THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

As mentioned above, assessing President Park's intentions with South Korea's nuclear weapons program is not an easy task. The paucity of materials which show Park's decision making process is a serious limitation. However, it is not impossible to make an informed speculation about Park's intentions. To achieve this end, I first analyze Park's leadership style and his security dilemma and then discuss the evolution of Park's intentions behind his nuclear weapons program.

##### *Chung Hee Park's Leadership Style*

Understanding Park's leadership style is an important element in assessing existing materials regarding Park's decision to pursue nuclear weapons. An extensive review of literatures on President Park's leadership suggests a widespread notion shared by scholars; Park was a pragmatic leader.<sup>55</sup> Hyung

<sup>52</sup> "Cable from Seoul to the Secretary of State on Ambassador's 2/26/75 call on Acting Foreign Minister Sing-Yong to urge early ROK ratification of the non-proliferation treaty," *Declassified Documents Reference System (Gale Databases)*, Cable, (U.S. Department of State, Confidential, Issue Date: Feb 26, 1975, Date Declassified: Mar 14, 1996).

<sup>53</sup> Campbell, Einhorn, and Reiss, ed., *The Nuclear Tipping Point*, 263.

<sup>54</sup> Hong, "The Search for Deterrence: Park's Nuclear Option," 499.

<sup>55</sup> Joongang Ilbosa, *Sillok Pak Chông-hŭi* [The Chronicles of Park Chung Hee]; Wookhee Shin, *Sumŭng kwa chŏhang ūl nŏmŏsŏ : Yi Sŭng-man kwa Pak Chông-hŭi ūi taemi chŏngch'aek* [Beyond Compliance and Resistance: The Policies of Syngman Rhee and Park Chung Hee toward the United States]; Ha-sang Hong, *Chusik Hoesa Taehan Min'guk CEO Pak Chông-hŭi* [Republic of Korea, Inc. CEO Park Chung Hee], (Seoul: Kugil Media, 2005);

Baeg Im argues that Park was strategic, not ideological.<sup>56</sup> Carter Eckert suggests that Park was pragmatic by noting that he "took advantage of the opportunities afforded by the expansion of the Japanese empire" and became a professional soldier in the Japanese army.<sup>57</sup> Im shares Eckert's view and states that such opportunistic characters demonstrate that Park was a pragmatist who sought to maximize benefits that his actions could produce.<sup>58</sup> In addition, Park was a goal-driven leader who did not vacillate when faced with opposition. Park's close associates have commented that Park always made a clear goal before making a policy and often had a great determination to execute his policy.<sup>59</sup> This leadership style was evident in Park's decision to dispatch South Korean soldiers to Vietnam in the 1960s. While this decision generated fierce opposition and criticism among South Koreans, Park was determined to dispatch troops and to enhance South Korea-U.S. relations, which led to military and economic assistance necessary for South Korea's development. Lastly, Jong-ryum Kim, Park's Chief of Staff from 1969 to 1978, stated that Park almost never made an impulsive decision.<sup>60</sup> In the interview with Ha-sang Hong, Kim suggested that President Park was very cautious in making a policy decision and considered various options before finalizing a decision.<sup>61</sup>

##### *Chung Hee Park's Security Dilemma*

As Mitchell Reiss notes, South Korea's primary concern throughout its history after the end of the Korean War was to defend itself from North Korea's potential invasion.<sup>62</sup> While South Korea had as much territory as and bigger population than North Korea, its military strength was inferior to the North. To compensate for this imbalance, South Korea relied heavily on the United States for its security. Recognizing the need to rely on the United States, Park did not hesitate to make a decision to support President Johnson's efforts in the Vietnam War and consequently succeeded in securing American military and economic support throughout the 1960s. However, this particular security structure was unstable because unlike Japan, which possessed a geostrategic impor-

Tae-gwang Kim, *Pak Chông-hŭi sŭ'ail : Pak Chông-hŭi chŏrŏm kkum kkugo, il hago, tojŏn hara* [Park Chung Hee Style: Dream, Work, Challenge like Park Chung Hee], (Seoul: Gloseum, 2011); Young-sop Ahn, ed., *Pak Chông-hŭi lidŏsip chaejomyŏng ūl wihan sido* [An Effort to Re-evaluate Park Chung Hee's Leadership], (Seoul: Sunin, 2010).

<sup>56</sup> Ahn, ed., *Pak Chông-hŭi lidŏsip chaejomyŏng ūl wihan sido* [An Effort to Re-evaluate Park Chung Hee's Leadership], 278-279.

<sup>57</sup> Carter Eckert, "Total War, Industrialization, and Social Change in Late Colonial Korea," *The Japanese Wartime Empire, 1931-1945*, Peter Duus, ed., (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 33.

<sup>58</sup> Ahn, ed. *Pak Chông-hŭi lidŏsip chaejomyŏng ūl wihan sido* [An Effort to Re-evaluate Park Chung Hee's Leadership], 279.

<sup>59</sup> Hong, *Chusik Hoesa Taehan Min'guk CEO Pak Chông-hŭi* [Republic of Korea, Inc. CEO Park Chung Hee], 217.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Reiss, *Without the Bomb: The Politics of Nuclear Nonproliferation*, 98.



tance to the U.S. maritime strategy in the Asia-Pacific, South Korea did not possess inherent importance to the United States. This became evident to the South Korean government when the United States began to withdraw its troops from South Korea in 1948 and when former Secretary of State Dean Acheson implied that the Korean Peninsula lay outside the defense perimeter of the United States in his January 1950 speech.<sup>63</sup> According to Victor Cha, “even after the Truman administration committed to defend the South after the North’s invasion in June 1950, Korea remained a remote, unknown, alien place that was strategically important to defend, but intrinsically meaningless to Americans.”<sup>64</sup>

Such inherent insignificance of South Korea to the United States did not escape the minds of South Korean leaders. Consequently, both President Syngman Rhee, the first president of South Korea, and President Chung Hee Park employed various diplomatic tools to ensure U.S. security commitments to South Korea. In this regard, the Cold War structure and the fear of the spread of communism provided strong rationale for U.S. security commitments to South Korea throughout the 1960s. This security structure, however, seemed to have dramatically changed with President Nixon’s decision to adopt the Nixon Doctrine and to enhance U.S.-China relations. When the Nixon Doctrine directly affected South Korea with U.S. unilateral withdrawal of forces in South Korea, Park felt a necessity to search for an alternative solution to ensure South Korea’s security. In this regard, while Park decided to pursue nuclear weapons in the early 1970s, it is important to note that U.S. security guarantee was a fundamentally preferred option for Park. I argue that Park was pragmatic enough to understand that not only did the South Korea-U.S. alliance ensure South Korea’s security, but it also significantly benefited South Korea’s economy, which was a critical factor in the South’s competition against the North. Therefore, I argue, Park only pursued nuclear weapons in the early 1970s because he was convinced that the United States would abandon South Korea.

### ***Chung Hee Park’s Intention in the Early 1970s***

When Nixon’s visit to China in 1972 was announced, Park employed measures to discourage Nixon’s plans to dramatically improve U.S.-China relations. Park insisted that he could impose measures to tighten his political control, which led to the declaration of a martial law in 1972, and threatened to pull South Korean troops out of Vietnam, Park’s prime bargaining leverage against the United States at the time.<sup>65</sup> When

<sup>63</sup> National Archives, “Teaching With Documents: The United States Enters the Korean Conflict,” <<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/korean-conflict>> (accessed May 25, 2013).

<sup>64</sup> Victor Cha, “Shaping Change and Cultivating Ideas in the US-ROK Alliance,” Michael Armacost and Daniel Okimoto, ed., *The Future of America’s Alliances in Northeast Asia* (Stanford: The Walter H. Shorensteign Asia-Pacific Research Center, 2004), 121.

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Historian. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. Vol. 19., (Washington:

these measures failed to stop Nixon’s decision to visit China and failed to prevent the U.S. decision to unilaterally withdraw forces from the Korean peninsula, I argue, Park decided to search for an alternative measure to ensure South Korea’s security: the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>66</sup> Why did the development of nuclear weapons become Park’s solution to South Korea’s security dilemma? Details on his decision making process is unknown, but his comments to a close associate provides an insight into his strategic thinking at the time. The aforementioned comments by Park to Won-chul Oh show that nuclear weapons development became Park’s choice because he had two objectives. On the one hand, he sought to strengthen military capabilities to deter North Korea’s potential aggressions, and nuclear bombs were the ultimate weapon that could achieve this goal. More importantly, however, Park wanted South Korea to be independent from the U.S. nuclear umbrella. These are reasons why nuclear weapons program was chosen over other potential choices, such as increasing the number of conventional weapons.

Another potential explanation for South Korea’s behavior during this time period is that Park did not really intend to develop nuclear weapons, but sought to use South Korea’s nuclear weapons program as a bargaining leverage against the United States. Considering President Park’s leadership style and South Korea’s economic and security situations at the time, however, I argue that Park had a serious intention to develop nuclear weapons in the early 1970s. While economic capacity was not necessarily a constraint to South Korea’s nuclear weapons program, it was nonetheless an expensive, difficult program that necessitated an enormous amount of money and energy. Given Park’s goal-driven and pragmatic leadership style and South Korea’s economic size at the time, it is difficult to imagine Park would allocate such a tremendous amount of resources to simply acquire a bargaining leverage against the United States. Therefore, I conclude that Park began his nuclear weapons program with a serious intention to pursue the atomic bomb.

### ***A Dramatic Change in Chung Hee Park’s Intention in 1975***

While President Park had a serious intention to develop nuclear weapons in the early 1970s, the evidence suggests that his initial intention dramatically changed in 1975. After the United States discovered South Korea’s ambition to develop nuclear weapons in 1974, U.S. officials began employing strict measures to discourage Park’s ambition. The United States pressed South Korea for early ratification of the NPT and made efforts to prevent France from exporting a plutonium reprocessing plant to South Korea. While these efforts

United States Government Printing Office, 2010), 316.

<sup>66</sup> Former Ambassador Donald Gregg also suggested that Park started the secret nuclear weapons program, because Park lost faith in the United States. See Tae-ho Kwon, “Former Ambassador Donald Gregg Discusses Park Chung-hee’s Legacy,” *The Hankyoreh*, May 13, 2011, <[http://www.pacificcenturyinst.org/download/Former\\_Ambassador\\_Donald\\_Gregg\\_Discusses\\_Park\\_Chung\\_Hee.pdf](http://www.pacificcenturyinst.org/download/Former_Ambassador_Donald_Gregg_Discusses_Park_Chung_Hee.pdf)> (accessed May 25, 2013).

eventually succeeded in discouraging Park, I argue that they had another unintended consequence; Park came to realize that nuclear weapons provided a significant bargaining leverage with a potential to ensure continued U.S. security commitments to South Korea. To a pragmatic leader who was aware of South Korea's relative weakness in Northeast Asia, continued U.S. commitment must have been a preferred solution to South Korea's security dilemma. With this change in strategic assessment, I argue, Park began to use his nuclear weapons program as a diplomatic tool to ensure U.S. security commitment to South Korea. There are two pieces of evidence to support this explanation of Park's decision making process.

First, President Park held a press interview and publicly disclosed South Korea's nuclear program in 1975. On June 12, 1975, about six weeks after South Korea's ratification of the NPT, Park held an interview with *The Washington Post's* reporters, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, and declared for the first time that "South Korea, if abandoned by the [United States], would go nuclear."<sup>67</sup> Stating that a number of South Koreans have doubts about U.S. commitment to South Korea, Park bluntly added that "if the U.S. nuclear umbrella were to be removed, [South Koreans] have to start developing our nuclear capability to save ourselves."<sup>68</sup> This public disclosure of South Korea's nuclear program is a strong evidence that implies a change in Park's intention behind nuclear weapons program. If Park wanted to complete his plan to develop nuclear weapons, it would have been much easier for Park to play hide-and-seek with the United States until South Korea succeeded in building a nuclear bomb. Park, however, chose to inform the entire world of South Korea's nuclear plans through one of his rare interviews with foreign reporters. I believe this demonstrates that Park had learned how serious Washington was about preventing South Korea's nuclear proliferation and was using his nuclear weapons program as leverage to ensure U.S. security commitment on the Korean peninsula. In this regard, *The Washington Post* was a perfect platform to reach out to U.S. citizens and Washington's international partners that would press U.S. policy makers to prevent South Korea's nuclear proliferation by re-confirming U.S. security commitment to the Korean peninsula. This change in Park's intention also seems consistent with his pragmatic leadership style.

Second, a significant change in Park's rhetoric illustrates how Park's solution to South Korea's security dilemma transformed. In January 1971, President Park held a press conference with South Korean reporters to share his concerns with the Nixon Doctrine and said that:

Several unusual events are occurring around the Korean peninsula. Belligerent Chinese are gaining a higher status in the international community, and the United States is seeking to pull out from Asia through the Nixon Doctrine and disengagement policy. There is no clear alternative that

can fill a power vacuum created by these policies... This will inevitably create an imbalance of power. Peace can only be achieved when relative powers are balanced with one another. When this balance is destroyed, maintaining peace will be very difficult.<sup>69</sup>

Such rhetoric dramatically changed in 1975. On June 28, 1975, Park held another interview with *The Washington Post* and said that he did not expect U.S. nuclear umbrella to withdraw from the Korean peninsula.<sup>70</sup> While the 1971 press conference and the interview with *The Washington Post* targeted different audiences, Park's change in rhetoric is noteworthy. This change, I believe, was a product of Park's increased confidence in securing U.S. security commitment to South Korea. Furthermore, in his meeting with Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs Allan MacEachen in June 1975, Park stated that South Korea had "no intention, no plan, and would not develop a nuclear weapons capability."<sup>71</sup> He further stated that "it would not be helpful to [South Korea] to develop [nuclear weapons] because both China and Russia have nuclear weapons capability and under these circumstances it would be counterproductive [for South Korea to develop nuclear weapons]."<sup>72</sup> Such comments in a diplomatic scene, where there is a great potential for leakage, illustrate Park's increased confidence in his ability to ensure U.S. security commitments to South Korea and provide evidence for a change in Park's strategic calculations. For these reasons, I argue that Park's initial plan to develop nuclear weapons in the early 1970s changed in 1975 to use South Korea's nuclear weapons program as a bargaining leverage to ensure U.S. security commitment to South Korea.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF NON-PROLIFERATION EFFORTS

The case of South Korea reinforces the notion that the U.S. pressure is sometimes a very effective way to deter nuclear proliferation. It is especially the case when the United States is essential for the survival of a nation seeking to build nuclear weapons. South Koreans were dependent on the United States for their security and economic well-being, thus the U.S. strategy proved to be effective in this case. At the same time, the evolution of President Chung Hee Park's nuclear ambitions and the changes in his intentions behind the nuclear weapons program reveal the need to study various cases in dealing with nuclear non-proliferation issue. Hymans argues that the existence of various veto players was the main disincentive to Japan's nuclear ambitions, but South Korea had different constraints. This study illustrates that the motivations for developing nuclear weapons and potential constraints to the program could vary significantly. Such basic

<sup>67</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Korea: Park's Inflexibility..." *Washington Post*, June 12, 1975.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Park, *Pak Chŏng-hŭi Taet'ongnyŏng yŏnsŏl munjip* [Compilation of Speeches by President Park Chung Hee], 50.

<sup>70</sup> Don Oberdorfer, "Canada Told That S. Korea Won't Seek Nuclear Arms," *Washington Post*, June 28, 1975.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

assumption must be applied to future studies dealing with nuclear actors such as North Korea and Iran. It is extremely dangerous to make a hasty generalization based on a few cases and make strategies based on that generalization. In this regard, this paper has successfully demonstrated how South Korea's case is quite complex due to its unique security dilemma, President Park's leadership style, and Seoul's dependence on the United States. Future studies on non-proliferation should also seek to undergo such case studies in order to make effective non-proliferation strategy.

## CONCLUSION

The case of South Korea demonstrates that a country's decision to ratify the NPT can involve various factors. While the U.S. pressure was the single most important factor in deterring South Korea's nuclear ambition, President Chung Hee Park managed to use it in his favor. Given South Korea's security dilemma, continued U.S. presence was arguably much more favorable than the development of nuclear weapons. In addition, given South Korea's export-driven economy at the time, the NPT helped Seoul achieve a certain degree of status in the international system. Furthermore, the evolution of President Park's ambitions behind the nuclear weapons program reveals the importance of case studies in future studies of nuclear non-proliferation. While various veto players were the main disincentive to Japan's nuclear ambitions, I have shown that the U.S. pressure was the main constraint for South Korea's nuclear weapons program. In this regard, this study suggests that different non-proliferation strategies should be employed to different players and that finding appropriate strategy will necessitate close examination of a state's intention behind the nuclear weapons program. It is true that these efforts are often hindered by the lack of adequate information, but supporters of nuclear non-proliferation regimes should strive to make an assessment that is as accurate as possible in order to enhance the effectiveness of their non-proliferation efforts.

# INDIA'S NOT-SO-SPLENDID ISOLATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

THE IMPACT OF STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN THE EMERGING ASIAN REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE



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## ABSTRACT

This article examines how India's insistence on a policy of strategic autonomy, in conjunction with its inability to increase bilateral trade, has damaged India's position in Central Asia, region critical for India's energy, trade and security needs. The article analyzes the causes of India's strategic setback in Tajikistan in December 2010 and then suggests that New Delhi's subsequent *Connect Central Asia Policy* has encountered similar economic and security setbacks in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan because of India's continued policy of strategic autonomy. The article then considers how India may develop a strategic partnership Uzbekistan and avoid the same isolation it now experiences in the rest of Central Asia. With India facing roughly analogous challenges in Southeast Asia and the rest of the Asia-Pacific, the article considers the consequences for India's position in the emerging regional architecture if India persists with the same policy orientation it has pursued in Central Asia.

## INTRODUCTION

While India is expected to overtake China as the world's most populous country by 2028, questions remain about India's capacity to assume a leading role in shaping the new regional architecture emerging in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>1</sup> The recent setbacks India suffered in its economic and security relations with the Central Asian republics seem to be symptomatic of India's general inability to conduct long-term strategic planning as well as of its reluctance to engage as a counterweight to China.<sup>2</sup> New Delhi's poor maneuvering over the past several years has left India isolated in Central Asia, a region critical for India's energy, trade and security needs. In September 2013, New Delhi's *Connect Central Asia Policy* experienced the latest in a series of setbacks when India lost ConocoPhillips' 8.4% stake in Kazakhstan's massive Kashagan oil field to the Chinese National Petroleum Company. Officially announced by New

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Population Prospects: The 2012 Revision", 13 June 2013, accessed on 21 October 2013, <http://esa.un.org/wpp/>.

<sup>2</sup> Manjari Chatterjee Miller, "India's Feeble Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 92.3 (2013): 14-19, *Political Science Complete*, accessed 28 July 2013, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=87000327&site=ehost-live>.

Delhi in June 2012, India's *Connect Central Asia Policy* was the formalization of New Delhi's revamped efforts to offset the strategic setback India first suffered in December 2010 with its loss of Tajikistan's Ayni airbase to Russia. Although India needs to counterbalance Chinese and especially Pakistani influence in the region, New Delhi has sought to maintain its strategic autonomy from both Moscow and Washington. This policy has caused Russia, in addition to China, to marginalize India in the region. Without a robust strategic partnership with any of the major powers, coupled with a delivery deficit in deepening its economic cooperation with the Central Asian republics themselves, New Delhi finds itself sidelined in the region in the run-up to NATO's 2014 Afghanistan withdrawal. This article examines how India's insistence on a policy of strategic autonomy, in conjunction with its inability to increase bilateral trade, has damaged India's position in Central Asia. In so doing, this article hopes to shed light on possible outcomes for India's involvement in Southeast Asia and the larger Asia-Pacific region if New Delhi persists with its present policy.

#### INDIA'S PRECARIOUS FOREIGN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

India participates as an observer in Central Asia's geopolitical and economic association, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).<sup>3</sup> This status provides India no diplomatic leverage. Of the SCO's two major powers, China and Russia, India maintains a geostrategic rivalry with the former and is looked upon with increasing suspicion by the latter.

India has a territorial dispute with China, and faces 400,000 Chinese troops on its border, as well as additional threats from China's build-up of military infrastructure in Tibet and the Chinese-administered Gwadar port on Pakistan's Indian Ocean coast. India's position is weakened by Beijing's ascendant role in the SCO due to China's deepening bilateral economic relations with each of the Central Asian republics, Beijing is poised to assume a dominant role in the SCO. Worse, India cannot rely on Russia as a counterbalance to China's Central Asian advances since Russia looks askance on its erstwhile Indian ally for developing strategic ties with the United States, embodied in a 2008 agreement on civil nuclear cooperation. Washington, which concluded the agreement with New Delhi in defiance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, sought to strengthen the rising India as a democratic counterweight to China in the Asia-Pacific region. However, India has balked at fulfilling this role. During his May 2012 visit to South Korea to participate in the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, Indian Prime

<sup>3</sup> The other nations with SCO observer status are Afghanistan, Iran, Mongolia, and Pakistan. Belarus, Turkey, and Sri Lanka are dialogue partners. Because of its policy of neutrality, the Central Asian republic of Turkmenistan does not officially belong to the SCO but its president participates in the organization's summit meetings as a 'guest'.

Minister Manmohan Singh expressed his doubts to the Korean press about the effectiveness of any collective security strategy to contain China and declared his intention for India to maintain its equidistance from Washington and Beijing.<sup>4</sup>

Indian foreign policy discourse has fallen back on its moribund policy of non-alignment. As part of the Nehruvian legacy reconstructed and perpetuated by India's Foreign Service and political elite, India's foreign policy has suffered from a moralizing, inflated sense of its own self-importance. In 2010, when India's External Affairs Minister attempted to point out the deleterious effects of India's foreign policy discourse to the conduct of its foreign relations, he was met with a firestorm of controversy.<sup>5</sup> India's discourse about its own importance to Central Asia far outstrips the scale of its bilateral relationships in the region.<sup>6</sup> India's efforts to increase its bilateral economic cooperation in Central Asia, particularly in critical sectors such as energy development and production, have been hampered by its insistence on strategic autonomy. Because New Delhi lacks a strong strategic partnership with the United States, the larger Central Asian republics can accede to Chinese pressure to limit the scope of their bilateral economic cooperation with India without damaging their developing defense ties to the United States and NATO. Conversely, because of India's lack of strong bilateral economic relations with the Central Asian republics, the smaller Central Asian republics can accede to Russian pressure to limit the scope of their bilateral defense cooperation with India without risking the loss of a major trading partner. The collapse of India's position in Central Asia began in this manner with the small Central Asian republic of Tajikistan.

#### INDIA'S SECURITY SETBACK IN TAJIKISTAN AND ONSET OF CONNECT CENTRAL ASIA POLICY

Indian policy makers first looked to Tajikistan to establish a foreign military presence. As India's closest Central Asian neighbor, the distance between Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe and New Delhi is approximately the same distance between New Delhi and Mumbai. More significantly, Tajikistan's south-

<sup>4</sup> The Times of India, "We want friendly ties with both US and China: PM," 25 March 2012, accessed on 9 October 2013, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-25/india/31236165\\_1\\_open-economy-today-sections-and-stakeholders-nuclear-security-summit](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-03-25/india/31236165_1_open-economy-today-sections-and-stakeholders-nuclear-security-summit).

<sup>5</sup> Spowmya Aji, "Tharoor commits ultimate Cong crime," *India Today*, 9 January 2010, accessed on 21 October 2013, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/Tharoor+commits+ultimate+Cong+crime/1/78378.html>; *The Hindu*, "Tharoor sets record straight on Nehru controversy," 10 January 2010, accessed on 21 October 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tharoor-sets-record-straight-on-nehru-controversy/article78675.ece>

<sup>6</sup> Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien Peyrouse, *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011).

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eastern border is less than 30 kilometers from Pakistani-administered Kashmir across Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor. India's only foreign airbase is located in Tajikistan, at Farkhor on the Tajik–Afghan border. India started operating the Farkhor base in May 2002, with Russian acquiescence, to support Indian relief and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Yet India's lack of broader operations at the Farkhor base renders it strategically insignificant. Without Indian combat squadrons at Farkhor, the airbase does not provide India with an alternative attack route against Pakistan or the ability to affect militant operations in Kashmir. The base's main function is to transport supplies for India's humanitarian mission in Afghanistan. India airlifts resources to Tajikistan's Ayni airforce base located about 15 kilometers from Dushanbe, and then transports material approximately 150 kilometers to Farkhor, where it is then trucked to Afghanistan. Thus, the Ayni airbase had been the key to advancing India's strategic footprint in Tajikistan, and its loss due to Moscow's pressure on Dushanbe constituted a grave strategic setback.

The Ayni airbase, originally used by the Soviets during the 1980s, had been abandoned since their 1988–89 withdrawal from Afghanistan. India contributed technical assistance and US\$70 million to renovate the airbase between 2003 and 2010. India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO), directed by India's Army Corps of Engineers, extended the main runway, built a control tower, and constructed three hangars capable of housing squadrons of MiG-29 bombers used by the Indian Air Force. In September 2010, a Tajik Defense Ministry spokesman confirmed to the press that the Ayni airbase had state-of-the-art navigational and defense technology and a runway extended to 3,200 meters to accommodate all types of aircraft.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, there are no reports of Indian combat aircraft having ever been stationed at the base. Tajikistan's small air force does not need it. Moreover, Russia's 201st Motor Rifle Division (MRD), Moscow's largest military contingent abroad, is stationed in Dushanbe and two other Tajik cities. Moscow has been intent on preventing other foreign nations from using the base. Although the BRO began the Ayni renovations in 2004, New Delhi never developed any meaningful leverage with the Tajik government. Dushanbe may have simply used New Delhi to force a better deal from Moscow for Russian use of Ayni and the bases housing the 201st MRD. In December 2010, Tajikistan announced that Russia was the only country under consideration to use the Ayni airbase.<sup>8</sup> The two countries then began negotiating the terms of their future military cooperation and, most likely, of Russian support for Tajik president Emomali Rahmon's November 2013 re-election bid. India was effectively closed out of Ayni.

The decision also stemmed from the powerful economic influence that Moscow exerts on Dushanbe through the per-

sonal remittances of Tajik workers in Russia. According to the Central Bank of Russia, personal remittances from Tajik workers amounted to US\$2.19 billion in 2010.<sup>9</sup> In the year India lost the use of the Ayni airbase to Russia, personal remittances from Russia accounted for 39% of Tajikistan's GDP.<sup>10</sup> By 2012, the year New Delhi announced its *Connect Central Asia Policy*, remittances from Russia accounted for 43% of Tajikistan's GDP. Meanwhile, Indian bilateral trade with Tajikistan does not act as a sufficient economic counterweight. From 2010–2011, India-Tajikistan bilateral trade amounted to only US\$41.3 million. From 2011–2012, the period prior to India's inauguration of its India-Central Asia Dialogue, the amount of India's trade with Tajikistan dropped by 31% to US\$28.37 million.<sup>11</sup> China's trade with Tajikistan also dwarfed that of India's. The volume of Chinese-Tajik bilateral trade amounted to US\$660 million, a little over half of the US\$1.04 billion bilateral trade between Russia and Tajikistan. During New Delhi's decade-long effort to develop a security relationship with Dushanbe, India did not concurrently develop a sufficiently significant trade partnership with Tajikistan. During the period, Chinese-Tajik bilateral trade has emerged as important economic counterweight to Russia. Since India was not a critical trading partner for Tajikistan, and New Delhi could not offer Dushanbe an avenue for wider security cooperation with a U.S.-led alliance because of New Delhi's strategic autonomy from Washington, there was little cost to Tajikistan for reducing its strategic relationship with India.

In the wake of India's setback in Tajikistan, India convened the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek in June 2012. In his keynote address, India's Minister of External Affairs unveiled New Delhi's *Connect Central Asia Policy*. Among its declared objectives for “deep engagement” with the Central Asian republics, New Delhi enumerated the need for strengthened strategic and security cooperation and long-term partnerships in energy development. One year after the inaugural round of New Delhi's India-Central Asia Dialogue, Moscow began sending the first installments of a new US\$1 billion military aid package to Bishkek, effectively closing off Kyrgyzstan to India as it did Tajikistan. As in Tajikistan, India's economic relations did not serve as a consideration for Bishkek. From 2011–2012, India-Kyrgyzstan bilateral trade amounted to only US\$30.05 million. Despite the Bishkek round of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, Indian-Kyrgyz bilateral trade rose to only US\$37.12 million in 2012–2013.<sup>12</sup> In sharp contrast, Chinese-Kyrgyz bilateral trade

<sup>9</sup> In 2011, remittances were US\$2.71 billion, and in 2012, were US\$3.02 billion. These figures are likely to be higher due to underreporting. Central Bank of Russia, accessed 19 September 2013, [http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=CrossBorder/Personal%20Remittances\\_CIS\\_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=ITM\\_43505](http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=CrossBorder/Personal%20Remittances_CIS_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=ITM_43505).

<sup>10</sup> In 2010, Tajikistan's GDP was US\$5.64 billion.

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, “India-Tajikistan Relations Brief,” January 2013, accessed 19 September 2013, [http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/tajikistan\\_bilateral\\_brief.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/tajikistan_bilateral_brief.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Ministry of External Affairs, “India-Kyrgyzstan Relations,” July 2013, accessed 30 September 2013, [http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Kyrgyzstan\\_Relations\\_EN.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Kyrgyzstan_Relations_EN.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> “Tajik Military Air Base Completed With Indian Help,” Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 9 September 2010, accessed 14 August 2013, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik\\_Military\\_Air\\_Base\\_Completed\\_With\\_Indian\\_Help/2152731.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Military_Air_Base_Completed_With_Indian_Help/2152731.html).

<sup>8</sup> Ramachandran, Sudha. “India air base grounded in Tajikistan,” *Asia Times*, 1 December 2010, accessed 14 August 2013, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/LL01Df02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LL01Df02.html).

in 2011 amounted to US\$4.98 billion.<sup>13</sup> Chinese-Kyrgyz bilateral trade further grew to US\$5.97 billion in 2012, accounting for half of Kyrgyzstan's total trade.<sup>14</sup> Although Russian-Kyrgyz bilateral trade accounts for 17% percent of Kyrgyz trade as compared to China's 50%, Moscow also exerts considerable economic influence on Bishkek through the personal remittances of Kyrgyz workers in Russia.<sup>15</sup> Although Kyrgyz dependence on remittances from Russia is less than that of Tajikistan, remittances account for a large portion of the Kyrgyz economy. Remittances accounted for 23% of Kyrgyzstan's 2011 GDP, and rose to 25% of its 2012 GDP.<sup>16</sup>

India is not even under consideration for a major role in the operation of the 'Transit Center' at the Manas airport outside of Bishkek after the July 2014 expiration of the U.S. lease on the airbase.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. military installation at Manas has been used to support ISAF forces in Afghanistan. Turkey, which like India has complicated relationships with Russia and China, aspires a major role in the operation of the future civilian transit center at Manas. In April 2011, Turkey cancelled US\$51 million of Kyrgyz debt and gave Bishkek US\$10 million in grant assistance.<sup>18</sup> Not to be outdone by Turkey, Russia cancelled US\$500 million of Kyrgyz debt in May 2013.<sup>19</sup> Russia had already promised Bishkek US\$2 billion for terminating the U.S. lease on Manas to compensate for the loss of the annual US\$60 million in rent Bishkek received from Washington. Having lost Tajikistan, which India regarded as its 'gateway' to Central Asia, New Delhi has no chance for a significant presence in Kyrgyzstan in the foreseeable future.

## STRATEGIC AUTONOMY AND INDIAN ECONOMIC SETBACKS IN KAZAKHSTAN AND TURKMENISTAN

India has been sidelined by China in the two larger, energy-rich nations of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan through Beijing's assertive energy policy. India's loss of ConocoPhillips' 8.4% stake in Kazakhstan's Kashagan oil field to the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) in September 2013 was an embarrassing blow to New Delhi's *Connect Central Asia Policy*. In November 2012, ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), the international arm of India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, concluded an agreement to purchase ConocoPhillips' 8.4% interest in Kashagan, pending Kazakhstan's approval. Considered the largest oil discovery in the last thirty years, the US\$5 billion stake in Kashagan was perceived by New Delhi as a significant foothold in Kazakhstan's oil industry. The second round of New Delhi's India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in Almaty in June 2013. In addition to being held in Kazakhstan's commercial center, the second round of dialogue featured a special session focused on the bilateral relations between India and Kazakhstan. About one month prior to this second round of dialogue, the Indian government announced it had received positive indications from Kazakhstan that it would approve the sale to OVL.<sup>20</sup>

However, one month after the Almaty round, ConocoPhillips was notified that the Kazakhstan Ministry of Oil and Gas would invoke Kazakhstan's Subsoil Law to pre-empt the proposed sale to OVL.<sup>21</sup> Instead, the state-owned Kazakh energy firm KazMunaiGas bought ConocoPhillips' 8.4% stake in the Kashagan field and then sold an 8.33% stake in Kashagan to China's CNPC for the an equivalent US\$5 billion. The head of KazMunaiGas informed the press that CNPC also promised up to US\$3 billion to cover half the cost of Kazakhstan's financing of Kashagan's second development phase.<sup>22</sup> In a public display of China's diplomatic triumph, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, in early September to sign the acquisition agreement with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, one of 22 agreements concluded between China and Kazakhstan worth US\$30 billion.

Kazakhstan's economic boom is the result of its relations with China. China-Kazakhstan bilateral trade accounted for 23% of Kazakhstan's total trade in 2012, whereas Indian-Kazakhstan bilateral trade accounted for merely 0.4%.<sup>23</sup> Although

<sup>13</sup> *Universal Newswires*, "Trade turnover between Kyrgyzstan, China increases 18.5%," 1 August 2012, accessed 30 September 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=12527>.

<sup>14</sup> European Community, "Kyrgyz Republic: EU Bilateral Traded and Trade with the World," 5 July 2013, accessed 30 September 2013, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc\\_113409.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113409.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> *The Economist*, "Remittance Man: Russia attempts to draw Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan back into its orbit," 7 September 2013, accessed 30 September 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21584999-russia-attempts-draw-tajikistan-and-kyrgyzstan-back-its-orbit-remittance-man>.

<sup>16</sup> *Trading Economics*, "Kyrgyzstan GDP figures," accessed 30 September 2013, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/kyrgyzstan/gdp>; In 2011 and 2012, personal remittances from Russia were US\$1.4 billion and US\$1.6 billion, respectively, though these figures are likely due to underreporting by Central Bank of Russia, accessed 30 September 2013, [http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=CrossBorder/Personal%20Remittances\\_CIS\\_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=ITM\\_43505](http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=CrossBorder/Personal%20Remittances_CIS_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=ITM_43505).

<sup>17</sup> Gordon Lubold and Yochi Dreazen, "Cashing Out: U.S. Military Quits Critical Air Base After \$100 Million in Payoffs," *Foreign Policy*, 18 October 2013, accessed 20 October 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Universal Newswires, "Kyrgyzstan, Turkey agree to eradicate Kyrgyz debt and work on visa regime" 27 April 2013, accessed 6 October 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/tourism/viewstory.aspx?id=3925>

<sup>19</sup> Erica Marat, "Kyrgyzstan's Decision To Renounce Manas Transit Center Favors Russia," 26 June 2013, accessed 4 October 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12764-kyrgyzstans-decision-to-renounce-manas-transit-center-favors-russia.html>.

<sup>20</sup> "Kazakhstan positive to India's hydrocarbons quest," *The Hindu*, 28 April 2013, accessed 10 September 10, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kazakhstan-positive-to-indias-hydrocarbons-quest/article4661271.ece>.

<sup>21</sup> "ConocoPhillips Notified of Republic of Kazakhstan's Intent to Pre-empt ConocoPhillips' Sale of Kashagan Interest," ConocoPhillips News Release, 2 July 2, 2013, accessed 10 September 2013, <http://www.piersystem.com/go/doc/5451/1825027/>.

<sup>22</sup> "UPDATE 4-China buys into giant Kazakh oilfield for \$5 bln," Reuters, 7 September 2013, accessed 7 September 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/07/oil-kashagan-china-idUSL5N0H302E20130907>.

<sup>23</sup> According to the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, the bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan in 2012 totaled US\$525.15 million, accessed 22 October 2011, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Port>

a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), energy-rich and economically prospering Kazakhstan is seeking to counterbalance its security relations with Russia by developing relations with the U.S. and NATO. India's strategic distance from Washington thus does not serve New Delhi in its relations with Kazakhstan. In August 2013, NATO conducted its Steppe Eagle military exercises in Kazakhstan, an annual exercise run by NATO's Partnership for Peace program since 2006 when Kazakhstan signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO. Kazakhstan's NATO trained and equipped airmobile forces brigade KAZBRIG (formerly KAZBAT), as well as Kazakh army and airforce units, participated in Steppe Eagle 2013, which involved the largest number of participating countries to date.<sup>24</sup> India was not invited to participate or even be present at the exercises as an observer. By not forming a strategic partnership with the U.S. as Washington seeks to implement its New Silk Road initiative, India finds itself left out in Kazakhstan.

India was similarly outmaneuvered by China's energy and trade diplomacy in Turkmenistan. India has placed great hopes on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, for which construction has still not yet begun. The stalled TAPI pipeline is intended to transport gas from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian town of Fazilka on the Indo-Pakistani border. During the same Central Asian tour in which President Xi signed the Kashagan acquisition agreement in Astana, he also inaugurated the operations of Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas field, the world's second largest gas field. A highly symbolic accomplishment for China, the Galkynysh field was developed by a CNPC-led consortium without the participation of a major Western energy company. Although the TAPI pipeline was originally intended to transport gas from Turkmenistan's Dauletabad field, the Galkynysh field, has emerged as a likely source for the pipeline. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the Dauletabad field's production forecasts were lower than expected. Predicting production to decline, the ADB reported that analysts doubted whether the Dauletabad field could meet the then proposed target of transporting 30 billion cubic meters of gas per year to South Asia.<sup>25</sup> The TAPI pipeline would most likely have to transport gas from the Galkynysh field providing Beijing with significant influence over the future of the TAPI pipeline project.<sup>26</sup> China's state-owned CNPC will be the sole service

contractor for the second development phase at Galkynysh. Perhaps tellingly, Turkmenistan sent no delegation of experts to New Delhi's June 2013 India-Central Asia Dialogue. Turkmenistan, which is not a member of the Russian-led CSTO, seeks to use its energy wealth to maintain its independence from Russia and prevent itself from being dominated by a Russo-Iranian bloc. Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov changed course from his predecessor's strict neutrality and has been developing security relations with the U.S., NATO, and Israel. India's economic and energy relations with Turkmenistan are inextricably bound to Ashgabat's primary concern to protect its strategic assets in the Caspian from Moscow and Tehran. New Delhi's lack of strong defense cooperation with Washington diminishes India's own strategic value for Ashgabat. Turkmenistan can deepen its economic cooperation with China at India's expense without incurring any significant cost to its security relationships with the U. S. and its allies.

#### UZBEKISTAN AND POST-2014 REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

India's best remaining option to gain a significant security presence in Central Asia is to develop a strategic partnership with Uzbekistan as Tashkent moves to deepen its ties with Washington. In June 2012, Uzbekistan's President Karimov withdrew his country's membership in the CSTO and has been pushing for closer ties with NATO. As Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbor to the north, Uzbekistan will play a crucial role in a post-ISAF Afghanistan. Like India, Uzbekistan is keen to prevent the resurgence of Pakistani-sponsored, Islamist proxies in Afghanistan. Moreover, India's grand North-South Transit Corridor depends on Uzbekistan for its northern outlet from Afghanistan to Central Asia. Despite sharing vital interests with Uzbekistan, India's insistence on strategic autonomy from Washington will likely render New Delhi an unattractive strategic partner for Tashkent.

The most populous country in Central Asia, energy-rich Uzbekistan is not only an essential player in the future security and prosperity of Central Asia, but also in India's own efforts to achieve energy security for its growing population. New Delhi has set a goal to generate 25% of the nation's electricity from nuclear energy by 2050.<sup>27</sup> India currently imports more than half its yearly uranium needs. As India's interim goal for 2020 is a five-fold increase in the amount of electricity generated from nuclear power, India's demand for uranium will increase commensurately.<sup>28</sup> Uranium exports from Uzbekistan constitute a key component of India's civil nuclear policy. Uzbekistan is the world's seventh largest producer of Uranium and geographically

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tal/ForeignRelation/India-Kazakhstan\_Relations.pdf; Kazakhstan's total volume of trade was US\$117.7 billion, accessed 22 October 2013, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/sep-tember/tradoc\\_113406.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/sep-tember/tradoc_113406.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Farida Ahmetov, "NATO experts praised Kazakhstan's military servants," *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 4 September 2013, accessed 6 October 2013. <http://kazpravda.kz/eng/?p=1081%23more-1081>.

<sup>25</sup> Asian Development Bank, "South Asian Gas Demand Strong Enough for Two Pipeline Schemes" 22 September 2005, accessed 8 October 2013 <http://www.adb.org/news/south-asian-gas-demand-strong-enough-two-pipeline-schemes>.

<sup>26</sup> China's clout is also enhanced by the fact that it has recently become Turkmenistan's largest importer of gas, superseding even Russia.

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<sup>27</sup> World Nuclear Association, "Nuclear Power in India," accessed 23 October 2013, <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Country-Profiles/Countries-G-N/India/#.Ume5ilP6XyA>.

<sup>28</sup> In 2011, Indian nuclear power generated 3,700 MegaWatts electrical (MWe), accounting for approximately 3% of India's electricity generation. India plans to increase the amount to 20,000 MWe by 2020. Rupakjyoti Borah, "India Should Look to Australia to Satisfy its Growing Demand for Uranium," *OilPrice.com*, 10 May 2011, accessed 23 October 2013



closer to India than any of the other major producers.<sup>29</sup> China has already cornered the market on uranium exports from Kazakhstan, the world's leading producer of uranium. India cannot afford to lose a contract to China for imports of Uzbekistani uranium as it did with the loss of its stake in Kazakhstan's Kashagan oilfield.

At the beginning of October 2013, a delegation from India's Department of Atomic Energy held high-level talks in Uzbekistan to secure a contract for the export of uranium to India starting in 2014.<sup>30</sup> The delegation's visit followed the Indian External Affairs Minister's September 2013 talks with Uzbekistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs in which uranium exports to India were discussed. Since August 2009, however, the Uranium Resources Company of the China General Nuclear Power Corporation (CGNPC) formed a joint venture with Uzbekistan's State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources (Goskomgeol) to explore for uranium at the Boztau uranium field in Uzbekistan's mineral rich Navoi province.<sup>31</sup> Named UZ-China Uran LLC, the joint venture is Uzbekistan's sole operator with direct foreign participation. UZ-China Uran has doubled its initial capitalization and will begin mining operations at the Boztau field in 2014.<sup>32</sup> Beijing is thus well-positioned to pressure Tashkent to limit its uranium sales to India. Should Beijing choose to do so, India's economic relations with Uzbekistan will not be a restraining factor. In 2012, India-Uzbekistan bilateral trade accounted for 0.9% of Uzbekistan's total trade volume, whereas China-Uzbekistan bilateral trade accounted for 16.9%.<sup>33</sup> China is even expected to overtake Russia as Uzbekistan's leading trade partner.<sup>34</sup> If New Delhi does not develop a robust security partnership with Washington, it will likely suffer the same isolation it is facing in the rest of Central Asia.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL ARCHITECTURE

India faces roughly analogous challenges in Southeast Asia and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region. While China is not a member of the ASEAN, in contrast to its leading role in the SCO, China is the largest trading partner of the ASEAN coun-

tries. In 2011, China-ASEAN bilateral trade was US\$280.4 billion, while India-ASEAN bilateral trade was only one-fourth of that amount at US\$68.4 billion.<sup>35</sup> India cannot therefore expect to function as a significant economic counterweight to China in the ASEAN region in the near future. Moreover, the ASEAN has assumed a greater strategic value for China because of the rapid growth in trade relations. The ASEAN became China's third largest trading partner in 2011, overtaking Japan. The China Council for the Promotion of International Trade projects that the ASEAN will become China's largest trading partner by 2015.<sup>36</sup> India's value for the ASEAN depends on the integration of economic and security cooperation. In comparison to Central Asia, India is better situated to project power in Southeast Asia via its Andaman and Nicobar Islands located close to the Malacca Strait. The strait is Southeast Asia's strategic sea lane, where one-third of the world's oil and traded goods transit every year. The territorial capital of India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, Port Blair, is home to a large naval base and India's first triservice command, the Andaman and Nicobar Command, established in 2001 as part of New Delhi's 'Look East' policy. In July 2012, India's armed forces commissioned its INS Baaz ('falcon') naval air station under the Andaman and Nicobar Command. Located at India's southernmost point on Great Nicobar island, INS Baaz is 90 km from the Indonesian island of Sumatra and dominates the six degree channel, a major access route to the Malacca Strait.

India's ability to project power in Southeast Asia provides New Delhi with leverage in its competition with China to establish long-term energy development partnerships. This can be seen in India's involvement in Vietnam's offshore hydrocarbon exploration and production industry. India's OVL obtained its first license to explore for oil and natural gas in Vietnam's littoral waters in 1988. OVL began commercial production of gas and condensates from this first facility in 2003. Despite vocal Chinese opposition, OVL and Petrovietnam (Vietnam's state-run Oil and Natural Gas Group) signed a three year contract in October 2012 to expand energy exploration and production off the coast of Vietnam. China views Indian energy development efforts in Vietnamese waters as a direct challenge to China's claim to sovereignty over those waters and the rest of the South China Sea. In December 2012, the Chinese foreign ministry issued a statement declaring its opposition to oil and gas development in the disputed waters of the South China Sea.<sup>37</sup> The statement was issued in response to remarks by the chief admiral of the Indian navy vowing to protect India's assets in Vietnamese waters. Referring specifically to OVL's hydrocarbon blocks off the coast of Vietnam, the chief admiral told the

<sup>29</sup> Trade Tech – Uranium prices and analysis since 1968, accessed 23 October 2013, [http://www.uranium.info/world\\_uranium\\_production\\_and\\_requirements.php](http://www.uranium.info/world_uranium_production_and_requirements.php).

<sup>30</sup> The Times of India, "India looking to import uranium from Uzbekistan," 6 October 2013, accessed 23 October 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-looking-to-import-uranium-from-Uzbekistan/articleshow/23604677.cms>.

<sup>31</sup> The China General Nuclear Power Corporation then was called the China Guangdong Nuclear Power Corporation.

<sup>32</sup> UZDaily, "UZ-China Uran can start uranium mining in 2014," 28 November 2012, accessed 23 October 2013, <http://www.uz-daily.com/articles-id-21102.htm#sthash.J6rrvz19.dpbs>.

<sup>33</sup> The volume of bilateral trade between Bangladesh and Uzbekistan was three times that of India. European Community, "Uzbekistan: EU Bilateral Traded and Trade with the World," 5 July 2013, accessed 27 September 2013, [http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc\\_113461.pdf](http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113461.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Even in 2012, Russia's bilateral trade accounted for 18.1% of Uzbekistan's total trade volume, just 1.2% higher than China's share.

<sup>35</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "ASEAN trade by partner country/region, 2011" November 2012, accessed 27 October 2013, [http://www.asean.org/images/2013/resources/statistics/external\\_trade/table24r.pdf](http://www.asean.org/images/2013/resources/statistics/external_trade/table24r.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Bao Chang, "ASEAN, China to become top trade partners," *People's Daily Online*, 20 April 2012, accessed 27 October 2013, <http://english.people.com.cn/90778/7794001.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Reuters, "Vietnam condemns China's sea claims as 'serious violation'," 4 December 2012, accessed 27 October 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/12/04/us-china-sea-idUSBRE8B303M20121204>.

press that India was prepared to defend against any threat to its interest in the South China Sea.<sup>38</sup>

However, in order for India to effectively face growing Chinese economic clout and a more muscular Chinese naval presence in the region, New Delhi will have to develop a robust strategic partnership with the U.S. and its Asian allies. India has not developed significant security relations with any of the other ASEAN nations who are in territorial dispute with China. India's maritime neighbor Indonesia faces no territorial claim by China but is one of the most important powers in the region. Despite India's 2005 Strategic Partnership Agreement with Indonesia, New Delhi did not significantly expand its security cooperation with Jakarta for over five years. In April 2011, India and Indonesia conducted the first high-level dialogue between their respective militaries.<sup>39</sup> In late February to early March 2012, Indian and Indonesian forces held their first joint-military exercise at India's Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram.<sup>40</sup> These positive developments come in the wake of the rapidly growing security cooperation between the United States and Indonesia since the two countries signed a 2010 Framework Arrangement for defense cooperation.

Beyond the ASEAN, India needs to alter its policy of strategic autonomy from the major Asia-Pacific maritime powers—the United States, Japan, and Australia. In October 2013, the foreign ministers of the United States, Australia, and Japan met for the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD). In an unmistakable signal to China, the ministers declared their opposition to “any coercive or unilateral actions that could change the status quo in the East China Sea.”<sup>41</sup> Addressing the conflicts in the South China Sea, the statement also called for “unimpeded trade and the freedom of navigation” and for “ASEAN and China to agree on a meaningful code of conduct.” The forceful TSD joint statement came on the heels of an agreement between Washington and Tokyo to revise their Guidelines for Defense Cooperation to provide Japan with a more active role in regional security.<sup>42</sup> The Guidelines were last revised in 1997 before China's economic rise in the region and its provocative

actions in the East China and South China Seas. As the U.S.-Japanese joint statement entitled “Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities” made clear, the new Defense Cooperation Guidelines will be aimed at deepening Japanese and American security cooperation to counteract increasing instability in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>43</sup>

India's developing naval cooperation with Japan may provide New Delhi with the mechanism to participate in a U.S.-led security alliance. In May 2013, one year after he expressed his doubts in South Korea about the efficacy of counterbalancing China, Indian Prime Minister Singh visited Tokyo for a summit meeting with his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe to improve defense ties between the countries. Speaking of “[m]aritime security across the linked regions of the Indian and Pacific Oceans,” Prime Minister Singh declared Japan to be “a natural and indispensable partner in our quest for stability and peace in the vast region in Asia that is washed by the Pacific and Indian Oceans.”<sup>44</sup> Even in 2012, India and Japan had already conducted their first joint naval exercise involving four ships from the Indian Navy. The regularization of joint naval exercises leading to a robust strategic partnership between India and Japan may enable India to join Japan, as well as the United States and Australia, in a quadrilateral partnership which Shinzo Abe termed as “Asia's Democratic Security Diamond.”<sup>45</sup> In so doing, India would increase its strategic value in the Asia-Pacific region and prevent itself from being marginalized in Southeast Asia as it has experienced in Central Asia.

## CONCLUSION

With NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, Russia and China are well placed to prevent India from projecting power in Central Asia. Unless India can act as a strategic partner in an Indo-American ‘New Silk Road’ framework, New Delhi will watch from the sidelines as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization constructs its own Russo-Chinese dominated trade, transit, and security corridor from the Baltic to the Pacific. India may avoid a similar fate in Southeast Asia by moderating its policy of strategic autonomy. India's recent upgrade of its defense cooperation with Japan may indicate that New Delhi has embarked on a new direction that will improve India's capacity to maintain strategic partnerships across the larger Asia-Pacific region.

<sup>38</sup> Sandeep Unnithan, “Indian Navy prepared to defend its interest in South China Sea, says Admiral DK Joshi,” *India Today*, 3 December 2012, accessed 27 October 2013, <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/india-prepared-to-intervene-in-south-china-sea-navy-chief/1/235881.html>.

<sup>39</sup> The Times of India, “India, Indonesia to hold maiden combat drill,” 9 February 2012, accessed 29 October 2013, [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-09/india/31041707\\_1\\_indonesia-military-ties-exercise](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-02-09/india/31041707_1_indonesia-military-ties-exercise).

<sup>40</sup> Defence Forum India, “Indian, Indonesian Troops Conduct Joint Jungle Warfare Drill,” 1 March 2012, accessed on 27 October 2012 <http://defenceforumindia.com/forum/military-multimedia/32680-indian-indonesian-troops-conduct-joint-jungle-warfare-drill.html>.

<sup>41</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement,” 4 October 2013, accessed 30 October 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215133.htm>.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee: Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities,” 3 October 2013, accessed 30 October 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215133.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> Lesley Wroughton and David Alexander, “U.S., Japan to modernize alliance to counter 21st century,” Reuters, 3 October 2013, accessed 30 October 2013.

<sup>44</sup> B. Muralidhar Reddy, “Japan is an indispensable partner in India's quest for stability in Asia: PM” *The Hindu*, 29 May 2013, accessed 30 October 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/japan-is-an-indispensable-partner-in-indias-quest-for-stability-in-asia-pm/article4759535.ece>.

<sup>45</sup> Shinzo Abe, “Asia's Democratic Security Diamond,” *Project Syndicate*, 27 December 2012, accessed 13 October 2013, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/a-strategic-alliance-for-japan-and-india-by-shinzo-abe>

# HITS AND MISSES: ASEAN AND REGIONAL SECURITY SOUTHEAST ASIA



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## ABSTRACT

The US rebalance to Asia and the simultaneous rise of China have created new opportunities and anxieties for Southeast Asian countries. Incidents in the South China Sea and the growing security dilemma between great powers have raised questions regarding regional stability and the role of ASEAN and the ARF in that regard. In ASEAN's early days, it sought to entrench the norm of regional autonomy in Southeast Asia. However, by the end of the Cold War, it was realized by countries within the region that drawing China and the United States into their regional affairs was necessary for their survival. Since then, ASEAN and later the ARF, were created to 'enmesh' external powers into its affairs using it as a strategy for regional stability. Despite its intentions, ASEAN remains restricted in its ability to keep apace the new geopolitical challenges coming with a growing Sino-US security dilemma. This is largely because its members tend to give greater importance to national versus regional interests. While conflict between the United States and China is by no means inevitable, the dangers of an exacerbating security dilemma and miscalculations do remain and should be avoided.

## INTRODUCTION

Great power competition is not new to Southeast Asia. The recent naval incident between the USS Cowpens, a guided-missile cruiser, and a Chinese Warship operating near its only aircraft carrier the Liaoning, was quick to reach international headlines as a marker for renewed tensions between the United States and China in the Western Pacific. Several renowned international media sources including Reuters and the Financial Times<sup>1</sup> stated that it was a 'near-miss'<sup>2</sup> and 'the most significant US-China maritime incident in the disputed South China Sea since 2009'<sup>3</sup>. The official response of United States and China

<sup>1</sup> Geoff Dyer, "US naval near-miss in South China Sea adds to tensions," *Financial Times*, December 14, 2014, accessed March 8, 2014, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/32fd63fe-644c-11e3-98e2-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2vMRMuxvn>.

<sup>2</sup> David Alexander, "Chinese inexperience a factor in warships' near-miss: U.S. admiral," *Reuters*, January 16, 2014, accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/01/16/us-usa-china-warships-idUSBREA0F02220140116>.

<sup>3</sup> David Alexander and Pete Sweeney, "U.S., Chinese warships narrowly avoid collision in South China Sea," *Reuters*, December 14, 2013, accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/14/us-usa-china-ships-idUSBRE9BC0T520131214>.

were more nuanced, on the other hand. In his remarks with Philippines' Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert S. Rosario, the US Secretary of State John Kerry reaffirmed that the situation was *not* viewed as one of 'rising tensions' and it is not seeking to do anything but 'continue with a process that President Obama initiated a number of years ago when he began the rebalance to Asia'<sup>4</sup>. The words coming from China's Ministry of National Defense were that 'Defense authorities of the two countries have reported relevant information to each other via normal channels and stressed that U.S. armed forces have an opportunity to develop their relations and both sides are willing to enhance exchanges, practice closer coordination and make efforts to maintain regional peace and stability'<sup>5</sup>. The gap between the position taken by the media and that taken officially reflects one of the key inferences the paper is aiming at making: while the official lines indicate a low likelihood of conflict between the US and China, it does not rule out the possibility of maritime miscalculations and an exacerbating security dilemma between the two in Southeast Asia region.

While it may be an overstatement that Southeast Asian security depends upon the shape that Sino-US bilateral relations take, it is one of the key determinants of the prospects for regional stability.<sup>6</sup> The US rebalance to Asia has incited an uneasy response from China. Some have even termed it a 'comprehensive containment package' that includes a 'new military doctrine of air-sea battle; launched a game-changing economic project called the Trans-Pacific Partnership; initiated the rotation of US marines in Australia; and stationed coastal battleships in Singapore'.<sup>7</sup> While Chinese assertiveness remains a prominent discourse amidst the emerging East and Southeast Asian security analyses, it can be argued that the rebalancing effort –which may not seem as new as it is

made to seem - has limited Beijing's space to maneuver in the international system leaving it with the need to consolidate its power domestically. Arguably, the US rebalance has also increased the voice of the People's Liberation Army in Chinese domestic and foreign policy and has contributed to a surge in Chinese military spending.<sup>8</sup> The concern with the emerging geopolitics is whether Southeast Asian countries have a part to play in maintaining regional stability given the growing security dilemma between the two great powers. This paper studies the capability and contribution of the Southeast Asian states in managing the balance of China-US presence in the region through ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). It argues that this is challenging due to two reasons: Southeast Asian states are far from speaking in a unanimous voice over regional security issues and seem to be prioritizing national interests over regional ones; the ability of ASEAN and ASEAN led 'institutions' like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), built on the aim of achieving consensus-based solutions from a number of varied, national-interest driven states, is limited, so these institutions could not act and take charge over the region's security issues.

The first section discusses that the challenges of maintaining an effective great power management strategy today, are rooted in the region's history since the early days of ASEAN. Undoubtedly, the institution helped give Southeast Asia a 'regional identity based on a set of norms that focused on 'regional cooperation' and 'regional autonomy'. It was established; however, that the latter became difficult to sustain fairly soon, since the regional environment was fraught with inter and intra state disputes in the broader context of the Cold War that seeped into the region. The second section discusses how this drew great powers into the region to manage regional power struggles. Since then, external relationship between US and China is critical in determining regional stability in Southeast Asia.

The emergence of the post-Cold War order and a rising China, offered both opportunities and challenges to Southeast Asian countries. This perpetuated a strategy of 'hedging' amongst Southeast Asian countries that consisted of deep engagement with China on one hand, and 'soft balancing'

<sup>4</sup> John Kerry, "Remarks With Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario," US Department of State, accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/12/218835.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Xinhua, "China, U.S. communicate effectively over warship encounter: ministry," *Xinhuanet*, December 18, 2013, accessed March 6, 2014, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-12/18/c\\_132977602.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-12/18/c_132977602.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Zhu Feng, "US Rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific: China's Response and the Future Regional Order," *Discussion Paper, Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand Victoria University of Wellington* (2012).

<sup>7</sup> Lanxin Xiang, "China and the Pivot" *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 54, 5 (2012), 113-128.

<sup>8</sup> Zhu Feng, "US Rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific: China's Response and the Future Regional Order," *Discussion Paper, Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand Victoria University of Wellington* (2012).

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against potential Chinese aggression or disruption of the status quo' on the other<sup>9</sup>. Arguably, it acted as a sort of insurance policy in the international system that offset the risks of engaging with either the traditional or rising power<sup>10</sup>. This moved them further away from acting regionally but carving independent strategies to engage with the US and China to avoid the risk of balancing against or bandwagoning with the latter. The challenges of sustaining this effort in the light of the Obama-endorsed rebalancing effort, remain the focus of the last section. The paper concludes by stating that as the notion of 'regionalism' – including the role played by regional institutions – in Southeast Asia remains fractured and contested, and only offers a thin layer to the foundation of its security architecture. As the recent naval incidents illustrate, conflict between the two is not inevitable, but dangers of an exacerbating security dilemma and miscalculations do remain and should be avoided.

## FRAMEWORK

As a framework of analysis, it is rather challenging, and in fact, serves of limited explanatory value, to categorize the interactions between Southeast Asian states and great powers within the confines of existing international relations theory. Evelyn Goh makes this observation in her article in the *International Security Journal* in 2008.<sup>11</sup> However, even for the scholars on the region who are synonymous with certain theoretical approaches to their work on subject, adhering to them in their complete entirety is rare. For instance, in a well-argued review essay in the *Pacific Review*, author Sorpong Peou<sup>12</sup> notes that late Michael Leifer<sup>13</sup> and Amitav Acharya<sup>14</sup>, known for their respective realist and constructivist approaches, raised questions and make observations in their work that steered away from their main approach. Even for scholars Sheldon Simon and Kai He, a single approach would be parsimonious and hence viewed Southeast Asian security by integrating realist and neoliberal perspectives<sup>15</sup>.

Simon argues that since the end of the Cold War, Southeast Asian states have practiced both self-help and collaboration<sup>16</sup>. Kai He furthered Simon's framework into bridging the gap between neorealism and neoliberalism in explaining state behavior in Southeast Asia<sup>17</sup>. He argues that rather than solely pursuing hard-balancing strategies – in a military sense – countries in the region seemed to have pursued inclusive institutional balancing strategies to draw external states into the region through multilateral institutions where they could constrain their behavior through a framework of norms and manipulate agendas to address their interests. This portion of He's analysis overlaps with Acharya's argument in his landmark publication 'Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia.' He highlighted that the unique aspect of ASEAN-endorsed regionalism was that it was not meant to prevent great powers from interfering in the affairs of the region, but enhance the bargaining power of small and weak states in their dealings with the Great Powers.<sup>18</sup>

From the existing theoretical literature on Southeast Asia, it seems that the integration of great powers, rather than the characteristic behavior of balancing or bandwagoning has determined regional security outcomes. In that regard, Evelyn Goh's concept of 'enmeshment' has strong explanatory value for the nature of great power relations in Southeast Asia<sup>19</sup>. Her analysis however risks overstating the 'regional' nature of a great power strategy. While great and middle powers are drawn into the region forming a complex web of linkages that would ensure their long-term engagement, there is only a specific limit within which it can bring about regional stability. Here, the words of Leifer resonate. Regional order in Southeast Asia remains elusive 'as the region's stakeholders, including interested outside powers do not share assumptions about the foundations of interstate conduct'<sup>20</sup>. Essentially, Southeast Asian states are individual entities acting in their own national interests, and the relationship and interest with the US and China varies among countries. Indeed, 'Singapore has expanded its agreement for US naval facilities in the city-state – apparently without affecting its very significant economic ties with China. Malaysia enjoys the best of relations with both China and the US, in a way the Philippines does not. Cambodia seeks to avoid turning its back on America

<sup>9</sup> Evelyn Goh, "Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies," *Policy Studies 16, East West Centre* (2005) accessed on March 7, 2014 <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/PS016.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Rommel Banlaoi, *Philippines-China Security Relations: Current Issues and Emerging Concerns*. (Manila : Yuchengco Center, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies," *International Security*, 32, 3 (2007/8): 113-157.

<sup>12</sup> Sorpong Peou, "Realism and constructivism in Southeast Asian security studies today: a review essay," *The Pacific Review*, 15, 1 (2002): 119-138.

<sup>13</sup> Micheal Lefier, *ASEAN and the security of South-East Asia* (Oxon, Routledge, 1989).

<sup>14</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001)

<sup>15</sup> Sheldon Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory and Southeast Asian security," *The Pacific Review*, 8, 1 (1995 ):5-24; Kai He, "Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia," *European Journal of*

*International Relations*, 14, 3 (2008): 489-518.

<sup>16</sup> Sheldon Simon, "Realism and neoliberalism: International relations theory and Southeast Asian security," *The Pacific Review*, 8, 1 (1995): 8.

<sup>17</sup> Kai He, "Institutional Balancing and International Relations Theory: Economic Interdependence and Balance of Power Strategies in Southeast Asia," *European Journal of International Relations*, 14, 3 (2008): 494.

<sup>18</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 51-52.

<sup>19</sup> Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies," *International Security*, 32, 3 (2007/8): 113-157.

<sup>20</sup> See Seng Tan, "Specters of Leifer: Insights on Regional Order and Security for Southeast Asia Today," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs*, 34, 3 (2012): 309-337.

even as it embraces, or is embraced by, China. Myanmar now looks forward to greater American economic engagement but whilst augmenting its ties with neighboring China. Thailand has a military treaty arrangement with the US, but does not seek to antagonize China<sup>21</sup>. These differing national strategies make it challenging to achieve a Southeast Asian regional position over great power management for years to come.

## SOUTHEAST ASIAN REGIONALISM: FROM AUTONOMY TO ENMESHMENT

Despite there being inter-linkages between Southeast Asian countries in the pre-colonial period, the existence of Southeast Asia as a political region is a twentieth century construct.<sup>22</sup> The formation of ASEAN played a major role in consolidating and institutionalizing the region as a collective body of nations in the international system. While the founding members decided that regional cooperation should be one of the main aims of ASEAN, most were nascent states, carving national sovereign identities, amidst regional mistrust and antagonism. The founding members were locked in sovereignty disputes amongst themselves, placing ASEAN's building blocks on an unsteady platform.

Amidst many things, ASEAN countries differed significantly over the extent to which external intervention was permitted. While Malaysia and Indonesia favored limited or no external intervention, other ASEAN countries like Philippines, Thailand and Singapore relied heavily upon its security alliances with foreign powers. These sharp differences came to light in the Vietnam-Cambodia War from 1977 to 1991. As the United States reduced its presence in the region by the end of the Vietnam War, Thailand, as a frontline country to the conflict, saw China as a means of military protection and support, and hence an important ally in Vietnamese (and, by extension, the Soviet Union's) aspirations in the region. Sino-Thai military cooperation paved the way for new ASEAN that began a strategic alignment with China and was less –although not completely– enmeshed in American affairs.<sup>23</sup> This marked the beginning of new strategic landscape across the region, which moved away from being a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality to one in which great powers were 'enmeshed' into international or regional society, enveloping [them] in a web of sustained exchanges and relationships, with the long-term aim of integration.<sup>24</sup>

The strategy of enmeshment was also crystallized by changes in the global political economy. By the late 1980s there was a wave of Western Protectionism that made ASEAN

countries concerned about their access to and dependence on Western markets. The 1992 Europe's Maastricht Treaty, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and U.S. efforts to link human rights to trade heightened these fears.<sup>25</sup> This increased their need to search for alternative economic partnerships to hedge those with the United States. This led to the emergence of an East Asian multilateral engagements and dialogues. The need for this intensified for the region, especially since the Asian Financial Crisis. ASEAN plus three (APT: ASEAN, China, Japan and South Korea) was once such agreement. Proposals for economic cooperation the 'New Millennium Yazawa Initiative' and the 'East Asia Vision Group' were submitted by 1998 during the second ASEAN summit.<sup>26</sup>

China, which was hardly affected by the Asian Financial Crisis, was applauded for helping stabilize the region's economy by not devaluing its currency.<sup>27</sup> In the early millennium, it showed more signs of favoring a cooperative approach and helped set up economic mechanisms to prevent another Asian financial crisis such as the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralism (CMIM) and the Asian Bond Market Initiative. It drew ASEAN into regional trade by initiating the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement (ACFTA) in 2002.<sup>28</sup>

As China's relations with ASEAN were evolving on economic terms, Washington renewed its ties with the region after terror attacks in the United States on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 and the Bali Bombings, where it declared the region as the second front in the war on terror.

While ASEAN countries welcomed China's economic presence, they were suspicious of its growing influence in the region as far as security was concerned. Apart from changes in the external environment, ASEAN underwent major internal change in the Post-Cold War era. It opened its membership to Vietnam (1995), Myanmar (1997), Lao PDR (1997) and Cambodia (1999). While on one hand this meant a wider regional community of 'One Southeast Asia', it increased intra-mural tensions by making the task of holding a common position towards external powers increasingly difficult.<sup>29</sup> New members came with their own backlog of national interests and individual external relations. By bringing Vietnam on board, ASEAN imported Sino-Vietnamese rivalry on to ASEAN's list of regional issues, as both countries were historic rivals who then clashed over disputed islands in the South China Sea. Myanmar came at quite a price, given its poor human rights record under the military junta, and this seri-

<sup>21</sup> Majid Munir, "Forging a Regional Strategy," *LSE IDEAS REPORTS: The New Geopolitics of Southeast Asia* (2012): 81-80.

<sup>22</sup> Tim Huxley, "Southeast Asia in the study of international relations: The rise and decline of a region," *The Pacific Review*, 9, 2 (1996): 199-228.

<sup>23</sup> Alice Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia," *Asian Survey*, 43, 4 (2003): 622-647.

<sup>24</sup> Evelyn Goh, "Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies," *International Security*, 32, 3 (2007/8): 121.

<sup>25</sup> Alice Ba, "China and ASEAN: Renavigating Relations for a 21st-Century Asia," *Asian Survey*, 43, 4 (2003): 622-647.

<sup>26</sup> Kazushi Shimizu, "Economic Integration in East Asia: issues and Tasks in the Post World Financial Crisis," *Economics Journal of Hokkaido University*, 41 (2012), 47-57.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Lum, Wayne Morrison, & Bruce Vaughn, "China's 'Soft Power' in Southeast Asia," *CRS Report for the Congress* (Washington DC, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Emmanuel Yujuico, "The Philippines," in *The New Geopolitics of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Kitchen, *LSE IDEAS Report* (2012), 61-66.

<sup>29</sup> Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 103.

ously undermined ASEAN's international standing. Lastly, Cambodia with its large-scale Chinese influence would mean keeping the Chinese engagement within check very difficult. The concerns with additional membership coupled with the 'ASEAN way' of managing regional issues through consensus-based decision making, soft institutions, flexible cooperation and non-intervention in internal matters have made achieving a stable regional security architecture extremely challenging especially with regard to the South China Sea dispute.

Chinese assertiveness over territorial features in the South China Sea made necessary strong American security presence for Southeast Asian countries. The changing security architecture after the Cold War caused by the supposed power vacuum was the catalyst for creating a new forum known as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 1993.<sup>30</sup> The aim of the ARF was to bring all interested parties in Southeast Asian regional security on a common platform 'to foster constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region'.<sup>31</sup>

The idea behind creating a region-wide security forum was to allow so-called middle powers such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia to rope both China and the United States in the regional security process.<sup>32</sup> Like ASEAN itself, the highly diverse membership of ARF made decision making increasingly difficult due to the presence of rival powers and clashing interests.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the ARF has inherited the ASEAN principles of non-interference and consensus in its discussion of security issues. Thus far, the progress on resolving the South China Sea issue has been slow and stuck in diplomatic deep-freeze, with a meek response. Attempts to tackle the South China Sea issue began in 1992, where ASEAN, in agreement with China, produced the Declaration on the South China Sea, in which 'all parties concerned', were urged to create 'a positive climate for the eventual resolution of all disputes'.<sup>34</sup> Despite this, not much changed in the Chinese position over its claims in the South China Sea. Hence, in 1994, at the first meeting of the ARF, the South China Sea issue was not even mentioned in the official sessions, but only post-dinner, in the dead of the night and outside the formal session.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Rodolfo Severino, In: Michael Kingsford, "Can the ASEAN Regional Forum have a Role in Maintaining Regional Security," (2012) *Shedden Papers*, 1-13.

<sup>31</sup> "About The ASEAN Regional Forum," ASEAN Regional Forum, last modified July 25, 1994, accessed April 21, 2013, <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/about.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Rodolfo Severino, *The Asean Regional Forum* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009)

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> "Declaration on the South China Sea ASEAN," *Centre for International Law*, last modified on July 22, 1992 accessed April 21, 2013, <http://cil.nus.edu.sg/1992/1992-asean-declaration-on-the-south-china-sea-signed-on-22-july-1992-in-manila-philippines-by-the-foreign-ministers/>.

<sup>35</sup> Rodolfo Severino, *The Asean Regional Forum* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2009)

In 2002, China signed the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DoC). The DoC essentially consisted of trust and confidence building measures with five voluntary cooperative activities.<sup>36</sup> It was meant to lead up to the ratification of a legally binding 'Regional Code of Conduct' for all countries involving in the South China Sea disputes. However, no agreement has been reached thus far.<sup>37</sup> Since the signing of the agreement on the DoC, Beijing and ASEAN both agreed that they needed to reduce tensions arisen from the South China Sea situation. The former; however, has made it clear that it opposes active involvement of the ARF in South China Sea disputes. China's actions are a product of the ASEAN way's consensus-based decision making, which implies that if China does not wish to discuss the South China Sea Issue, it need not.<sup>38</sup>

The concern with the ARF is that there has been no unanimity amongst members for what its functions actually are in relation to regional security. For ASEAN countries, the ARF is an instrument to maintain a regional balance of power through a continued U.S engagement on one hand, and Chinese engagement on the other. For ASEAN member countries, this would ensure that the latter's engagement is restrained to a rules-based agreement in the practice of 'good international behavior'.<sup>39</sup> China, on the other hand, viewed the ARF as a representative of a multipolar world order countering a Washington-centered one, by the end of the Cold War.<sup>40</sup> For the US, it has helped improve its position towards its allies and smaller regional players, assuring them of a continued presence in the region; furthermore, it legitimizes its security presence and naval postures. While it is in the interests of most ASEAN members that regional stability and a sustainable balance of power are maintained through this framework, it is becoming increasingly challenging given the 'new geopolitics shaping Southeast Asia',<sup>41</sup> characterized by a growing Chinese presence and influence on one hand, and America's rebalance to Asia on the other.

<sup>36</sup> Carlyle Thayer, "ASEAN's Code of Conduct in the South China Sea: A Litmus Test for Community-Building?," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2013) accessed on February 19 2013, [http://www.japanfocus.org/-Carlyle\\_A\\_-Thayer/](http://www.japanfocus.org/-Carlyle_A_-Thayer/).

<sup>37</sup> Sanchita Basu Das, "ASEAN: a united front to tackle the South China Sea issue," *East Asia Forum*, 13 May, 2012, accessed April 21, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/05/13/asean-a-united-front-to-tackle-the-south-china-sea-issue/>.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Kingsford, "Can the ASEAN Regional Forum have a Role in Maintaining Regional Security," *Shedden Papers* (2012): 1-13.

<sup>39</sup> Ralf Emmers, "The Influence of the Balance of Power Factor within the ASEAN Regional Forum," *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 23, 2 (2001) 275-291.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Munir Majid, "Southeast Asia between China and the United States," in *The New Geopolitics of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Kitchen, LSE IDEAS Report (2012): 21-35.

## POST THE 'PIVOT': SUSTAINING ENMESHMENT

The reassertion of American supremacy in Asia has been one of the key foreign policy objectives in the Obama Administration as it 'pivots' to or 'rebalances' in the region with increased presence. The message endorsed by this is that America is planning to play a leadership role in Asia.<sup>42</sup> It builds on tenants of Bush Administration's foreign policy in Asia, such as the strengthening of relations with existing allies, initiation of a flexible and sustainable troop presence, Free Trade Agreement and negotiations, the focus on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and new partnerships with India and Vietnam.<sup>43</sup>

The management of relationship with the US and China has been a key diplomatic objective of the pivot. Essentially, the approach has been two-pronged: reaffirming and strengthening cooperative ties, and simultaneously establishing a strong American presence in the region in Asia to encourage constructive Chinese behavior and provide confidence to regional leaders who wish to resist potential Chinese hegemony.<sup>44</sup> The strategy in practice; however, illustrates a focus on the second approach more than the first. Its military dimensions, though modest, seem to be targeting the South China Sea dispute, such as the rotational deployment of 2,500 U.S. Marines in northern Australia within projecting distance of it, and four new U.S. Navy littoral combat ships developed for rapid reaction in coastal waters – in Singapore.<sup>45</sup> It has obviously not won much support in China and has given hardliners fodder to raise alarm about what they perceive as containment.

This indicates that a new strategic environment shapes Southeast Asia. It has been particularly challenging for ASEAN to manage, as the very powers that it was created to enmesh, clash, it can have disastrous consequences since most countries in the region seek to engage both powers. As argued earlier, ASEAN's inclusiveness is one of its key weaknesses, especially since its members vary in the nature of engagement with either power. In the last two years, members have made such decisions with regards to tensions in the South China Sea, making it a dispute that has been extremely difficult to resolve. ASEAN's biggest setback was in July 2012 when foreign ministers of member countries failed to agree on a joint communiqué at the end of their meeting in Phnom Penh. Members were divided over whether or not to include reference to disputes in the Scarborough Shoal and oil leasing in

<sup>42</sup> "The American Pivot to Asia," Nam Viet News, accessed 21 February 2013, <http://namvietnews.wordpress.com/the-american-pivot-to-asia/>

<sup>43</sup> Mark E. Manyin, Stephen Daggett, Ben Dolven, Susan V. Lawrence, B. Dolven, Micheal F. Martin, and Ronald O'Rourke, "Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Toward Asia," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress (2012).

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2013), 112.

Vietnam's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the communiqué. While most members were in favor of their inclusion in the communiqué, Cambodia, whose representative happened to be the ASEAN chair in 2012, rejected it repeatedly and vetoed the draft prepared by other ASEAN members.<sup>46</sup> Since then, relations between Philippines and Cambodia have deteriorated, signaling a division in the members of the organization.<sup>47</sup> It is argued that Cambodia's strong bilateral ties with China influenced its position in ASEAN.<sup>48</sup>

Last January, Philippines made a unilateral move to take China to arbitration over the issue of maritime delimitations in the South China Sea. Frustrated with the failure of ASEAN to manage a resurging China, Philippines made a strong decision to take legal action against it. Not all Southeast Asian countries have overtly supported Philippines' move. Singapore, for instance, stressed on the fact that it was a 'national decision' made by the Philippines and territorial disputes of the South China Sea can only be settled by 'claimant states'.<sup>49</sup> Hence, in many ways, there appears to be a shift away from regionalism amongst Southeast Asian nations.

Despite the tensions with China, the economic dimensions of Obama's rebalancing strategy only reaffirm the need for its long-term Chinese presence in the region. Essentially, it focuses on stimulating trade relations with great emphasis on the TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership). The TPP was relaunched as a proposal for a free-trade zone by the Obama administration in the East Asia Summit in Bali in 2009.<sup>50</sup> Characterized by the principles of transparency, protection of intellectual property, labor rights and environmental protection, the TPP aimed at including the major economies of the Asia Pacific. The current group of member countries includes Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Mexico, Peru and New Zealand, while Japan and Thailand have considered joining. While this has been welcomed in the region, it has been realized by the less-developed countries that the standards for joining the TPP are

<sup>46</sup> Carlyle Thayer, "ASEAN's Code of Conduct in the South China Sea: A Litmus Test for Community-Building?," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* (2013) accessed on February 19 2013, [http://www.japanfocus.org/-Carlyle\\_A\\_-Thayer/](http://www.japanfocus.org/-Carlyle_A_-Thayer/).

<sup>47</sup> Munir Majid, "Forging a Regional Strategy," in *The New Geopolitics of Southeast Asia*, ed. Nicholas Kitchen, LSE IDEAS Report 81-80.

<sup>48</sup> Donald K Emmerson, "ASEAN stumbles in Phnom Penh," *East Asia Forum*, July 23, 2012, accessed March 6, 2014, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/07/23/asean-stumbles-in-phnom-penh-2/>

<sup>49</sup> "MFA Spokesman's comments In response to media queries on the Philippines' initiation of arbitration proceedings against China under Article 287 and Annex VII of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)," Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, last modified 23 January, 2013, accessed May 21, 2013, [http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media\\_centre/press\\_room/pr/2013/201301/press\\_20130123.html](http://www.mfa.gov.sg/content/mfa/media_centre/press_room/pr/2013/201301/press_20130123.html)

<sup>50</sup> Jonathan Fenby, "China's geo-economic strategy: does China have a foreign policy? Domestic Pressures and China's Strategy," London School of Economics and Political Science. London: LSE IDEAS reports (2012).



extremely high. Last April, Philippines' Trade and Industry Secretary Gregory Domingo stated that the country is not prepared to join the TPP.<sup>51</sup> ASEAN countries still rely on exclusive Asia-Pacific economic integration like the APT and ASEAN + 6.<sup>52</sup> The meeting on the latter was held in Bali last February to undertake negotiations pertaining to the world's largest free trade area under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).<sup>53</sup> The RCEP has similar objectives to that of the TPP in terms of trade liberalization and economic integration, but the difference is that the RCEP has special and differential treatment towards less-developed ASEAN countries and that it remains specific to the Asia Pacific region. In this way, exclusive Asian multilateralism—with China as a strong pillar—acts as a successful counterweight to US-based economic engagement.

Evidently, the dual Sino-US presence is essential for Southeast Asian regional security. Despite China's rise being an economic boon to the region, the US rebalance was welcomed to keep the latter's assertiveness over sovereignty claims in check. That said, countries themselves are hesitant about US commitment to the region, given its financial constraints to sustain its military deployments in Asia.<sup>54</sup> Obama's absence in the APEC and EAS summits last year due to the shutdown in Washington was demonstrative of the limitations of American engagement with the region.

As Southeast Asian nations continue to hedge between the US and China, ASEAN will constantly need to act on its feet and draw them into presenting a regional strategy to deal with major powers in the region. This would, in the long run, give the region space to operate independently between the two great powers.<sup>55</sup> While the incident between the USS Cowpens and the Chinese warship in the South China Sea was quickly managed, it would be unfortunate if miscalculations such as these would escalate further resulting in dangerous consequences for regional stability.

## CONCLUSION

The interest of China and the United States in increasing their presence in the region has altered the strategic landscape in Southeast Asia. This has brought into question the role of ASEAN as the pillar of Southeast Asian representation in the international multilateral order in managing Sino-US presence in the region, keeping the possibility of conflict at bay. Managing the Sino-US security dilemma has much to do with developing ways and means to tackle the South China Sea issue, given that tensions can cause serious miscalculations, if they escalate.

Since the end of the Cold War, Southeast Asian regional strategy as endorsed by ASEAN, moved away from regional autonomy to enmeshment of external powers. This was mainly because countries within the region realized the importance of Chinese and American presence in the region. The rise of China offered numerous economic opportunities to the region. Several forums sprung as offshoots of this strategy, in the form of regional security forms and economic arrangements to bring the ASEAN voice to the international forefront. Later, middle powers were drawn in, through the ARF with the aim of their long-term and sustained engagement with Southeast Asia.

Currently, as China and the US seek to reassert their presence and influence in Asia, ASEAN centrality has come under tremendous strain. It is challenging for ASEAN to forge a regional identity when Southeast Asian countries themselves are divided over how key security issues such as the South China Sea problem should be dealt with and the extent they would go to achieve a unanimous and peaceful solution. ASEAN's role is central to the Southeast Asian strategy of great power enmeshment, and it needs stronger leadership orientation to play this more role effectively to keep apace the emerging strategic environment in the region.

<sup>51</sup> Paolo G Montecillo, "PH not yet ready for trans-pacific trade agreement," accessed May 7, 2013, <http://business.inquirer.net/117837/ph-not-yet-ready-for-trans-pacific-trade-agreement>.

<sup>52</sup> ASEAN+6 includes the 10 ASEAN countries and six countries: China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

<sup>53</sup> "Official meeting with the ASEAN +6 members is imminent," *SANET*, accessed on March 3, 2013, <http://sanet.eu/en/info-center/daily-news/daily-news-details/article/official-meeting-with-the-asean-6-members-is-imminent.html>.

<sup>54</sup> "What Happened to the Asia Pivot in 2013?" *Council on Foreign Relations*, accessed on <http://www.cfr.org/china/happened-asia-pivot-2013/p32108>.

<sup>55</sup> Donald K. Emmerson, "Challenging ASEAN: the American pivot in Southeast Asia," *East Asia Forum* July 23, 2012, accessed on January 22, 2014 <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/01/13/challenging-asean-the-american-pivot-in-southeast-asia/>

# GREAT POWER POLITICS IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

SCENARIOS AND STRATEGIES BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES



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## ABSTRACT

I offer a preliminary assessment of a range of strategic options for China and the United States, put them together in an analytical framework to generate a set of plausible scenarios, and examine what combination of such scenarios is most likely to take place. I argue that neither China nor the United States is likely to dominate the region alone. A bipolar East Asia is the most likely scenario because there is little that stops the rise of Chinese power to reach parity with American power. The strategy to minimize negative implications from that balance of power for the United States is the continuation of internal balancing and external balancing efforts. While a unipolar East Asia under Chinese or American leadership is plausible in the long run, that system is likely to be unstable and unpopular on both sides of the Pacific.

## INTRODUCTION

20 years after the end of the Cold War, East Asia is at a crossroads. With a series of territorial disputes and rising economic power, the region has gained much attention from the world. In part to respond to China's rapid rise in economic and military power, the United States has announced a "Pivot to Asia" by beefing up its military presence through enhanced rotations of troops and equipment in the Philippines, Australia, and Singapore, and advancing its agenda for greater economic cooperation region-wide. The two key drivers of these dynamics, China and the United States, are such power-

ful entities that they get to determine the main course of action of the region in future.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not entirely clear what the strategic landscape of East Asia will be as the two states compete for regional and global leadership. There are a variety of scenarios we can draw for the future of Asia. It is imperative to pursue these scenarios because as power shifts from the West to the East, the future of the region is likely to impact the stability of global politics and economy, and determine resources that these countries will spend on other regions. Answers to these questions will help us envision the future of great power politics in East Asia.

This article explores a range of strategic options for China and the United States, constructs an analytical framework to generate a set of plausible scenarios, and examines which combination of scenarios is most likely to occur. In so doing, I discuss five strategic options for both sides while dealing minimally with operational and tactical dynamics. My main argument is that neither China nor the United States is likely to dominate the region alone. A bipolar East Asia is the most likely scenario because there is little that stops the rise of Chinese power to reach parity with American power. Among the best strategies for the United States to minimize negative implications from that balance of power is the continuation of internal balancing and external balancing efforts. While a unipolar East Asia under Chinese or American leadership is plausible in the long run, that system is likely to be unstable and unpopular on both sides of the Pacific. But first, we

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<sup>1</sup> Rosemary Foot and Andrew Walter, *China, the United States, and Global Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

should begin with a brief discussion on the history of great powers.

## LEARNING FROM THE PAST

What does the past tell us about great power politics in East Asia? A useful historical reference comes from Robert Art, who analyzes three major dyads of the 20<sup>th</sup> century using military balance, economic interdependence, and ideological competition as indicators of rivalry.<sup>2</sup> The first dyad is between Britain and Germany in the pre-1914 era. Even though the level of economic interdependence between them was high, and the military tension and ideological between them was considered low, the two countries still ended up in World War I. The second dyad is between Britain and Germany in the pre-1939 Europe. While the level of economic interdependence was deemed low to medium, the ideological competition was medium to high, military perception was dominated by the presumed airpower threat, and the outcome of the rivalry was World War II. The third dyad is the Cold War between the United States and USSR. The military

balance was maintained by nuclear deterrence (although the tension was found later to be high), the level of economic interdependence was low, the ideological competition was deemed high and intense, and the outcome was a series of proxy wars in Korea, Vietnam, and elsewhere with an uneasy peace between the two superpowers.

Art concludes that security factors are more important than economic and ideological ones in deciding the likelihood of great power war, a point that I agree with. Yet there is a question about the conclusiveness of this article, as none of the variables he examines turns out to be independently powerful enough to determine the outcome of rivalry. Furthermore, Art's picture is missing a key variable: the regime type of the challenger and its interactions with that of the hegemon. We need to include the regime type in the analysis in order to grasp the likelihood of conflict because internal politics of a nation shapes its foreign policy, so I add it to Table 1. On the surface, the Sino-American relationship today resembles the pre-WWI British-German rivalry that Art describes; the level of economic interdependence is high but ideological competition is low. In Europe, Britain and Germany ended up in war despite relatively low military tension and both sides being democratic. Between China and the United States today, the military tension is rising and the

<sup>2</sup> Robert Art, "The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 125, No. 3 (2010).

Table 1: Historical examples of rivalry between major powers

Dyad	Military tension	Level of economic interdependence	Ideological competition	Regime type	Outcome
<b>Britain-Germany, pre-1914</b>	Considered to be low	High	Low	Both democratic	War
<b>Britain-Germany, pre-1939</b>	Low due to presumed airpower threat	Low to medium	Medium to high	Both democratic	War
<b>US-USSR during the Cold War</b>	Initially thought to be low but turned out to be high, nuclear deterrence	Low	High and intense	Democratic vs non-democratic	Uneasy peace
<b>Sino-US today</b>	US military power declining relative to that of China	High	Low to non-existent	Democratic vs non-democratic	

Source: Art, "The United States and the Rise of China, p. 366.

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former is not democratic. According to this comparison, a major war is likely between China and the United States.

However, we must avoid drawing premature conclusions from such a comparison. Differences abound between the three historical cases and today's Sino-American relations. First, the rise of economic interdependence between the two may have a powerful pacifying effect. While the ideological competition may be low to non-existent, both sides have adopted different political systems, which frequently translate into short-term bickering about human rights abuses and sovereignty. Second, while Art argues that economic interdependence and ideological competition are not main determinants of whether the two sides would go to war, and that security is a more important variable to predict the likelihood of war, the evidence does not support this claim. If ideological and economic factors were not central, then great power war would become likely only if both sides reacted strongly to major security challenges. China's democratization and growing participation in the world economy today will do little to stop it from going to war if the security situation intensifies. If trade disputes with the United States become politicized and ideological differences become an issue of contention, they will make war more likely. For these reasons, we must revise the comparison table in order to better reflect the Sino-American relations. On one hand, ideological competition is not as relevant in the current rivalry. On the other hand, differences between liberal democracy and socialist/communist systems are so pronounced today that we should discuss indicators of China's domestic politics and its relationship with American democracy.

## LONG-TERM SCENARIOS

Long-term analysis of great power competition in East Asia is best informed by currently available literature on grand strategy. Following an existing definition, I consider grand strategy to be a set of ideas for deploying a nation's resources to achieve its interests in security, prosperity, and democratic liberty in the long run.<sup>3</sup> Grand strategy is the highest level of policy manifestations encompassing the major interests that a country has in political, diplomatic, military, and economic affairs, conceptually standing above strategic, operational, and tactical interactions.<sup>4</sup> There are many types of grand strategies. Barry Posen and Andrew Ross mention four types for United States: Neo-isolationism, Selective Engagement, Cooperative security, and Primacy.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, China deploys a different set of grand strategies, including Hegemony, Balancing, Bandwagoning, Isolation-

ism, and what Avery Goldstein calls a strategy of transition.<sup>6</sup> Countries have different aims and capabilities, and operate under distinct environments, so they naturally have different options, although there are overlapping options they can choose from, as I will show in this article. Below I will examine the implications of each scenario and the probability of each happening. Of course, there are limits to this intellectual exercise. Long-term predictions cannot be precise. It is worth trying however, as the matter is so important to the future course of Asian politics. Considering the limits, it makes sense for us to conduct a *preliminary* assessment by way of using recent international relations literature and analysis of historical patterns and current affairs. Between the two powers, the following set of options illustrates a reasonable range of grand strategy scenarios. Following Aaron Friedberg, the list includes U.S. primacy, Chinese primacy, Sino-American bipolarity, continental-maritime divide, US-China-India tripolarity, and the establishment of an East Asian community, as summarized in Table 2 below.<sup>7</sup>

In the first scenario, the United States may consolidate its dominant position in East Asia into regional primacy. Because this scenario brings about security and economic benefits to its allies through base operations and joint exercises, it is generally popular among US allies like South Korea, Japan, and the Philippines but less so among non-allies that are at times hostile to US interests, such as North Korea, China, and its partners like Cambodia and Pakistan. However, it is not certain if this scenario may be achieved in the future because it presupposes China's acquiescence and a magical reversal of the ongoing reduction of US defense commitments around the world. After all, some scholars see the United States as nothing more than a regional primacy in the Western Hemisphere and the country does not control all the global commons, especially in the ground, cyber, and space domains.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, it is not certain that the United States *can* stay at the top of the game even if it wants to because of its economic constraints on military power projection. Base issues challenge US primacy, too, because U.S. overseas bases remain vulnerable to political shifts in their host nations and are dependent on host-nation support.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the troops rotation promised as part of the strategic rebalancing, the United States would probably have to halt troop reduction from Japan, especially Okinawa, and put maritime and air assets closer to Taiwan. The stability of this

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth, "Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment," *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Winter 2012/2013).

<sup>4</sup> Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders: Power, Culture, and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (Winter 1997-98).

<sup>6</sup> Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China's Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup> Aaron Friedberg, "The Geopolitics of Strategic Asia, 2000-2020," in Ashley Tellis, Andrew Marble and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2010-11, Asia's Rising Power and America's Continued Purpose* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Barry Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Summer 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Kent Calder, *Embattled Garrisons: Comparative Base Politics and American Globalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

Table 2: Long-term scenarios in East Asia

Scenario	Description	Implications	Likelihood
<b>U.S. primacy</b>	The US takes a sole leadership role and governs the region	Unstable	Plausible
<b>Chinese primacy</b>	China takes a sole leadership role and governs the region	Unstable	Plausible
<b>Sino-American bipolarity</b>	China's power reaches a general parity with American power and both sides are in a balance	Stable	Likely
<b>Continental-maritime divide</b>	East Asia is divided between continental and autocratic states under Chinese leadership and maritime and democratic states led by the US	Stable	Unlikely
<b>Tripolarity</b>	China, India, and the United States agree on a three-way distribution of power	Unstable	Unlikely
<b>East Asian community</b>	China, Japan, and the United States work together to solve regional problems	Unstable	Unlikely

system is questionable. Some scholars believe that the system would be stable under a unipole which allows its junior allies to free-ride on defense responsibility. For others, the system would be unstable because other powers are likely to want to topple it.

The second scenario is Chinese primacy. Some contend that this system has proven to be stable from a historical point of view. Between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, China dominated secondary political units in the region, such as those in Korea and Vietnam, built a tributary order on the basis of military, cultural, and economic superiority, and allowed its participants great latitude in their activities.<sup>10</sup> Today, the Chinese primacy may be “restored” if it could continue its economic growth and military expansion, prevent other countries from forming a countervailing coalition, and if the United States is either forced or willing to acquiesce. Assuming that the United States would stay out of Asia, this system would put most of its neighbors – even those rival states like India and Japan – under its tutelage. The system would probably be popular among a small number of states like North Korea, Laos, and Cambodia but not so among Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and India. The system is more plausible than likely, however, because the United States and its allies would most likely do something to prevent it from happening. The cost of withdrawal from Asia and expected cost of having to restore it in the future if it wishes to, is simply too much for the United States to bear. The path to Chinese primacy would also be unstable, as America's decline would force its allies in the region to challenge a more aggressive China, which may precipitate a war with China and get the United States entangled in a regional conflict.

Third, East Asia may turn into a bipolar system between China and the United States if China's power reaches

a general parity with American power, a scenario that is becoming realistic day by day. A bipolar East Asia may be more stable than any other forms of distributions of power. Realists like John Mearsheimer expect China to rise to regional primacy whenever possible. In this scenario, US allies are likely to remain on the US side, but China's rise would force the rest of the countries in East Asia to choose sides, which divides the region into two opposing poles.<sup>11</sup> There is also a pacifying power of economic interdependence and nuclear deterrence between China and the United States, making East Asia peaceful even if the region is split into two. However, this scenario will not be attractive for Washington as it would mean that the United States has weakened its influence on one of the most economically and strategically important parts of the world. Yet it is likely to occur if the United States goes in the direction of “offshore balancing,” an alternative strategy for Washington to encourage its regional allies, notably in East Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, to check and balance rivals while maintaining the ability to deploy forces offshore to engage in conflict if necessary.

Fourth, East Asia may get divided into two geopolitical groups: the continental and maritime groups. This would occur as an extension of bipolarity, with the continental side mostly made up of authoritarian states and the maritime side being largely democratic in governance. The continental side would be led by China and include North Korea, Russia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Laos, Central Asian states, and possibly Vietnam. This alignment pattern is possible because of common regime types (non-democracy) and the general inclination of each state *not* to intervene in the domestic affairs of each other. Some of those states, like North Korea, Russia, and Pakistan, cooperate on military buildup. The maritime side would be led by the United States and include its de-

10 David Kang, *East Asia before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

11 John Mearsheimer, *Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001).

fense treaty allies (South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and Australia), Indonesia, Singapore, India, and possibly Mongolia. The states generally share democratic values, institutions, ideologies of freedom, capitalist economic systems and policies, and often ally against common threats from the above alignment. The “divided Asia” scenario is more specific than the bipolarity one in that most countries in the region are specifically assigned to either pole. Along with the Chinese primacy scenario, Friedberg thinks this divide is also likely to occur. Despite the famous “strategic partnership,” Beijing and Moscow remain suspicious of each other’s intent and do not explicitly show close relationships on key security issues like nuclear weapons and border disputes.

This scenario is problematic, however, in several respects. It is unclear if the alignment will be drawn this way precisely, especially with regard to Russia’s willingness to fall under this system. Mongolia, Myanmar, and Vietnam’s positions are not clear, either, because they may side with the United States in the wake of growing Chinese assertiveness in the region, or seek to play one against the other. Instead of taking a clear stance for one side against another, these lesser powers have traditionally preferred to use “light” alignments.<sup>12</sup> Andrew Shearer even argues that the dominant stance of many Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam and Indonesia, is a combination of hard balancing and soft-balancing against China, along with a collective effort to maintain security ties with the United States as a hedge.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, it remains questionable whether the foreign policy stances of Indonesia and India will align with that of the United States. Dan Slater makes it clear that Southeast Asian countries are so divergent that the region will not be aligned neatly. The ordering principle of the region, including Burma, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia, lies instead in the varying levels of state capacity and authoritarian durability.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, countries in Southeast Asia are especially wary about making choices between the United States and China, as taking one side would likely provoke negative reactions by the other, and therefore they prefer a third route centered on “enmeshing” the powers into a web of regional institutions and interdependence.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, an East Asia divided along the maritime/continental line is unlikely to emerge.

The fifth scenario is a tripolarity, which may occur under an unlikely condition that military power of China, India, and the United States become equal. From a Chinese

view, this option may be plausible. Taylor Fravel argues that, “China views India’s rise as a positive development that promotes China’s own core interests,” more than it challenges them. This stance allows China to “avoid a potentially costly confrontation that would harm the growth of both countries, block the formation of a close U.S.-India relationship, and reduce the overall influence of the United States over China.” In short, China would not mind working with India.<sup>16</sup> There are many obstacles, however, to this scheme. Firstly, India, which has emphasized the role of independence as a former colony and non-alignment member, is unreliable as a strategic partner either for China or the United States. Evidence for this view comes from the fact that the ongoing US “Pivot to Asia” has been conducted without much input from India and that China is geopolitically closer to Pakistan than to India. Secondly, India does not trust China. Harsh Pant argues that India’s distrust of China is growing because India feels that China is the only one that does not accept its place as a rising power that should be accommodated into the global order.<sup>17</sup> Arun Sahgal also shows that India seeks to develop credible hard power as a dissuasive strategy against China.<sup>18</sup> Lack of trust makes it difficult for the two countries to rise simultaneously and accept each other as major powers in the region. Another case in point is the growing conflict over water in Asia. With a number of rivers and lakes crossing national boundaries in the region, water conflict stimulates interstate tensions over shared resources and exacerbates long-term territorial disputes, notably the border dispute that has intensified in recent months between India and China. This conflict is further underscored by China’s unwillingness to cooperate with its neighbors, such as India and Vietnam, even though it taps the resources of international rivers.<sup>19</sup> Thus even if achieved, the tripolar system is likely to be unstable with the three powers competing against each other for regional dominance.<sup>20</sup>

Lastly, the idea of an East Asian community has been entertained in limited quarters of academic circles. The idea is that if countries work together to solve regional problems, no primacy is necessary. According to Friedberg, China, Japan, and the United States would shape whatever may ultimately emerge. According to this view, such a community may work because China favors regional groups like ASEAN+3 where it would be able to assert itself. Japan promotes groups where it would offset China’s diplomatic power. The United States prefers an open, inclusive pan-Pacific organization. This idea

<sup>12</sup> John Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment: Southeast Asia and the Great Powers since 1975* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Shearer, “Southeast Asia and Australia: Case Studies in Responding to China’s Military Power,” in Ashley Tellis, Travis Tanner, and Jessica Keough, eds., *Strategic Asia 2011-12, Asia Responds to Its Rising Powers* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011).

<sup>14</sup> Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Evelyn Goh, “Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies,” *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Winter 2007/2008).

<sup>16</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, “China Views India’s Rise: Deepening Cooperation, Managing Differences,” in Tellis, Tanner, and Keough, eds., *Strategic Asia 2011-12*.

<sup>17</sup> Harsh Pant, “India Comes to Terms with a Rising China,” in Tellis, Tanner, and Keough, eds., *Strategic Asia 2011-12*.

<sup>18</sup> Arun Sahgal, “China’s Military Modernization: Responses from India,” in Ashley Tellis and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2012-13: China’s Military Challenge* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Brahma Chellaney, *Water: Asia’s New Battleground* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2010), pp. 202-303.

may work in Southeast Asia, too, because countries there want to enmesh powerful outsiders in a web of regional institutions. The system would be unstable, however, because in reality these states are more likely to seek to outcompete the others. China has little to gain from this system where it would be tied into arrangements that restrict its freedom of action. Japan may be seeking a new grand strategy as well; Richard Samuels sees Japan's new course based on what he calls a "Goldilocks consensus," a "grand strategy that is not too hard but not too soft, not too Asian and not too Western," so a firm alignment pattern cannot necessarily be expected of Japan in the near future.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Japan has developed an economic system quite dissimilar to the Chinese system to the extent that China and Japan are competing against each other rather than collaborating. The more likely scenario, for Claude Meyer, is where the two countries compete in leading Asia.<sup>22</sup> In addition, lack of cooperation is apparent in the sphere of space development. James Clay Moltz's research demonstrates that China, India, and Japan have all pursued national space programs independent of each other and competed against one another in building up regional space pro-

grams.<sup>23</sup> Because Asia remains divided by ideology, history, and lack of trust, there is strong doubt about the feasibility of this community, as well as the stability of this model. The whole scheme is nothing other than a theoretical exercise with utopian flavor. US allies like the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia that view China's assertiveness with suspicion may welcome the strategic rebalancing, but they also rely on Chinese investment for development.

## FIVE STRATEGIES

There are five strategies that China and the United States can adopt to generate these scenarios. These strategies are short-term because the two countries can implement them quickly. There are many effects that each of these strategies generates, so they can each lead to more than one scenario. Unlike those scenarios, the strategies are not mutually exclusive, so they can theoretically take place simultaneously. But they are also distinct strategic responses, and each has varying influence on great power politics. These strategies are retrenchment, internal balancing, external balancing, soft balancing, and preventive war, as seen in Table 3 below.

<sup>21</sup> Richard Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> Claude Meyer, *China or Japan: Which Will Lead Asia?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

<sup>23</sup> James Clay Moltz, *Asia's Space Race: National Motivations, Regional Rivalries, and International Risks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Table 3: Strategies between China and the United States

Strategy	Description	Likelihood	Scenarios they serve
Retrenchment	Hegemon reduces global commitment, including in East Asia, and adjusts its strategic priorities.	Unlikely	Chinese primacy Bipolarity Divided Asia Tripolarity East Asian community
Internal balancing	Nations increase military power internally in order to balance others.	Likely, along with other strategies	American primacy Chinese primacy Bipolarity Divided Asia Tripolarity
External balancing	Nations form and strengthen alliances in order to balance others.	Likely, along with other strategies	American primacy Chinese primacy Bipolarity Divided Asia Tripolarity
Soft-balancing	Challenger forms a coalition of states to undermine primacy diplomatically.	Unlikely	Bipolarity Divided Asia Tripolarity
Preventive war	Hegemon initiates war against challenger in order to prevent power transition.	Unlikely	American primacy Chinese primacy Bipolarity

## Retrenchment

America's strategic overstretch in the post-Iraq era and ensuing fiscal constraints of the last few years drive the first strategy of retrenchment. The hard lessons of fighting resilient insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq – even without completely eliminating those insurgents – have taught lawmakers in Washington that it is high time for them to put the financial house in order. A combination of defense budget cuts, collapse of the health care system, and the financial meltdown at home is pushing the United States to reconfigure its policy priorities and share its defense burdens with its allies.<sup>24</sup> Thus in the face of mass violence in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Egypt – and despite China's leveraging against America's withdrawal from global activities – the United States would stay out of trouble around the world that could entangle it in a protracted war. Although it may not spell instability immediately, this cost-saving posture may prove to be a “game-changer” because it is likely to further encourage China to rise and provoke a power transition. The situation would be unsettling because, when the effects of US retrenchment kick in, China's geographic size, economic power, and military resources will dwarf those of its neighbors and because many Asian states would no longer be able to depend on the freedom of navigation along China's eastern seaboard where the Chinese navy has amassed so much power. Further, this option comes as a test of America's extended deterrence and reputation for protecting the Asian order.

Retrenchment strategy may generate a set of situations that may be conducive to the creation of Chinese primacy, Sino-US bipolarity, divided Asia, tripolarity, and the creation of an East Asian community. Needless to say, US retrenchment is a recipe for a tectonic change in East Asian security and economy that may lead to Chinese primacy in every aspect. China would come out as the biggest benefactor of the system in which it would be able to exert the strongest influence to shape major events and policies in East Asia. Yet retrenchment would also help usher in bipolarity if the United States were able to “stop its decline” as a result. It might also lead to the emergence of a divided Asia because it allows China to be on a par with the United States although, again, the specific alignment pattern implied in the divided Asia scenario is uncertain. Retrenchment strategy would also result in tripolarity if China, the United States, and India can agree on a relatively equal distribution of regional power and maintain stability among them. Finally, retrenchment would support the establishment of an East Asian community if it allowed China and Japan to share regional leadership and filled a void created by America's reduced role.

The likelihood of retrenchment is low, however, as US actions do not seem to follow it. America's unique alliance network, the so-called “hub and spokes” system with it being

at the center of East Asia and with others forming alliances with it, continues to hinge on the American supply of public goods and guarantee of the security of its allies. The strategic rebalancing indicates nothing other than Washington's renewed strategic reorientation to a long-term challenge, far from the erosion of commitment. The continued volatility in the Middle East and North Africa may encourage Washington to stay attentive to other regions, but not necessarily to retrench. Stephen Brooks, G. John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth argue that advocates of retrenchment tend to overestimate the budgetary costs of deep engagement, systemic pushback against the policy, and the possibility of entrapment, while underestimating security and economic benefits it brings. The United States would gain security benefits in terms of the power to deter the rise of challengers, restrain partners from taking provocative actions, and keep access to US bases around the world, while it would also gain a greater ability to maintain the global economic order through the reduction of arms race and security dilemma, keep the freedom of navigation and sea lanes of communication available for commerce, and protect property rights in the ocean.<sup>25</sup>

## Internal Balancing

Because global politics is a self-help system, internal balancing is a natural state of affairs for most governments in East Asia. From a pure realist standpoint, governments in East Asia would find American security protection unreliable because the United States might change its strategic posture someday and because there is no guarantee that the United States would help them in the case of Chinese aggression. Internal balancing takes place when countries increase military power to secure survival. Washington increases military power in order to keep the status quo while China does so in order to change the status quo in its favor. While resources for US defense are decreasing, China has spent a large portion of its GDP annually on national defense, including weapons that can be used for offensive purposes. Because internal balancing has a lot to do with the material aspect of economic and military power, it may make the Sino-US relations become increasingly conflict-prone. But balancing behavior does not tell us much about states' intentions. Michael Chase argues that Chinese scholars do not paint a simple, black-and-white picture of US policy. Beijing sees US policy in the so-called “two-handed China policy” based on the elements of engagement on the one hand and containment on the other. Of course, they see the United States as a declining power after the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the recent financial crisis, but they know that China still has a long way to go to catch up.<sup>26</sup> Thus, even if China wanted to challenge US balancing, it would not necessarily be able to do so. Thus the gap in military power may be closing, but it would take

<sup>24</sup> The literature on retrenchment is expanding. See, for instance, Joseph Parent and Paul MacDonald, “Graceful Decline: The Surprising Success of Great Power Retrenchment,” *International Security*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Spring 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Brooks, Ikenberry, and Wohlforth, “Don't Come Home, America.”

<sup>26</sup> Michael Chase, “Chinese Suspicion and US intentions,” *Survival*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (June-July 2011).



many years before China can catch up with the United States. Because the balancing strategy alone is unlikely to be a “game changer” in Asia, it is more likely to be accompanied by another strategy than implemented alone.

Internal balancing strategy supports options for American primacy, Chinese primacy, bipolarity, a divided Asia, and tripolarity. Primacy under either Chinese or American leadership may emerge if one side achieves an overwhelming military edge over the other, whether in conventional or nuclear capabilities. This is not a likely scenario, however, because it is difficult for one side to completely out-balance the other. While the United States maintains its overall edge in military power, there is little that can stop China from continuing its investment to reach military parity with the United States both in nuclear and conventional weapons. In other words, neither China nor the United States is likely to achieve primacy just by internally balancing. On the other hand, internal balancing strategy is likely to be a core national behavior under a bipolar system, as it will determine the pattern of alignments and military balance between the two sides. A divided Asia is a possible outcome as well, but internal balancing alone will not be sufficient to create a complex alignment pattern under the scenario. However, internal balancing will not become the only way that countries adopt; states will engage in other behaviors along with it to increase their chance of survival. The same logic works for the creation of tripolarity, although the system itself is unlikely to emerge in the near future for the reason discussed above.

### ***External Balancing***

External balancing takes place when countries form and strengthen alliances with others. Because international politics is a self-help system, this is another “constant” in the statecraft of most Asian states, including South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan in the face of Chinese military modernization,<sup>27</sup> but it is worth mentioning because it remains the most realistic option for many East Asian countries. The United States externally balances China by strengthening its alliances with junior partners like Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea and continues to do so under the strategic rebalancing. China has no formal allies of its own, but it continues to buttress diplomacy by working via the ASEAN and APEC frameworks and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) involving Russia, Central Asian nations and several observer nations like Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkey. External balancing is also a key part of America’s effort to act consistently with its allies’ expectations in order to reassure *other* allies, especially given the fiscal constraints it faces. As Friedberg writes, “in part because of the constraints under which they now feel themselves to be operating, American policymakers have been especially eager to engage others

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Hughes, “China’s Military Modernization: U.S. Allies and Partners in Northeast Asia,” in Tellis and Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2012-13*.

in a collective effort to balance Chinese power.”<sup>28</sup>

China and the United States adopt this strategy in combination with others, such as internal balancing, that are designed to buttress their capability while benefiting from the growing financial ties with each other. But they also want to ensure that their partners would not stir unwanted trouble. The United States reassures that its allies will not be “abandoned” during crisis, but doing so increases the chance of getting “entrapped” in a war it does not desire. It is partly because of this moral hazard that allies face incentives to misbehave because of the false sense of insurance. For alliances to work, the balancer must take steps to keep its commitment credible, but doing so will tie its hands in ways that constrain its options. This notion of avoiding entanglement is historically grounded in East Asia, as Victor Cha shows that the United States built asymmetric alliances with South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan during the Cold War in order to restrain their national leaders from taking drastic actions against communist China and avoid unnecessary conflict with the Soviet Union and China.<sup>29</sup> The “strategic ambiguity” that the United States maintains towards Taiwan reflects its implicit fear about being drawn into unnecessary conflict with China as well as a sense of mistrust in U.S.-Taiwan relations. In order to minimize the danger of entrapment, therefore, the United States reassures target nations. The United States sends its signals to China that the United States would neither take aggressive actions against it nor encourage Taiwan’s independence as long as China does not attack Taiwan. The United States also signals to Taiwan that American extended deterrence is there to protect them as long as Taiwan does not declare independence.<sup>30</sup>

If it is carried out, external balancing strategy can move East Asia into the direction of American primacy, Chinese primacy, bipolarity, a divided Asia, and tripolarity. First, external balancing serves the restoration of American primacy by shoring up its existing allies and forming tacit alliances with “swing states” like Vietnam and Burma, although it may face China’s counter-efforts to make its own alliance formations. However, China’s strategic partnerships with the likes of Russia and Pakistan has not particularly increased its chance to build a primacy of its own, so primacy of either China or the United States is unlikely to occur. Third, a bipolar East Asia may result from external balancing behaviors if the United States and China agree on the relative division of East Asia through the establishment of opposing yet restraining alliance systems. Bipolarity in the region would see China and the United States form their alliance structures to rival against each other and end up in a situation like the Cold War, spurring arms races and security dilemma but with a quite stable system. A divided East Asia and tripolarity scenarios are also

<sup>28</sup> Aaron Friedberg, “The Euro Crisis and US Strategy,” *Survival*, No. 54, No. 6 (December 2012), p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Victor Cha, “Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia,” *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Nancy Bernkoph Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

possible but they are less likely to occur. For one, external balancing alone will not create such a specific alignment pattern predicated in the divided Asia scenario. The same issue applies to tripolarity. Unsurprisingly, there are obstacles to this strategy. Countries in Southeast Asia are not likely to be part of this balancing strategy because they prefer *enmeshing* regional powers and going through *limited* alignments that steer between neutrality and formal alliances.

### **Soft Balancing**

We understand soft balancing strategy as an effort of weaker states to oppose unilateral actions of stronger states. Unlike the two “hard” forms of balancing, the soft version occurs when weaker states decide that the dominance of a stronger state is unacceptable, yet the military disadvantage is so overwhelming that they balance only diplomatically.<sup>31</sup> A recent example is a decision of some members of the international community not to join the “coalition of the willing” to fight Iraq in 2003. As a challenger to American power, it would be China that would adopt this strategy in this context. China may do so by working with others like Russia, Pakistan, and SCO partners to weaken America’s standing. If implemented, soft balancing would generate forces for bipolarity, a divided Asia, and tripolarity. Soft balancing serves bipolarity if China and the United States use their diplomatic means to divide East Asia into two camps, for the same reason as they may seek to divide East Asia between continental and maritime forces. However, it would be a bipolarity based heavily on diplomatic attraction and persuasion, one subject to change depending on how the two powers decide to use hard power to influence the region. At the same time, soft balancing can theoretically help create a tripolar Asia if China, India, and the United States can agree on the centrality of diplomacy as a means to conduct statecraft in the region. It is unclear if the tripolarity can be sustained because other states in East Asia, such as Japan, Russia, Singapore, and Indonesia, would join the race to compete against the three.

The problem with soft-balancing is that China is less likely to adopt this measure today than a few years ago when the United States made a series of unilateral actions vis-à-vis Iraq that proved unpopular in the international society. Now, the United States is a lot less likely to take such actions, as seen in its relatively passive stance in recent NATO operations in Libya and Mali, so there is less incentive for China to soft-balance America today. Additionally, China’s ability to form a coalition of partners is questionable due to its unpopular activities in the South China Sea and its poor human rights records with regard to the Muslim populations in Xinjiang and Uighur, and with its own citizens. Its in-

<sup>31</sup> Robert Pape, “Soft Balancing against the United States,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005); Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, “Hard Times for Soft Balancing,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005); T.V. Paul, “Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005).

vestment flows into the Middle East and Africa have won some financial allies, but there are long-term questions about China’s strategic intent behind what is often perceived to be a Chinese version of economic imperialism, as well as criticism about the Chinese-built infrastructure being unreliable. While China has initially wooed the world by the use of rhetoric such as “charm offensive” and “peaceful rise” and taking advantage of unpopular American adventurism in places like Iraq,<sup>32</sup> a more recent research by Chin-Hau Huang argues that China’s push to project soft power has not been effective because Beijing seeks to resolve regional territorial disputes by military coercion, and serious reforms on political and civil freedoms come too slowly in China, which affects its international reputation.<sup>33</sup> Thus instead of soft-balancing the United States, as Goldstein argues, China’s strategy is designed to foster favorable conditions for continuing its modernization while reducing the risk that others will see it as a threat. China does so through the combination of active multilateral policy and development of good bilateral relations with major countries.<sup>34</sup>

### **Preventive War**

In the worst case scenario, the United States as a declining hegemon may be tempted to launch preventive war, a war to curtail the challenger’s rise even if the threat is not necessarily imminent. The hegemon might do this if it believed that its decline is no longer evitable, and there is a good chance of preventing the challenger from further rising.<sup>35</sup> Such a war may become even more probable if the challenger aspires for power transition through violent means, and if the defending regime declines to be replaced as such. The presence of nuclear weapons on both sides will make it difficult for the war to go beyond the conventional level, restraining both sides to instead engage in less destructive means. Yet because both sides are sure that nuclear exchange would be too costly for them to bear, they may be tempted to raise the intensity of conventional war as high as possible. The stability/instability paradox, in short, may help prompt a highly intense war when there is actually no need for it. Depending on its outcome, preventive war can bring about situations where we see American primacy, Chinese primacy, bipolarity, and the divide as possible outcomes. Victory in preventive war would likely generate a winner, but the process would be ugly and demanding. It would take the United States a lot of resources and strong public support to win this war decisively. If waged, however, preventive war will become increasingly difficult for the United States to win because China’s military

<sup>32</sup> Joshua Kurlantzick, *Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power is Transforming the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

<sup>33</sup> Chin-Hau Huang, *China’s Soft Power in East Asia: A Quest for Status and Influence?* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge*.

<sup>35</sup> Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

power would prove increasingly resilient. In contrast, China's victory would accelerate the rise of China and, although it would depend on how it is fought and won, make it more plausible for East Asia to have Sino-American bipolarity, if not outright Chinese primacy, in which case East Asia would be unstable because U.S. allies in the region would seek to balance the unipolarity and the United States would seek to topple the unipolarity soon. At this moment, however, the United States is likely to maintain overall superiority in the projection of military power in the Pacific.

Fortunately, neither side sees the option as serving their interest for now. Any major war would severely upset the fiscal base for both sides. On one hand, for Washington, costly wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the economic malaise at home have made it difficult to gain popular consensus for foreign adventures, let alone carrying out mutual killing with the world's second largest economy. Robert Art argues that a major war with China – kinetic or cyber – is unlikely because the United States cannot stop China's rise without adopting a mutually devastating economic policy. The war would further undermine US economy, backfire politically, and it will not be effective if only the United States fought it.<sup>36</sup> The ground for preventive war is not even there because as Michael Beckley argues, the United States is now wealthier, more innovative, and more militarily powerful compared to China than it was in 1991.<sup>37</sup> Robert Lieber argues that America is not in decline in the areas of size, population, demography and resources, economy, scientific research and technology, competitiveness, military power, and attractiveness to talented immigrants.<sup>38</sup>

For China, on the other hand, preventive war is not a good reaction to draw from the United States. Aware that it has a long way to go to defeat the United States militarily, Beijing seeks to “win without fighting” in order to replace the United States as the leading power. Although China's military capability has increased in recent years, it may not necessarily harbor an aggressive intention, a point that many China scholars have recognized in recent years. Thus historically, China's stance on aggression has been defensive in nature.<sup>39</sup> Andrew Scobell demonstrates that China's strategic culture through the Cold War centered on the “Cult of Defense,” although recent generations of Chinese leadership have been more flexible in the use of force and doctrinal thinking.<sup>40</sup> For Thomas Fingar, China prefers to work with its neighbors to

continue its growth.<sup>41</sup> Chinese reticence toward the use of force is likely to undermine the preventive war option.

## CONCLUSION

Which scenario is more likely to emerge than others in the current world affairs? In this preliminary analysis, I argue that bipolarity is most likely because China's power continues to rise while fiscal pressure on the United States continues to generate pressure for the strategic rebalancing short of making greater military investment to keep its sole leadership role in the region. This is where China and the United States contend for regional dominance by consolidating their partnerships without going to war. The United States is at an advantage at this moment, given its existing alliances and overseas bases across the Asia-Pacific, although China's economic power and soft power may win it some allies like Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and North Korea. In contrast, the continental/maritime division scenario is less likely to emerge because at this moment we do not see the described alignment pattern in current affairs. Thus the most likely scenario to occur is a bipolar structure where the United States will keep its traditional security allies on its side and China seeks to expand its sphere of influence in the ocean, resulting in the creation of a relatively stable balance of power across the Pacific where countries continue to engage in economic activities and check each other's military, space, and cyber capability. There are four strategies that may lead to this bipolar system – retrenchment, internal balancing, external balancing, and soft-balancing. The countries can adopt all these strategies at once, but an initial US retrenchment is likely to be replaced by America's continued effort to balance the rise of China both internally and externally, as well as through the activities of its allies to check China's rise on their own. On the other hand, soft-balancing strategy will not be decisive enough to create a bipolar East Asia.

The other scenarios are less likely to occur. First, if China and the United States want primacy of their own, they would focus on choosing from the strategies of internal and external balancing and preventive war. The first two strategies are realistic, while going to war does not meet serious expectations of either country. The problem, however, is that primacy will neither materialize easily nor be stable, so it remains to be a less likely option than bipolarity. On the other hand, if strong desires exist for a tripolar system, then China, India, and the United States should come to the table to negotiate a mutually acceptable distribution of power, but given divergent national interests of these countries and because there are issues of mutual trust and cooperation, this strategy is unlikely to bear fruit. A tripolar system would also be unstable because the three nations would compete for regional dominance and will try to force other states to take side with them. If a region-wide security community is the way to go, the United States would have to slightly retrench

<sup>36</sup> Robert Art, “The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 125, No. 3 (2010).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Beckley, “China's Century? Why America's Edge Will Endure,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/12).

<sup>38</sup> Robert Lieber, *Power and Willpower in the American Future: Why the United States Is Not Destined to Decline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> M. Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>40</sup> Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> Thomas Fingar, “China's Vision of World Order,” in Tellis and Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2012-2013*.

and allow China and Japan to rise relatively. But this system is unlikely to happen because, again, there are embedded problems of collaboration among the three, as well as among many Southeast Asian nations who prefer sovereignty over regional cooperation. Finally, the strategy of soft-balancing is unlikely to emerge because it is doubtful that China will succeed in forming and sustaining a coalition of states to balance American power diplomatically and because it will probably not be sufficient to shape sustainable long-term scenarios.

Based on the findings, this analysis highlights two policy prescriptions for the United States. First, it should prepare for a bipolar East Asia by keeping its defense commitment in the region at a modest level and managing the impact of its financial problems on the military. Keeping balance between these objectives will not be easy, especially if the fiscal constraint proves to exceed the current expectation and tilt the balance against the security dimension. Another challenge will be in the assumption that the United States would somehow find a way to let China grow as a peer competitor, encourage it to become a responsible stakeholder, and make a transition to bipolarity without sending misleading signals for China to take over regional leadership. What the United States will be required to do then is to send credible signals to China and its allies about America's intentions to manage the power transition on its own terms while keeping to the minimum any potential strategic repercussions that this transition is likely to generate. Doing all this will take enormous political, economic, and military capital, but it will be critical for the future of American strategic posture and the stability of global politics. Although preventive war is unlikely, the United States should avoid getting drawn into regional conflict involving its allies and territorial disputes.

Second, to make a "soft-landing" at an emerging bipolar structure in the Pacific, Washington should continue to use available resources to balance China's rise both internally and externally. Seeking new partners to the existing inventory of allies in the Pacific will be important, especially with regards to the roles of India and Russia. At the same time, efforts must be made to restrain its partners from taking provocative actions and reassure its allies about their security. Keeping balance between a growing list of potential allies and the need to avoid unnecessary conflict will not be easy. But again, the ability to effectively address concerns among players in East Asian security will be a key part of success for the United States to adequately manage the future of the region.

(Views expressed here belong solely to the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the United States Government, Department of Defense, or Air War College.)



