



**Berkeley Student
Journal of Asian Studies**

Fifth Edition - Spring 2015

Editorial Committee

Robert Curl
Stephanie Chamberlain
Nancy (Robin) Duong
Spandana Singh
Louise Tan
Kyung Wu Lee

Ramanathan Veerappan
Wen Xin (Cindy) Liu
Michelle Phillips
Yang Qu
Eric Noh

Advisors

Martin Backstrom
Sharmila Shinde
Bonnie Wade

Institute of East Asian Studies
Group in Asian Studies
Group in Asian Studies

Faculty Reviewers

Robert P. Goldman
Paola Bacchetta
Darren Zook

South & Southeast Asian Studies
Gender & Women's Studies
Political Science and International
& Area Studies
Near Eastern Studies
Political Science

Sanjyot Mehendale
Amy Gurowitz

**BERKELEY STUDENT JOURNAL OF
ASIAN STUDIES**

FIFTH EDITION - SPRING 2015

Institute of East Asian Studies and the Group in Asian Studies
University of California, Berkeley

Funded by The National Resource Center at the Institute of East
Asian Studies and the Group in Asian Studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 FAMILY PATRIARCHS AS TRAGIC FIGURES IN THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA* AND *RĀMĀYAṆA*
Vidhatha Reddy, *Undergraduate Senior, Public Health*
- 16 TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST APPROACHES TO LANGUAGES AND IDENTITIES OF EAST ASIAN “THIRD CULTURE KIDS” AT UC BERKELEY
Jinoh (Kahn) Ryu, *Undergraduate Sophomore, Gender & Women’s Studies*
- 38 SEEKING PARTNERSHIP: THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CAMBODIA SINCE 1993
Grayson Dimick, *Undergraduate Sophomore, Political Science and History*
- 56 THE STATE OF INTERETHNIC RELATIONS IN POST-SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA: A CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE
Ari Shusterman, *Undergraduate Freshman, Economics and Pre-Haas*
- 77 THE FRIENDSHIP OF KARNA AND DURYODHANA IN THE *MAHABHARATA*
Malayandi Palaniappan, *Undergraduate Freshman, Applied Mathematics and Economics*
- 92 THE ETHICALITY OF CHINESE INVESTMENT IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO: THE REALIST AND COSMOPOLITAN PERSPECTIVE
Veena Bhatia, *Undergraduate Junior, Political Science and Legal Studies*

Special Thanks: The Berkeley Student Journal of Asian Studies would like to thank Martin Backstrom, Sharmila Shinde, Bonnie Wade, Robert P. Goldman, Paola Bacchetta, Darren Zook, Sanjyot Mehendale, and Amy Gurowitz. Your support and contributions have been invaluable. This journal would not have been possible without you.

Front and Back Cover: Logo design by Nancy (Robin) Duong and Yang Qu; Cover by Yang Qu.

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to present the fifth edition of the Berkeley Student Journal of Asian Studies. The journal's goal is to showcase, connect, and enrich young scholars studying issues related to Asia at UC Berkeley, giving these undergraduate and graduate students a means to present their original work while developing their writing and research abilities. This year the staff also welcomed a record number of new members as our goals grew beyond just publishing a single edition every spring to include plans for a digital presence and networking with the campus Asia community.

In this edition, **Vidhatha Reddy** utilizes the patriarchal figures in the *Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana* to explore the concept of dharma as it pertains to both personal obligations and social obligations. **Jinoh (Kahn) Ryu** discusses the difficulties in identity formation faced by Third Culture Kids, or children who have spent part of their lives growing up in multiple different cultural milieus. **Grayson Dimick** analyzes the difficulties Cambodia has had coming to grips with its dark history surrounding human rights, exploring which factors may be unique to Cambodia and which are more generally systemic. **Ari Shusterman** explores the interethnic relationships between Russian immigrants and native residents of former Soviet countries. **Malayandi Palaniappan** examines the friendship between the *Mahabharata*'s two central antagonists, Karna and Duryodhana, in order to determine the true nature of the friendship. **Veena Bhatia** discusses the ethical implications of Chinese foreign investment in Africa, specifically focusing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This year's selections represent an especially diverse geographic region, including our first article dealing with Central Asia.

As always, we would like to thank our supporters for their generous contributions of time and effort in creating this edition and look forward to a bright future as the journal's mission grows.

—The Editorial Committee

Family Patriarchs as Tragic Figures in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*

Vidhatha Reddy

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of dharma and its philosophical and social implications within the context of the great literary epics the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana. Specifically, it examines the roles of the patriarchs in these epics, Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha, as tools that are utilized by the works to reaffirm the importance of social obligations. This argument is central to the epics' discussion of dharma and what a dharmic way of life entails. Thus, it is argued that as literature that is not only central to South Asian religion, the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyana have established themselves as fundamental social doctrines. This paper analyzes how this doctrine is developed in these works through the family patriarchs and how the actions of these characters have implications for how social expectations are valued in the cultures represented by these epics. In particular, this paper discusses topics of the relationship between the patriarchs and female characters to analyze power dynamics. Furthermore, it also examines modern interpretations of these ancient texts to demonstrate that the works' emphases on fulfilling social obligations continue to impact South Asia both politically and socially.

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that the literary epics the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*—which continue to impact modern philosophical, sociopolitical, and religious discourses—have served as perhaps the most iconic and influential ancient Indian texts. Much like other ancient texts that may be more familiar to Western audiences such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are epic poems that involve tales of warfare and conquest. Although both Sanskrit epics have significantly influenced South and Southeast Asian religion and culture, the themes that are discussed are not regionally specific, but rather reflective of a shared human experience. Thus, the universality of these texts has contributed to their continued relevance in academia and popular culture for centuries. In order to analyze the significance of the texts' impact, it is first necessary to establish historical and cultural context.

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* fall into time periods that are delineated in Hinduism as *yugas*, or different cyclical ages.¹ The *Mahābhārata* takes place at the end of the period known as the Dvāpara Yuga and follows the internal conflict that arises within the dynastic lineage of the Kurus, the rulers of the ancient Indian kingdom of the same name located in present-day north India. The epic largely focuses on the political intrigue and violence resulting from the contested succession of the Kuru kingdom between the two rival factions known as the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas of the Kuru Dynasty, following them from childhood and culminating in the catastrophic Kurukṣetra War in which the protagonists, the Pāṇḍavas, emerge victorious. The *Rāmāyaṇa* is also an iconic ancient Sanskrit epic poem that, like the *Mahābhārata*, incorporates spiritual and philosophical teachings within a tale of contested succession.

The story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, written by the Hindu sage Valmiki, takes place in the Kingdom of Ayodhyā in the Treta Yuga and follows the journey of the protagonist prince Rāma from his exile to his eventual return as king. Rāma's exile is filled with repeated trials and tribulations, including the abduction of his wife Sītā by the

demonic Rākṣasa king Rāvana and the resulting battle that ensues to save her, testing Rāma's adherence to the principles of dharma.

The *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* incorporate a vital aspect of Hindu mythology which parallels that of other ancient cultures: the direct involvement of deities in human affairs. In particular, the Hindu deity Viṣṇu is reincarnated as the characters of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* respectively. The purpose of this direct interference by a deity is to restore what is referred to in Hindu scripture as dharma, or righteousness. As a result, the epics must be analyzed within a greater context in which each event that takes place is part of a predetermined plan that has been orchestrated by deities to restore dharma to the human world. In addition, as dharma is foundational to ethical and moral principles, the concept of *varna* is likewise reflective of adhering to one's social obligations based on one's social class. The characters in both epics repeatedly find themselves navigating issues of balancing varnic and dharmic obligations, especially when social and moral expectations contradict one another. It is through the exploration of this recurring dilemma that the epics have established themselves as fundamental social and philosophical doctrines, as this dilemma is something that is applicable to all, regardless of one's sociocultural and economic standings.

THE PATRIARCHS

Given that I have introduced a foundational background of the epics, it is possible to analyze how both texts, utilizing the premise of monarchical succession within royal families, explore the intricacies of balancing familial and social obligations. Central to both texts is a paternal figure who, without serving as one of the primary characters, plays an integral role in the banishment of the texts' heroes due to his own unique, tragic flaw. In the case of the *Mahābhārata*, King Dhṛtarāṣṭra's love for his eldest son, the epic's antagonist Duryodhana, prevents the king from addressing Duryodhana's repeated violations against the Pāṇḍavas, which ultimately leads to the widespread carnage that results from the Kurukṣetra War. King Daśaratha of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is also influenced by a loved one, obligated to fulfill the desires of his middle wife Kaikeyī to have her own son Bharata as

¹ Hudson, Emily T. "Time That Ripens and Rots All Creatures: Temporality and Its Terrors in the Sanskrit Mahabharata." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 41, no. 2 (2008), 43.

the heir of the kingdom rather than his eldest son Rāma. I will argue that the epics present dharma as a dichotomy between one's duty towards social occupation or status and one's duty towards family, and that the downfall of the patriarchal figures of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha demonstrates the need to prioritize social obligations over familial ones. More specifically, I will demonstrate that through the characters of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha, the epics qualify dharma as a utilitarian concept, in which one's social obligations should be conducted to benefit society as a whole rather than specific individuals.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha deviate from their roles as dutiful kings by submitting to the wants of their family members, rather than obeying their varnic obligations as rulers to do what is best for their kingdoms. While both patriarchs in the epics are depicted as noble characters, it is evident that their actions largely contribute to the struggles imposed upon the heroes, who must then undergo an extended journey to seek redemption and return to their original positions as heirs to the thrones. As a result, the characters of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha are not only utilized by the authors of the epics to address the central issue in both texts regarding the conflicts that arise from contested succession, but also to serve as inadvertent violators of dharma, if it is viewed as a utilitarian concept.

UNDERSTANDING DHṚTARĀṢṬRA'S MOTIVES

Dhṛtarāṣṭra, whose blindness limits his ability to perform the tasks expected of an ideal king, is depicted as a benevolent character with pure intentions. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's weakness, however, lies in his partiality towards Duryodhana, which causes him to overlook his son's malevolent actions and greed. While Dhṛtarāṣṭra is repeatedly warned by advisors to curb Duryodhana's hatred, he remains adamant in supporting Duryodhana's political aspirations. Despite his pure intentions, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is ultimately one of the primary causes of the war as his inability to reach a successful compromise between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas reflects his ultimate failure as a leader. What is more alarming however is that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's adoration for his son causes him to unknowingly place the entire lineage in

danger. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's aloofness is demonstrated in the emotionally charged scene immediately following the end of the Kurukṣetra War. His initial reaction upon hearing the news of Duryodhana's death is demonstrated in the following passage:

Dhṛtarāṣṭra grieves for the death of all his sons, in particular Duryodhana. He recalls how Duryodhana had often boasted of the coming defeat of the Pāṇḍavas, and how he himself had believed him ... Dhṛtarāṣṭra maintains that nothing but fate can be held responsible for this catastrophe.²

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's claim that it was merely fate that caused the war despite the many years of tension leading up to the tremendous violence that has taken place illustrates that he does not acknowledge his involvement in exacerbating the relationship between the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas by repeatedly overlooking Duryodhana's actions. The epic therefore utilizes the character of Dhṛtarāṣṭra to illustrate the dangers of violating one's social duties in order to protect one's private interests. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's initial lack of acceptance regarding his culpability underscores the extent to which he has been drawn away from fulfilling his role as a mediator and leader. Thus, the epic demonstrates the potentially harmful power of personal relationships in clouding one's judgment when it comes to adhering to righteous principles.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness is often analyzed as a physical identifier that excludes him from being officially consecrated as king. In addition, his blindness serves as a tangible manifestation of his ignorance of Duryodhana's true nature. Sankaran Manikutty argues:

From the point of view of the categorical imperative, clearly, Dhṛtarāṣṭra fails the test even at the first stage. His duty as a king was paramount ... in as much as he failed to listen to his moral sense, he failed in the ethical test ... Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness is as metaphorical as it

² Smith, John D., ed. *The Mahabharata*. Penguin Classics, 2009, 526.

is physical.³

The epic therefore utilizes blindness as a metaphor for ignorance that befuddles Dhṛtarāṣṭra's judgment. It is important to note, however, that although Dhṛtarāṣṭra's wife Gāndhārī is also technically a blind character in the epic, her blindness is not an inherent quality, but rather a choice that she makes. Thus, the main distinction between the two is that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness is a physical deformity that also reflects an imperfection of personality. As a result, if physical disability is to be used by the epic as an indicator of one's psyche, then Gāndhārī should not be characterized by the same ignorance that Dhṛtarāṣṭra possesses with regards to Duryodhana because her "blindness" is a voluntary act that demonstrates her submission towards her husband. This in fact is demonstrated by evidence. As Jayanti Alam argues:

Gāndhārī time and again, explained and pleaded to her husband not to deprive the Pāṇḍavas of their legitimate and legal share. The thrust of her argument was that Dhṛtarāṣṭra was first the king and later a father; so he should be guided in all his actions and decisions, by law as well as the welfare of the people of Hastinapur, and not by his sentiments and ambitions as a father of Duryodhana.⁴

Dhṛtarāṣṭra is therefore intrinsically blind towards Duryodhana's nature, while Gāndhārī, through her divine vision, is able to see the true danger that Duryodhana imposes upon the family. It is evident here that Dhṛtarāṣṭra's relationship with Gāndhārī underscores his deviation from his legal and ethical obligations as a king towards his kingdom. Gāndhārī, often a symbol of the idealized subservient wife, is nonetheless able to distinguish between Dhṛtarāṣṭra's obligations as a father and as a king, a task that Dhṛtarāṣṭra is incapable of understanding.

Dhṛtarāṣṭra's blindness however should not be confused

³ Manikutty, Sankaran. "Why Should I Be Ethical? Some Answers from Mahabharata." *Journal of Human Values* 18, no. 1 (2012), 26-27.

⁴ Alam, Jayanti. "Gandhari, the Rebel." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1994), 1517.

with being a representation of physical weakness. In fact, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is described as having incredible physical strength despite his age and lack of vision. While Dhṛtarāṣṭra is often in the periphery of the *Mahābhārata*, including during Draupadī's humiliation following the dice game as well as during the war, he emerges in a pivotal scene following the Pāṇḍavas' triumph. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's initial sorrow for the loss of his son is replaced by fury and the usually subdued character emerges with a rage that is typically uncharacteristic of him. Dhṛtarāṣṭra is so powerful in fact that he demonstrates his capability of crushing Bhīma, who is regarded as the quintessential representation of physical prowess:

He [Dhṛtarāṣṭra] embraced the lord of dharma, heir of Bharata ... as for Bhīma, he pounced wickedly on him like a fire eager to consume him—the flames of his anger, fanned by the wind of his grief, seemed ready to make a forest fire of Bhīma ... exerting the strength of ten thousand elephants, the king smashed that iron Bhīma, so that his own chest was crushed and blood flowed from his mouth.⁵

The text's reference to blood flowing from Dhṛtarāṣṭra's mouth reflects a violent physicality in Dhṛtarāṣṭra's nature that results from his anger over Duryodhana's death. Dhṛtarāṣṭra breaks down following the war, having failed both his kingdom and his family. While the other leaders of the family such as Bhīṣma perish in the battles, Dhṛtarāṣṭra remains to lament the tragedy that has befallen the family. Through Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the *Mahābhārata* illustrates a completely broken figure torn by personal loss and regret. As a result, it is able to demonstrate the complexity of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's attempts to satisfy both his obligations as a ruler and as a father. While Dhṛtarāṣṭra, as a father, has a duty towards the protection and well-being of his family, he is also bound by a utilitarian obligation as king towards protecting his kingdom as a whole. Thus, the *Mahābhārata* demonstrates through Dhṛtarāṣṭra's character that one's attempts to follow a dharmic way of life is convoluted by contrasting, often contradictory expectations

⁵ Smith, John D., ed. *The Mahabharata*. Penguin Classics, 2009, 584.

that reflect the versatile roles that individuals play as members of society as well as members of a family.

From the perspective of the *varna* system, Dhṛtarāṣṭra is a failed character who prioritizes personal and biased opinions over his legal obligations. In fact, while Dhṛtarāṣṭra is often considered to be a revered elder, it is his lack of action and foresight that results in the war. The position he should fill as the protector of the sanctity and peace within the family is actually occupied by other characters such as Vyāsa and Bhīṣma who regularly step in to alleviate tensions within the family. Both Vyāsa and Bhīṣma, through their roles as educators and mentors, represent qualities of a dharmic elder that Dhṛtarāṣṭra fails to exemplify despite repeated opportunities to do so throughout the *Mahābhārata*.

COUNTERPARTS TO DHṚTARĀṢṬRA IN THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA*

Bhīṣma is certainly a symbol of utilitarian sacrifice as he gives up his own sexuality for the sake of his father's and even volunteers his own life in order to end the Kurukṣetra War, saving the lineage and the kingdom from further carnage. Furthermore, it is Bhīṣma and not Dhṛtarāṣṭra who instills in the eldest Pāṇḍava brother Yudhiṣṭira the qualities of a righteous king. Bhīṣma therefore, in stark contrast to Dhṛtarāṣṭra, serves as the ideal dharmic elder, making decisions that are self-sacrificing and beneficial to the greatest number of people. While Bhīṣma's dharmic contributions are readily apparent, Vyāsa's actions may not be as directly evident. Bruce M. Sullivan clarifies Vyāsa's contributions to the Kuru lineage in the following passage:

Vyāsa though remained neutral and counseled peace repeatedly, even advocating reconciliation after hostilities erupted ... Vyāsa is the pitāmaha Prajāpati of the Bhāratas, procreating Pāṇḍu and Dhṛtarāṣṭra, creating, even delivering, the Kauravas, and

performing the role of guru of all the Bhāratas.⁶

Thus, unlike Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Vyāsa serves as an elder who acts towards the benefit of the lineage and kingdom as a whole rather than favoring the desires of specific individuals. While Vyāsa regularly distances himself from the other characters, he appears at various critical moments in the epic when the lineage finds itself in times of need in order to alleviate the situation. As a result, Vyāsa serves as an ideal, unbiased figure whose actions when interacting with the family are motivated by his desire to protect the lineage as a whole.

ANALYSIS OF DAŚARATHA

King Daśaratha of Ayodhyā can be seen as Dhṛtarāṣṭra's counterpart in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. While Dhṛtarāṣṭra survives throughout the majority of the *Mahābhārata*, Daśaratha's presence in the text is cut short as he passes away after Rāma's exile. The cause of his death is depicted as the result of emotional heartbreak and is revealed to have been indirectly caused by a curse that befalls Daśaratha when he accidentally kills the ascetic son of two blind forest dwellers. Prior to his death however, Daśaratha engages in a pivotal scene with his second wife Kaikeyī, which initiates Rāma's exile and serves in displaying the *Rāmāyaṇa*'s attitude towards the dangers of materialistic avarice. Kaikeyī is described by Vālmīki as "the malicious, black hearted woman"⁷ and as a woman who "knew no bounds."⁸ While it is explained that Kaikeyī acts in this manner as a result of manipulation from her hunchbacked maid Mantharā, the epic focuses on the contrast between the dispositions of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha during the scene in the sulking chamber, excluding Mantharā's involvement during this point. Prior to hearing Kaikeyī's demands, Daśaratha makes the following statement:

6 Sullivan, Bruce M. "The religious authority of the Mahābhārata: Vyāsa and Brahmā in the Hindu scriptural tradition." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (1994), 392.

7 Vālmīki, *Ayodhyā Kānda*, ed. and trans. Sheldon Pollock (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 10.10.

8 *Ibid.*, (10.41)

Is there some guilty man who should be freed, or some innocent man I should execute? What poor man should I enrich, what rich man impoverish? I and my people, we all bow to your will.⁹

Vālmīki immediately underscores the extent to which Daśaratha is willing to violate his duties as a dharmic king to satisfy Kaikeyī. Daśaratha's claims are polar opposite to behavior that is considered righteous and are thus in direct violation of the code of a *kṣatriya king*. It is here that we see how Daśaratha's passion and desire to serve Kaikeyī allow for her conquest over him. Vālmīki elaborates on this power dynamic after Kaikeyī makes her demands:

The pure-hearted king lamented, frantically and piteously, his eyes reddened and dimmed by tears, but the malicious, black-hearted woman only listened and made no reply.¹⁰

This scene is crucial to the examination of Daśaratha's downfall because it reveals the contradictory nature of Daśaratha's obligations if he is to maintain dharma in his actions. On the one hand, Daśaratha is bound by his word to Kaikeyī and is incapable of retracting his promise without violating dharma. On the other hand, exiling his beloved son who rightfully should be Daśaratha's successor can also be seen as a violation of dharma. Some critics such as Sheldon Pollock argue "Daśaratha is weak, tyrannical, and reckless... Daśaratha in fact, should be viewed as one of several studies in calamitous passion, along with Vālin and Rāvaṇa himself."¹¹ From this perspective, it appears that Daśaratha only has himself to blame for his downfall. While Kaikeyī utilizes her sexuality to obtain power over Daśaratha, it is Daśaratha who allows himself to be guided by physical passion, or *kāma*, rather than rational thought. However, Pollock later observes that Vālmīki eventually absolves Daśaratha on his deathbed. He argues:

⁹ Ibid., (10.10)

¹⁰ Ibid., (11.14).

¹¹ Pollock, Sheldon. "Daśaratha" in *Ayodhyā Kānda*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 59.

It was not an act, we now are told, that was in any way characteristic of him, or for which he is to be held accountable, but the doing of some hidden power, as inexplicable and uncontrollable as the force that guided an arrow shot in the dark to the heart of an ascetic boy.¹²

So which is it? Is Daśaratha meant to be viewed as a victim or a perpetrator? The answer lies within the greater context of the *Rāmāyaṇa* by acknowledging that the main purpose of Rāma's existence, as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, is to be expelled in order to rid the world of Rāvaṇa. Because the downfall of Daśaratha is required for the purpose of expelling Rāma from Ayodhyā, the character of Daśaratha is utilized as a means of illustrating the consequences of deviating from dharma. While Daśaratha is often viewed as being a victim of circumstance, it is more fitting to analyze Daśaratha as symbol of weakness, who seals his own fate rather than being a victim of it. This is further demonstrated by deconstructing the motivations behind why Kaikeyī is given her two boons. A potential counterargument is that Daśaratha could not have avoided the curse of the ascetics, and therefore was destined to die following the expulsion of Rāma.

However, Daśaratha does have free will when he gives Kaikeyī her two boons during the war. Kaikeyī is given her boons because she aids Daśaratha in battle and is rewarded by him for saving his life, despite the fact that it is uncharacteristic for a *kṣatriya* woman to take part in battle. By rewarding Kaikeyī for deviating from appropriate conduct, Daśaratha allows for her later retribution, which results in his death. Thus, it can be argued that Daśaratha is punished in the epic for allowing Kaikeyī to overstep her bounds as a *kṣatriya* woman, with regard to her position in the battlefield as well as her sexuality. Furthermore, Daśaratha's downfall serves as a precursor to Rāma's reign as a dharmic ruler. As a result, if Daśaratha represents deviation from dharma, Rāma's eventual return to Ayodhyā not only represents the expulsion of evil following the death of Rāvaṇa, but also the return of dharma.

¹² Ibid., 62.

MODERN INTERPRETATIONS

The wildly popular TV serialization of the *Rāmāyaṇa* directed by Ramanand Sagar provides a modern dramatization of Daśaratha's downfall. Much like its *Mahābhārata* counterpart, the *Rāmāyaṇa* serialization provides a new means for current audiences to visualize the characters of the great epics. In particular, the confrontation between Daśaratha and Kaikeyī in the fourteenth episode of the series utilizes a physical and emotionally charged approach to illustrate the sexual and manipulative power that Kaikeyī maintains over Daśaratha in a way that the original text does not. While the intimate nature of Daśaratha and Kaikeyī's relationship is implied in the text, the serialization is able to provide a new dimension to the portrayal of Kaikeyī and Daśaratha. The scene in the queen's chamber reveals Kaikeyī as a young seductress while Daśaratha, depicted as an elderly man, begs for her affections. Kaikeyī's response to Daśaratha's reluctance to fulfill her wishes extends beyond the dramatization of the Vālmīki text as the actress portraying Kaikeyī freely screams in the palace and mocks Daśaratha, even stating "What sort of warrior are you? You make me laugh at you."¹³ More importantly, however, it is Daśaratha who states, "It's not your fault, because it was I who did not recognize your real self."¹⁴ Kaikeyī therefore emerges as the ultimate contributor to Daśaratha's demise. Even in the original Vālmīki text, Kaikeyī remains the only family member who supports the expulsion of Rāma; not even Rāma's supposed rival Bharata wishes for his banishment. As Robert Goldman points out:

Bharata's main contribution to the issue of aggressiveness and rebellion appears to lie in his relationship to his mother Kaikeyī who, with her scheming maidservant constitutes the only source of narrative tension in the portion of the epic dealing with the court of Ayodhyā.¹⁵

¹³ *Ramayan*, "Kaikeyī's Demands", directed by Ramanand Sagar (1987; Mumbai: Sagar Arts, 1990), DVD.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Goldman, R. P. "Rāmah sahalaksmanah: Psychological and literary aspects of the composite hero of Vālmīki's *Rāmāyaṇa*." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (1980): 172.

Thus, with Kaikeyī being depicted as the primary antagonist within the family, it is understandable why her character is often blamed for Daśaratha's death. However, if the text is supposed to represent a dharmic universe, why is it that Daśaratha suffers rather than the villain that is Kaikeyī? While Daśaratha's death can be viewed as karmic retribution for the accidental death of the ascetic's child, its ethical and moral implications are not explained if Kaikeyī is viewed as the sole contributor to his downfall. Rather, Daśaratha's death is a product of his own doing. His unbridled sexuality is criticized in the epic because by granting Kaikeyī her boons, Daśaratha violates his dharmic obligation by rewarding her deviation from dharma.

CONCLUSION

Although Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha struggle with unique dilemmas in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, both are utilized by the epics as tragic figures who suffer personal loss because of their deviation from dharma. The concept of dharma presented in the epics is not a black and white issue in that it is often difficult for the characters to delineate right from wrong, particularly when attempting to balance personal, social, and moral obligations. Nonetheless, the evidence has demonstrated that Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha are portrayed as violators of dharma, eventually replaced by new leaders who are able to restore dharmic principles, as intended by the deities. The paternal figures, as *ksatriya* rulers, are burdened by often contradictory expectations that often cannot be fulfilled at the same time. The epics illustrate the incredible complexity of the nature of dharma through the characters of Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha. While it is tempting to justify the characters' downfalls as a product of fate or a necessity of the plot, the evidence has demonstrated that the two kings serve a much more pivotal role in revealing a vital thematic of the epics.

I have shown that Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Daśaratha serve as victims responsible for their own downfall rather than victims of fate. Whether it is because of misguided paternal affection or overt sexual desire, the two are critical as counterexamples to the dharmic heroes Yudhiṣṭira and Rāma, who replace the elder kings

and thereby restore dharma. The implications of this conclusion demonstrate that the epics uphold the ideology that one's social purpose remains paramount in the quest for the dharmic way of life. Given the historical and theological context of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*, this conclusion further supports the development of these texts as major contributors to the sociological and religious developments of the caste system and utilitarian ideology because they reinforce the unparalleled significance of social obligation over personal desire.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alam, Jayanti. "Gandhari, the Rebel." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1994): 1517-1519.
- Goldman, R. P. "Rāmā sahalakṣmanah: Psychological and literary aspects of the composite hero of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (1980): 149-189.
- Hudson, Emily T. "Time That Ripens and Rots All Creatures: Temporality and Its Terrors in the Sanskrit Mahabharata." *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 41, no. 2 (2008): 41-62.
- Manikutty, Sankaran. "Why Should I Be Ethical? Some Answers from Mahabharata." *Journal of Human Values* 18, no. 1 (2012): 19-32.
- Pollock, Sheldon. "*Daśaratha*" in *Ayodhyā Kānda*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 59-63.
- Ramayan, "*Kaikeyī's Demands*", directed by Ramanand Sagar (1987; Mumbai: Sagar Arts, 1990), DVD.
- Smith, John D., ed. *The Mahabharata*. Penguin Classics, 2009.
- Sullivan, Bruce M. "The religious authority of the Mahābhārata: Vyāsa and Brahmā in the Hindu scriptural tradition." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* (1994): 377-401.
- Vālmīki, *Ayodhyā Kānda*, ed. and trans. Sheldon Pollock (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

Transnational Feminist Approaches to Languages and Identities of East Asian “Third Culture Kids” at UC Berkeley

Jinoh Ryu

ABSTRACT

This paper presents an in-depth analysis of interviews with two women-identified East Asian students at UC Berkeley who self-identify as “Third Culture Kids,” or TCKs. Third Culture Kids are individuals who accompanied their parents into different societies outside their heritage culture(s), or the cultures they were born into, during their childhood years (0-18). The two ethnically Chinese-identified interviewees, who used the pseudonyms Taylor and Lisa, spent a significant number of their developmental years outside of Mainland China, in Hong Kong and Canada, respectively. Taylor, the subject who stayed in Hong Kong, was in physical and cultural proximity to her culture of “origin,” while Lisa was not. My interview analysis is predicated on the texts of postcolonial studies and transnational feminism that critically attend to the multiple neoliberal ways by which contemporary superpowers re- and neo-colonize non-Western countries. In comparing the transcultural identities of these interviewees, I organize the analysis into three parts that, in combination, shed light on the subjects’ use of language as sociocultural capital or a citizenship-like claim.

INTRODUCTION

“Where are you from?”

For those who can claim various locations around the world as home, this mundane question of origin leads to a complex self-inquiry. With the ever-increasing rate of globalization, there is an equally growing number of individuals who have been raised in multiple cultures outside their parents’ birth countries. Parents cross these cultural and political borders for various reasons, including political, religious, and, most predominantly, economic goals. In the 1950’s, American sociologist Ruth Hill Useem first coined the term *Third Culture Kids* (TCKs) to characterize the behaviors and mindset of American children who lived outside the country due to their parents’ working abroad.¹ Today, the term is applied to any person who was raised outside their inherited culture(s). Some adults who had a TCK experience call themselves Adult Third Culture Kids (ATCKs) or Third Culture Individuals (TCIs). The “third” culture of a TCK is often described as a unique transculturation of the “first” and “second” cultures.² The “first” is the parent’s ethnonational culture(s), which are present at home among family members wherever a child accompanies their parents into the “second,” host culture(s).³ In the meantime, the child picks up both verbal and

1 TCKWorld.com, “TCK World proudly presents:

Dr. Ruth Hill Useem -- the sociologist/anthropologist who first coined the term “Third Culture Kid” (“TCK”),” *TCKWorld: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids*, <http://www.tckworld.com/useem/home.html>.

2 Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term *transculturation* to describe Cuban indigenous people’s experience with the Spanish colonization. *Transculturation* captures the complexity of (the forced) cultural convergence that entails not only acculturation but also deculturation and neoculturation.

Fernando Ortiz, “The Ethnography and Transculturation of Havana Tobacco and the Beginnings of Sugar in America,” in *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (Durham and London: Duke UP, 1995).

3 Although the initial conception of TCK highlighted transnational experiences, there also are “domestic” TCKs whose parents “have moved in or among various subcultures within the child’s home country.”

TCKid.com, “What are Cross Cultural Kids?,” *TCKid: A Home For Third Culture Kids – Building Cross Cultural Bridges*, <http://tckid.com/crossculturalkid.html>

nonverbal customs of the second culture in school and other localized institutions.

TCKs’ early exposure to heterogeneous cultural practices often assists them in being multilingual, culturally intelligent, interpersonally sensitive, and adaptable. Third Culture Kids typically build relationships relatively easily with cultures unfamiliar to them. It is a skill they must pick up while navigating different cultures in such a short span of time. Consequently, the majority do not feel comfortable claiming full ownership of any particular culture, including one of their “own”, especially when some of them flew to other countries before they could even walk.⁴ Such “cultural homelessness” results in a unique consciousness similar to – or more complex than—what Gloria Anzaldúa calls the *mestiza consciousness* of Chicanas living in the Mexico-US borderland.⁵ Indeed, many TCKs face challenges in their daily routines; they are assumed to be a “full” citizen, or sociocultural insider, by their own ethnic group(s). TCKs may try to police themselves to fit into their “home” culture(s). However, they cannot live in “stealth”, as they express psychic and epistemological otherness through a combination of incompatible cultural practices.⁶ They are perceived to be peculiar or confused by members of the racial, ethnic, and/or national populations they belong to. This incongruity in the perception of self by the TCK individual and others has often resulted in a higher rate of depression, self-dysphoria, extended adolescence, and suicide amongst TCKs in comparison to the majority of individuals raised in one geographical location.

There is a vast amount of literature on how to clinically accommodate the needs of TCKs, who themselves are sharing more and more of their experiences on online communities such as Tumblr. The mechanism and genealogy of TCKs’ self-reflexivity, however, have not been thoroughly investigated through a theoretical lens. If

4 David C. Pollock and Van Reken Ruth E., *The Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing up among Worlds* (Yarmouth, Me.: Intercultural, 2001), 34.

5 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987).

6 “Living in stealth” is a phrase frequented in transgender communities to refer to a situation in which the gender assigned at birth of a transgender person is read as one’s preferred gender at all time in the public eye, and the individual intends to maintain that situation.

we assume that the world is going to only have more individuals who lead a mobile, transcultural childhood, it is critical to observe and analyze college-aged TCKs’ understanding of themselves. These are young adults who will soon roam and interact with the larger world outside their college campuses. It is imperative to assess how they relate to the world(s) and what may have influenced them to do so.

In its collective attempts to revive its economy, devastated during World War II and the “Asianized” financial crisis of the 1990’s, East Asia has steadily risen from a society of “Asian Tigers” to a so-called “Neo-Europe.”⁷ This is partly due to the international policies of the post-Cold War United States; the United States coercively pushed for a tight political and neoliberal economic coalition with nations indebted to it.⁸ For the past couple of decades, East Asia has thus experienced some of the most explosive growth of TCK populations, members of which are often privileged in many ways. In this text, I take a multi-angled transnational feminist approach to the identities of two East Asian TCK women at UC Berkeley, as narrated by themselves in their interviews, with an analytic focus on their language use.

METHODS

My interviews were conducted at UC Berkeley in a semi-structured, in-depth form, each taking a minimum of two hours. I also asked post-interview follow-up questions. I looked for women-identified TCK students on campus with ethnic origins from South Korea, China, Japan, and Taiwan, but I did not require the childhood host countries of my interviewees to be in East Asia. I recruited four participants thanks to the Berkeley International Office and one by the recommendation of an interviewee. All interviewees signed an

7 I used “Asianized” to indicate the root of Asian financial miracle and crisis in “discursive and ideological struggle[s.]” Laura Hyun Yi Kang, “The Uses of Asianization: Figuring Crises, 1997-98 and 2007-?” *American Quarterly* Volume 64, No. 3 (September 2012): 415.

8 Garry Rodan and Kevin Hewison, “Introduction—Globalization, Conflict, and Political Regimes in East and Southeast Asia,” in *Neoliberalism and Conflict in Asia after 9/11*, ed. Garry Rodan and Kevin Hewison (London: Routledge, 2006), 5.

informed consent form and agreed to anonymously release their personal information and the contents of their interviews. I began each interview with some basic personal background questions and later asked what makes one a Third Culture Kid. I also asked a set of prepared questions to gather further information.

The topics of these extra questions stemmed from my literature review on the critiques of how (East) Asians and women have been historically understood and shaped by Western knowledges. Given the lasting racialized assumptions of East Asian women being submissive and homebound, I asked the interviewees if they had had any miscommunications with their parents and local residents. This was to investigate the latent manners by which the selected interviewees are interpellated by others as “heterosexual [or] biological reproducers of group members... [and] social reproducers of cultural forms.”⁹ Would their TCK-ness fundamentally hinder the expected transmission of the culture(s) they were born into? Or does their TCK consciousness rather empower and complement their culture(s) of origin?

In addition, drawing from Said’s statement that “the Orientalist’s presence is enabled by the Orient’s effective absence”, I inquired them of their social and academic life at “international” schools, which allegedly provide “multicultural” education.¹⁰ This question aimed to verify the impact of East Asian presence in Anglocentric elite space on the continued prevalence of Orientalist viewpoints or Asian Elite Myths among younger generations. I inferred that American or other White-dominant K-12 schools, expanded to the exponentially growing financial spots of East Asia, ultimately intend to “bring the future under [the West’s] control”.¹¹ Jodi Melamed contends that these schools, as Western knowledge factories, produce docile, whitewashed non-white subjects who will later become “future members of the professional-managerial class”

9 V. Spike Peterson, “Sexing Political Identities: Nationalism as Heterosexism,” in *Women, States and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?*, ed. Sita Runchod-Nilsson and Mary Tétraut (New York: Routledge, 2000), 64-65.

10 Edward W. Said, “Latent and Manifest Orientalism,” in *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 208.

11 Aihwa Ong, “Higher Learning in Global Space,” in *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), 147.

among White leaders.¹²

It was only after I completed all five interviews that I recognized *all the interviewees were differentially and selectively using language as a sociocultural capital or citizenship-like claim*. Amongst the five participants, I selected to present in this paper two interviewees with the pseudonyms Taylor and Lisa. I was particularly interested in comparing and contrasting them, given that both of them identified as ethnic Chinese women who followed a disparate trajectory in identifying as TCK. Due to the large Chinese American/Canadian population, the two interviewees were taken as sociocultural insiders in the spaces they occupied. At the same time, the interviewees’ experiences go against the spatialized understanding of “belongingness”—that is, Taylor and Lisa felt more connected to those who had transcultural experiences regardless of their backgrounds than those who grew up only in Hong Kong, China, Canada, or the United States. Also, the geographical proximity to the country of ethnic origin does not promise a continued linguistic fluency of Chinese due to a varying degree of international educational milieu and the size of expatriate community. This twist has to be noted, given that Chinese people maintain a very strong tie between language/dialect and nationalism/regionalism.¹³

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND

The first interviewee, whom I refer to with the pseudonym Taylor, was born in Los Angeles, California. She then flew to Hong Kong with her parents at the age of 3. Her mother is ethnically Taiwanese and her father mainland Chinese. Though she is a dual citizen of both the United States and Hong Kong, Taylor personally identifies as an ethnic Chinese person, “hua ren (华人)”. Taylor was taught Cantonese as her first language, yet she is more comfortable with English in all aspects of communication. She is least fluent in the official language of her stated ethnicity, Mandarin. Taylor spent most of her life in Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) on

12 Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2011), 114.

13 Arienne M. Dwyer, “The Texture of Tongues: Languages and Power in China,” in *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, ed. William Safran (New York: Frank Cass, 1998).

the southeastern coast of China and a former British dependency. In Hong Kong, Taylor attended kindergarten, a year of local Mandarin-speaking primary school, and a British international school from Year 4 to 13. She moved with her family to Los Angeles and went to a public elementary school for a year and half during the Hong Kong SARS epidemic of 2002-2003. Although she is by definition Chinese American, or American-born Chinese, she said during the interview that she is not a “real” one. Her parents met each other at a prestigious private college in Los Angeles during their undergraduate studies overseas. They stayed together in LA for the next 16 years, including three years after Taylor’s birth. Both of Taylor’s parents were in the LA hotel business. Since they came back to Hong Kong—after the SARS epidemic subsided—they have worked together as financial consultants.

The second interviewee, with the pseudonym Lisa, also identifies as fully ethnically Chinese. Lisa was born and raised in Beijing, the capital city of China, until age 10. She attended a year of local Chinese elementary school, and spent the next year at an international school. As a teenager, Lisa studied alone in Los Angeles during a year-long study abroad program financially supported by her parents. She lived in Vancouver from age 11 to 18 with her mother who was then divorced. Before she arrived at UC Berkeley, Lisa changed her official nationality to Canadian, which makes her a Chinese Canadian immigrant. Therefore, Lisa would now be classified as “hua yi (华裔)”, an overseas ethnic Chinese person who no longer holds a Chinese citizenship or nationality. Lisa said that it “didn’t seem like identifying [as] Asian interferes with being a Canadian citizen.” Although she was taught Mandarin first, and can speak conversational Mandarin very fluently, she said she speaks (academic) English better. Lisa learned French as well for 6 years as part of public education in Vancouver, but does not consider French culture as part of hers. Her father is a professor at one of the most distinguished Chinese universities. Her mother owns a graphic design company in Vancouver.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

I organize the analysis into three parts that, in combination, shed light on the subjects’ use of language as sociocultural capital or a citizenship-like claim. The first section investigates how local residents in different places misidentify the interviewees. The next section explores how the TCKs (dis)claim languages as theirs based on the language’s affective proximity to their everyday lives. The last section brings up the diverse ways through which each interviewee handles the guilt or pleasure of cultural hybridity and subjective multiplicity.

“No Need to Come Out”: Third Culture Kids in the Glass Closet

Both Lisa and Taylor clearly expressed that there is something different about themselves compared to local, single-cultured strangers with whom they interact (for a short period of time, i.e. vacation). Even when the interviewees strive to remain “stealth” about their transcultural identities, local people somehow figure out that they are not “100%” Chinese.

“One summer [I visited Beijing,] I took on an internship at ... a local photography studio. Everybody who worked there [was] fully Chinese—born and raised, Chinese Chinese. Initially, I didn’t want them to think of me as an international ... I just wanted them to see me as another worker, who is just like them. So I never talked about school or anything [that would hint I am not like them]. When they would talk about [those topics], I would make something up initially or just avoid the question. One week into the internship, a fellow colleague asked me “You’re not from around here. Are you from the United States or something?” [I responded,] “What makes you say that?” ... I spoke really good Chinese, even though I didn’t have an authentic Beijing accent ... [He said,] “I think it’s just from the way you talk and act.” *I personally was*

striving towards not showing any difference. [It is] something that's not [something] I can hide. It is so inherent to the way I behave instinctually that people can tell right away." — Lisa

"My Cantonese is ... passable for daily life things like buying things. When I speak to [local Cantonese people] for one to two minutes, they will realize I have an accent ... They ask me whether or not I am studying in Hong Kong. When I tell them I do, they get confused, because they don't know [that] I am studying at an international school, not at a local school. I used to get uncomfortable [about this], but now *it's the uncomfortable that I am used to ... [Local people] just know I am an international.*" —Taylor

Given that they both self-identify as ethnic Chinese, their use of phrases such as "fully Chinese" and "Chinese Chinese" to casually replace "local Chinese" and place themselves apart from the local people may seem somewhat ironic—yet it is understandable. Indeed, the phrases indicate an essentialist notion of what being Chinese means or looks like and overlook dynamism within (g)local Chinese cultures. These phrases both demonstrate the underlying categorization processes at work by the nature of language. To be preserved, all terminology requires a stable, discrete definition.¹⁴ When it comes to the validity of one's national identity, or one's claim to be part of "an imagined political community," one qualification or definition a person must meet is not only the ability to speak the common language, but also to practice it with the indigenized *technique*.¹⁵ Given the everydayness of language, the interviewees' lack of "correct" or standardized accent, tone, or attitude in speaking Mandarin symbolically threatens the reproductive project and delusional fantasy of national homogeneity.¹⁶ Just as gender and sex are popularly conceived to be inseparable, (sociocultural)

14 Roderick A. Ferguson, "Reading Intersectionality," *Trans-Scripts* 2 (2012): 94.

15 Benedict Anderson, "Introduction," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), 6.

16 Peterson, *Women, States and Nationalism*, 55.

citizenship and language are often imagined to go hand in hand by the majority of people who have lived in a relatively narrow scope of geographical locations. In contrast to Third Culture Kids, they have been exposed to only one nation's agenda of cultural loyalty. This is what I call *ciscultural loyalty*, a faithful identification with the ethnonational culture deemed appropriate to—or even immanent in—one's ancestry and perceived appearance.¹⁷

"My Precious": No One Can Take English Away From Me

Both Lisa and Taylor speak English most fluently among the multiple languages they understand. However, they are attached to English as something more than a means to communicate; they strongly sense affects toward and through English as a marker of mobility and identity.¹⁸ Given their relative lack of rooting in any one culture, the interviewees seemed to use English as a main tool for building a community. English breeds a sense of belonging that they would have taken for granted had they been raised with *ciscultural loyalty*. Without English, the symbolic anchor that ties TCKs to the world, Lisa and Taylor's sense of anxiety would heighten. I interpret that the interviewees find English as an epistemic foundation upon which their subjectivities have formed:

17 The "cis" in *ciscultural* is a prefix that is often posed against *trans*. The cis-trans relationality is most often attributed to transgender communities that have used the term *cisgender* since 1990s to describe the majority of population who identify with a binary gender they were assigned at birth according to their genitalia. My coinage of the term *ciscultural loyalty* is thus in conjunction with the predominant somato-centric ways by which people assume their essentialist concepts of being as absolute truth and automatically apply them to others. The term poses a question as to why and how people are raised to be loyal to a certain culture and how people with (in)voluntary transcultural experiences are socially punished or silenced. I acknowledge that my phrase puts cultural identification under trans/cis binary when in fact each culture is always already glocal. Please note that I am using *ciscultural loyalty* in a deictic manner in relation to transcultural Third Culture Kids.

18 I use *affect* as "visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion."

Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010), 1.

“[When people tell me I speak good English,] sometimes I feel insulted. *English is an international language. It’s used globally, a standard language.* Just because I visually appear as Asian, a lot of people here in the [United] States ... think I can’t speak fluent English. *I feel insulted because I consider it my first language ... I only identified myself as a TCK when I became comfortable with English in secondary school, in [an] environment in which I used to be completely local, but no longer consider myself [as such.] I identified with [English that] I could finally call my own ... I constructed my identity through the language of English ... [When my parents forced me to] remaster Chinese after I learned English, I hated it honestly.*” —Taylor

The repetition of “my” marks Taylor’s possessive right over English, both literally and metaphorically. Thus she feels disrespected when her ownership over the language is invalidated by the assumptions of others about her language abilities; her apparent Asian ethnicity or non-Whiteness leads others to think she cannot “speak English like a native”. Moreover, English for her is a “standard”, universal language, rather than a lingua franca. This understanding could potentially marginalize those regions of the world that ethically oppose a defenseless adoption of English as an official national or global language. But what does it signify that her identity is constructed “through *the language of English*”? Taylor might have meant to say “through English language.” Nonetheless, I propose English, for both interviewees, functions as a quasi-passport to anywhere where the hegemonic effects and affects of English reach, which is now likely everywhere. Indeed, English is marketed as a must-have skill that promises financial capital and enables the very possibility of mobility. Knowing English has become a condition of modern being. What is often overlooked is that English is firmly

anchored to the Enlightenment “ideoscape”.¹⁹ It states that English is a primary language of the Western (ideological) world and many of its past and neo-colonies, and it is worth considering what must (have) happen(ed) to naturalize the seductiveness of English.²⁰

“Some people tell me that if you dream in a certain language, then that’s probably like the language you go to first in terms of thought, etc. [And] I dream in English ... *I think Chinese is a language that you can forget really quickly*, just because how complicated it is ...²¹ My Chinese is pretty bad already. I haven’t practiced at all in the past year ... I am trying to keep up, [but *Chinese is*] *not a life necessity anymore* as it was when I was living with my mom.” — Lisa

When language loses its sense of applicability and necessity, it becomes obsolete for the person who speaks it. The necessity for communication does not disappear, but transfers to another language that promises a greater value and audience. Learning *the language of English* therefore refers to an acquisition of “certain ways of being, desiring, and knowing” that greases the wheels of neoliberal circulation of capitals. Neoliberal capital extends beyond the traditional understanding of capital as economic resource. This broad set of capitals includes cultural, social, and symbolic ones. Under the zeitgeist of neoliberalism, people are required to abide by “the so-called new world order” by demonstrating competency in multiple forms of capital that enables an access to a wider range of

19 Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai coined a portmanteau word, *ideoscape*, composed of ideology and landscape. The term refers to the extent to which one ideology can extend farther outside its geographical origin, problematizing global political communication.

Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” in *Globalization: The Reader*, ed. J. Beynon and D. Dunkerley (New York: Routledge, 2000), 96.

20 Anna M. Agathangelou, M. Daniel Bassichis, and Tamara L. Spira, “Intimate Investments: Homonormativity, Global Lockdown, and the Seductions of Empire,” *Radical History Review* Winter 2008, no. 100 (2008): 120.

21 All language is forgettable if not frequented by the speaker, yet the logographic nature of Chinese characters makes it more challenging for those who live overseas to keep up with the writing.

work.²² Consequently, one’s condition of humanity is often reduced to and equated with the ability to survive the deterritorialization of the workforce under imperialist neoliberal capitalism. TCKs master English and thereby efficiently navigate the tide of deterritorialization, becoming “the specter of migration” that “haunts the world.”²³ TCKs lack of “psychic resistance to resisting” in reclaiming Chinese as their language does not bring them immediate harm—the new world order glorifies English, especially in combination with multilingualism, which is a result of their hypermobile childhoods.²⁴

These same forces also work on demarcating subjects whose agency and voice are negligible and illegible to begin with. That is, the hypermobility of TCKs is in stark contrast to the “global lockdown” that produces what Angela Davis calls “human surplus.”²⁵ This population is more vulnerable to surveillance based on racial profiling and incarceration, as they are relegated and exposed to the realm of literal and Kristevian abjection.²⁶ People are differentially treated along the lines of privileges since “life [today has become] a drama of *earning* a place in it.”²⁷ Largely deemed unworthy of grief, these precarious populations and their predicaments, created through a system that benefits others, are not greeted by the “affective [and moral] responsiveness” of the dominant majority.²⁸

22 Ibid., 123.

23 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2000), 213.

24 Paola Bacchetta, “Transnational Borderlands. Gloria Anzaldúa’s Epistemologies of Resistance and Lesbians ‘of Color’ in Paris,” in *El Mundo Zurdo: Selected Works from the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa 2007 to 2009*, ed. Norma Cantu, Christina L. Gutierrez, Norma Alarcón and Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2010), 115.

25 Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories, 2003), 191.

26 Feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva defines *abjection* as “[W]hat disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”

Julia Kristeva, “Approaching Abjection,” in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), 4.

27 Lauren Berlant, “Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejić, Isabel Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanović,” *TDR/The Drama Review* 56.4 (2012): 171.

28 Judith Butler, “Survivability, Vulnerability, Affect,” in *Frames of War* (New York: Verso, 2009), 34, 41.

“Guilty Pleasure”: Reconceptualizing Cultural “Disloyalty” or “Inauthenticity”

Both interviewees were highly aware of the (self-)accusations they received from their lack of *ciscultural loyalty* or authenticity. As they largely deviate from the popularly imagined ways of being a correctly ethnicized person, Lisa and Taylor take very dissimilar approaches toward their not being a “real” Chinese person, or not having their Chinese physical features “matched” with their current perspectives and lived experiences.

“Sometimes, I wish, because I look Asian, I could be fully Asian ... I would want to speak Chinese, and that comes up when I am trying to speak to my grandparents [who only speak in Chinese]. At those rare moments, I wish I were local local ... I [am] fine with [Chinese] cultural practices ... I grew up with it and it didn’t require much effort [to retain it.] For example, celebrating Chinese New Year, not doing certain things on the first day of the year, knowing the right phrase to say on someone’s birthday, and read[ing] the newspaper. [The last one was] really important [to my parents.] My dad, especially, wanted me to know Chinese history, although I wasn’t that interested. *This is one of the things I am guilty of: Not being interested in my ‘own culture’ and its history.*”
— Taylor

Because Taylor said she had not put sincere effort into learning Chinese, I had initially expected her to confess that she wished she were an Anglo-American, whose understanding of the world would be very analogous to hers. Surprisingly, she repeatedly mentioned wanting to be a “Chinese Chinese,” “local local,” or “Asian Asian” who would know Chinese history and Mandarin. Why does knowing history and language validate one’s national identity more than partaking in traditional cultural practices? The former requires a consistent, conscious effort to not fall into a retrieval problem, while the latter is more, for lack of a better word, behavioral; the body does not easily forget such long-practiced rituals. As a result, the artificial

alignment of nationality, citizenship, race, ethnicity, language, and cultural knowledges/practices leaves the interviewees permanently unqualified to be “authentic” or “loyal” citizens, or, sometimes, citizens at all.

In her discussion of multiple subjectivities, Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, “Inauthenticity is condemned as a *loss of origins* and a whitening (or faking) of non-Western values.”²⁹ Agreeing with Trinh’s statement, I find Western metaphysical approach, which accentuates unity and coherence of subjecthood, insufficient to the understanding of self/selves in Lisa’s description of what she called “living vicariously through [her]self.”

“I really like [appearing to be native Chinese] when I [am] vacationing in China ... I don’t have a Beijing accent, so that [people] know that I am not from Beijing. [So] when I tell them I am from out of Beijing, they won’t really be able to tell whether my accent is from being abroad for so long or from whatever that city [I tell them I am from]. I would always do that on taxi rides, and I will tell them a different story ... Deception itself carries a certain exhilaration ... Also, because I am fluent in Chinese and know a lot of Chinese culture, I can just pull up such an intricate, flawless, and zero loophole plan to deceive this [taxi driver], who is natively Chinese and so much older than me. This may be somewhat touching upon my roots-roots that I initially planted in China ... I come back to where I was born, with a foreigner’s perspective, but also under the disguise of [being] native Chinese ... It is in a way, living vicariously through myself. [It is] the part of life that I never had, but I can relive it with [made-up] stories ... Because of my knowledge in China and cultural heritage my parents gave me, I am able to imagine [what I would have become] if I had lived in China. It’s like an altered ego of me, the different me that could have been alive if I had made a

29 Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989), 89 (emphasis in original).

different choice [to stay in Beijing instead of moving to Canada].” — Lisa

Unlike Taylor, Lisa takes her inconsistent modality of being, or what Norma Alarcón names “plural personality,” to be pleasurable.³⁰ In concocting a personhood that is accepted by the population of her birthplace, Lisa can, to certain extent, manipulate her lingual and behavioral hexis at her will. That is, her psychic and psychological habitus is limited to neither Canadian nor Chinese territory, but dispersed transnationally. Lisa’s vicarious encounters with her “roots-roots” serve as the completing element to her mental schema; the influence of Chinese cultural experiences in her younger childhood, which might have been suppressed or made invisible after her many years in Canada, has not diminished in her life overseas. Lisa’s temporary personas serve as an evidence of the typical quality of Third Culture Kids, that their transcultural experiences do not eradicate their heritage culture(s). In other words, the interviewees are detached from “the national normativities of their parents’ countries of origin and from dominant [Western culture] itself, even as they remembered ethnicities, racializations and cultural differences.”³¹ Their daily experiences provide a potential insight through which they can gain a better understanding of themselves as spearheads of globalization. This gives them an opportunity to become “critically thinking [people who] can transform [themselves and others.]”³²

CONCLUSION

Now and then, one hears “Berkeley has no *authentic* [insert ethnicity] food!” “Authentic” is often the description given to a set of precise practices consistent with what one has initially experienced or told about. Thus, ironically, the objective presence or lack of

30 Norma Alarcón, “The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism,” in *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, ed. Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim (New York: Routledge, 2003), 413.

31 Paola Bacchetta, “Transnational Borderlands,” 118.

32 bell hooks, *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*, DVD, directed by Sut Jhally (Media Education Foundation, 1997).

authenticity is highly subjective. Then what is an authentic Third Culture Kid? How do we measure that authenticity? Because Third Culture Kids cannot be neatly categorized according to their physical inheritance or other cis-cultural standards, so people often rely on what countries TCKs have been to and what languages they can speak to determine their ethnicity. People also often ask TCKs how fluent they are in various languages, measured against the national language of their birth country or the first language they speak fluently – when often, those are not interchangeable. Generally, the more languages TCKs speak, the more likely others are to be fascinated with them or even fetishize them. Such a common reduction of TCKs to simply a group of people with certain linguistic capitals, though also unmistakable privileges, simultaneously strips them of their sociocultural context. Too often, people fail to understand the communication among languages within one's mind, sometimes fostered without one's conscious effort, the interstitial space that magically bridges seemingly irreconcilable spheres of expression. That is the very core of the third culture experience – neither legal nor geographical, but a relational bond that empathetically ties Third Culture Kids together regardless of the countries each individual has lived in. There can be a former expatriate, but no former TCK; transculturality grows not out of 'having done' but out of 'continuously doing' each culture in seamless combination. Language and the act of speaking are central to this process of creating identity. Because each Third Culture Kid has a different third culture, internally authentic and shaped by their intertwined languages, *there exists no such "authentic" TCK-ness.*

REFLECTION

Three other interviewees, “B,” “N,” “E”—whom I did not introduce in this paper—offered insights into (neo)colonial, neoliberal capitalism that underlie their TCK experiences in the international schools. “B” attended British international school in Hong Kong where she learned that her Cantonese friends, born before Hong Kong's independence in 1997, have British passports. Their passport status, in tandem with their international school

degrees, tremendously helped her peers go abroad for their accepted colleges—often prestigious Western universities. Interestingly, B also said that the closer a school is to nature, the higher the chance it is Anglo-dominant. In contrast, urban international schools are often populated with Asian students. B's closing remark was that she “do[es] not feel like an outsider, but that does not mean [she is] an insider.” The next interviewee, N, is a half-Japanese half-Anglo American biracial TCK who lived in Japan, Italy, and the United States. However, during her childhood, N “never felt the need to define [her]self,” because “most of [her] friends were in a similar situation [as TCKs.]” It was only after she came to UC Berkeley, where identity politics pervade, that N fully explored her identities. However, she did face some discrimination by other TCKs in her high school, who were condescending to N because her family traveled due to military service, not for business. Lastly, E is a Taiwanese TCK who joked that she is a “Thaiwanesee,” as her entire childhood was spent in Thailand. E brought up that, due to Japanese occupation of Taiwan, her grandparents speak Japanese. After Japan's loss in World War II ended its colonization of Taiwan, China banned Japanese and Taiwanese cultures. As E had to struggle with maintaining her Taiwanese cultural and linguistic legacy, she found her postcolonial childhood in Thailand refreshing. In her first year at UC Berkeley, E joined both TASA and ThaiSA, student associations for Taiwanese and Thai students.

As I interviewed each participant, I was surprised to learn what kind of presuppositions I had made unconsciously as to the common TCK experience. Before the formal interview began, I told each interviewee that I identify as a TCK, having lived in South Korea, China, and the United States in that order. The pre-interview “coming out” was to foster trust and transparency, and lessen power dynamics between the researcher (myself) and the research subject. Some participants wondered why I am only interviewing women-identified TCKs. I did not tell them that I felt more connected to them than the men-identified ones. As the interviews took place, I became uncertain of that conviction. They were talking about lives I could not relate to. It was then I realized my TCK struggle was not only further exacerbated by, but had also merged with, my loneliness as a genderqueer person in medical transition. I have been constantly required to meet others' fantasies of who I am, denied the agency

to determine my identities in my own terms. Indeed, throughout my childhood, I did not have anyone in whom I could confide my concerns. The repeated failure to appease my unacknowledged and repressed selves has motivated me to pursue research on how other TCKs experienced their early adulthood. Although I had long ago learned the concept of intersectionality, or the simultaneity of all identities at all times, it was eye-opening to see the apparent disparity of the interviewees’ lives from mine.

When I contacted Taylor to confirm her background information, she asked me why I am not analyzing the interview of a person, “N,” whom Taylor had recommended I interview. Taylor said because N had lived in more countries than she had, N had much more interesting stories to offer to my analysis. But I chose to analyze Taylor and Lisa precisely because their self-claimed TCK status is seemingly contestable. They have lived “only” in a few cultures, “too long” in Hong Kong and Canada, respectively. Besides, their documents say they are Chinese American and Chinese Canadian. One’s self-determination of their own identity is often ignored, especially those identities that are considered to be inherent in a person’s phenotypes. I did not want to perpetuate the tendency to quantify the worth of each TCK’s experience based on how often or how distantly one moved around during childhood. If Third Culture Kids as a group already lack *ciscultural loyalty*, why hierarchize who is more “TCK” amongst them? Transgender people experience reductionist questioning of identity authenticity much more invasively. Cisgender people often invalidate the gender with which transgender individual identifies, and a cisgender person’s measurement is based on the degree of physical “transformation” a transgender individual dutifully went through. Both gender and culture present themselves in uncountable ways. They are not something we can explicate in words, because they don’t happen in words. They happen in the worlds each one of us occupies and imagines differently.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agathangelou, Anna M., Bassichis, M. Daniel, and Spira, Tamara L.. “Intimate Investments: Homonormativity, Global Lockdown, and the Seductions of Empire.” *Radical History Review* 100, (Winter 2008): 120-143.
- Alarcón, Norma. “The Theoretical Subjects of This Bridge Called My Back and Anglo-American Feminism.” In *Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives*, edited by Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, 404-414. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Alexander, M. Jacqui and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. “Introduction: Genealogies, Legacies, Movements.” In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ix-xii. New York: Routledge, 1997.
- Anderson, Benedict. “Introduction.” In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 1-8. New York: Verso, 1983.
- Appadurai, Arjun. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.” In *Globalization: The Reader*, edited by J. Beynon and D. Dunkerley, 92-100. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Bacchetta, Paola. “Transnational Borderlands. Gloria Anzaldúa’s Epistemologies of Resistance and Lesbians ‘of Color’ in Paris.” In *El Mundo Zurdo: Selected Works from the Society for the Study of Gloria Anzaldúa 2007 to 2009*, edited by Norma Cantu, Christina L. Gutierrez, Norma Alarcón and Rita E. Urquijo-Ruiz, 109-128. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 2010.
- Berlant, Lauren. “Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roundtable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejić, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanović.” *TDR/The Drama Review*, 56.4 (2012): 163-77.
- Butler, Judith. “Survivability, Vulnerability, Affect.” In *Frames of War*, 33-63. New York: Verso, 2009.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories, 2003.
- Dwyer, Arienne M. “The Texture of Tongues: Languages and Power in China.” In *Nationalism and Ethnoregional Identities in China*, edited by William Safran, 68-85. New York: Frank Cass, 1998.

Ferguson, Roderick. “Reading Intersectionality.” *Trans-Scripts* 2 (2012): 91-99.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2000.

hooks, bell. *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*. DVD. Directed by Sut Jhally. Media Education Foundation, 1997.

Kang, Laura Hyun Yi. “The Uses of Asianization: Figuring Crises, 1997-98 and 2007-?” *American Quarterly* Volume 64, No. 3 (September 2012): 411-436.

Kristeva, Julia. “Approaching Abjection.” In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, 4. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982.

Melamed, Jodi. *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2011.

Ong, Aihwa. “Higher Learning in Global Space.” In *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, 139-56. Durham: Duke UP, 2006.

Ortiz, Fernando. “The Ethnography and Transculturation of Havana Tobacco and the Beginnings of Sugar in America.” In *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, 97-103. Durham and London: Duke UP, 1995.

Peterson, V. Spike. “Sexing Political Identities: Nationalism as Heterosexism.” In *Women, States and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?*, edited by Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and Mary Tétraut, 54-80. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Pollock, David C., and Van Reken Ruth E. *The Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing up among Worlds*. Yarmouth, Me.: Intercultural, 2001.

Rodan, Garry, and Kevin Hewison. “Introduction—Globalization, Conflict, and Political Regimes in East and Southeast Asia.” In *Neoliberalism and Conflict in Asia after 9/11*, edited by Garry Rodan and Kevin Hewison, 1-24. London: Routledge, 2006.

Said, Edward W. “Latent and Manifest Orientalism.” In *Orientalism*, 205-09. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

Seigworth, Gregory J., and Melissa Gregg. “An Inventory of Shimmers.” In *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg, 1. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010.

TCKid.com. “What are Cross Cultural Kids?” *TCKid: A Home For Third Culture Kids – Building Cross Cultural Bridges*. Accessed February 25, 2015. <http://tckid.com/crossculturalkid.html>

TCKWorld.com. “TCK World proudly presents: Dr. Ruth Hill Useem -- the sociologist/anthropologist who first coined the term “Third Culture Kid” (“TCK”).” *TCKWorld: The Official Home of Third Culture Kids*. Accessed December 17, 2014. <http://www.tckworld.com/useem/home.html>

Trinh, T. Minh-Ha. *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1989.

Seeking Partnership: The Development of Human Rights in Cambodia Since 1993

Grayson Dimick

ABSTRACT

The practices of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia from 1975 to 1978 resulted in both the brutal physical and physiological trauma of the Cambodian people, and an unshakable association between Cambodia, genocide, and the violation of basic human rights in the minds of the international community. Following years of inaction, the international community sought to remedy the situation through the 1992 United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC). A massive amount of resources were devoted to developing a self-sufficient system of human rights in Cambodia. These initial hopes have not been met. This paper uses the legal system—an integral part in development and protection of human rights—as a case study to explore the factors for this stagnation. The inability for human rights to flourish has been the product of a lack of partnership between the Cambodian government and civil society organizations. This lack of partnership stems from the government's desire for power and growing mistrust of civil society, thus rendering the initial promise for Cambodian human rights unfulfilled.

INTRODUCTION

After years of inaction by the international community in the face of the Khmer Rouge, Vietnamese invasion, and the ensuing civil war, the stage was finally set for a long-overdue United Nations (UN) address of the Cambodian conflict in the early 1990s, with a clear mandate from the international community for the development of human rights. The 1991 Paris Peace Conference on Cambodia produced the “Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict,” thus paving the way for the United Nations Transitional Authority for Cambodia (UNTAC) to enter Cambodia from 1992 through 1993 in order to supervise a ceasefire, prepare Cambodia for a new constitution, and guarantee free and fair elections.¹ In line with the human rights emphasis, UNTAC was explicitly mandated to foster “an environment in which respect for human rights shall be ensured,” while Cambodia itself was called upon, following its return of sovereignty in 1993, “to take effective measures to ensure that the policies and practices of the past shall never be allowed to return.”²

Beyond reforms at the state level, the development of an active civil society would also be critical to Cambodia’s transformation. The emergence and existence of civil society, primarily in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are viewed by many political theorists as a precondition for democracy, as they provide a counterweight to state power and create a communicative public sphere in which both the general and dissenting interests can be rationally and critically discussed.³ Although the development and protection of human rights in the immediate post-UNTAC era were initially met with cautious optimism (thanks to external efforts to train local governmental and civil society institutions into partners

1 “Text: Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict.” US Institute of Peace. February 22, 2000. Accessed November 1, 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 Ishkanian, Armine. “Democracy Promotion and Civil Society.” In *Global Civil Society 2007/8: Communicative Power and Democracy*, ed. Martin, Glasius, Marlies, Anheier, Helmut K. and Kaldor, Mary. London: SAGE Publications, 2007, 58-61.

in a self-sufficient system) in the decade since the 1993 elections, the Cambodian government has grown to be an unwilling partner due to its desire for power and subsequent mistrust of civil society, rendering initial hopes for Cambodian human rights unfulfilled.

EARLY OPTIMISM: 1993 TO THE LATE 1990's

In the years immediately following the UN mandate, the development of human rights was contingent upon external efforts to help build, train, and strengthen both government and civil society institutions in order to foster long term self sufficiency in Cambodia. The May 1993 elections brought an end to UNTAC's mandate, transitioning power to a democratically elected government in which the FUNCINPEC (*Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant Neutre Pacifique Et Coopératif*, French for "National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful and Cooperative Cambodia") and CPP (Cambodian People's Party) jointly ruled to form the Royal Government of Cambodia.⁴ With the end of UNTAC's mandate, Cambodia was expected to begin the course towards democracy and work to uphold the variety of rights the UN had outlined as being required in accordance with accepted international conventions. Yet there was initial pushback to the idea that Cambodians were now required to be responsible for their own protection of human rights—a remarkable number of Cambodian citizens placed an invalid mark on the 1993 elections ballot to express a vote for the United Nations in hopes that the UN "might deliver them from the weight of past sufferings."⁵

Cambodians' distrust of the government's ability or desire to safeguard human rights was far from unfounded, drawing upon the horrific events that had occurred at the hand of the government less than twenty years prior. Upon seizure of power on April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge had virtually eliminated all forms of political culture in order to reconstruct society from zero and impose their radical

4 Downie, Sue and Damien Kingsbury. "Political Development and the Re-emergence of Civil Society and Cambodia." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, No. 1 (2001): 42-43..

5 Duffy, Terence. "Toward a Culture of Human Rights in Cambodia." *Human Rights Quarterly* 16, No. 1 (1994): 83.

Maoist and Marxist-Leninist ideology. To transform Cambodia into a rural, classless society, the Khmer Rouge abolished the concepts of time, money, judicial authority, free markets, private property, normal schooling, traditional Khmer practices, and religion,⁶ while simultaneously psychologically reorienting the people away from their attachments to home, village, and Buddhism through mass relocation.⁷ Within days of the Khmer Rouge's seizure of power, around two million people from Phnom Penh and other cities were forced into the countryside to undertake agricultural work. The regime eliminated hundreds of thousands of those it deemed "impure," including ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Cham, Vietnamese, and Chinese, members of the previous Lon Nol regime, intellectuals, and city residents.⁸ The government granted citizens a degree of rights based upon their political and social past. However, it quickly became clear that nobody truly possessed rights under the Khmer Rouge.⁹ Those suspected of being disloyal were brutally tortured and executed in a prevailing climate of fear and paranoia.¹⁰ Children were encouraged to spy on their parents, and those speaking foreign languages were assumed to be CIA spies.¹¹

Altogether, around two million Cambodians died from disease, starvation, execution, or exhaustion from overwork under the Khmer Rouge's state of Democratic Kampuchea between April 1975 and January 1979.¹²

In light of the events of the Khmer Rouge regime and the subsequent power struggle for control of Cambodia from 1978-1992 between the Vietnamese-backed People's Republic of Kampuchea regime and several factional groups, including those lead by former Khmer Rouge leaders, the Cambodian people had every reason to distrust political authority,¹³ yet over ninety percent of the registered electorate voted in the May 1993 elections—a rate comparable to

6 Dy, Khamboly. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*. Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2007: 2.

7 Duffy, 85-87.

8 Dy, 2.

9 Duffy, 85-87.

10 Ibid.

11 Dy, 37-46.

12 Ibid., 4.

13 Ibid., 61.

voter turnout in democratic countries in which voting is compulsory, such as Australia.¹⁴ This degree of turnout was deemed “remarkable in a country constrained by electoral intimidation and blighted by poverty,” as well as one that had never before participated in a meaningful democratic process.¹⁵ International observers heralded the high levels of participation as a sign of Cambodians’ hope in their newly emerging country.¹⁶

In order to build upon this hope and upon the groundwork that UNTAC had laid out, in the years following 1993, Cambodia saw a large number of external actors working towards educating the Cambodian government and citizens about human rights and helping the formation of local NGOs. Education took a variety of forms: television and radio media, the distribution of Khmer language leaflets in the countryside explaining human rights and where to file human rights violation complaints, the development of curriculum for teachers, and the introduction of specialized courses at the University of Phnom Penh, such as “Journalism and the Law.”¹⁷ Many of these efforts were undertaken by the UN, which interpreted the Paris Peace Agreement as giving the organization a continued mandate to supervise human rights in Cambodia after the official end of the UNTAC mission. This led to the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Cambodia Country Office in October 1993 and a United Nations Human Rights Center (which were merged in 1998), as well as an independent Special Rapporteur on Cambodia.¹⁸ However, collaboration from various individual nations (with significant bilateral financial assistance from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Sweden, and the United States) and foreign NGOs was also abundant.¹⁹ Human rights symposiums were organized with the goal of connecting fledging Cambodian human rights groups with regional Asian NGOs, while foreign NGOs and aid organizations focused on providing support

for grassroots initiatives.²⁰ By utilizing this vast array of approaches, external actors hoped to capture and fully engage, educate, and invigorate all aspects of Cambodian society in the protection of rights, from the government to civil society to citizens.

While these early efforts relied on external resources, their objective was to directly empower Cambodia to become self-sufficient, not to implant a foreign apparatus responsible for the protection of Cambodians’ human rights. This emphasis on local sustainability is exemplified by The Human Rights Education Project for Health Professionals in Cambodia. In 1993, the American Refugee Committee (ARC), in collaboration with the international organization Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) and with the cooperation of the Cambodian Ministry of Health and the Faculty of Medicine in Phnom Penh, began developing a human rights education program for Cambodian health professionals.²¹ With the help of Cambodian health professionals, representatives of local human rights organizations, and a Buddhist monk, the international team worked to produce a twenty hour curriculum and one hundred page syllabus in Khmer in order to educate health professionals about the definition and importance of human rights and its connection to the practice of medicine, including the treatment of victims of human rights abuses, such as torture, rape, and war-related injuries (i.e. landmines).²² In 1993 alone, 3,217 doctors, midwives, nurses, medical students, and medical assistants were trained, all with the goal of incorporating these individuals into the national Cambodian human rights dialogue.²³

Thus, in this climate of broad and innovative collaboration immediately following UNTAC’s mandate, many felt optimistic about the future of human rights in Cambodia, especially drawing encouragement from the actions of local civil society and the government, who were working both separately and collaboratively. Michael Kirby, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Human Rights in Cambodia, focused

²⁰ Duffy, 100.

²¹ Keller, Allen S., Sin Kim Horn, Sam Sopheap, and Gabriel Otterman. “Human Rights Education for Cambodian Health Professionals.” *Health and Human Rights* 1, No. 3 (1995): 258.

²² Keller, 259-260.

²³ Ibid., 265.

¹⁴ Downie, 45.

¹⁵ Duffy, 84.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 99.

¹⁸ “OHCHR in Cambodia.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2014. Accessed November 5, 2014.

¹⁹ Downie, 56..

extensively on the perceived positive developments coming out of Cambodia in his reflection on his sixth mission to Cambodia in August 1995. Kirby wrote, “I remain hopeful about Cambodia. On balance, the good news is undoubtedly more important than the bad. Progress continues to be made.”²⁴

CASE STUDY: THE CAMBODIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

The initial post-UNTAC developments—cautious optimism in the face of the need for significant work, external involvement, and the goal of an enduring governmental and civil society partnership—can be characterized by the initial post-1993 developments in Cambodia’s judicial system. In Cambodia, as in the rest of the world, the protection of human rights is inseparably linked with the broader issue of administration of justice.²⁵ Without a functioning judicial system to ensure that rights are upheld, fair trials ensue, and police and government officials are kept within the law, efforts to develop human rights are futile.

In the early 1990s, the Cambodian legal system did not require mere adjustments—it had to be built entirely from scratch. The Khmer Rouge had destroyed the system: legislators, prosecutors, judges, and law professors were either killed or forced to flee for their lives, while law books and court buildings were destroyed. At the completion of the Khmer Rouge’s massacres, an estimated six to ten legal professionals survived in Cambodia.²⁶ Between 1979 and 1993, the situation had minimal progress, with areas of the country still lacking a formal system of adjudication in 1993 and the concept of a right to defense remaining non-existent.²⁷ Judges’ education levels ranged from possessing a high school degree to completing one year of schooling at a university, plus the completion of a three to five month

24 Kirby, Michael. “Human Rights, the United Nations and Cambodia.” *The Australian Quarterly* 67, No. 4 (1995): 257-259.

25 Duffy, 100.

26 Donovan, Dolores A. “Cambodia: Rebuilding a Legal System from Scratch.” *The International Lawyer* 27, No. 2 (1993): 445

27 Duffy, 101.

law course offered by the Institute of Public Administration and Law between 1982 and 1989.²⁸ Any steps taken towards improvement prior to 1993 were limited by the sheer lack of resources, including laws on record, personnel, money, and trained individuals (there was not a single private lawyer in Cambodia in 1993).²⁹ While the new constitution, adopted in September 1993, outlined the judicial system in New Chapter XI, the structure remained vague and aspects went unimplemented. Article 128, for example, declares “The Judiciary shall guarantee and uphold impartiality and protect the rights and freedoms of the citizens,” yet provides no mechanisms for guaranteeing judges’ good behavior.³⁰ Even the optimistic Special Representative Kirby was not blind to the glaring limitations of the Cambodian legal system. In 1995, Kirby wrote:

Cambodia’s judges are paid the equivalent of only \$US20 per month ... Whereas other professionals can often supplement their earnings, judges cannot easily do so ... There is an urgent need to pay them the minimum that will ensure that those with the will to do so can live with complete financial independence of the litigants. Improvements in the fixed scheduling of cases and the rigorous training of the judiciary are needed to enhance the reputation of the judges and the respect in which they are held by the community.³¹

Thus, the first task of external actors was to help Cambodia begin to develop safeguards for judicial independence in order to ensure the legal system is free of corruption and is trusted by a population that had little historical reason to accept the legitimacy of the courts. Significant work was immediately undertaken to train judges, defense lawyers, and police.³² This is not to imply that the new government was completely compliant and receptive to the proposed reforms—the Second Prime Minister, Hun Sen, informed the UN

28 Donovan, 450.

29 *Ibid.*, 446.

30 “The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Accessed November 1, 2014.

31 Kirby, 36.

32 Duffy, 101.

Special Representative in 1995 that he must refrain from criticizing the government (including its legal system) or see his post ended.³³ However, the work conducted to train both government members of their responsibilities and citizens of their rights exemplifies that some progress was tentatively being made on both sides.

MISTRUST: LATE 1990's TO PRESENT

Although the development of civil society organizations and NGOs has proliferated since the late 1990s, their ability to make significant human rights contributions, as well as the growth of human rights protections in general, has been hindered by the government, which has focused far less on democracy and much more on the consolidation of power in the hands of Hun Sen.

Local NGOs began to emerge during the UNTAC period, and with the support of the UN and other external sources of funding and technical assistance in the immediate post-UNTAC period, they grew from 100 in number in early 1996 to over 400 fully established by the mid-2000s.³⁴ While a small number of these NGOs are involved in business or are instruments of political parties, unsurprisingly, the vast majority of NGOs seek to contribute to the peace-building process and many directly emphasize the promotion of human rights.³⁵ Some critics argue that Cambodian civil society remains too reliant on foreign aid, giving outsiders the ability to dictate action rather than produce change from within.³⁶ Regardless of foreign aid, however, it is undeniable that Cambodian NGOs have developed significantly and are making concrete gains. Among the most prolific of these are the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) and the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC). While retaining overlapping goals, the two NGOs specialize in different areas: ADHOC focuses on a three-pronged program of Human Rights, Land and Natural

³³ Kirby, 37.

³⁴ Downie, 59-60.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Dosch, Jörn, "The Role of Civil Society in Cambodia's Peace-building Process: Have Foreign Donors Made a Difference?" *Asian Survey* 52, No. 6 (2012): 1073-74

Resource Rights, and Women and Children's Rights,³⁷ while LICADHO focuses primarily on monitoring, documentation and advocacy in order to "render government officials accountable" and to promote transparency.³⁸ Today, both organizations are domestically, regionally, and internationally supported, and are recognized as strong voices drawing the Cambodian people and government's attention, as well as international attention, to the plight of human rights in Cambodia.³⁹

Yet despite the extensive education efforts of the immediate post-UNTAC period, the government has failed to fully understand and trust NGOs' role as their integral partner in the development of human rights. A lack of understanding has led to a deep suspicion of the organizations' motives—civil society, especially non-governmental organizations, are regarded as "anti-government" and, therefore, as opposition. There are two possible explanations for this: entrenched political polarization in Cambodia is characterized by the common attitude of "if you are not with us, you are against us"; and the fact that civil society often calls for change, which itself usually challenges the government.⁴⁰ It is easy to blame the Khmer Rouge for many of Cambodia's apparent shortcomings: the lack of trust and cooperation between the government and NGOs can be directly tied to the Khmer Rouge period, during which individuals realized they could not trust neighbors, siblings, or even their own children.⁴¹ While the Khmer Rouge-inflicted attitude is a compelling argument, a much more likely explanation for the lack of governmental trust is the perceived challenge NGOs—and human rights themselves—pose to the government, and, most notably, to the prime minister himself.

Elected in the May 1993 FUNCINPEC-CPP power sharing arrangement, Hun Sen, a former Khmer Rouge official, used the military to arrest Norodom Ranariddh (his co-prime minister under the UN-implemented power sharing arrangement) and Ranariddh's

³⁷ "ADHOC's Background." ADHOC: Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association. 2011. Accessed 1 November 2014

³⁸ "LICADHO: About US." LICADHO Cambodia. 2014. Accessed November 1, 2014.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Downie, 57.

⁴¹ Ibid., 50.

supporters, initiating a coup and claiming sole power over the government of Cambodia in 1997. Since then, Prime Minister Sen—in his 30th year as Cambodia’s preeminent politician as of 2015—has done everything within his reach to maintain his grasp on society, including the silencing of all political threats, most notably the opposition leader Sam Rainsy. In addition, most media is owned and controlled by the government.⁴² The growing NGO sector too has not escaped Sen’s reach in his quest for absolute, authoritarian power. While building upon the paths to partnerships and collaboration that were established in the immediate post-UNTAC period, the government formally has a variety of mechanisms to involve NGOs in development strategy plans, policy implementation, and dialogue. In reality, NGOs have scant influence on government policy and limited means for dialogue due to the Sen’s interpretation of the organizations as fundamentally threatening.⁴³ Sen attempted to further curtail the power of NGOs through a proposed 2011 law requiring all civil society groups working in the country to register to work and to send reports to the government on their activities. Although the law’s passage has been delayed due to domestic and international pressure, the government has continued to limit NGOs via indirect prohibitions on the right to assembly (e.g., requirements for advance notice, limits on numbers of participants, bans on demonstrations on national holidays) through the Law on Peaceful Demonstrations, restrictions on operations in provinces outside of the NGOs’ home province created by the Ministry of the Interior, financial disclosure requirements (which are challenging for both small organizations and organizations working on sensitive issues, such as human rights violations or human trafficking), and an overall weak legal framework which is open to the interpretation and whim of the government.⁴⁴

As a result of the government’s clear distrust and disregard for NGOs, “Cambodian civil society does not comply with the mainstream notion of civil society as a largely independent third sector, distinct from government and business. Rather, it is best

42 Zook, Darren. “Cambodia’s Democracy: Disillusion, Despair, and Development.” Lecture, Berkeley, October 22, 2014.

43 “NGO Law Monitor: Cambodia.” International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. 2012. Accessed March 10, 2015.

44 “NGO Law Monitor: Cambodia.”

understood as a state tolerated, and in some limited cases, state co-opted, loosely organized, collective actor that comes into play wherever and whenever the government does not, or cannot, get involved.”⁴⁵ As the former ambassador, and then-President of the Asia Society, Nicholas Platt stated in 2000, civil society organizations in Cambodia form a “sort of shadow government that provides services ranging from the protection of women, to the digging of wells, to the provision of legal aid.”⁴⁶ Statistics on international financial assistance paint a telling picture. Total disbursements of foreign aid totaled \$1.075 billion in 2010 and an estimated \$1.235 billion in 2011—an amount equivalent to 9.4% of Cambodia’s gross domestic product, equal to \$78 per capita. Cambodia is, thus, the second-most aid-dependent country in Southeast Asia, behind Laos, and is roughly on par with the assistance that developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa receive.⁴⁷ Equally important to the amount of aid money flowing in is the consideration of to whom it is flowing. Increasingly, Cambodian NGOs are “the preferred partners of foreign donors, many of whom are reluctant to provide substantial direct assistance or budget support to the RGC [Royal Government of Cambodia] because of the high level of corruption.”⁴⁸ For example, even after the United States Congress lifted the restrictions which had barred most forms of direct assistance to the Cambodian government in 2007, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs on issues such as HIV/AIDS and basic educations continue to be largely implemented through partnerships with a variety of NGOs rather than through state agencies.⁴⁹

REVISITING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

Again, the developments of the Cambodian legal system provide a microcosm of the broader status of development and protection of human rights within Cambodia from the late 1990s to the present. Strong development of NGOs in relation to the legal

45 Dosch, 1072.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid., 1067.

48 Ibid., 1068.

49 Ibid.

system is evident: an entire division of ADHOC is devoted to legal aid for human rights cases, including incurring the legal fees of the victim's defense, providing the victim and their families with legal counsel, assisting victims in drafting their complaints, covering transportation and accommodation costs for the victims to attend proceeding, and monitoring the proceedings themselves.⁵⁰ However, civil society's commitment to improving the legal system has not been matched by an equal government effort. A 2010 report noted "although there was some improvement in the courts' handling of ordinary cases, in those involving political or economic interests, judges functioned as tools of the elite in an ever-increasing number and variety of trials."⁵¹

This corruption and cronyism stem from the very top, as Hun Sen continues to use every tool in his arsenal to silence and punish critics of his regime; he utilizes the courts as his key weapon. The late 2000s saw a shift away from the crude violence of the 1900s in favor of capitalizing upon the legal system, including a new penal code, which effectively outlawed any criticism of the judiciary.⁵² A report published by LICADHO in December 2007, entitled "Human Rights in Cambodia: the Charade of Justice," demonstrates just how deeply the failings of the legal system run, focusing primarily on defamation and impunity. Defamation has not been decriminalized, despite Hun Sen's promise to do so in 2006 in light of international pressure, and remains a criminal offence for which people can be arrested and subject to fines of up to \$2,500.⁵³ Just one example of the legal system's failings LICADHO cites are the "repeated attempts to bring three Prey Veng province policemen to trial for allegedly beating robbery suspect Eath Oeurn to death in July 2001 [which] remain unsuccessful—a hearing scheduled for February 8, 2007, was postponed as the suspects, who remain in their positions, were 'too busy' to attend the court."⁵⁴ Beyond corruption, the legal

50 "Legal AID's Objectives." ADHOC: Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association. 2011. Accessed 30 October 2014.

51 Herder, Steve. "Cambodia in 2010: Hun Sen's Further Consolidation." *Asian Survey* 42, No. 1 (2011): 210

52 Ibid.

53 "Human Rights in Cambodia: the Charade of Justice." LICADHO Cambodia. December 2007. Accessed 30 October 2014.

54 Ibid.

system remains plagued by systemic underdevelopment due to lack of governmental action—for example, as of 2012, Cambodia still lacked a juvenile justice law, despite ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) in 1992.⁵⁵

It is not impossible to build trust in the legal system in Cambodia—this has already been done in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the UN-backed tribunal tasked with holding Khmer Rouge leaders accountable for their crimes. Known informally as the "Khmer Rouge Tribunal," the ECCC is a hybrid body consisting of parallel international and domestic judges and prosecutors.⁵⁶ While the domestic courts suffer massive mistrust, in 2010, 75% of the Cambodian public believed that the Tribunal was neutral and fair.⁵⁷ There are several potential explanations as to why the domestic courts have not been able to reach such a level of public trust. LICADHO asserts that the corruption and lack of development of the legal system is the result of millions of foreign dollars being channeled into the country for "reform" with no oversight attached.⁵⁸ There is certainly truth to this: Cambodia's newest patron, China, has offered generous financial assistance that comes with no strings attached. Additionally, the U.S. has shifted its policy towards Cambodia, deemphasizing demands for respecting human rights in favor of focusing on anti-terrorism and anti-drug trafficking policies, mirroring its broader shifts in foreign policy priorities post-2001.⁵⁹ Both developments have undercut international pressures for reform and have emboldened the Cambodian government to continue its corruption without fear of reprisal.

While international affairs have certainly played a role, the greatest blame for a weak and undeveloped justice system lies squarely on the shoulders of the Cambodian government. The government understands the concept of judicial independence, and is well aware that a stronger judiciary would weaken its grip on power. Reforms deemed necessary in 1993, including a raise in judges'

55 Ferraro, Carmela. "Cambodia Opens the Door to Juvenile Justice Reform." *The Guardian*. October 23, 2012. Accessed March 10, 2015.

56 Un, 783-784.

57 Un, 787.

58 "Human Rights in Cambodia: the Charade of Justice."

59 Un, Kheang. "The Khmer Rouge Tribunal: A Politically Compromised Search for Justice." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, No. 4 (2013): 786.

wages in 2003, have done little to promote public confidence: a 2005 survey of 2,000 households across Cambodia, found that “the courts came second only to the customs authority as being most dishonest, whilst providing the worst service.”⁶⁰ A concurrent survey of 1,200 businesses found that “the judiciary was viewed as the most corrupt public institution in the country.”⁶¹ It is clear that the government’s refusal to curb corruption (and the government’s participation in the corruption born out of a motivation to maintain power) or to listen to NGOs’ calls for reform have produced a judicial system that has only marginally progressed since its 1993 starting point.

CONCLUSION

It has been suggested that the key to moving forward lies in the past—that the ability to confront the worst symbols of the Khmer Rouge regime, the Tuol Sleng prison and the killing fields of Choeung Ek, with a commitment to reconciliation, rather than despair, will allow Cambodians to view these dark spaces as “enshrining the necessity for human rights” and release Cambodian society from the weight of suffering.⁶² There are many individuals and organizations in Cambodia who have already begun the hard work of educating and reclaiming human rights; however, this mentality is far from being shared by all. On the twentieth anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreement, the current UN Special Rapporteur on Cambodia, Professor Surya Subedi of Nepal, remarked that peace and stability have brought “enormous dividends” to the country. Yet he noted “the Agreements will remain relevant until their vision is a reality for all Cambodians.”⁶³ The protection of human rights has certainly progressed since the May 1993 elections, yet the development still leaves much to be desired. While civil society has actively championed the education and active promotion of human rights, the strong, self-sustaining system envisioned for Cambodia

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Duffy, 104.

⁶³ “Cambodia - 20 Years on from the Paris Peace Agreements.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. October 21, 2011. Accessed November 1, 2014.

in 1993 has failed to materialize. Although the large role that the young NGOs have played in the wake of governmental corruption is commendable, civil society acting alone is not sufficient, nor should it be the norm. A strong system of human rights will only materialize in Cambodia when both civil society and the government both view the protection of human rights as paramount to the country’s future and view each other as integral partners in the protection of human rights. Given the government’s increasing resistance to human rights, “the Agreement” will remain relevant for the foreseeable future, and the likelihood of the entirety of Cambodia being released from its suffering will, too, remain slim.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “ADHOC’s Background.” ADHOC: Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association. 2011. Accessed November 1, 2014. <http://www.adhoc-cambodia.org/?p=911>.
- “Cambodia - 20 Years on from the Paris Peace Agreements.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. October 21, 2011. Accessed November 1, 2014. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Cambodia20yearsonfromtheParisPeace.aspx>
- Donovan, Dolores A. “Cambodia: Rebuilding a Legal System from Scratch.” *The International Lawyer* 27. No. 2 (1993): 445-454.
- Dosch, Jörn, “The Role of Civil Society in Cambodia’s Peace-building Process: Have Foreign Donors Made a Difference?” *Asian Survey* 52, No. 6 (2012): 1067-1088.
- Downie, Sue and Damien Kingsbury. “Political Development and the Re-emergence of Civil Society and Cambodia.” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, No. 1 (2001): 43-64.
- Duffy, Terence. “Toward a Culture of Human Rights in Cambodia.” *Human Rights Quarterly* 16, No. 1 (1994): 82-104.
- Dy, Khamboly. *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)*. Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2007.
- Ferraro, Carmela. “Cambodia Opens the Door to Juvenile Justice Reform.” *The Guardian*. October 23, 2012. Accessed March 10, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2012/oct/23/cambodia-children-rights-justice-reform>
- Herder, Steve. “Cambodia in 2010: Hun Sen’s Further Consolidation.” *Asian Survey* 42, No. 1 (2011): 208-214.
- “Human Rights in Cambodia: the Charade of Justice.” LICADHO Cambodia. December 2007. Accessed 30 October 2014. <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/reports/files/113LICADHOReportCharadeJustice07.pdf>.
- Ishkanian, Armine. “Democracy Promotion and Civil Society.” In *Global Civil Society 2007/8: Communicative Power and Democracy*, ed. Martin, Glasius, Marlies, Anheier, Helmut K. and Kaldor, Mary, 58-85. London: SAGE Publications, 2007.
- Keller, Allen S., Sin Kim Horn, Sam Sopheap, and Gabriel Otterman. “Human Rights Education for Cambodian Health Professionals.” *Health and Human Rights* 1, No. 3 (1995): 256- 271.
- Kirby, Michael. “Human Rights, the United Nations and Cambodia.” *The Australian Quarterly* 67, No. 4 (1995): 26-39.
- “Legal AID’s Objectives.” ADHOC: Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association. 2011. Accessed 30 October 2014. http://www.adhoc-cambodia.org/?page_id=4116.
- “LICADHO: About US.” LICADHO Cambodia. 2014. Accessed November 1, 2014. <http://www.licadho-cambodia.org/aboutus.php>
- “NGO Law Monitor: Cambodia.” International Center for Not-for-Profit Law. 2012. Accessed March 10, 2015. <http://www.icnl.org/research/monitor/cambodia.html>.
- “OHCHR in Cambodia.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2014. Accessed November 5, 2014. <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/KHSummary.aspx>.
- “Text: Agreement on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict.” US Institute of Peace. February 22, 2000. Accessed November 1, 2014. http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/resources/collections/peace_agreements/agree_comppol_10231991.pdf.
- “The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia.” Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Accessed November 1, 2014. http://cambodia.ohchr.org/klc_pages/KLC_files/section_001/section_01_01_ENG.pdf.
- Un, Kheang. “The Khmer Rouge Tribunal: A Politically Compromised Search for Justice.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 72, No. 4 (2013): 783-792.
- Zook, Darren. “Cambodia’s Democracy: Disillusion, Despair, and Development.” Lecture, Berkeley, October 22, 2014.

The State of Interethnic Relations in Post-Soviet Central Asia: A Cultural, Historical, and Political Perspective

Ari Shusterman

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to analyze how and why interethnic relations differ among the five Post-Soviet Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Cultural, historical, and political factors are analyzed in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of interethnic relations and tensions in these five states. The two types of interethnic relations focused on here are interethnic relations between Russians and members of the titular nationality and interethnic relations between members of the titular nationality and members of other indigenous groups. Because of the complex role that Russia and Russians have played in Central Asia, interethnic relations between Russians and members of the titular nationalities are given more attention than interethnic relations between any two indigenous groups. The main conclusion of this paper is that Central Asian countries that strive to integrate themselves closer with Russia and Russian-dominated structures will have better interethnic relations, especially between Russians and the members of the titular nationality than those nations that do not pursue such a path.

INTRODUCTION

Post-Soviet Central Asia is a region of strategic importance for U.S. foreign policy. This region's copious supply of natural resources, such as oil and gas, make it economically important for neighboring countries such as Russia and China as well as for the United States. However, given Central Asia's proximity to Afghanistan and the Middle East, this region has significant military importance for the U.S. After the attacks on September 11, 2001, the Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan allowed the U.S. to host military bases on their territory for the purpose of fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Currently, with the rise of the Islamic State, formerly known as ISIS, and the partial withdrawal of American and NATO troops from Afghanistan, Central Asia's military and strategic importance has only grown. Thus, one of the main interests of the U.S. in regards to Central Asia is for this region to remain stable and secure against the threat of radical Islam. One of the main sources of instability in this region is ethnic tension, a complex topic that warrant further study.

Central Asia was part of the Russian Empire and subsequently the Soviet Union. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the five Soviet Socialist Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan became independent for the first time in history. Soon after gaining independence, the governments of these new nations were faced with a wide range of issues. The issue that is analyzed in this report is that of interethnic relations within each country. Due to their Russian legacy, there are many ethnic Russians and other minorities living in each nation, complicating interethnic relations. Furthermore, interethnic relations vary substantially among these countries as a result of cultural, historical, and political factors. Thus, the first step that needs to be taken towards understanding interethnic relations in Central Asia is understanding the culture and history of the region.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The indigenous peoples of Central Asia are of either Turkic or

Iranian descent. Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmens, and Uzbeks are Turkic peoples who speak Turkic languages, while Tajiks are Iranians who speak a variation of Persian. Traditionally, the peoples of Central Asia were either nomadic or sedentary: the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmens were nomadic peoples while the Tajiks and Uzbeks were sedentary peoples.¹ Before the Russian Empire began expanding into Central Asia in 1730, this region was composed of khanates, emirates, and tribal confederations. At this time, Islam was a dominant force in the region, providing the legal and moral structures of these states. The traditional Muslim social order promoted close family, clan, and tribal ties, which still play important roles in modern Central Asia.² Most importantly, as 19th century Russian historian Vasily Bartold noted, the peoples of Central Asia placed virtually no significance on ethnicity but rather viewed themselves as “Muslims”. This is evidence that ethnic tensions are a relatively new phenomenon in Central Asia, rather than one that existed for many centuries. Russia’s expansion and dominance of the region and the policies that were enacted as a result laid the framework for ethnic tensions in present-day Central Asia.

RUSSIAN EXPANSION INTO CENTRAL ASIA

Russian domination of Central Asia occurred in two main stages, a Russian Imperial and Soviet stage. Russian Imperial expansion took place from 1730 to 1884. The Russian Empire first expanded into Kazakhstan in 1730 and then from 1864 to 1884, expanded into the rest of Central Asia. Russia expanded into Central Asia for various reasons, such as its need for a new source of cotton and its participation in the Great Game against the British Empire. By 1867, the Governor-Generalship of Russian Turkestan was established under General Konstantin Petrovich Von Kaufman, with its headquarters at Tashkent.

¹ Almay, Kunanbay. “Nomads,” *Smithsonian Institution*, Accessed March 8th, 2015. http://www.festival.si.edu/past_festivals/silk_road/program_alma_kunanbay.aspx

² Dilip Hiro. *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*. (New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2009). 70.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Russian Empire fell and a bloody civil war ensued. As a result of these events, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was established in 1922. The Soviet Union divided Russian Turkestan into administrative units called Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR). For the administration of Central Asia, the Soviets implemented several policies, the most important of which was its national delimitation policy. This involved the drawing of borders along ethno-linguistic lines under the belief that language defines a nation. Most importantly, national delimitation marked the borders of the modern day nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. The primary goals of the policy of national delimitation were to stem feelings of Pan-Turkism, ease local administration, and serve as a step towards the construction of Communism.

EFFECTS OF RUSSIAN RULE ON INTERETHNIC RELATIONS

During the period of Imperial Russian rule, Russia exploited Central Asia for its resources and allowed Russians to settle in Central Asia, but did not interfere in the cultural and religious practices of the region. One of the positive impacts of Russian control of the region was its modernization through the construction of railroads and industrial plants. On the other hand, the Russian Empire expropriated the indigenous peoples’ lands and gave them to Russian farmers, who began to arrive in large numbers. The first display of major ethnic tensions between Russians and Central Asians was the Basmachi Revolt, which started in Russian Turkestan in 1916 and lasted until 1942, when it was put down by the Soviets. This revolt was caused by the discontent of the Central Asian population towards the Russian rule of the region. Presently, Central Asian authorities, for the purpose of increasing nationalism and legitimizing their rule, have depicted the Basmachi Revolt as a national liberation movement and have heavily emphasized its role in history.³ This has contributed to the increase in nationalism and Russophobic views among certain

³ “The Socio-Historical Dimensions of Basmachi Movement.” https://www.academia.edu/492602/Basmachi_Movement.re

members of the indigenous population, posing potential problems for the maintenance of positive interethnic relations.

A very important effect of Russian rule of Central Asia is the influx of Russians to this region. Although Russians first started relocating to Central Asia during Imperial Russian rule, the relocation of Russians to Central Asia during the Soviet period was much more extensive. For instance, between the years 1926 and 1939, 1.7 million men left European Russia to live in Central Asia. Most of the Russian settlers were skilled workers who were looking for economic opportunities. During World War II, many Russians and other Soviet peoples relocated to Central Asia to ensure their security. The Central Asian country which had the largest percentage of Russians during the Soviet era was Kazakhstan, followed by Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. The large number of Russians in these territories has significantly affected the state of interethnic relations in this region. In these countries, interethnic relations between Russians and the indigenous population vary among these countries.

The policy of national delimitation has had a significant effect on interethnic relations and tensions. Although the policy mostly succeeded in incorporating the five main titular nationalities into reasonable administrative units, the borders imposed by this policy destroyed the traditional organization of the region. Before these divisions, Central Asians didn't view themselves in terms of ethnicities and national identities, but rather in terms of clan and tribal affiliations.⁴ Therefore, the constructed borders did not always correspond with the cultural, linguistic, and ethnic dynamics of certain areas, such as the case of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.⁵ Tajiks were only assigned their own Soviet Socialist Republic in 1929, which came into existence after it split from the Uzbek SSR. In the process of splitting from the Uzbek SSR, several Tajik-dominated areas, such as the Tajik cultural centers of Bukhara and Samarkand, remained part of the Uzbek SSR, and not in Tajikistan where they logically belonged.⁶ Even today, these two regions are mostly inhabited by Tajiks and are a potential source of ethnic tensions between Tajiks and Uzbeks. Thus, the artificial borders created by Soviet policies

4 Cummings, *Understanding Central Asia*, 30.

5 "The Soviet Nationality Policy in Central Asia", last modified 2013, <http://www.studentpulse.com/a?id=731>

6 Hiro, *Inside Central Asia*, 100.

paved the way for future ethnic tensions between indigenous groups in Central Asia.

During Soviet rule, the Central Asian republics were actively Russified and Sovietized. The people of Central Asia were required to learn Russian and were educated in Soviet ideology. Fluency in the Russian language was required to receive higher education and be eligible for most jobs. The promotion of the Russian language caused members of the titular nationalities, especially ones that lived in urban centers such as Tashkent and Almaty, to know Russian better than their titular language. Despite the fact that the titular language has been promoted in each of these states since 1991, many Central Asians speak Russian on a daily basis. This is especially the case in Kazakhstan, where approximately one third of ethnic Kazakhs do not speak Kazakh.⁷

Though the Soviet Union was oppressive in many ways, it helped develop and industrialize a significant portion of Central Asia, providing economic, political, and social stability. Moreover, many Central Asians came to identify with the Soviet ideals of education, equality, and friendship for men and women of all ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. For example, the formerly largely illiterate region of Soviet Central Asia achieved almost universal literacy for both genders by the 1950's.⁸ As a result of the many benefits that Russian rule brought to Central Asia, many Central Asians came to view the Russians as bringers of civilization, culture and education. This helps explain the results of the March 1991 Soviet referendum, in which over 90 percent of the voters in each Soviet Central Asian republic voted for their republic to remain part of the USSR.⁹ It should be noted that some of the Central Asians who voted for the preservation of the USSR did not have positive views of Russia and Russians and only voted this way for economic reasons. However, such a large percentage of votes for the preservation of the USSR indicates that most Central Asians, at least during the Soviet era, did not view Russia and Russians as unwanted occupants.

7 Beacháin, Donnacha, and Rob Kevlihan. "State-building, Identity and Nationalism in Kazakhstan." Centre for International Studies 1 (2011): 1-15. Accessed December 14, 2014. <http://doras.dcu.ie/16243/1/1101.pdf>.

8 Scott W. Thompson. *The Third World, Premises of U.S. Policy*. (San Francisco: ICS Press, 1983). 156.

9 Hiro, *Inside Central Asia*, 61.

Thus, one can assume that for the most part, Central Asians viewed Russians positively and were content with living in the same country as them. This implies that interethnic relations between Russians and Central Asians were fairly positive up until the fall of the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, independence was thrust upon these countries and they reluctantly accepted it. The leaders of these young nations, which consisted entirely of former high-ranking Soviet officials, quickly realized that they needed to engage in nation building in order to preserve their newborn country's independence, as well as their own political power. The nation-building policies of these countries often led to the discrimination of minorities and often worsened interethnic relations. During the Soviet period, the prevalence of Soviet ideals stemmed nationalism and promoted friendly interethnic relations. After the fall of the Soviet Union, however, nationalism and ethnic tensions increased. The current state of interethnic relations in each country varies, depending on several key factors such as demographics, economics, and government policies. For each of the five former Soviet Central Asian Republics, interethnic relations and ethnic tensions as well as the factors underlying them were analyzed and compared among the five Central Asian nations.

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan is the largest and most prosperous country in Central Asia. Due to its Imperial Russian and Soviet legacies, Kazakhstan has a very large Russian population. When Kazakhstan first became independent in 1991, the number of Russians and Kazakhs was approximately the same.¹⁰ However, Kazakh elites managed to retain control of this nation mainly due to Gorbachev's appointment of an ethnic Kazakh, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to first secretary of the Kazakh SSR in 1989. One of the main issues that the Kazakh state had to deal with was balancing its desire to build a "Kazakh nation", while not alienating its large Russian minority. Russians in Kazakhstan are usually skilled workers that occupy

10 Hanks, Reuel R, *Central Asia a Global Studies Handbook*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2005, 200.

jobs critical for the Kazakh economy. Furthermore, most Russians living in Kazakhstan live in Kazakhstan's industrialized northern region that shares a border with Russia, enabling the possibility of separatism.

Russians in Kazakhstan

In the early 1990's, millions of ethnic Russians emigrated from Kazakhstan to Russia, believing they would be discriminated against in the new nation of Kazakhstan. At this time, the Kazakh government pursued a nationalistic policy, taking steps such as making Kazakh the only official language, while designating Russian the language of interethnic communication.¹¹ This angered the large Russian population, causing many members of the Russian community to move to Russia. It is important to note that most of the Russians that left Kazakhstan in those years came from southern Kazakhstan, which is overwhelmingly inhabited by ethnic Kazakhs. Kazakhs in the south tend to be nationalistic and have negative views of Russians.¹² After realizing the adverse economic effects of this demographic shift, the Kazakh government attempted to build an inclusive Kazakh nation for all ethnicities. An important step in this process was making Russian the official language on par with Kazakh in 1995.¹³ This move has helped make Russians who live in Kazakhstan feel more welcome and content with their current situation, which has in turn decreased ethnic tensions.

Currently, there is minimal discrimination when it comes to Russians in Kazakhstan. Russians and Kazakhs tend to get along with each other very well and ethnic violence is rare. Unlike in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the Russian language is a largely favored by both Russians and Kazakhs. According to a survey conducted in 2013, most Kazakhs view the relationship between Russians and Kazakhs as positive.¹⁴ However, that same survey

11 Ibid., 202.

12 Hiro, *Inside Central Asia*, 125.

13 Peyrouse, "The Russian Minority in Central Asia: Migration, Politics, and Language," 16.

14 Askar Jumageldinov, "Ethnic Identification, Social Discrimination and Inter-ethnic Relations in Kazakhstan," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 114 (2014): 411, accessed December 14, 2014, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813053603>.

stated that most Russians view interethnic relations between Russians and Kazakhs in a neutral, but not positive manner. One of the likely explanations for such sentiments among Russians is that some Russians view themselves as outsiders and think of interethnic relations in an “us versus them” mentality. However, one should note that such a mentality is much more prevalent in other Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan than it is in Kazakhstan. In countries such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, state authorities have indirectly made it clear that Russians are not welcome. Kazakhstan’s political life is heavily based on clans and families.¹⁵ In many cases, people who are appointed to government posts are members of the ruling clan. Because Russians are not the indigenous people and do not belong to a clan, it is often difficult for them to receive government posts. However, the vast majority of nonpolitical jobs are as easily accessible to Russians as they are to Kazakhs.

Overall, interethnic relations in Kazakhstan are positive. Russians and Kazakhs have had historically friendly relations and the tolerant attitude of the Kazakh government towards Russians helps maintain this status quo. The Kazakh government has refrained from promoting intense ethnic nationalism, but rather promotes an inclusive civic nationalism. Interethnic relations between these two groups is the most positive in north Kazakhstan, where there are many Russians. However, in south Kazakhstan, where there few Russians, interethnic relations are relatively negative. Many Kazakhs that live there have poor knowledge of Russian and have negative views of Russians. They view Kazakhstan’s Imperial Russian and Soviet past negatively and regard Russians and Russia as occupants. One of the most evident signs of positive interethnic relations in Kazakhstan is that the flow of Russians from Kazakhstan to Russia has significantly decreased. This implies that Kazakhstan’s Russians feel more welcome in Kazakhstan.

¹⁵ Peyrouse, “The Russian Minority in Central Asia: Migration, Politics, and Language,” 12.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyzstan is located in the Fergana Valley, a densely populated, resource-rich region that is split among Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Because of this, there are large ethnic minorities of Tajiks and Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, while Tajikistan and Uzbekistan contain sizable minorities of the other two. Just like in Kazakhstan, many Russians have settled in Kyrgyzstan during the Imperial Russian and Soviet periods. Thus, around a quarter of Kyrgyzstan’s 5.6 million inhabitants are members of ethnic minorities. In Kyrgyzstan, Russians compose about 8 percent of the population, while the largest ethnic minority are Uzbeks, which make up around 14 percent of the population. Although interethnic relations between Russians and Kyrgyz are mostly positive, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks have had tense relations, which has led to violence on several occasions.

Russians in Kyrgyzstan

In 1989, Russians were the largest minority in Kyrgyzstan and made up 22 percent of the population. After the fall of the Soviet Union, many Russians immigrated from Kyrgyzstan to Russia, causing a significant fall in the percentage of Russians living in Kyrgyzstan. Similarly to the situation in Kazakhstan, the outflow of Russians resulted in a significant brain drain. Russians who have lived in this country often perform skilled professions that are necessary for Kyrgyzstan’s economy. Thus, in an effort to encourage Russians to stay, the Kyrgyz government promoted a tolerant attitude towards Russians and even decided to make Russian an official language alongside Kyrgyz in 2001.¹⁶ It should be noted that Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are the only two Central Asian states that have Russian as one of their official languages. The other three Central Asian states of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan only have their titular language as their official language. Because Kyrgyzstan is more democratic than the other four Central Asian nations, it permits

¹⁶ Peyrouse, “The Russian Minority”, 10.

a relatively high degree of political activity.¹⁷ Consequently, civic life in the Russian community is richer than in the other Central Asian republics. For example, there are more than 25 registered organizations that represent the interests of Kyrgyzstan's Russian minority. Another very important reason for positive interethnic relations between Russians and Kyrgyz is its close relationship with Russia. Russia is Kyrgyzstan's closest ally and Kyrgyzstan is economically and military dependent on Russia. Thus, Russia has a significant amount of influence in Kyrgyzstan, making it in Kyrgyzstan's best interests not to anger its ally.

Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, there have been significant ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, especially in southern Kyrgyzstan, where many Uzbeks live.¹⁸ There are many Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan due to the forming of Uzbek enclaves as a byproduct of the Soviet national delimitation policy. The Uzbeks that live in Kyrgyzstan are in conflict with the Kyrgyz for a few reasons. The fall of the Soviet Union caused nationalism in all former Soviet republics to increase. In southern Kyrgyzstan, many Kyrgyz have held anti-Uzbek sentiments due to the large role that Uzbeks have played in the local economy. Kyrgyz believed that Uzbeks have been trying to break Kyrgyz unity through advocating more autonomy and rights for Uzbeks.¹⁹ On the other hand, Uzbeks have complained of discrimination by the Kyrgyz majority. They were angered by the Kyrgyz government's decisions to exclude Uzbeks from public life and professions as well as the closing most Uzbek-language media. Furthermore, Uzbeks have often complained about being unfairly

¹⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸ "Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South." *International Crisis Group* 222 (2012): 1-2. Accessed December 10, 2014. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/222-kyrgyzstan-widening-ethnic-divisions-in-the-south.aspx>.

¹⁹ Marlène Laruelle, "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45 (2012): 40, accessed March 12, 2015. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0967067X12000037>.

prosecuted and selective justice towards them. During the ethnic clashes and in Osh and Jalalabad and their aftermath, human rights organizations have verified Uzbek complaints regarding the unfair prosecutorial system.²⁰

Ethnic tensions between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz culminated in the 2010 ethnic clashes. After the ouster of President Bakiyev in 2010, ethnic clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks erupted in the towns of Osh and Jalalabad, which are in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Unlike many Kyrgyz in this region, Uzbeks mostly supported the ousted president due to his tolerant attitude towards Uzbeks. During the clashes, at least 418 were killed and over 80,000 people were displaced, most of whom were Uzbek. Moreover, the destruction of property was mostly targeted against Uzbek areas and Uzbek-owned establishments. Victims of these attacks as well as human rights organizations believed that politicians in the south supported the violence and that members of the security apparatus played a role in them.²¹ After these events, interethnic relations between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks further deteriorated.

TAJIKISTAN

Tajikistan is the poorest country in Central Asia and underwent a devastating civil war from 1992 to 1997. Though Tajikistan's population is largely Tajik, it has a sizable Uzbek population, comprising about 15.3 percent of Tajikistan's total population. Compared to the other Central Asian nations, Tajikistan has the fewest Russians, both by number and percentage. From 1989 to 2010, Tajikistan's Russian community decreased from 400,000 to 35,000, currently comprising less than 1 percent of the total population. Tajikistan's Russian population left primarily due to violence from the civil war and poor economic conditions.

²⁰ Peter Grant, "State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2014", last modified July 2014, <http://www.minorityrights.org/12473/state-of-the-worlds-minorities/mrg-state-of-the-worlds-minorities-2014.pdf>.

²¹ "Kyrgyzstan Overview", *Minority Rights Group International*, last modified May 2011, <http://www.minorityrights.org/2346/kyrgyzstan/kyrgyzstan-overview.html>

Russians in Tajikistan

In general, interethnic relations between Russians and Tajiks are positive in Tajikistan.²² Because Russians occupy many skilled professions, the Tajik government has encouraged Russians to stay. Although Russian is not an official language there, it is designated as the language of interethnic communication and is widely used in government and business. Moreover, Tajikistan's economic and military dependency on Russia has contributed to the state's tolerant attitude towards its Russian population. Due to Tajikistan's poor economic situation, many Tajiks have migrated to Russia for work. Russia's significant assistance to Tajikistan helps promote positive views towards Russians in this country.

Uzbeks in Tajikistan

Many Uzbeks living in Tajikistan believe that they are marginalized and denied access to economic and political resources. One reason for this is that Tajik is the only official language of Tajikistan, while the Uzbek language does not have any legal status. Thus, in order for someone to obtain a higher education in Tajikistan, one must speak Tajik fluently, which can be difficult for many Uzbeks, especially those from rural backgrounds. Uzbeks also believe that their interests aren't sufficiently represented on an official level, such as in Tajikistan's parliament, in which only 2 of the 63 seats are held by ethnic Uzbeks.²³

Uzbekistan's role in Tajikistan's treatment of Uzbeks

An important factor that influences Tajikistan's policy

²² Paul Goble, "Window on Eurasia: Tajikistan – Where the Russians Are a 'Disappearing Nation,'" *Window on Eurasia -- New Series*, March 30, 2013, <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2013/03/window-on-eurasia-tajikistan-where.html>.

²³ Uzbekistan: Tajik Language under Pressure in Ancient Samarkand," *EurasiaNet*, last modified November 5, 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67724>.

towards its Uzbek minority is its uneasy and sometimes tense relations with Uzbekistan. Since independence, there have been high tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.²⁴ As a result of these tensions, the Tajik government has often took out its anger by discriminating against Uzbeks who live in Tajikistan. On its part, Uzbekistan has enacted policies that marginalized Tajiks living in Uzbekistan. Although there has been discrimination on the state level against Uzbeks, interethnic relations among Uzbeks and Tajiks have been primarily positive. Though most people feel uncomfortable discussing ethnic relations on the record, Tajiks usually insist they have no problem with their neighbors, only with Uzbekistan's leaders in Tashkent.²⁵ This shows that government policies towards a certain ethnic group doesn't necessarily reflect the views of its people. Such is often the case in other Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, whose governments are known to discriminate against Russians and other ethnic minorities.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan is one of the most repressive and isolated countries in the world. It relies on its vast gas reserves, which are the 4th largest in the world, to survive economically. Its policies towards Russians are considered the most discriminatory among all Central Asian countries. Since it gained independence, Turkmenistan has pursued an intense policy of de-Russification and "Turkmenization". This was especially true under its first president, Saparmurat Niyazov, who ruled from 1991 to 2006. Though the Russian language is still considered the language of interethnic communication and is commonly used, especially in the capital Ashgabat, the government has been actively trying to decrease its influence. For instance, Turkmenistan removed most Russian-language schools and has decreased the number of Russian-courses in schools in order to promote the Turkmen language. Moreover, Turkmenistan authorities have refused to register any Russian cultural organizations and organizations that represent Russian people, such as the organization

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Russkaia Obshchina.²⁶

A major incident of discrimination against Russians occurred in 2003, when the Turkmen government cancelled the dual citizenship agreement with Russia and forced all Russian citizens to choose either their Russian or Turkmen citizenship. Moreover, those who chose Russian citizenship were subsequently discriminated against.²⁷ Many lost the right to own real estate and were forced to sell the property they possessed. To add to the troubles that Russians experienced, Turkmen authorities often confiscated the apartments of Russian citizens, and, to avoid a massive immigration of Russians, blocked the delivery of exit visas, then obligatory for all citizens.²⁸ Currently, there are approximately 50,000 Russian citizens in Turkmenistan who are deprived of their rights and are regularly harassed by the authorities.

One of the reasons why Turkmen authorities have acted in such a repressive manner towards the Russian minority is the authoritarian and repressive nature of the Turkmen regime. As is the case with Uzbekistan, the proportion of Russians to the native population was relatively low after the fall of the Soviet Union, causing the government to disregard the welfare of Russians. Furthermore, the Russian government has not done much to improve the state of Russians living there; Russia has often been criticized for being more interested in maintaining beneficial economic relations with Turkmenistan rather than protecting the rights of Russians who lived there.²⁹ As a result, the Turkmen government was able to proceed with its actions without any major reactions on the part of Moscow. Due to the isolated and authoritarian nature of Turkmenistan, indicators of public opinion and specific information about the situation there are difficult to come by, making it difficult to assess how regular Turkmens view Russians. However, it can be concluded that Russians are subject to significant discrimination by the state.

²⁶ Peyrouse, "The Russian Minority", 10.

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

²⁸ Ibid., 13.

²⁹ "Central Asia Report: June 29, 2004." *Radio Free Europe*, last modified June 29, 2004, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342170.html>.

UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan is the most populous Central Asian state with a population of almost 30 million. Similarly to Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan has pursued a stringent policy of de-Russification and nationalism. As is the case with Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, the titular language, which in Uzbekistan's case is Uzbek, is the only official language. Although Russian is commonly spoken in large cities such as Tashkent as well as in industry and business, the Uzbek government has been trying to reduce the use of Russian by closing down Russian schools, limiting Russian classes, and encouraging the use of Uzbek.³⁰ According to reports by Russians who have moved to Russia from Uzbekistan, there is sometimes employment and wage discrimination against Russians in Uzbekistan, even if they speak good Uzbek.³¹ Tangible evidence of discrimination against Russians could be seen by their mass exodus from Uzbekistan to Russia, as well as to other countries, such as the United States. In 1989, there were roughly 1.66 million Russians among the 20 million people of Uzbekistan.³² Now, there are only 900,000 among the roughly 30 million people of this country. However, one should note that this is not a widespread problem and that not all Uzbeks have such negative attitudes toward Russians. In fact, the desire of Uzbeks to learn Russia has remained strong, especially in large cities such as Tashkent, Samarkand, and Namangan.³³ Furthermore, many Uzbeks watch Russian television, read Russian newspapers, and prefer to speak Russian among themselves. This implies that many Uzbeks still view Russia and Russians in a positive light.

The authoritarian nature and the disregard for freedoms

³⁰ Vitaly Slovetsky, "Who Will Save Uzbekistan's Russians,?" *Slobodnaya Pressa (Free Press)*, April 2, 2013, Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/66300>

³¹ Ibid.

³² "World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples," *Minority Rights Group International*, last modified January 1, 2005, accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.minorityrights.org/2479/uzbekistan/uzbekistan-overview.html>.

³³ Yunus Khalikov, "Uzbekistan's Russian-Language Conundrum," *EurasiaNet*, September 18, 2006, accessed December 15, 2014, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091906.shtml>.

and human rights by the Karimov regime has enabled it to pursue discriminatory policies against its Russian minority. Like the case with Turkmenistan, Russia's desire to maintain positive economic and strategic ties with Uzbekistan has caused Russia to largely ignore Uzbekistan's policies towards Russians. As was the case in Turkmenistan, after Uzbekistan became independent in 1991, the percentage of Russians in Uzbekistan was relatively small, causing authorities to place little to no importance on their well-being.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Interethnic relations in the five Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan vary based on a variety of factors, both internal and external. The legacies of the Imperial Russian and Soviet periods have had a significant effect on many aspects of these new nations. The borders of these nations arose from the Soviet's national delimitation policy. As shown by the enclaves of Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley, these borders were in many ways artificial and did not always reflect the situation on the ground. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent independence of the five Central Asian states, these borders remained, serving as an impetus for future ethnic tensions in areas such as the Fergana Valley. Russian rule of this region has resulted in its Russification; the Russian language and culture became prominent and millions of Russians and other Slavs settled here. After the fall of the Soviet Union, each Central Asian leader adopted a secular nationalist stance and embarked on de-Russification and nation building. However, the extent and intensity of de-Russification varied from country to country: the Uzbek and Turkmen governments adopted harsh de-Russification policies, while the Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Tajik governments adopted more mild ones. Moreover, many members of the titular nationalities have espoused nationalistic feelings and views. Such individuals often view themselves as victims of Russian and Soviet occupation

and oppression.³⁴ In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, Russians have often been subject to discrimination by the authoritarian, repressive and nationalist governments of these two countries. However, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have adopted tolerant policies towards their Russian populations.

Despite the discrimination of Russians by certain Central Asian governments and the prevalence of nationalism among some members of indigenous groups, Russians are still viewed positively by the majority of Central Asians. In Central Asian nations, many natives are interested in learning Russian. They watch Russian television and read Russian publications. When it comes to the state of interethnic relations in the future, further integration with Russian-dominated organizations, such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Treaty Security Organization, would maintain and improve interethnic relations between Russians and the titular nationalities in these nations. Although Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan show interest in integrating into Russian-dominated organizations in the near future, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan do not. Therefore, it is likely that interethnic relations between Russians and the titular nationalities in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan will continue to stay positive and may even become better. However, unless Russia pursues a more aggressive policy with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, or those countries decide to drastically change their policies towards Russians, interethnic relations between the titular nationalities and Russians will continue to deteriorate and Russian will eventually lose its importance in these countries.

34 Sergei Balmasov, "Uzbekistan Gets Rid of the Soviet past," *Pravda.ru*, last modified November 11, 2010, <http://english.pravda.ru/world/ussr/11-11-2010/115735-uzbekistan-0>.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Balmasov, Sergei. "Uzbekistan Gets Rid of the Soviet past." Pravda.ru. November 11, 2010. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://english.pravda.ru/world/ussr/11-11-2010/115735-uzbekistan-0/>.

Beacháin, Donnacha, and Rob Kevlihan. "State-building, Identity and Nationalism in Kazakhstan." *Centre for International Studies* 1 (2011): 1-15. Accessed December 14, 2014. <http://doras.dcu.ie/16243/1/1101.pdf>.

Belafatti, Fabio. "Ethnic Tensions in Central Asia: Autochthonous and Russian Minorities." *Geopolitika*. March 10, 2014. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=6569>.

Çalışkan, Murat. The Socio-Historical Dimensions of Basmachi Movement. https://www.academia.edu/492602/Basmachi_Movement.

"Central Asia Report: June 29, 2004." Radio Free Europe. June 29, 2004. Accessed December 14, 2014. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1342170.html>.

"Central Asia: The Complexities of the Fergana Valley." Stratfor. October 7, 2013. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/central-asia-complexities-fergana-valley>.

Cummings, Sally N. *Understanding Central Asia: Politics and Contested Transformations*. New York: Routledge, 2012. 10-200.

Freni, Salvatore J. 2013. The Soviet Nationality Policy in Central Asia. *Student Pulse* 5 (03), <http://www.studentpulse.com/a?id=731>

Goble, Paul. "Window on Eurasia: Tajikistan – Where the Russians Are a 'Disappearing Nation.'" *Window on Eurasia -- New Series* (blog). March 30, 2013. Accessed March 12, 2015. <http://windowoneurasia2.blogspot.com/2013/03/window-on-eurasia-tajikistan-where.html>.

Grant, Peter. "State of the World's Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2014." *Minority Rights Group International*, 2014, 108-14. Accessed November 30, 2014. <http://www.minorityrights.org/12473/state-of-the-worlds-minorities/mrg-state-of-the-worlds-minorities-2014.pdf>.

Hanks, Reuel R. *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2005. 185-400.

Hiro, Dilip. *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*. New York: Overlook Duckworth, 2009. 60-400.

Jumageldinov, Askar. "Ethnic Identification, Social Discrimination and Interethnic Relations in Kazakhstan." *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 114 (2014): 410-414. Accessed December 14, 2014. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813053603>.

Khalikov, Yunus. "Uzbekistan's Russian-Language Conundrum." EurasiaNet. September 18, 2006. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091906.shtml>.

Kunanbay, Almay. "Nomads." Smithsonian Institution. Accessed March 8, 2015. http://www.festival.si.edu/past_festivals/silk_road/program_alma_kunanbay.aspx

"Kyrgyzstan: Widening Ethnic Divisions in the South." *International Crisis Group* 222 (2012): 1-3. Accessed December 10, 2014. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/central-asia/kyrgyzstan/222-kyrgyzstan-widening-ethnic-divisions-in-the-south.aspx>.

Laruelle, Marlène. "The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan. Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue, and Political Agenda." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45 (2012): 39-49. Accessed March 12, 2015. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0967067X12000037>.

Peyrouse, Sebastien. "The Russian Minority in Central Asia: Migration, Politics, and Language." *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars* 297 (2008): 1-22. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/OP297.pdf>.

Sadykov, M. (2013, November 5). Uzbekistan: Tajik Language under Pressure in Ancient Samarkand. Retrieved December 14, 2014. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67724>

Slovetsky, Vitaly. "Who Will Save Uzbekistan's Russians?" Slobodnaya Pressa (Free Press). April 2, 2013. Accessed March 8, 2015. <http://svpressa.ru/society/article/66300>

“Tajikistan’s Ethnic Uzbeks: Poor Like Everyone, But Sidelined More.” EurasiaNet. February 24, 2011. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62952>.

Thompson, W. Scott. *The Third World, Premises of U.S. Policy*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, California: ICS Press, 1983. 155-74.

“World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples.” Minority Rights Group International: Uzbekistan. January 1, 2005. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.minorityrights.org/2479/uzbekistan/uzbekistan-overview.html>.

The Friendship of Karna and Duryodhana in the *Mahabharata*

Malayandi Palaniappan

ABSTRACT

The Mahabharata is arguably one of the greatest epics of human literature; contained within it are characters who represent the complex, intricacies of humankind and to whom many of us in the modern world can still relate. Two especially interesting characters are that of Karna and Duryodhana—the primary antagonists of the epic who together form a friendship that even today is referred to in popular Indian culture as the true representation of friendship. In this paper, I analyze this friendship in greater detail with the goal of trying to understand whether this friendship is one born of selfish desire or of selfless camaraderie. I come to the conclusion that this friendship is born out of personal needs, most notably that of Duryodhana’s. However, as the two characters evolve through the epic, so does their friendship. Most notably, I will make the case that this friendship is seen as being so great not because it is flawless, but for the exact opposite reason: this friendship was as flawed as any of our own, but yet at its core were two people who care deeply for each other—so much so, that one of them was willing to give his life for the other.

INTRODUCTION

The *Mahabharata* is one of the two major epics in Hindu Mythology—the other is the *Ramayana*. With the oldest portions of the epic dating back to 400 BCE, the *Mahabharata* has been a staple of Indian culture and society for millennia, and many of the values held by characters in the epic are still largely held by Hindus in India today, giving us a clear impression of the cultural significance of this epic in modern Indian society.¹

The epic relates the tale of the battle for the throne of Hastinapura between two groups of siblings, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, who are cousins with each other. Through lies, betrayal, and deceit, ownership of the throne frequently switches between the two groups, eventually culminating in the Kurukshetra War. This infamous 18-day war between troops led by each group is eventually won by the Pandavas, but not without significant losses on both sides. In the midst of all this brutality lies a tale, tinged with philosophical debate, religious teachings, and the constant blurring of the line between right and wrong.

One of the defining features of the *Mahabharata* is the intrinsic complexity and density of the characters of the epic, which presents each of them with a uniquely human feel. In the other epic of Hindu mythology, the *Ramayana*, the line that divides characters as being good or evil is fairly opaque and well-defined. This leads to the *Ramayana* reading more as a bedtime story where the eternal battle of good and evil plays out on the plane of humanity and where good eventually triumphs. In the *Mahabharata* on the other hand, this line is less clear. While the *Mahabharata* may be considered similar to the *Ramayana* as an earthly personification of the supernatural battle between good and evil, it is infinitely more complex due to the raw humanity of the characters who blur the line between good and evil, ridding this line of the sharp bipolar distinction that is present in the *Ramayana*.

Much of the *Mahabharata* is characterized by the lies, deceit, and betrayal of particular characters. Even the divine character of Krishna indulges in several deplorable acts throughout the epic. The characters of Karna and Duryodhana, generally

considered the two primary antagonists of the *Mahabharata*, are no different in this regard and arguably embody this profane sense of humanity more than any other character in the epic. Born as cousins, separated by circumstance, and kept apart by class divisions, Karna and Duryodhana should never have met, but yet the hand of destiny crosses their paths and, following a long sequence of events, their acquaintance manifests itself in a friendship.

This friendship divides opinion among scholars and casual readers alike. To many, such as Kevin McGrath, this relationship is a friendship in its truest form for the sheer loyalty, commitment, and selflessness that the two figures show to each other.² Those who subscribe to this view argue that, for all the sins that they commit throughout the epic, their friendship and the values that they exhibit in cultivating and maintaining this friendship with each other, are their greatest redeeming features and a sign that even within the darkest of souls, resides some good.

Others such as Irawati Karve argue, however, that this relationship is cultivated by Duryodhana for a purely selfish purpose and that it is essentially one controlled, dominated, and abused by Duryodhana. Meanwhile, Karna chooses to let himself be treated in that way, as he is better off being in such a relationship than he would have been without it.³ Essentially, the argument is that the friendship is more a mutual business agreement in which both parties benefited than a selfless, honest friendship between two men.

In this paper, I look to further explore this issue and try to unearth the true nature of this friendship. I argue here that the relationship between Karna and Duryodhana is more closely associated with a genuine friendship of the sort championed by McGrath than with a manipulative, business arrangement as proposed by Karve, but not quite distinct enough to be simply defined as one or the other. The true strength of the friendship and why it is held in such high regard is that it is in fact reflective of the nature of real friendships seen in society as it is between two dense, conflicted individuals and is extraordinarily nuanced and complex. By delving further into the relationship between Karna and Duryodhana and by considering key events in the epic, I will try to analyze the root of this

² McGrath 2004, 131-132

³ Karve 1969, 174-175

¹ Smith 2009, xi

friendship, considering the nature of both Karna and Duryodhana and also their motivations in forming this friendship. Then, I will look at the evolution of this relationship before bringing it all together and trying to justify why the argument above holds true.

THE WEAPONS TRIAL

The Pandava and Kaurava brothers are both trained in the art of battle by Drona, a master of the advanced military arts. Although he trains all the brothers, he takes a keen interest in the development of the Pandava hero Arjuna, whom Drona recognizes as being the most gifted fighter—especially when armed with a bow—and favors him with special attention and training.

Upon the completion of the brothers' training, Drona arranges for a weapons trial to show off the fruits of his training in front of the court. In this trial, Arjuna dominates the competition, clearly marking himself out as being the most talented warrior. However, a stranger then appears at the trial and challenges Arjuna—this stranger is none other than Karna, making his first appearance in the epic. Keeping true to his word, he demonstrates that he is equal to Arjuna in archery and then challenges Arjuna to a duel—this challenge will come to define much of the rest of Karna's life, least of all with regard to his friendship with Duryodhana.

Before we proceed further, we need to understand Karna's unique upbringing. Karna is born to Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, and the divine Sun god, Surya; however, he is soon abandoned by his mother and adopted by lowly charioteers. In ancient Indian society class divisions that were laid out in the *Rig Veda* (one of four primary texts of the Vedic religion, the core teachings of which led to the formation of Hinduism) were strongly enforced.

Each Indian was put into one of four castes: Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Warriors were said to belong to the Kshatriya class—in order to be a king, one would have to be of this class. Charioteers, however, were part of the Suta class—a degenerate mixed caste, whose members were not considered worthy enough to hold any positions of responsibility or to even learn about

the teachings of the Vedas.⁴

Born to the Sun god Surya and Kunti, who both belong to the Kshatriya class, Karna is technically a Kshatriya by birth and hence is gifted with the supposed athletic ability and skill in battle that only a Kshatriya may possess. Since neither he nor his adopted parents are aware of this, he grows up believing that he is indeed a Suta; however, being gifted in the art of battle to a level beyond even most Kshatriyas, Karna always felt that he was destined for greatness. This challenge to Arjuna is a manifestation of that feeling.

This is why upon being questioned of his lineage and background, Karna is unable to respond. This presents a problem, as per the code of dueling both contenders must be of equal rank and Karna cannot state his rank. Not wanting to disclose his Suta upbringing, Karna is reduced to merely standing still with tears in his eyes. Seeing him helpless, Duryodhana, the oldest of the Kaurava brothers, stands up on behalf of Karna, proclaiming:

A warrior does not need to pronounce his ancestry. If Arjuna is unwilling to fight anyone who is not a king, I shall give the kingdom of Anga (an Eastern kingdom) to Karna.⁵

Karna is then consecrated on the spot. Out of gratitude, Karna then proceeds to ask Duryodhana what he would like in return for his gift, to which Duryodhana simply replies that he would like Karna's endless friendship.

What is the motivation of Duryodhana in cultivating this friendship? After all, he presents Karna—whom he has only just met moments earlier—with a kingdom, asking only for friendship in return. Common sense alone indicates that there must have been more to Duryodhana's seemingly selfless defense and support of a Suta than the quest for friendship, and the literature does seem to agree with this analysis.

Duryodhana is delighted, and “gladness gleamed upon his face”, upon seeing Karna match all of Arjuna's feats.⁶ Duryodhana

⁴ Kolenda 1985, 15

⁵ Karve 1969, 173

⁶ McGrath 2004, 114

knows Arjuna's prowess in battle and is fully aware that neither he nor any of his brothers could hold their own against Arjuna in the art of combat. As Karve argues in *Yuganta*, seeing Karna able to do so fills him with joy as he sees the potential to strengthen his own claim to the throne in acquiring an ally equal in prowess to Arjuna.⁷

It's said that as Duryodhana departs the arena with Karna by his side, he felt "the fear born of Arjuna quickly vanish."⁸ This further supports the point above—at this point in time, Duryodhana sees Karna as a figure whom he could exploit to further his own cause and reduce the disparity in talent between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Here, Karna is but a pawn in Duryodhana's master plan and the friendship is Duryodhana's thinly veiled way of getting Karna under his control.

One thing is evident—this relationship means a lot more to Karna at this point than it does to Duryodhana. As McGrath points out, Karna's deepest desire is to obtain fame and recognition—to be recognized as the Kshatriya that he believes he is and to be idolized for the greatness that he perceives in himself.⁹ He has longed for such an opportunity his entire life—the weapons trial is his first real chance to achieve this, but his humiliation at having his Suta origins revealed only sets him back further in this quest. In Duryodhana, Karna now finds someone who recognises his own intrinsic nobility, or so he thinks. When the Pandava hero Bhima ridicules Karna's lowly upbringing upon seeing the charioteer Adhiratha, Karna's adopted father, Duryodhana retaliates and defends Karna by claiming that Karna's talents with the bow show that he is not a Suta by birth despite being one by upbringing. Although Duryodhana probably has self-serving intentions in both his gifting of a kingdom to Karna and in his defense of Karna's status, Karna is either not privy to or is simply not bothered by Duryodhana's intentions. Having been presented with the nobility and fame that he has craved, his only immediate reaction is one of gratitude and it is this gratitude, along with a sense of indebtedness, which bind Karna to Duryodhana and forms the crux of the friendship.

7 Karve 1969, 173-174

8 McGrath 2004, 114

9 McGrath 2004, 123

THE KING AND HIS ADVISOR

Following the weapons trial, Karna is almost always seen alongside Duryodhana. Together with Shakuni and Duhshasana, they form the group that constantly strategizes to kill and bring about the fall of the Pandava brothers. Out of these three, it is Karna who immediately develops into becoming Duryodhana's main advisor. We first see Karna taking this role when Duryodhana's father Dhritarashtra asks Duryodhana what their course of action should be after news emerges that the Pandavas have not only survived Duryodhana's plot to kill them, but also further strengthened themselves by marrying into the Panchalas. Duryodhana recommends that they attempt to cause discord among the Pandavas by creating hostility within them; Karna instead immediately leaps forward and, escalating Duryodhana's proposal, proposes that the Kauravas attack the Pandavas instead. This is the first time in the epic that war is proposed and it is this moment that kicks off the sequence of events that culminates in the Kurukshetra war.

In his role as an advisor to Duryodhana in the means of destroying the Pandavas, Karna consolidates himself as Duryodhana's friend. Before we can see or understand how or why that comes to be, we must first look deeper at the motivations of both Karna and Duryodhana.

Throughout the epic, Duryodhana is driven by his hatred towards the Pandavas. His father, Dhritarashtra, being blind, is forced to renounce the throne in favor of his younger brother Pandu, the father of the Pandavas. Duryodhana, being the son of the elder brother, believes that the throne of the kingdom of Hastinapura is rightfully his and that by presenting the kingdom to his cousin Yudhishthira—the eldest of the Pandava brothers—his father and uncle have essentially robbed him of his rightful place as the king of Hastinapura. Furthermore, Duryodhana develops an inferiority complex as a result of having been raised alongside and having to compete with the divine-born Pandavas. Neither he nor any of his brothers is a match for Arjuna's talents with the bow or for Bhima's sheer strength and brute physical prowess. As David Gitomer argues, it is this sense of entitlement and of inferiority that contributes to the creation of a sense of hatred towards his cousins, the Pandavas, and

it is this hatred that motivated Duryodhana.¹⁰

With Karna, on the other hand, his motivations are slightly more complicated. Following the weapons trial, we see a slight shift in Karna's motivations. Here we see his primary motivation being his sense of utmost gratitude and loyalty to Duryodhana, while initially, as mentioned above, he is primarily motivated by his desire for fame and recognition. At this point, it seems that that motivation is slightly diminished. While we can only theorize as to why this is the case, one potential explanation implied by McGrath is that, having been just presented with a kingdom and having had his insecurities about his status diminished by Duryodhana's show of faith, he feels less compelled to prove himself in that regard and so instead is driven by loyalty to him who believed in Karna when no one else did.¹¹

It's also important to note here that when Karna first challenged Arjuna at the weapons trial, it was not out of any form of hatred towards the Pandavas. He was merely looking for an avenue to make a name for himself. Defeating the greatest archer in the land was one such avenue. However, having been humiliated by the Pandavas at the trial, and still retaining his envy of Arjuna's title of being the greatest archer in the land, he quickly begins to develop a strong hatred of the Pandavas. His loyalty to Duryodhana, the only man who stands up for him and who also hates the Pandavas, further accentuates this sense of hatred within Karna towards the Pandavas. In a curiously cyclical manner, this hatred then serves as a unifying force between himself and Duryodhana, as we will come to see.

As a king, Duryodhana is constantly looking for methods by which he can undermine the efforts of and potentially kill the Pandavas. Due to his loyalty to Duryodhana and his derived hatred of the Pandavas, Karna tends to not just support Duryodhana's plans to bring about the destruction of the Pandavas. He also tends to further press Duryodhana into taking even more radical courses of action that may be unnecessary, but would nevertheless be more devastating to the Pandavas, such as when he proposes waging war against the Pandavas in the situation addressed above.

Duryodhana's other advisors, most notably the elders Bhishma and Drona, tend to strongly oppose Duryodhana's plans

of destroying the Pandavas due to their own personal attachment to the Pandavas. By supporting and aggravating Duryodhana's plans, Karna attaches himself further to Duryodhana, who appreciates having someone to support his opinion and viewpoint—as leaders tend to do. Hence, Duryodhana begins to value Karna's counsel and friendship more as Karna continues to support him, despite the disdain of the older advisors.

So the real catalyst for the development of this friendship is a complicated multi-layered construct: Karna's blind loyalty to Duryodhana contributes to the cultivation of a hatred towards the Pandavas, which then develops into a closer relationship to Duryodhana as his advisor by constantly supporting his aggressive, anti-Pandava policies. It is here that we first begin to see the evolution of the relationship between the two. Duryodhana begins to see Karna as less of a pawn in his conquest of the Pandavas, but more as a trusted knight, advisor, and friend, who is able to help him get what he wants just as Duryodhana himself is able to help Karna do the same. This evolution is made especially evident in Duryodhana's address to his commanders before the onset of the fighting in the *Virata Parvan*, where he opens by saying "This policy was stated by Karna and me to Drona." He no longer considers Karna a subject below the king, but as a counsel and friend who can be referred to in tandem with the king. We should remember that the epic is set in a traditional Indian society where cultural norms and traditions are highly valued. Having one's name read alongside that of the king can only be a high honor exclusively bestowed to those who are held in extremely high regard by the king—in this case, it is evident that Karna is so.¹²

KARNA, THE SELFISH ONE?

Irawati Karve claims in *Yuganta* that Karna, while undoubtedly loyal and filled with gratitude for Duryodhana, values his own personal pride and conquests over his friendship with Duryodhana.¹³ This friendship, as we have come to see, is mostly instigated and developed by Karna's seemingly undying loyalty

10 Gitomer 1992, 223-224

11 McGrath 2004, 116-117

12 Banerji 1976, 58

13 Karve 1969, 180-183

to Duryodhana, which knows no bounds. Such an accusation is especially bold as it brings into question whether Karna is genuinely loyal to Duryodhana and also questions the very foundation on which the friendship is built.

There is one main incident where such selfishness from Karna can be observed and his priorities can be questioned: in his conversation with his birth mother Kunti. When Kunti comes to Karna revealing the story of his birth, she asks him to join the side of the Pandavas and to claim his birthright title of being a Kshatriya. Flatly refusing her request, Karna then proceeds to promise her that he would not kill any of her other four sons—Arjuna being the only exception—as Kunti would then still have five sons after the mortal duel between Karna and Arjuna.

There was no real reason as to why Karna has to offer such a promise to Kunti. Having been abandoned by her at birth and never having known about their relationship until he is informed of it by Krishna slightly before the conversation with Kunti took place, he has no reason to love or care for Kunti. It's more than likely that this promise is made to Kunti under the guise of love, when in fact, it is motivated by pride. By refusing to kill any of the other brothers, Karna is implying that he considers the other four brothers to be far beneath his standing and that the only one worthy of battling him is Arjuna, his archenemy.

However, the one thing that Karna forgets about in this moment is the needs of his friend and king, Duryodhana. By promising not to kill any of the other Pandava brothers, he is in fact hurting Duryodhana's chance of winning the war against the Pandavas. It is clear that he is among the greatest warriors in the Kaurava ranks and by disabling himself from killing the other Pandava brothers—especially Bhima whose strength does cause genuine problems for the Kauravas in battle—he essentially weakens Duryodhana's force, hurting his quest for victory. This is all due to Karna's pride and selfish notion of his own greatness, or at least so claims Karve.

While it's undeniable that such a vow to Kunti would have hurt Duryodhana's cause and also likely that Karna made such a vow while blinded by his own envy of Arjuna and by his own illusion of greatness, such an act could just as easily be interpreted to be a function of Karna's infamous impulsiveness. This is the main reason, as Karve points out, that Bhishma does not consider

Karna a maharathi, an accomplished fighter from a chariot.¹⁴ After all, we must consider that this is the first time that he has spoken to his birth mother who had abandoned him. Karna must have been overwhelmed by a sense of emotion, which further accentuates his impulsiveness.

As I proceed with my defense of Karna, let us first remind ourselves of the aforementioned meeting between Karna and Krishna. Here, Karna finds himself driving Krishna back to the Pandavas following failed peace negotiations with Duryodhana. In the privacy of the chariot, Krishna reveals the truth about Karna's birth to him, informing him that he is the eldest Pandava and that if he were to switch sides, he would not only become a Kshatriya, but also a king, as Yudhishthira would step aside so that Karna would take the throne. The Pandavas, his mortal enemies, would then have to wait on his every command, as he would be their king. This is Karna's dream; all that he has ever wished for—the fame, the recognition, the promise of greatness—could have been achieved quite simply by switching sides over to the Pandavas. But instead, he replies to Krishna, “Any kingdom that I am presented I would present to Duryodhana.”¹⁵

Now, if Karna does truly value his own pride and greatness more than he does his friendship with Duryodhana, as Karve claims, there is no doubt that Karna would have taken Krishna's offer. Instead, by turning it down—an incident that Karve fails to consider in her interpretation of Karna's selfishness—he proves himself as a true friend to Duryodhana and shows himself as being tied to his friend by a self-transcending sense of gratitude and loyalty. While Karve's argument does raise some questions, T.S. Rukmani in return argues that these incidents merely represent Karna's sense of humanity—who would not be emotionally frail and prone to making poor decisions upon meeting their mother who abandoned them at birth? This humanity is the trait that makes Karna a truly fascinating, and yet relatable, character.¹⁶

14 Karve 1969, 182

15 Rukmani 2005, 136

16 Rukmani 2005, 131-132

KARNA'S DEATH AND DURYODHANA'S SORROW

Until now, we have considered the initial nature of the friendship between Karna and Duryodhana, the evolution of this friendship, and how a particularly insignificant relationship that develops out of one man's desire to conquer his foes by using the other man develops into a mutual friendship in which each holds the other in great esteem. The one moment that personifies the completion of this evolution is Karna's death, which is, sadly enough, also the end of such a friendship on Earth.

Upon news of Karna's death at the hands of Arjuna, Duryodhana is said to have been "greatly distressed with eyes full of tears" and "utterly hopeless and wholly submerged in a sea of grief."¹⁷ Duryodhana gives up on the battle very quickly after hearing of this news, consigning himself to the depths of a lake in an emotional state, which can only be described as a compound of sorrow and helplessness.

Duryodhana, while remorseful over the deaths of his other brothers, does fall into a deep emotional cavern of sorrow as he does when he finds out about Karna's death. Throughout most of this paper, and indeed most of the epic, it has been made extremely evident just how much Karna values this friendship. This revelation about Duryodhana's behavior after Karna's death opens an eye into just how much Duryodhana values Karna. As Rukmani highlights, one could even argue that Duryodhana sees Karna as an adopted brother and considers him his most valued sibling among the 100 others, having made a connection with his friend that he had never quite made with the others.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it's clear that Duryodhana forms the friendship with a self-serving goal in mind but the friendship quickly evolves to something much greater and more significant to him, and eventually,

¹⁷ McGrath 2004, 131

¹⁸ Rukmani 2005, 137

Karna comes to mean more to him than even his own brothers did. On the other hand, Karna values the relationship very highly right from the start. Duryodhana is able to offer Karna what he has craved his entire life and for that, Karna feels eternally indebted to Duryodhana—it is the loyalty that developed from that sensation of indebtedness that forms the foundation of the friendship for Karna.

As Karve cynically points out, it's clear, however, that there is an imbalanced power dynamic in the friendship; Duryodhana always seems to hold the upper hand in the relationship.¹⁹ However, Banerji helps us identify that the power dynamic is less of a reflection of the strength of the friendship than it is a reflection of the nature of Indian society and the respective roles that Karna and Duryodhana hold in this society. Duryodhana is a king born into nobility, while Karna is a warrior and champion raised in the lower echelons of society. The strong caste divide in ancient Indian society and Duryodhana's ambition of being king would have prevented him from completely embracing Karna as his equal.²⁰ Karna, recognizing this, is content with his role as the chief advisor to the king and, caring exceedingly about him, is happy to live in service of whom he is eternally loyal.

As we have come to see throughout the course of this paper, the answer to the question of the nature of the friendship between Karna and Duryodhana is far from black and white, just as one would expect from a friendship in the *Mahabharata*. But, making a value judgment to answer the question that was posed at the start of this paper, I strongly disagree with the view that the friendship is not genuine in nature. Yes, it is cultivated for selfish reasons and does have mutualistic benefits for both parties, but the depth of emotions that both Karna and Duryodhana experience with regard to each other signifies to us that both of them see the relationship as more than just a business transaction and that the relationship is in fact a true friendship.

What makes this friendship truly great, however, is the fact that it is a friendship that is far from perfect as reflected by the awkward power dynamic between the two, the frequent disagreements they have, and the occasionally selfish decisions each party makes. The imperfections in this friendship reflect those that are present in

¹⁹ Karve 1969, 175

²⁰ Banerji 1976

many of our own today, comforting us with the knowledge that a great friendship does not necessarily have to be a perfect one. A great friendship is not defined by a particularly stringent set of criteria; all that is required is two people caring exceedingly about each other. In Karna and Duryodhana, we find two such individuals, bound by a true, great friendship.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adarkar, Aditya. "Karna in the Mahabharata." PhD diss., University of Chicago, Committee on Social Thought, 2001.
- Banerji, Sures Chandra. *Indian Society in the Mahābhārata: Based on Smṛti Material in the Mahābhārata*. Varanasi: Bharata Manisha, 1976.
- Bhatanagara, Manorama. *Duryodhana*. 1. Saṃskaraṇa. ed. Dillī: Anila Prakāśana, 2000.
- Gitomer, David. "King Duryodhana: The Mahābhārata Discourse of Sinning and Virtue in Epic and Drama." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 112, no. 2 (1992): 222-32.
- Hiltebeitel, Alf. *Brothers, friends, and charioteers: parallel episodes in the Irish and Indian epics*. na, 1982.
- Karve, Irawati Karmarkar. "Karna." In *Yuganta, the End of an Epoch*, 167-188. Poona: Deshmukh Prakashan, 1969.
- Kolenda, Pauline. *Caste in Contemporary India: Beyond organic solidarity*. Waveland Pr Inc, 1985.
- McGrath, Kevin. "Contention & Identity." In *The Sanskrit Hero Karna in Epic Mahābhārata*, 112-132. Leiden: Brill, 2004.
- Rukmani, T. S. "Karna and the Mahabharata: An Ethical Reflection." In *The Mahabharata: What Is Not Here Is Nowhere Else* : (Yanēhāsti Na Tadkvacit). New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2005.
- Sireesha, G. "The Relevance of the Ethics of the Mahabharata to the Present Day Society." *Asia Pacific Journal of Social Science* 4, no. 2 (2012): 254-70.
- Smith, J. (2009). *The Mahābhārata*. New Delhi: Penguin.
- Note: All translations and background regarding the Mahabharata are sourced from Smith (2009).*

The Ethicality Of Chinese Investment in the DRC: The Realist and Cosmopolitan Perspective

Veena Bhatia

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research paper is to identify the ethicality of Chinese investment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by utilizing theories that are pertinent in international relations. By analyzing Sino-Congolese economic relations, I explore why neocolonialism is one of the most important issues of our time. After introducing this topic, I provide background and previous evidence on the ethicality of Sino-Congolese economic relations; introduce realist and cosmopolitan international theories; use the 2007 Sino-Congolese Cooperation Agreements as a case study to apply these theories; and conclude by offering a compromise in these two approaches to the ethicality of China-DRC economic relations, as well as connect our case study back to the issue of neocolonialism. There is evidence that Sino-Congolese economic relations are both ethical and unethical, and I argue that there is no concrete answer to this dilemma. Neocolonialism incorporates both generous gains and vast disparities that any and all international relations between countries must account for.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has a long history—from the globalization of Ancient Greek culture to the 21st century expansion of free trade and the emerging Information Age.¹ In a progressively globalizing world, countries become more interconnected politically, socially, and economically. Scholars study these interconnections in order to understand how society is changing, and how society can keep up with these changes. One such scholarly debate revolves around where globalization stands on the spectrum of ethicality. In case by case analyses, scholars discuss the “moral choices faced by decision makers or by citizens when they have to engage in transactions among different societies or deal with those domestic issues that affect foreigners.”² Accordingly, a predominant global, ethical issue today is globalization in the form of neocolonialism—or the use of economic or political pressures to control or influence other countries³—in Africa.

China’s economic relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo serve as a paragon for one of the two dominant models of development deployed in neocolonialism of Africa. One model of development that world powers, like the United States, use in Africa is a humanitarian aid approach, which is the traditional Western approach to third world diplomatic relations. The second model of development that China has specially devised is the investment approach, where Chinese officials exchange investment for natural resources, for example. The Chinese model of development is relatively new but has satisfactory prospects, contrary to the traditional Western approach. The Chinese model of development in the DRC is particularly relevant since the Cooperation Agreement in 2007 was the biggest investment that China has made in all of

1 “Globalization.” National Geographic Education. Accessed December 16, 2014. <http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/encyclopedia/globalization/?ar_a=1>.

2 Hoffmann, Stanley. *The Political Ethics of International Relations*. New York: Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, 1988.

3 “Neocolonialism.” Merriam-Webster. Accessed January 3, 2015. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neocolonialism>>.

Africa.⁴ Ethicality of these relations remains in question, however, since the Congolese are facing both benefits and burdens of these economic relations. In this article, I discuss the ethicality of China's investment model of neocolonialism, as it is a new and emerging issue. I use the international political theories of realism and cosmopolitanism to structure my analysis of the ethicality of China-DRC economic relations. By analyzing China-DRC economic relations using these two contrasting theories, we can visualize both extremes of the ethicality spectrum. Through the lens of realism, Chinese investment in the Democratic Republic of Congo is ethical, whereas cosmopolitans deem these relations unethical. I argue that by applying both moral theories we can reach a midpoint on this "ethicality spectrum."

To analyze the question of whether Chinese investment in DRC is ethical or not, I will provide background and previous commentary on the ethicality of Sino-Congolese economic relations; introduce realism and cosmopolitanism; use the 2007 Sino-Congolese Cooperation Agreements as a case study to apply these theories; and conclude by offering a compromise in these two approaches to ethicality of China-DRC economic relations. Beyond this ethicality debate, the broader implications of my analysis of Sino-Congolese relations are to gain a greater outlook on why neocolonialism is one of the most significant moral dilemmas for society today.

BACKGROUND

In this section, I present a brief background of China-DRC relations, and review scholarly examinations of Sino-Congolese economic relations. Scholars have studied these relations to unveil whether there is evidence to support or oppose continuous neocolonialism in the DRC. In a larger sense, these scholars are at different points of the ethicality spectrum concerning China-DRC economic relations. Thus, some scholars argue from the perspective that the Chinese, specifically government-owned companies, are

4 Jacob Kushner. "China's Congo Plan." *The American Interest*. January 10, 2014. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/01/10/chinas-congo-plan/>.

unethical in investing in the DRC. Others dwell on the economic and social gains of the DRC that justify such investments as ethical. Lastly, there are few scholars that make arguments in between these two extremes.

China-Africa relations began as early as 1368, during the Ming Dynasty, and flourished after the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Scholars argue that European colonial expansion in Africa beginning in the 1800s has transitioned into a new global "Scramble for Africa" which is denoted by the world's desire for Africa's natural resources. Chinese relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular, began in 1960 after DRC gained independence from Belgium rule. Between 2002 and 2008, Congolese and Chinese trade soared due to an increase in exports of African raw materials such as cobalt, copper ore, and hardwoods to China.⁵ The majority of literature on Sino-Congolese economic relations makes reference to one of the biggest trade agreements signed by Africa in China. The catalyst for the present-day growth of China-Congo relations was a deal in 2007 that allowed the creation of a joint venture to extract the DRC's cobalt, copper, and gold. This resource mining deal was in exchange for Chinese loans that will finance DRC infrastructure projects such as roads, hospitals, and universities. The joint venture, named Sicominex, "includes the Chinese state-owned enterprises China Railway Engineering Corporation and Sinohydro and the private company Zhejiang Huayou Cobalt,"⁶ and creates a guarantee of loan payback from the DRC.⁷ Later, I will delve deeper into this case study by analyzing the transaction's ethicality in realist and cosmopolitan lenses in order to discuss the ethicality of neocolonialism as a whole.

Marysse and Geenen not only report on the Sino-Congolese

5 Stephanie Matti. "Resources and Rent Seeking in the Democratic Republic of the Congo." *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (04, 2010): 401-413. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2010.488471>. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/743811667?accountid=14496>.

6 Jansson, Johanna. "China - DRC Sicominex Deal Back on Track." *The Africa Report*. August 4, 2014. Accessed December 15, 2014.

7 Stefaan Marysse, and Sara Geenen. "Win-Win Or Unequal Exchange? The Case of the Sino-Congolese Cooperation Agreements." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no. 3 (09, 2009): 371. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X09003978>. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/60027088?accountid=14496>.

cooperation agreements discussed above, but also discuss whether it is a “win-win or unequal exchange.”⁸ Marysse and Geenen conclude that this deal is unequal and therefore unethical for these important reasons: First, the agreement is unclear, and China is taking a significant portion of the profits. The Chinese profit by about \$40 billion to \$84 billion, whereas the DRC gain road and railway infrastructure worth \$6.5 billion.⁹ Second, China has protected itself with the Cooperation Agreement, which is a binding contract that the DRC will agree to any extensive guarantees. Third, the Chinese have secured custom and fiscal exemptions. These extreme exemptions ensure Chinese authority of DRC public revenue. In terms of ethicality, the authors suggest that this transaction of resources for public infrastructure benefits China more than it helps DRC. The Congolese minority is getting the short end of the stick and therefore this transaction is unequal and unethical.¹⁰

Conversely, Jacob Kushner’s e-book, *China’s Congo Plan*, discusses why DR Congo—the world’s poorest nation—welcomes Chinese investment and Sicominex over Western aid. Kushner states that, according to the United Nations, DR Congo is the most underdeveloped country in the world and lacks the prospect of improving the living standard of Congolese citizens. Due to Chinese involvement, soccer stadiums, electronics shops, trade businesses, hospitals, restaurants, roads, bridges, universities, and so on allow the Congolese to experience a new kind of everyday life. The Congolese people expect and hope that China’s plan will transform their country out of the ranks of the world’s poorest nation. Kushner also proposes that China’s development model of using investments has the potential to be a model for all of Africa, instead of the West’s humanitarian aid approach. DR Congo received \$6 billion in federal direct investment from China in 2012 alone. Congolese locals prefer China’s development model, since companies create jobs, and locals are earning wages for the first time in their lives. Development aid does little to benefit locals, whereas these Sicominex are improving their lives. The Chinese Sicominex have spent an estimated \$400 million alone in building infrastructure in DR Congo, promoting the

⁸ Marysse and Geenen, “Win-Win Or Unequal Exchange?”, 371.

⁹ Ibid., 390.

¹⁰ Ibid., 391.

Congolese’s standard of living.¹¹ Kushner gives these reasons that align with the view of Chinese investments as ethical.

Other scholars vary in their perspective on Sino-Congolese economic relations between the two dominant arguments discussed above. In their article “Understanding Sino-African Relations: Neocolonialism or a New Era?”, Rich and Recker argue that China economically helps Africa while overlooking “the systemic problems that plague African nations, specifically human rights violations and other social and political abuses that have come to define African institutions and post-Cold War development.” However, Rich and Recker support Africa and China relations as mutually beneficial. China has a demand for natural resources while Africa has a need for export markets and foreign investments. Ultimately, these authors have found a middle ground in the ethicality of China-Africa economic relations.¹²

Additional literature referred to in this article, and on this topic, fall into these same arguments for, against, and somewhere in between Sino-Congolese economic relations. The authors above draw on facts and figures that are vital to supporting their own and my arguments. However, what scholars fail to apply when analyzing China-DRC economic relations are the various moral theories in international relations that help determine what is “right” and what is “wrong”. By applying realism and cosmopolitanism, particularly, I can offer a normative approach to explain the standards of what is right and wrong in Sino-Congolese economic transactions that other authors have not taken.

REALISM AND COSMOPOLITANISM

The two political theories of realism and cosmopolitanism represent the extremes of the ethicality spectrum, and therefore are useful in navigating all aspects of the ethicality of China-DRC economic relations. The fundamental claim of realist theory is that

¹¹ Kushner, *China’s Congo Plan*.

¹² Timothy S. Rich, and Sterling Recker. “Understanding Sino-African Relations: Neocolonialism Or a New Era?” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 20, no. 1 (06, 2013): 71.

<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/1625337111?accountid=14496>>.

states exclusively pursue self-interest in the international realm without regard to morality. Realists believe that acting in self-interest is the only ethical imperative for four key reasons regarding the international realm. First, realists argue that human nature is egoistic—that a state’s self-interest leads to insecurity that, therefore, leads to competition and conflict. The primary duty in this state of nature becomes to not take risks other than to protect oneself. Second, realists focus on anarchy, meaning that there is no higher power to control international conflict. Since the international realm lacks hierarchy, state actors end up with a security dilemma and seek to gain power to be able to protect themselves sufficiently. Third, realists focus on power. To protect themselves, states must build their power so they can pursue their national interest. Since everyone is in a state of nature, and the state of nature is anarchic, states always follow their national interest. Self-interest in this anarchic state of nature leaves no room for obligation to help others. States’ only moral imperative is to protect themselves and to preserve their state since they are rational actors.

On the other hand, cosmopolitan theory argues that states derive their rights from the rights of individuals, and is opposed to the idea that rights or quality of life should depend on membership in a community. Cosmopolitans agree on the principle of universality—that all individuals are equal, all standards of justice apply to all persons, and states have no boundaries. I will focus on deontological cosmopolitanism, which argues that the rightness or wrongness of an action determines moral worth of the action. In other words, the reasons and motives for an action determine its morality, not merely the consequences of the action. Deontologists draw on Kant’s idea that humans are rational beings who are capable of moral action. Deontologists favor Kant’s categorical imperative, which states that we should treat others as having value in themselves and act according to principles that can be universally valid. For Kant and deontologists, morality is not defined by self-preservation but equality of moral beings.¹³

13 Robert Johnson. “Kant’s Moral Philosophy.” In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford: Stanford U, Metaphysics Research Lab, 2004.

CASE STUDY

Having examined background literature and theories related to the ethicality of Chinese investment in DRC, I will now briefly elaborate on the 2007 Cooperation Agreements as a case study, then apply realism and cosmopolitanism to this case study. In my conclusion, I argue that the application of both theories determine that Chinese investment in the DRC is both ethical and unethical in different respects.

The 2007 Cooperation Agreements between China and DRC serves as a paragon case to apply realism and cosmopolitanism to, and to assess the ethicality of neocolonialism in Africa. China utilizes a unique investment development model than humanitarian ones previously used, and has secured the biggest transaction that they have ever made in Africa.¹⁴ In *Drivers of Change in the DRC: The Role of China Re-Shaping the Country*, Enne, Galanello, and Marino describe the September 2007 China-DRC Agreement by referring to the agreement’s key articles. Article 1 describes the purpose of the agreement that China will exchange public infrastructure for DRC natural resources. Article 4 certifies that the Chinese-owned companies will command 68% of the joint venture while Congolese companies will own 32%. Article 5 states that revenue generated from mining will be used to repay Chinese companies for their loans. Article 6 defines special conditions and benefits guaranteed to mining companies. Lastly, Article 11 leaves open possibilities for future infrastructure-loan agreements.¹⁵ This Cooperation Agreement has been mutually advantageous, but also representative of vast disparities for the local Congolese people.

Realists would assert that the China-DRC Agreement is moral since both China and the DRC are pursuing their self-interest. For China, there is no room for moral considerations in these economic transactions—they are merely acting in their self-interest. Despite the disparities inflicted upon the Congolese population discussed in the subsequent cosmopolitan application, some scholars argue that

14 Kushner, “China’s Congo Plan.”

15 Erica Enne, Giacomo Galanello, and Eliana Marino. “Drivers of Change in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Role of China in Re-Shaping the Country.” In *Transition Studies Review*, 297-310. 2nd ed. Vol. 17. Transition Studies Review, 2010.

Sino-Congolese investments are “win-win” relations; both China and the DRC are acting ethically in these transactions.

Realism

First, realists argue that human nature is inherently selfish. When states act in self-interest, their insecurity leads them to an international realm of conflict and competition. The only moral action that realists support is to protect oneself. In China’s Congo Plan, Kushner describes the two dominant models of development, the Western humanitarian approach, and the Chinese investment approach to development. Concomitantly, China is not the only state to have economic relations with the DRC. The EU, US, South Africa, India, and Zambia are all trade partners with the DRC. Yet China specifically has been at the forefront of the DRC economy.¹⁶

According to Bruno Hellendorff, China’s trade with DRC was \$1.458 billion in 2009 and was expected to grow rapidly.¹⁷

The value of trade between Kinshasa and Beijing passed from a mere US \$19.41 million in 2000 to a staggering US \$1.458 billion in 2009, with a peak of US \$1.811 billion in 2008 (see figure 1 below).¹⁸ Additionally, this evolution is much more likely to resume its upward trend, following the broader multilateral trade between China and the African continent, which is expected to bounce back to “pre-crisis levels” and reach more than US \$110 billion in 2010.¹⁹

Through my research, the UN Comtrade reports the 2013 trade value of imports to China from the DRC as US \$2.7 billion. From 2009 to 2013, the amount of imports to China has almost

doubled. This rapid increase is a display of the effects of the 2007 Cooperation Agreements. Comparatively, the EU has imports from DRC that have not changed from \$1.5 billion in 2009 to \$1.5 billion in 2013, according to the UN Comtrade.²⁰ What these statistics represent is China’s rapid growth in power via trade. The states that invest in the DRC, according to realists, are all acting in their self-interests and have themselves instigated competition in the international realm. Because of states’ egoistic nature, the only moral action considered should be to protect themselves. By competing with other states in the DRC, China is merely protecting itself from conflict by pursuing its self-interest.

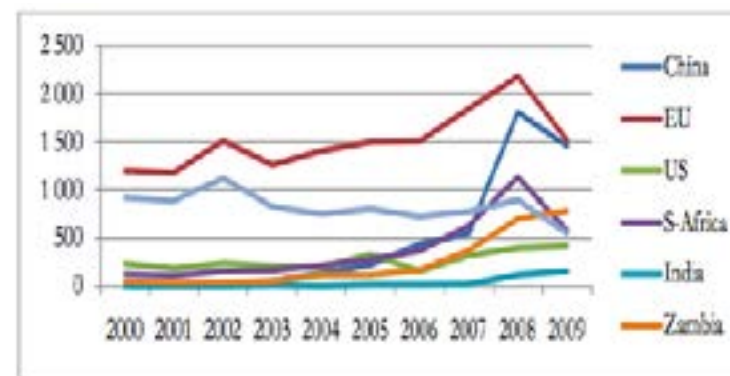


Figure 1 shows DRC’s trade in millions of dollars from 2000-2009. In 2009, China’s trade imports with DRC are about \$1.5 billion. The 2013 trade value, according to UN Comtrade was doubled to \$2.7 billion. In 2009, EU’s trade imports with DRC are about \$1.5 billion. The 2013 trade value was about the same.

Secondly, realists argue that the international realm is anarchic, with no higher power to control international relations. Anarchy is true of the international world, despite the many international institutions that exist. Since the world is anarchic, states tend to compete for security in order to ensure survival, with the possibility of war in the background. Although the world is anarchic, cooperation occurs while concerns about dishonesty in agreements still exist. This case study serves as a special illustration in that some scholars argue that the Sino-Congolese cooperation agreements serve both China’s and DRC’s self-interests. For both states, keeping

¹⁶ Kushner, “China’s Congo Plan.”

¹⁷ Bruno Hellendorff. “China and DRC: Africa’s Next Top Models?” Uclouvain. January 1, 2011. Accessed December 17, 2014. <http://www.uclouvain.be/cps/ucl/doc/pols/documents/NA13-INBEV-ALL.pdf>. Page 19.

¹⁸ Ibid., 20

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ “UN Comtrade: International Trade Statistics.” Comtrade. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://comtrade.un.org/data/>.

their economic relations moral and transparent is not necessary, but having a cooperation agreement that guarantees both China's and DRC's survival is. *The Economist* article, "Mutual Convenience: Congo has something China wants, and vice versa," comments that the Congolese should be the richest in the world with its enormous mineral wealth, but in fact is one of the poorest.

It [Congo] has huge mineral wealth, including the world's biggest reserves of cobalt and tantalum, a rare metal used in the circuitry of mobile phones and laptops. It also has rich seams of copper, diamonds, gold, manganese, uranium and zinc. Moreover, much of the country is covered with virtually intact tropical forests, thick with valuable hardwoods.²¹ DR Congo's pursuit of self-interest is whatever will help their survival—whatever will get them out of their rank as the poorest state in the world. China's self-interest in DR Congo's mineral resources is vital to their development and thirst for power.

Lastly, realists argue that to protect themselves, they must build up their power to defend themselves and to pursue their interests. These last two realist principles summarize the realist application above. China is pursuing its self-interest in mining for DRC's mineral wealth. There are many other countries that invest in the DRC, yet China's investment model of development maximally benefits both China and DR Congo. China out-invests any other country in the DRC, ensuring its power over other states interested in DRC's mineral wealth.

Realists paint quite a cynical picture of international relations. States look for chances to take advantage of each other, and have no reason to trust each other since the world is an egoistic and anarchic place. States like China endeavor to be the most powerful, and think little of the moral consequences of their actions towards others. This case study, therefore, is particularly unique in that both China and DRC are cooperating to promote their self-interests. But contrary to the realist view, which considers both countries' actions of self-interest ethical, there are scholars that argue the exact opposite in this same agreement.

21 "Mutual Convenience." *The Economist*. March 15, 2008. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.economist.com/node/10795773>.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitans, particularly deontologists, would argue that the rightness or wrongness of Chinese investment in the DRC determines the moral worth of the action itself. The motives and reasons behind Sino-Congolese economic relations determine its morality, not simply the consequences of the action. With Kant's categorical imperative serving as their starting point, cosmopolitans define every person as having equal moral worth. Therefore, this theory must be applied at the individual level of analysis—or more specifically, the Congolese population. Rather than just looking at economics and business, the individual level of analysis in the Sino-Congolese case is a study of the exploitation of Congolese peoples. Marysse and Geenen discuss how the Congolese are affected by the Cooperation Agreements.

One Congolese commentator expressed his concerns about the need to engage local firms as subcontractors. The Chinese will probably be the cheapest anyway, as wages for unskilled workers do not exceed \$2 a day and social wages are minimal. In several African countries, people have already protested against working conditions in Chinese companies.²²

Many Congolese, who are employed by Chinese firms, view the cooperation agreements as negative. They complain about frequent violations of environmental standards, labor rights, child labor rights, exemptions, culture and language gaps, and racism.²³ In deontologist terms, all of these violations committed by Chinese firms are breaches of human rights. In this case study, cosmopolitans would argue that all standards of justice are not being applied to all individuals, as they should. The Chinese investors do not treat the Congolese as humans of equal moral worth in this respect, and these economic relations are consequently unethical.

The New Presence of China in Africa by Meine Pieter van Dijk similarly discusses the Congolese citizens' resentment

22 Stefaan Marysse, and Sara Geenen. "Win-Win Or Unequal Exchange?"

23 Hellendorff, "China and DRC: Africa's Next Top Models?" 26.

of Chinese businessmen activity in their country. Van Dijk shares a concrete example of why the Congolese are so resentful: in one instance, Chinese entrepreneurs of copper flee the DRC without paying their staff or paying their taxes at the end of the commodity upswing.²⁴ Deontologists would deem these actions unethical since the Chinese businessmen's motives are harmful towards Congolese citizens. Distribution of wealth within the DRC is also distorted, and "benefits of the Sino-Congolese cooperation seem to be distributed unequally and be concentrated in the hands of a few businessmen or corrupt government political leaders."²⁵ Some cosmopolitans argue for international distributive justice, an assurance of equal distributive wealth or economic benefits.²⁶ Cosmopolitans argue that the Sino-Congolese cooperation agreements defy fair economic distribution that the Congolese locals should have the right to.

These points and applications of cosmopolitanism to the ethicality of Sino-Congolese cooperation agreements merely hold individual worth to be of high importance. Cosmopolitans argue that the Chinese should not exploit the Congolese in ways discussed above, and should show equal moral respect. Contrary to the realists, cosmopolitans paint an idealistic picture of international relations. Essentially, cosmopolitans, particularly deontologists, argue that the Sino-Congolese agreements are unethical against the local Congolese and yield adverse effects.

CONCLUSION

So far, I have analyzed the deeply political question of whether Chinese investment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is ethical through the lenses of realism and cosmopolitanism. Using the context and specificities of Sino-Congolese economic relations and the Sino-Congolese Cooperation agreements of 2007 as a case

24 Meine Pieter van Dijk, ed. *The New Presence of China in Africa* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; distributed by University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/821273198?accountid=14496>.

25 Hellendorff, "China and DRC: Africa's Next Top Models?" 41.

26 Michael Blake. "International Distributive Justice." Stanford University. October 24, 2013. Accessed December 14, 2014. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/international-justice/>.

study to compare the applications of realism and cosmopolitanism, I have shown that both theories have concrete reasoning behind their arguments and even some solid evidence to back up their claims regarding the ethicality of these investments—even as those claims stand in stark opposition to one another.

In short, my findings acknowledge the realist cynical approach and the cosmopolitan idealistic approach to the international realm. Although these two arguments are at the extremes of the "ethicality spectrum," some scholars also argue somewhere in the middle. What is missing in scholarly examinations of Sino-Congolese economic relations, however, is the use of these classic theories of international relations. World affairs have always had an ethical dimension, and international political theories are vital in structuring ethical arguments. In this article, I explicitly apply international moral theory in order to discuss the ethicality of Chinese investment in the DRC, whereas other scholars use deductive evidence exclusively. What is missing in deductive studies of this topic is concrete data as to what actual disparities and gains are taking place. Comtrade statistics, for example, lack information for clandestine investments and other non-reported transactions.²⁷ Nevertheless, using theories provides an alternative route to judge the morality of China-DRC relations.

Concurrently, my analysis is merely a means to engage in a rigorous and nuanced debate on the ethicality of Sino-Congolese economic relations. By exploring the extremes of the debate, I too believe that China is acting both ethically and unethically in their relations with DRC in different ways. There is no explicit answer as to whether or not Chinese investment in DRC is ethical. Like other scholars that fall in the middle of the spectrum (Rich and Recker, for example), I argue that the DRC is gaining and losing in ways discussed previously in this article. Accordingly, the answer to our debate is inclusive of both realist and cosmopolitan arguments.

The 2007 cooperation agreements between China and the DRC signify a turning point in history—a model of which can be used all throughout Africa by China and other countries after observing long-term trends of economic growth. Neocolonialism is one of the most crucial moral dilemmas for society today, both with increasing

27 Hellendorff, "China and DRC: Africa's Next Top Models?" 20.

gains and vast disparities for Africa caused by economic, political, and social relations with the international realm. In order for China to succeed in the DRC and be able to apply their investment model of development to all of Africa, they must work to improve good governance and transparency. China must learn to cooperate with other international partners, be accountable for their actions, win support of local citizens, and more.²⁸ After taking these long-term steps, China and Africa can benefit from employing an investment model of development—being aware of potential disparities that may arise thereof—and subsequently challenge neocolonialism’s negative connotation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blake, Michael. “International Distributive Justice.” Stanford University. October 24, 2013. Accessed December 14, 2014. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/international-justice/>.
- Enne, Erica, Giacomo Galanello, and Eliana Marino. “Drivers of Change in the Democratic Republic of Congo: The Role of China in Re-Shaping the Country.” In *Transition Studies Review*, 297-310. 2nd ed. Vol. 17. Transition Studies Review, 2010.
- “Globalization.” National Geographic Education. Accessed December 16, 2014. http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/encyclopedia/globalization/?ar_a=1.
- Hellendorff, Bruno. “China and DRC: Africa’s Next Top Models?” Uclouvain. January 1, 2011. Accessed December 17, 2014. <http://www.uclouvain.be/cps/ucl/doc/pols/documents/NA13-INBEV-ALL.pdf>.
- Hoffmann, Stanley. *The Political Ethics of International Relations*. New York: Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs, 1988.
- Jansson, Johanna. “China - DRC Sicomines Deal Back on Track.” *The Africa Report*. August 4, 2014. Accessed December 15, 2014.
- Johnson, Robert. “Kant’s Moral Philosophy.” In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford: Stanford U, Metaphysics Research Lab, 2004.
- Kushner, Jacob. “China’s Congo Plan.” *The American Interest*. January 10, 2014. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2014/01/10/chinas-congo-plan/>.
- Marysse, Stefaan and Sara Geenen. “Win-Win Or Unequal Exchange? the Case of the Sino-Congolese Cooperation Agreements.” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 47, no. 3 (09, 2009): 371-396. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0022278X09003978>. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/60027088?accountid=14496>.
- Matti, Stephanie. “Resources and Rent Seeking in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.” *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 3 (04, 2010): 401-413. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2010.488471>. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/743811667?accountid=14496>.

²⁸ Ibid., 53

“Mutual Convenience.” *The Economist*. March 15, 2008. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://www.economist.com/node/10795773>.

Nardin, Terry, and David Mapel. *Traditions of International Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

“Neocolonialism.” Merriam-Webster. Accessed January 3, 2015. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/neocolonialism>.

Rich, Timothy S. and Sterling Recker. “Understanding Sino-African Relations: Neocolonialism Or a New Era?” *Journal of International and Area Studies* 20, no. 1 (06, 2013): 61-76. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1625337111?accountid=14496>.

“UN Comtrade: International Trade Statistics.” Comtrade. Accessed December 18, 2014. <http://comtrade.un.org/data/>.

van Dijk, Meine Pieter, ed. *The New Presence of China in Africa* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; distributed by University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2009. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/821273198?accountid=14496>.



Institute *of*
East Asian Studies