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Front and Back Cover: Carol Yuan Gao
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1  LEGACIES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CAMBODIA  
   Chorkin Chau, Undergraduate Senior, Interdisciplinary Studies Field

32  TROUBLE IN PARADISE: AUROVILLE AND THE LIMITS OF UTOPIA  
   Adora Svitak, Undergraduate Junior, Development Studies and South Asian Studies

45  THE NEW SELF-DETERMINATION OF CHINA’S FOREIGN POLICY  
   Harry Liu, Undergraduate Sophomore, Political Science

59  CIVILIAN THINK TANKS AND THE STATE IN CHINA: ALOOF FRIENDLINESS  
   Yiwen Zhang, Undergraduate Junior, Political Science and Economics

73  PROJECT PENGYOU CASE COMPETITION POLICY  
   Yilun Cheng, Undergraduate Junior, Political Science  
   Matthew Forbes, Undergraduate Freshman, Economics and Public Policy Minor  
   Jeanny Xu, Undergraduate Sophomore, Asian Studies and Economics

86  SELF AND THE SRI LANKAN IDENTITY - UNPACKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COUNTRY WE CALLED ENIGMA  
   Arany Uthayakumar, Undergraduate Senior, Cognitive Science

102  THE ROLE OF ISLAM AND TERRORISM IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA  
   Khairuldeen Al Makhzoomi, Recent Graduate,

126  CHINA AROUND THE WORLD: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOFTPOWER THROUGH CHINESE ARTS AND CULTURE  
   Samantha Yen, Undergraduate Junior, Environmental Economics and Policy
HUMAN TRAFICKING IN CHINA: THE FORGING OF A STRONG NATIONAL COMMITMENT

Yilun Cheng, Undergraduate Junior, Political Science

INDIA IN TRANSITION: THE SHIFT FROM PUBLIC TO PRIVATE EDUCATION

Marylin Longley, Undergraduate Junior, Political Science and Political Economy
Dear Reader,

We are pleased to present the seventh edition of the Berkeley Student Journal of Asian Studies. Our annual journal serves as a method for undergraduate and graduate students alike to present their insightful and creative pieces of work on Asia, and to develop critical skills in writing, editing, and research. This year’s pieces were selected from a competitive pool of record-high submissions; we are excited and humbled to be presenting such an impressive array of submissions.

In this edition, Chorkin Chau examines the societal causes and effects of gender-based violence in Cambodia. Adora Svitak explores how Auroville, a utopian community in Tamil Nadu, reproduces colonial relationships and fails to provide effective alternatives to capitalist society. Harry Liu proposes that China must follow a new path of self-determination that would ensure that it maintains its position as a power in the East while resolving both internal and external challenges. Yiwen Zhang identifies the relationship between Chinese civilian think tanks and the state to be “aloof friendliness.” For the Project Pengyou Case Competition of Spring 2017, Yilun Cheng, Matthew Forbes, and Jeanny Xu craft a realistic policy proposal that would help better relations between the U.S. and China regarding trade policy conflicts and territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Arany Uthayakumar utilizes a wide array of primary sources to identify what it means to be Sri-Lankan. Khairuldeen Al Makhzoomi juxtaposes the influence of Islam in Indonesia and Malaysia and its relation to terrorism in both countries. Marilyn Longley examines the merits and demerits of India’s educational system and proposes that India needs a push for more accessible, high-quality private education. Samantha Yen examines the increased efforts by the Chinese government to develop and disseminate Chinese culture both and abroad to create soft power. Finally, Yilun Cheng analyzes the role of foreign influence on the Chinese government’s decision-making process in combatting human trafficking.

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
LEGACIES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CAMBODIA

Chorkin Chau

ABSTRACT

The rates of gender-based violence (GBV) are rising across all nations, but the numbers are alarmingly high in lower to middle-income countries and the victims are also now increasingly younger in age. This paper aims to view Cambodia as a case study of such a phenomenon by analyzing how different cultural, historical, and political circumstances have contributed to the lack of resources to prevent such forms of violence against women. Prior work on the high rates of Cambodia GBV has shown how the privatization of violence leads to acceptance of acts of GBV, causing institutionalized acceptance and enforced reconciliations between victims and perpetrators. The structure of gendered identities, the population’s exposure to violence, and the disruption of social standards during and after the genocide are highly contributive factors to how violence against women is normalized in Cambodian society. To contribute to the past works, I analyze survey data collected from various agencies to measure the current rates of GBV, refer to the social disruptions that occurred during the Khmer Rouge Regime, and evaluate its psychosocial impact on survivors. The results have revealed how such reinforcement of cultural expectations and gender roles has created a legacy of GBV that has been normalized within rural communities and leads to the isolation and silence perpetuated by the lack of support and resources from the government.
Introduction

On October 2016 at the Khmer Rouge tribunal, expert witness, Peg LeVine testified that the marriages during Khmer Rouge were not forced. Her claims came from her own research, which surveyed 192 people, with 40 percent reporting that they were not threatened with death if they did not have sex. Such data led LeVine to conclude consummation during the regime was not forced, based on her comparison to the Western world’s expected consummation of marriage during the ‘honeymoon period.’”1

Her words were echoed in various languages to an audience of Cambodian and foreign jurors and civil party members in the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea (Extraordinary Chambers or ECCC). This is an international court created by the United Nations to prosecute senior leaders and those most responsible for the violations of international and national law during the Khmer Rouge Regime (KRR) from April 1975 to January 1979, including forced marriages. The currently ongoing Case of 002 serves to charge the major former leaders, “Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan (together with Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith), with crimes against humanity, genocide and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.”2

Methods

My primary source stems from the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) survey, conducted in February 2016, which involved survivors of the KRR who had been forcefully married. The results drawn from the study will be used to understand the types of GBV, the perpetrators of such acts and the psychosocial impacts of such violence on survivors. In addition, testimonies of survivors documented by TPO will also be included in the analysis to better picture the circumstances and acts of violence that had occurred. The use of other data sets from other NGOs throughout the paper serves the purpose of understanding how the prevalence, impacts, and perspectives of GBV has changed or been sustained across generations.

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The interpretation of gender can vary across culture and time, but it can be thought as a concept in which gendered traits, emotions, values, expectations, norms, environments, and institutions interconnect and determine social positions in society. However, these positions usually place women with less power, privilege, and resources than men. These unequal standards set by society allow for women to be in a more vulnerable state and subject them to harsher forms of physical, structural, and gender-based violence. For the purposes of this paper, gender-based violence against women is defined as:

“any act that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”

In Cambodia, all of these forms of GBV can be found within every era, but the rates of such incidences have exponentially risen since the Khmer Rouge period. To understand the contributing factors of why this is occurring takes an evaluation of how women have been perceived and valued in the past and present society.

**Traditional Literature**

Gender roles have been outlined in traditional religious literature that has been reiterated in classrooms and enforced in Cambodian society for generations. The expectations carried in these roles are an essential component within traditional and contemporary Cambodia as it “is closely linked to other social practices, identities and is a fundamental dimension of power relationships.” This power relationship essentially formed a bilateral kinship system that created a sense of “balance” within households. Women are able to take part in agricultural production to generate income and own properties but are disproportionately more limited in social mobility than men. Frieson, a UN regional spokesperson, views this is because “at all levels of government and within the Buddhist order—the sources of the country’s political and moral authority—women are denied equal

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access on the basis of their ‘inferior’ sex status.” Such enforced forms of oppression within communities and institutions are one of the biggest contributing factors to the rates of violence against women in Cambodia.

Two particular works, the prose poems titled “Chbab Srey” and “Chbab Proh,” have been essential in how gender norms were established. “Chbab Srey” refers to the codes of conduct for women while “Chbab Proh” was for men. Both “Chbabs” were implemented in the 1950s and 1960s and served as a measure to preserve Cambodian culture and resist French colonialism. After the KRR, these gender norms were reasserted as a means to revert to the traditional ways of Cambodian life. They were taught in primary schools across the country, upheld by many households, and reinforced amongst various generations. The poems dictate that the man are to be “hardworking, proactive, independent” and thus translate that they are to fulfill their proper authorial position as the head of their household to provide for and support the family. On the other hand, his wife is deemed as the “household manager” who is responsible for the house and all its resources and is expected to have the upmost respect for her husband who she is to serve for the rest of her life. Though she is managing the resources of the household, her role puts her at a disadvantage as she is expected to depend on the resources that only her husband could provide for the family. Before the 1970s, there was a “close correspondence” between the ideals articulated in the “Chbap Srey” and lives of Cambodian women. This indicates that within this point in time, “Chbab Srey” is an essential part of how women were valued in society; to be deemed a “successful Khmer woman” implied that she had well conformed to the conventions instilled by the “Chbap Srey.” After the Khmer Rouge period, Cambodians reverted back to these “traditional” perceptions of men and women and institutionalized these gender norms through education.


Brickell, Katherine. “We don’t forget the old rice pot when we get the new one”: discourses on ideals and practices of women in contemporary Cambodia (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 438.
The data from both the studies from the Minister of Women’s Affair on Domestic Violence (MoWA) in 1996 and the UN’s 2006 National Survey have shown the highest rates of abuse were against women in ages 30-35 (27%).\textsuperscript{10} This finding indicates that the rate of violence against women is much higher towards women who are younger, and that such rates are continually increasing throughout the years. This variable indicates that those in this age range were impacted by the enforcement of “Chbab Srey”, as it was still implemented in the education received and in the basis of which society functioned. It indicates that though the codes are now removed, they continue to impact society’s perception and value of women.

In a study by Brickell, there are various indications of pressure from the older generation for younger women to follow their prescriptive female roles within their households.\textsuperscript{11} Such pressure limits women’s accessibility to attain higher education and ultimately creates tension between respecting traditional values placed by institutions and societal forces. The effects of strong reinforcement of these expectations on young women and men can be later seen in isolation and lack of community many felt after the amount of trauma and hardships endured during the KRR.

Rather than uniting the Khmer community, such literature have been harmful and caused division amongst individuals. In addition to the Chbab’s, there were also proverbs such as “men are gold while women are white cloth” that have constantly been recited for generations. This saying indicates that the general perception of women is that they have no value, can be soiled as compared to men whose value remains regardless of his actions or circumstances. It is also interpreted that women who are no longer virgins have been tainted (whether it was consented or coerced) and hold the least value in Cambodian society. These poems and proverbs are not the sole reason for the high rights of GBV against women, but they highlight the misogynistic components of the culture that explains why women are at higher risk to experience such forms of violence and why there exists a dearth of support and resources for this vulnerable population.

The effects of these gender-defining codes and degrading proverbs on social practices are incredibly harmful as they have been constantly reiter-
ated and play a major role in enforcing gender inequality. The consequences were studied in a report which found that such traditional literature “[regulates] the female population, [impairs] women’s movement, [engenders] high rates of illiteracy and poverty, [reduces] occupational choice and control over resources, and is responsible for low rates of political participation.”

Social Acceptance of GBV

The stress and implementation on gender roles are so imbedded in the society that they have become normalized, to the point in which women who are victims of GBV themselves accept the violence experienced. In the UN survey conducted, it was identified that almost half of all respondents “believe that under certain circumstances, a husband/partner is justified in hitting his partner.” Such findings were consistent to another qualitative study conducted by Zimmerman, in which over half of the women interviewed revealed that the common excuses used by their husbands for violence were related to their conceptions on the role of women in their homes. It was related to their inability to meet such expectations of preparing meals, performing household tasks, refusing intercourse, or being inadequate in their manner or service to their husbands. The mentality that men hold regarding their actions only reinforces self-blame in such a way that they feel justified to execute such violent actions against their wives. The number of women who also shared such perspectives increased with age, duration of marriage, and number of children and decreased among urban higher-educated women. The consistencies in acceptability of abuse against women indicate that the Cambodian society grant men the right to execute such forms of violence towards their wives, simply because they are men with power over these women. If he chooses to abuse her, his actions will be viewed as appropriate because women will always remain at fault in the public’s eye.

The acceptance of the violence within these households, as a result of failure to partake in the gender roles implemented in Cambodian societ-


13 “National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Cambodia.”

ies from both men and women, only further increases the likelihood of violence against women. Despite being the victim, she will essentially always be blamed—the first question from her community will always be what has she done to deserve the beatings.\textsuperscript{15} This perspective regarding GBV has been so strongly implemented in Cambodian society that the victims themselves also blame themselves. Amongst the individuals surveyed in the UN and MoWA surveys, only a few of the victims of domestic violence actually took action and sought help; an alarmingly high number of those refused to do so because they felt that the violence was “normal” and “not serious.”

Mechanisms of societal reinforcement of gender roles were also seen across various institutions; the study on Health Care Provider Perceptions and Response to Domestic Violence in Cambodia revealed that both the health sector groups and the domestic violence survivor groups perceived the most common cause of abuse was a result of the woman’s failure to meet traditional roles and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{16} These health providers, of whom women are entrusting to protect them against harm, also blame the victim, which impacts the quality of care provided, the assessment conducted, and the amount of empathy they have towards the patient herself. It serves as a danger to her health and isolates her even more.

The disregard for the violence against women is also found in the justice system; one study found that 48 percent of police surveyed did not consider domestic violence a crime, and only 17 percent of police officers that witnessed a man whipping his wife would arrest the man.\textsuperscript{17} Even in the NGO community oriented towards human rights, the women and men workers betray varying degrees of acceptance of this violence. This demonstrates the lack of resources and support that a woman has in this society that perpetuates and supports violence against women.

Even in the case that a woman does voice about the violence she experiences, these social institutions will not offer any help or protection; rather, it may subject her to more danger. If she does share about the abuse to her neighbor or family members, she would ultimately be urged to reconcile with her perpetrator. There lies a lack of regard for the true peril she is in because society highly values the concept of liv-

\textsuperscript{15} Ledgerwood.  
ing in harmony, and aims to maintain it by disregarding the true concern or danger that any woman is in when having a domestic dispute.

Though seemingly harmless, this is evidence how the social acceptance of violence against women has been embedded; even when she tries to reach out for help, she is expected to take fault for her perpetrator’s anger and actions and continue to be under his power because she has no other options, according to the social norms. This standard is not only held in her social circle but is in fact part of Cambodia’s divorce laws. The law indicates that if a case of divorce is filed to local officials, it is expected that “they shall attempt to reconcile the two parties in the marriage. If they cannot, they forward the complaint to the court.”\(^\text{18}\) The rate of divorce in Cambodia is incredibly low, because of such a process and culture that emphasizes the solution of reconciliation. However, rather than protecting the women, this law silences their sufferings, violates their right to live free from violence, and gives authority to local officials who may be supporting these violent behaviors themselves and lack the proper training and education to handle the case appropriately. Zimmerman views that this “reconciliation process, as a ‘no-fault’ system, ultimately places at least some blame with the woman, failing to address the issue of domestic violence as a criminal assault and human-rights violation.”\(^\text{19}\) The amount of reinforcement of gender roles and standards from these institutions and societal forces are contributing factors to the ongoing disempowerment and violation of women’s rights.

These standards continue to be fundamental to Cambodian culture because of the nature of the hierarchically structured Cambodian society in which sexual differences are diffused in power relations.\(^\text{20}\) It not only prevents women from taking any position of authority outside of their household roles, but also allows men to constantly hold their positions of power within the public spheres. They are expected to “live up to the myth of toughness, power and strength—a masculinity of patriarchal domination—and are expected to discipline their families, with violence if necessary, so as not to ‘lose their faces.’”\(^\text{21}\) The expectation that violence is deemed as a necessary measure for men to take in order to not experience shame in society highlights that there has been a social construction and reinforcement


\(^{19}\) Zimmerman, 5.

\(^{20}\) Frieson, et al., 173.

\(^{21}\) Brickell, 456.
of violence within households. This culture of violence was of course, exacerbated and extended during and after the Khmer Rouge Regime.

**KRR Spillover Effect**

From April 1975 to January 1979, the Khmer Rouge (KR), also known as the Communist Party of Kampuchea, overthrew the former King Lon Nol, and gained complete control of the country. Pol Pot’s new party, referred to as the “organization” or angkar, created a conglomeration of individuals from impoverished backgrounds and gave them status, food, and weapons. The party leaders utilized the poverty, hardships, and social oppression experienced by these individuals to kindle a strong flame of hatred and revenge against the upper class. Eventually they were able to recruit members from several villages and collectively evacuate the urban population from cities and into the fields of the countryside.

The next four years came to be known as the Khmer Rouge Regime (KRR) and was a period in which there was an absence of any forms of markets, school, religion, culture, effectively becoming a “classless society.” Families and communities were torn apart, and everyone was forced into the fields where they were overworked, underfed, and abused for more than 12 hours a day without rest. The regime sought to control and manipulate every aspect of the population’s life, from what they ate and thought to whom they married. There were about 2 million, one third of the population, who died from over-exhaustion, disease, starvation, murder, and torture. The remaining survivors are left with an alarming rate of mental health issues and the legacies of the human rights violations that still remain in present day Cambodia. This gruesome history also causes a “spill-over effect” of the Democratic Kampuchea (DK) Social Order and culture of rape, both of which continue to plague a country of broken people in a broken society through the perpetuation of violence, mostly towards women.

**Ideologies of Violence**

Hinton’s work in *Why Did They Kill?* offers in-depth analysis on the anthropological background of such a violent time. The party’s achievement of a socialist society was achieved through the destruction and re-

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placement of social and class structures with two distinct groups: the “new people” (those who were from the urban areas) and the “old people” (rural villagers) with no family, village, or culture structures imbedded. Hinton views that the leaders of the party were able to harbor the anger and hatred within the classes and perpetuated this from individual thoughts into collective action and violence. Once people were aware of the “contradictions” and the ways in which they were oppressed,” they were more able to justify their reasoning for such acts.24 The party gave those angry villagers and peasants the opportunity to seek vengeance and harbor their hatred by committing utter loyalty to the DK’s genocidal acts. They were highly valued for their efforts in completely abandoning their thoughts about their communities, families, and even their own minds and bodies. These individuals were often less educated and were not completely competent in the political motives of the KR, and thus, used fear and force to establish compliance.25 This led to a complete inversion of previous social positions and structures: peasants were more valued than those from city dwellers and adults, and children were recruited as soldiers, spies, and torturers.26

The destruction of the communities and families heavily impaired the foundation of Cambodian society, relationships that were critical for establishing livelihood, and, building trust. This vital bond in social life was heavily damaged by the KR; many Cambodians shared memories of how cadres who swore loyalty to the party and its ideologies had arrested, beat, or killed a parent or spouse within their own kin.27 These measures to ensure absolute obedience perpetuated more violence, for it allowed individuals to justify their violent actions to those who they deemed were against the party itself. Damage to the societal structures were immense; Jacobsen writes “life was so insecure that one could not necessarily trust one’s children or one’s wife…[there was] the sense of complete loss of the old system of order.”28 This older system was replaced by a society in which senseless killings were normalized, sentiments were banned, and social relationships were destroyed; the party and its ideologies that promised equality only resulted in mass deaths and utter chaos.

24 Ibid., 52.
25 Ibid., 46.
27 Hinton, 245.
Code #6

Additional changes in the reconstruction of society during KRR also included changes in gender relations; for women were no longer held to the standards of the traditional literature and were now valued on the basis of their revolutionary zeal like men were. The intentions of ensuring gender equality through homogenization were false as there was a major disregard for crimes committed against women. However, if a “moral offence,” when a man and woman had relations without the benefit of a marriage that was recognized by the Regime, was committed, both individuals would be punished. This would be in violation of Code #6 of the Twelve Codes of Conduct, disciplines that revolutionaries were to respect and implement without fail. Code #6, which forbade the abuse of women—defined as the action of forcing a “woman to have consensual sex or having sex with a woman who is not your wife.” Though such measures to ensure the safety of women were outlined in these standards, the cadres themselves did not respect them. The exact number of rape cases was not well documented, but it’s estimated that there had been at least 156 cases of KR soldiers who had raped women in institutions or detention centers. Note that these numbers only highlight a small proportion of GBV that occurred, for most of the women were raped and usually killed afterwards. Even when it was revealed that this moral offence had been committed, the offender often went unpunished. Despite the many promises of absolute equality between the genders, the women were most likely to be punished, even if they were the victims of rape. They were either imprisoned, forced to labor until their deaths, or were killed through other means.

29 Hinton, 193.
The only forms of sexual relations allowed were those instilled by the party through the forms of forced marriages and marital rape. These marriages were organized with the purpose of achieving new members for the revolution, and anyone who dared to object would be tortured or killed. One survivor’s tale recounts the torture she experienced after rejecting a captain. She was repeatedly beaten by the young guards, dragged into a pagoda, chained, and stripped. The soldiers then proceeded to sexually assault her until she lost consciousness and awoke the next morning with the captain by her side; this was done on a nightly-basis. With her were about 20-50 other women prisoners. The ones who reluctantly agreed to avoid the imprisonment and death threats were then forced into lines and simply married off with strangers in a matter of minutes. The terror did not end at the ceremony for most, as new couples were also then forced by the KR soldiers to also have sexual intercourse. The measures of regulating all forms of sexual activity during this period included a system of forced marriages and the facilitation of the marital rapes within them. Langis, a senior expert on women’s human rights in conflict and post-conflict settings, argued that the values instilled in Code #6 granted the state total control over all sexual activity for revolutionary ends and directly implicated rather than exculpated the accused in this crime. Thus it instilled a “state-enforced culture of rape—rape was normalized and perpetrated with impunity, especially within marriage and for punishment.” Consumption was heavily enforced and expected of the members, if a woman rejected her husband, the cadres themselves would assist her new husband in raping her. The cadres would stand outside and monitor the couples, and there were even incidences of their assistance in the rape of women who were resisting. Stories like CP’s were common amongst survivors:


33 Theresa Langis. “This Is Now the Most Important Trial In the World”: A New Reading of Code #6, the Rule Against Immoral Offenses Under the Khmer Rouge Regime.” The Cambodian Law and Policy Journal no. 3 (December 2014): 61.

34 Strasser, Judith, e. al. “A Study about Victims’ Participation at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and Gender-Based Violence under the Khmer Rouge Regime.” TPO Cambodia (September 2015): 14.
“The guards said it had been almost a week and we still had not slept together, so that night we had to have sex. I did not agree... the guards tied my legs and arms to the bed and moved away to let my husband approach me. And that fucking husband raped me!”

The justifications from the KR members and the husbands who raped their new wives were said to be for the purpose of producing children for the party. This atrocious practice enforced by the party was a measure that allowed for future social acceptance of rape and GBV in Cambodia. As the acts were occurring within this period, there was utter silence from outsiders. It became manifested into a new culture of silence, created from the growing fear of the perpetrator. The trauma and adversities that the women faced were never properly recognized, even after the war had ended. Years later, “traditional gender roles” were once again implemented and women took their position in a masculinized society—suffering in silence, afraid to speak about the events that continue to haunt them through forms of poverty, social isolation, and discrimination amongst their peers.

The horrible four years of the KRR finally drew to a close when Vietnamese soldiers entered Cambodia in December 1978 to overthrow the DK, who retreated into rural provinces after losing their final battle on January 7, 1979. Though the nightmare itself had ended, the country was completely devastated and continues to recuperate from the amount of mental and political trauma that resulted from the chaos that had erupted.

“Traditional social norms may impede the adjustment to modern egalitarian norms,” but the traditional gender roles embedded in Cambodian society can no longer continue to be an excuse for continual oppression, hatred, and violence against women. Throughout Cambodian history, it has fueled the reinforcement of gender roles that have undermined the rights and lives of Cambodian women for decades. Even with the promise of an equal society during the horrific era of the KRR, women were targeted, a culture of rape was enforced by the state through forced marriages, and a lifetime of psychosocial trauma haunted those who were able to make it out alive.

35 Ibid.
Results/TPO DATA

In February 2016, Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) in Cambodia conducted interviews and surveys of 101 survivors of the KRR, all of whom were civil party members for the ECCC. As a member, these survivors are able to participate in the trial directly seek collective or moral reparations, and share rights similar to the prosecution and defense. The results of the surveys indicate the amount of psychosocial impacts of the GBV they had experienced during the genocide. The survey conducted evaluated the types of trauma experienced during the KRR, its relation to certain anxiety and depression symptoms, and resources used by respondents to address their psychological needs.

A majority of the respondents are over the age of 50; all are living in the rural provinces and were collectively forced to relocate during the KRR. To assess their trauma, surveyors asked respondents what their most upsetting or stressful event in their life was. 35 of the respondents reported that it was their experiences of forced marriages or other forms of GBV during KRR. Others reported having trauma from the hard labor, starvation, or the murders of their family members.

These civil party members were all forcibly married during the regime; 73 were threatened to be “re-educated” or have their family members killed if they had refused to have sex after the wedding procedures. The impacts of such threats, the marriages, and the amount of violence that occurred within them were primarily evaluated through psychosocial measures.

The survey conducted served to assess the mental health impacts of the traumatic events during the KRR. Most respondents had experienced several signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression. However, despite suffering from such mental health issues decades after the war had ended, 82 survivors never received any form of support or help medically or psychologically. Nonetheless, there were other mechanisms in which survivors found strength to continue onwards after the regime ended.

Of the 101 respondents, 76 had shared about their experiences of GBV during the KRR, mostly to their neighbors or fellow victims of such acts. There was still a large number of people (21) who had never spoken about such experiences until the interviews, 13 of whom had
killed by existing party members. 15 respondents also shared their experiences to their children or the next-generation members of their family. The role families played in supporting the survivors cope was essential, as a majority of the respondents (45) mentioned that they were able to get some form of support from their family members. Most indicated that their family members were encouraging, particularly their children. Others indicated they were able to find relief through religion or help from NGOs in their communities. Additionally, 23 of the survivors had no one else but themselves to give them the strength to overcome their traumas and the drive to live despite their past struggles. One respondent said she was her own motivator in ensuring that she was doing everything for her current life. However, her self-reliance may have been due to the lack of social support from her community, which was also assessed in the surveys.

Though only a small proportion of people kept the violence to themselves, 20 strongly agreed and 56 agreed that they had to keep feelings about the rape or forced marriages silent because they had felt it would make others feel uncomfortable; most viewed others would not be able to understand what they had experienced. More than half expressed shame and felt that their statuses as Cambodian women had been destroyed, and 54 members no longer felt respected amongst their communities.

In addition to assessing personal accounts of GBV that occurred during their experiences of the KRR, the surveyors also asked respondents about their witnessing of other forms of GBV that took place. Respondents recalled their memories of seeing or hearing of victims who were raped, had genital mutilations, or were sexually abused or humiliated through other means, where most of the actions were perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge cadres between the ages of 18-30. In total, there were also 19 accounts of genital mutilation. Some victims had “a burning iron [rod]” or other items inserted into their genitals and were then raped and killed after; 15 of these acts were executed by KRR cadres. Additionally, there were 15 other accounts of sexual harassment or humiliation, most of which involved forced nudity. 18 of 20 respondents reported they knew someone who had been raped by a cadre—all of the victims were female.
Discussion

Social Implications

The data highlighted that most of the respondents were able to share their experiences of GBV during the KRR with their neighbors, fellow victims, or family members. The large number of people who felt comfortable enough to revisit the trauma and seek aid from their peers is essential to highlight as the response of these supporters are essential. If they were open and understanding towards the victims, it would further encourage them to express their emotions and distresses that they may still feel about the experience. The warmth by these individuals is not only essential to the survivor’s mental health but should be an indicator of how current victims of GBV in modern day Cambodia are treated. The community that was previously destroyed has recovered since the fall of the Khmer Rouge and must then be utilized in a way that creates a greater, more supportive and equitable society for all members.

There is essentially an increase in the importance that family holds for the survivors in their abilities to cope. Not only are they an incredibly essential unit of support, but they are also the motivators of the respondents to share their experiences. The respondents who told of their struggles during those four years to the next generation of family members did so with the concern and fear of their own future safety. Most participants feel anxious that the events will repeat for the next generation and are mostly concerned about their kids and grandchildren going through the same experience. In fact, some become civil party members for this sole reason, which can be seen from one survivor’s statement, “I am happy to share my testimony to the next generations for educational purposes and to prevent the darkest regime from happening again.”

The breaking of silence regarding the tragedies that occurred is a mechanism in which the ideologies of violence that were created during the KRR are being deconstructed and replaced with a more supportive foundation and network of individuals within communities. However, the action of doing so was not possible for everyone as those who stayed silent about their trauma did so on the basis of their constant fear of the Khmer Rouge

cadres. The violent acts of the KR cadres still haunt the survivors and highly impact their ability to heal from the catastrophic events from those four years.

In addition to the fear they held was the amount of isolation they had experienced; those who did not have the same familial support only relied on their own selves to cope and endure the following years after the regime. Despite the fact that the entire population suffered, the GBV victims still felt that they could not share about the experiences they had endured and felt socially isolated. PS, a survivor, stated, “I feel like a woman who is wearing a pair of torn pants—disgraceful” when her lover’s mother forbade their marriage because of her relationship with her abusive husband from the Regime period. She depicted her life as filled with shame and avoided seeing anyone from the KRR by taking measures like moving markets where she sold her goods. PS’s shame stems from how this society has historically maintained such strong gender roles and will exclude those who fail to adhere to such rules. As previously discussed, these roles were highlighted in both “Chbab Srey” and “Chbab Proh,” but other literature suggests the perspective of the general society towards those who did not do as they were told were rather harsh.

PS’s depiction of herself wearing torn pants was analogous to the cloth and gold proverb previously discussed that illustrated Cambodians’ attitudes toward women and sexuality. A woman’s virtue was the white cloth, and when dirtied, she will never be clean in society’s eyes again. To describe women as an item that to be tainted by men indicates that society deems them to be useful in only this sense. On the other hand, men can do as they please and continue to be preserved, valued, and infallible in their masculine bodies. Such misogynistic ideals still remain in many of Cambodian communities and policies today, and thus explain why many kept their experiences of rape and other forms of GBV they endured to themselves.

The large number of respondents who no longer felt respected within their communities is the result of the enforced rejection of “dirtied” women. They are the individuals who were in the few number of rape survivors within the genocide period, as most were often killed immediately. However, instead of being treated as actual victims, they were outcasts in society and experienced discrimination. This is after 40 plus years following the KRR, which indicates that this problem has not been properly

40 Theresa de Langis, ed. “Like Ghost Changes Body’ Participation at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia and Gender-Based Violence under the Khmer Rouge Regime.”
addressed by society and has only worsened since then. The stigmatization and various forms of discrimination against victims of GBV during the regime had transcended into the following generation. Once again, following PS’s experiences of shame and fear of judgments of her being forcefully married to an abusive husband during the KRR and then remarrying later to another violent man after the regime fell. The amount of discrimination she faced impacted her family’s future, as some of the villagers within her community did not want their children to marry her children because of the “tainted pants” she wore in the face of society. Her stories are similar to those who are current victims of GBV, specifically domestic violence.

When these victims sought help, they also instead faced shame for not satisfying their husbands, as revealed in Zimmerman’s work. The support that is given to survivors of GBV during KRR should also be given to the proportionally higher number of victims of GBV in modern day Cambodia. The officials who simply ignore their struggles and deem them invalid by calling for reconciliation with her perpetrator, like the providers from the PADV study, are committing actions analogous to what was done during the KRR. They are metaphorically peering over their relationship, ensuring that the husband is satisfied with his wife, and if she refuses to cooperate, they step in only to assist in her husband’s violence towards her. This is a way in which the legacy of gender-based violence and the rape culture has been maintained.

The large proportion of individuals who continue to experience GBV in Cambodia indicates that these issues have transcended across generations and are associated with the spillover effects from the ideologies of violence and culture of rape that was created during the KRR. The victims of the current acts of GBV are those within the younger generations, as depicted from the more current surveys from the UN. However, unlike the past 40 years of brutal rape and forced marriages, GBV in Cambodia now takes various forms. Additionally, the number of rapes have increased, and the age of victims have only been decreasing—the median age of victims was 12 years old in 2010, two years younger than compared to 2007. These individuals and young children are not being well-protected within their communities against the perpetrators who take advantage of them. The decrease in age of the victims indicates there is a need for society to reevaluate who’s lives matter more and who is worth saving. These shocking rates are an indication that the culture of rape enforced by the state during the KRR has not fully been disassembled. Rather, it has taken into a new form with underlying sentiments of belittling the lives of women and girls in Cambodian society.

_A Dearth of Resources_

The institutionalization of gender roles has not only occurred pri-

or to the KRR; it was continued throughout the rule of the regime and still remains in Cambodia today. These social institutions were forces that have contributed to the immense rising rates of GBV in Cambodia, and though its effects cannot be reversed, they can be fundamentally changed to provide for the victims of such violence by providing for those with immense mental health illnesses. Though there was a range of symptoms that survivors had experienced after the genocide, and about 40 percent of Cambodia’s population suffers from mental health and psychological disorders, which are often left untreated.⁴²

The main reason for such a high amount of untreated symptoms is not only the lack of resources for mental health in Cambodia, but also the difficulties in accessibility and transportation to clinics that do exist. Within the entire country of approximately 15 million people, only two psychiatric units exist within the various hospitals, and both are located in the capitol. These psych wards are heavily based on using outdated psychiatric medications to account for cost and only have a total of 14 beds for the patients served.⁴³ Aside from these units, Cambodians may be able to seek other private providers or aid from NGOs; however, both are usually very high in cost and thus are mainly accessible to expats.⁴⁴ As of 2015, there are only 49 trained psychiatrists in the country, of whom only 10 operate outside of the capital Phnom Penh in addition to 45 psychiatric nurses who operate across the whole country in other mental health facilities and/or private practices. The need for mental health services alone is one of the most motivating factors for survivors to become civil party members, thus they themselves understand the value in their means to cope and move past the trauma of the KRR. For example, a survivor spoke of the importance of such resources, “For me, compensation means mental health treatment so that we can recover from this great suffering...”

The use of psychosocial resources to address GBV victims is essential to offer a way to validate the victim’s mental and emotional distresses, rather than pushing them back to the arms of their perpetrators.

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tresses, rather than pushing them back to the arms of their perpetrators. Additionally, if proper counseling sessions were supported and provided by the government, it can encourage better communication between partners, and also demonstrate the importance of offering support to other victims or community members. This offers an alternative to the divorce and reconciliation laws, for it still addresses the needs of the victims but offers a solution that will not dismiss their needs or risks. The investment in such services can aid in the attempts to deconstruct the damages of the ideologies of violence and destruction of community relations that resulted from the KRR. It can also strengthen relationships and shift society’s victim-blaming practices to encompass empathy and support instead.

The lack of support and resources within rural communities is a clear indicator that little has been done to resolve such issues of GBV; communities need to provide for proper healing for survivors themselves. A statistically significant number of respondents (23) had experienced some form of GBV, following the fall of the KRR. There were forced marriage survivors who were able to remarry, but some continued to face GBV even with their new husbands, and shared similar stories to PS. Whether it is from a lack of education or a spillover effect of the amount of violence tolerated during the KRR, both these contributing factors to the high rates of ongoing GBV are tied to society’s perceptions of women. Such misogynistic impressions have been reinforced and institutionalized from the dearth of resources and policy changes needed. Reformation in these areas are essential to protect women from further violence, advocate for their rights and properly educate the next generations how to value them as more than servants of their male peers.

Measures to undo the seemingly permanent damage of Cambodia’s value of women and fully explore the potential that once existed within this period of time will require appropriate measures to break gender stereotypes. This can start by giving the victims of GBV the opportunities to share their experiences to shed light on the existence such drastic inequalities and forms of oppression. Case 002, set in the international court of the ECCC, is an opportunity to do so, and thus, the voices of survivors should not be undermined.
When LeVine claimed that the rape and forced marriages were not technically coerced within an international court, her statements endangered the potential for deconstructing gender roles. LeVine’s conclusion disregarded the testimonies of the civil party members, who had told the court stories of their traumatic experiences, such as being raped by an official after refusing to consummate her marriage. Such unethical statements were also made out of complete failure to observe the cultural context and interpretations of marriages in Cambodian society. Her perspectives on the matter were on the basis of her comparison of the Western world’s “honeymoon stage.” Such a damaging statement based off of culturally insensitive research cannot be dismissed.

It’s important to address and correct LeVine’s claims as they could potentially contribute to the societal normalization of coerced consummation and support the cultural and institutional reinforcements of gender roles in Cambodian society that further perpetuate the currently rising rates of GBV. If LeVine’s comments of the marriages were depicted in the court’s final ruling, it would be detrimental to the battle of breaking the legacies of GBV. Not only will the testimonies and traumas of the survivors hold no value, but also it will continue to perpetuate rising rates of violence against women and maintain society’s misogynistic traditions. It not only exacerbates survivors’ forceful marriages in this period, but also influences the valuation of women and definition of GBV within a global context.

This trial is within an international court, thus it has the potential to create a ripple effect on the global perspective of women. This paper has mainly focused on GBV within Cambodia, but violence against women is a rising global phenomenon. One in three women experience sexual or physical violence, even 20 years after the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

In any efforts to decrease such an alarmingly high rate, there must be cultural, social, and historical understanding of each individual country to create an ethical and applicable intervention. These high rates of violence are a growing public health problem, and not only deteriorate women’s health, but also diminishes the economic productivity of entire nations. Thus, when an opportunity to shed light of the damaging social norms and paralyzing gender roles within an international community presents itself, it will be essential in advocating for the rights of women transculturally.
Appendix

Questions from TPO Survey (February 2016)

1. Survey #
2. Date
3. Name of CP
4. Number of victim Information Form
5. Other victim
6. PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION
7. Where do you live? Village
8. Commune
9. District
10. Province
11. How old are you?
12. To which ethnic group do you consider yourself to belong?
13. To which religious group would you say you belong?
14. Marital status
15. Sex
16. PART 6: LIFE IN THE KHMER ROUGE REGIME
17. Where were you living when the Khmer Rouge gained control of the country on April 17, 1975? Village:
18. Commune
19. District
20. Province
21. Who were you living with after the take-over?
22. If other, please describe
23. Were you ever forced by the Khmer Rouge to go to a different place (forced transfer)?
24. IF Yes, write where they were forced to go.
25. What kind of work did you do during the Khmer Rouge regime?
26. If other, please describe more answer
27. What kind of person did Angkor consider you to be, for example, a Khmer Rouge cadre, a “new person”. If Other, Please list.
28. IF other, please list
29. Part 6 : EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE AND GBV UNDER THE KHMER ROUGE
30. A. Forced Marriage
31. Were you ever asked to be married to someone by the Khmer Rouge? If No, go to next section
32. (IF yes) did you want to marry this person? If Yes, go to Q5
33. (IF no), did you express your refusal? If Not Refused go to Q5
34. (IF yes), what were the consequences for expressing your refusal?
35. If other, please describe
36. Were you eventually married to this person? If No, go to next session
37. (IF yes), Can you tell me a bit more about the wedding procedure? Who conducted it? Where, when and how many couples were involved (Let the respondent tell their story)
38. Did you feel forced to have sex after the wedding procedure? IF no, go to Q11
39. (IF yes) Who forced you?
39. (IF yes) Who forced you?
40. If other, please describe
41. How did the perpetrator force you?
42. If other, please describe
43. Were you/your partner directly ordered by the Khmer Rouge to have sexual intercourse in the first nights? (If yes): How was the instruction (language)? If No, go to Q 11
44. How was the instruction (language)?
45. Was there a reading out of the forced marriage policy?
46. Did you continue to see your spouse after the wedding procedure?
47. (IF Yes), how often?
48. Did you have any children from this marriage?
49. Did you stay together with your spouse after the fall of the Khmer Rouge? If Yes, go to Q15 , If No, go to Q17
50. (IF yes) How willing are you to live together then? check all that apply
51. If other, please describe
52. (IF yes), can you tell me more about this marriage? Were you happy? How was/is the relationship with your spouse?
53. (IF no), why did you separate?
54. If other, please describe
55. B. Rape
56. Do you know anyone who was raped during the Khmer Rouge regime? If No, DK, Refuse, go to next section
57. (IF yes), can you tell me a bit more about what happened? When, where and how did it happen? Let the repondent tell their story
58. Who was the perpetrator?
59. If other, please describe
60. Was the perpetrator female or male?
61. Was there one perpetrator or were there more perpetrators?
62. How old was the perpetrator?
63. Was the victim female or male?
64. Was there one victim or were there more victims?
65. How old was the victim?
66. Do you know if anything happened to the perpetrator?
67. If other, please describe
68. Was that a punishment for the rape?
69. Did this ever happen to you? If no or refuse, go to next section
70. (IF Yes), can you tell me a bit more about what happened? When, where and how did it happen?
71. Who was the perpetrator?
72. If other, please describe
73. Was the perpetrator female or male?
74. Was there one perpetrator or were there more perpetrators?
75. How old was the perpetrator?
76. Did the perpetrator(s) give a reason for the abuse?
77. More answers
78. Do you know if anything happened to the perpetrator?
79. If other, please describe
80. Was that a punishment for the rape?
81. E. Sexual Mutilation
82. Did you witness or hear about people who had been sexually mutilated? (for example, harming sexual organs by cutting them off or electrocuting them) If No, DK, Refuse, go to next section
83. (IF Yes), can you tell me a bit more about what happened? When, where and how did it happen? Let the respondent tell their story
84. Who was the perpetrator?
85. If other, please describe
86. Was the perpetrator female or male?
87. Was there one perpetrator or were there more perpetrators?
88. How old was the perpetrator?
89. Was the victim female or male?
90. Was there one victim or were there more victims?
91. How old was the victim?
92. Did this ever happen to you? If No or Refuse, go to next section
93. (IF yes), can you tell me a bit more about what happened? When, where and how did it happen? Let the respondent tell their story
94. Who was the perpetrator?
95. Was the perpetrator female or male?
96. Was there one perpetrator or were there more perpetrators?
97. How old was the perpetrator?
98. Did the perpetrator(s) give a reason for the abuse?
99. If other, please describe
100. Do you know if anything happened to the perpetrator?
101. If other, please describe
102. Was that a punishment for the sexual mutilation?
103. F.Sexual_Abuse_or_Humiliation
104. Do you know of anyone who experienced other treatment that you think was sexually abusive or sexually humiliating? For example: 1 Forced to be naked in front of others. 2 Unwanted sexual touching. 3 Sexual mocking or harassment. 4 Forced to watch others being sexually abused. If No, DK, Refuse, go to next section
105. (IF yes), can you tell me a bit more about what happened? When, where and how did it happen? Let the respondent tell their story
106. Who was the perpetrator?
107. Was the perpetrator female or male?
108. Was there one perpetrator or were there more perpetrators?
109. How old was the perpetrator?
110. Was the victim female or male?
111. Was there one victim or were there more victims?
112. How old was the victim?
113. Did this ever happen to you? If No, Refuse, go to next section
114. (IF Yes), can you tell me a bit more about what happened? When, where and how did it happen? Let the respondent tell their story
115. Who was the perpetrator?
116. Was the perpetrator female or male?
117. Was there one perpetrator or were there more perpetrators?
118. How old was the perpetrator?
119. Did the perpetrator(s) give a reason for the abuse?
120. If other, please describe
121. Do you know if anything happened to the perpetrator?
122. If other, please describe
Was that a punishment for the sexual abuse?

Part 9: Experience of GBV after the Khmer Rouge

After the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime, did you ever experience any violence similar to what we discussed before (e.g., rape, forced marriage, sexual slavery)? If No, go to next part

IF yes, what type of violence did you experience?

Other answer number 7

Can you tell me more about your experience? When, where, by who, how?

Can you tell me more about your experience? When, where, by who, how?

Trauma Symptoms

In the first interview with TPO in Phnom Penh, you told us about the most upsetting/stressful events in your life. I will summarize them again for you so that you know what exactly I mean. You told me that you..........................................................

Repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts, or images of a stressful experience from the past? To what extent are you bothered by it?

Repeated, disturbing dreams of a stressful experience from the past? To what extent are you bothered by it?

Suddenly acting or feeling as if a stressful experience were happening again (as if you were reliving it)? To what extent are you bothered by it?

Feeling very upset when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?

Having physical reactions (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when something reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?

Avoid thinking about or talking about a stressful experience from the past or avoid having feelings related to it?

Avoid activities or situations because they remind you of a stressful experience from the past?

Trouble remembering important parts of a stressful experience from the past?

Loss of interest in things that you used to enjoy?

Feeling distant or cut off from other people?

Feeling emotionally numb or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?

Feeling as if your future will somehow be cut short?

Trouble falling or staying asleep?

Feeling irritable or having angry outbursts?

Having difficulty concentrating?

Being “super alert” or watchful on guard?

Feeling jumpy or easily startled?

G. Anxiety

Suddenly scared for no reason

Feeling fearful

Faintness, dizzy, or weakness

Nervousness or shakiness inside

Heart pounding or racing

Trembling

Feeling tense or keyed up

Headaches

Spells of terror or panic

Feeling restless, can’t sit still

H. Depression
160. Feeling low in energy, slowed down
161. Blaming yourself for things
162. Crying easily
163. Loss of sexual interest or pleasure
164. Poor appetite
165. Difficult falling asleep, staying asleep
166. Feeling hopeless about the future
167. Feeling blue
168. Feeling lonely
169. Thoughts of ending your life
170. Feeling of being trapped or caught
171. Worrying too much about things
172. Feeling no interest in things
173. Feeling everything is an effort
174. Feeling of worthlessness
175. Part 11: Impact of GBV and access to support
176. What impact did the violence have on your physical body at the time? Allow respondent to tell their story
177. Does the GBV you experienced during the KR regime still affect your physical well-being today? If No, DK, Refuse, go to Q3
178. (IF yes) How are you affected today? Note
179. How did the violence impact you psychologically/emotionally at the time? (Ask respondent how exactly they felt after the violence happened) Allow respondent to tell their story
180. Does the GBV you experienced during the KR regime still affect you psychologically/emotionally nowadays? If No, DK, Refuse, go to Q5
181. (IF yes) Please explain
182. How has being a victim of gender-based violence under the Khmer Rouge affected your sexual functioning?
183. Please explain
184. Did you ever receive any support or help (e.g. medical treatment, counselling) for the sexual violence you experienced recently? If No, go to Q6.2
185. (IF yes) Please describe Allow respondent to tell their story
186. (IF no) why not? Can be more than one answer.
187. Other of answer number 5
188. Did you ever receive any support or help (e.g. medical treatment, counseling) for the sexual violence you experienced recently? If no go to Q7.2
189. (IF Yes) Please describe
190. (IF No) Why not? Can be more than one answer
191. I am worrying about what others think about me.
192. The only people, who really understand me, are those who have suffered/suffer the same.
193. I feel that others do not understand what I went through.
194. I have had to keep my feelings to myself about the rape/forced marriage because they made others feel uncomfortable.
195. Important figures of public life in my place of residence (e.g village chief, officials, monks) expressed their sympathy and understanding for me.
196. I feel ashamed for having been raped/forced to get married.
197. I feel guilty [OR: respondent] for having been raped/forced to get married.
198. I feel hatred against the perpetrators.
199. I would seek revenge on the perpetrators if I could.
200. Because of the rape/forced marriage, my reputation as a Cambodian woman is destroyed.
201. Because of the rape/forced marriage, I am not any more a respected member of the Cambodian society.
202. Experienced during the KR regime affect your social life/your life as a woman men in a Cambodian community?
203. (IF yes) Please explain
204. Part 9: Coping
205. Have you ever spoken about your experience of GBV during the Khmer Rouge regime? If No, go to Q1.2 If DK, Refuse go to Q2
206. (IF yes) To whom?
207. Other of answer number 5
208. Let respondent explain
209. Before becoming a CP of the ECCC, did you ever sought help from a doctor, traditional healer, counselor, health center or hospital because of the GBV you experienced? If No, go to Q2.2 If DK, Refuse go to Q3
210. Please indicate
211. GP
212. Health Centre
213. Referral Hospital
214. Counselor or mental health expert
215. Traditional Healer
216. Monk/nun or acha
217. (IF no) What has prevented you from seeking help?
218. Other of answer number 4
219. I can see that you lived through many difficulties in your life and you survived those challenges. Are there particular things that gave you strength or helped you cope with your experiences?
220. Other of answer number 7
221. In which way.............................................helped you to cope with the experience? please explain let respondent explain
222. Some people say that they changed or grew as a person in a good way due to as the result of one’s struggle with a highly challenging, stressful, and traumatic event. Do you think that you changed or grew as a person in a good way after experiencing trauma during the KR regime?
223. (IF Yes), please explain Let respondent explain
224. Is there something that could help you deal with the impacts of violence that you experienced?
225. Other of answer number 6
226. Who should provide this?
227. Other of answer number
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TROUBLE IN PARADISE: AUROVILLE AND THE LIMITS OF UTOPIA

Adora Svitak

ABSTRACT

Auroville is a utopian community in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, founded by French émigré Mirra Alfassa (popularly known as “the Mother”) in honor of her mentor, the famed Indian nationalist and yogi Sri Aurobindo. Like his more famous counterparts, Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi, Aurobindo was largely educated abroad; like them, his time abroad led him to several strong ideas about the nature of India and ideal society. In understanding the intellectual history of Sri Aurobindo’s writing, the argument of Bernard Cohn—that Indian elites educated abroad became self-objectifying, in the sense that their distance allowed them to see India as a cohesive “thing”—is essential. As such, Sri Aurobindo’s work and the role it plays in determining the charter of Auroville provides a lens through which to understand the struggle of postcoloniality more broadly. Auroville, which draws its name from Sri Aurobindo, has attracted worldwide attention for its idealism and longevity. Several decades after its founding, Auroville remains a place where people from around the world visit and even stay for life, drawn to the city’s message of advancing a “Divine Consciousness.” But despite its benevolent goals, Auroville represents uneven power dynamics—not only between the “Western world” and India, but between Indian elites (many of whom were early settlers of Auroville) and local Tamilians. Drawing on the lessons of Said’s Orientalism and other critical traditions that highlight power dynamics in relationships of knowledge production, this paper will explore how Auroville reproduces colonial relationships and fails to provide effective alternatives to capitalist society.
Introduction

When a foreigner visits India today, perhaps she walks out of the airport into an assault on the senses: the hot air from the street with its cacophony of horns, auto-rickshaws reeling around corners and Ashok Leyland buses with peeling red paint. If she is hungry for self-discovery and spiritual transcendence, and eager to see yogis and gurus with long beards and robes, then she might be disappointed by encounters with flashy mega-malls and concrete jungles. But French-born Mirra Alfassa first came to India in 1914, and in a Pondicherry ashram, she quickly found the India she was looking for.¹ For modern-day seekers, the question of where to find spiritual utopia in a capitalist nation may be answered by the city Alfassa founded: Auroville, in Tamil Nadu. Alfassa (popularly known as “the Mother”), a devotee of Indian nationalist Sri Aurobindo, founded Auroville to be a cooperative society for citizens of all nations interested in collectively advancing the “Divine Consciousness.” As such, it is frequently heralded as a utopian community. On paper, it sounds like one: Alfassa called for the rejection of money, allowing people to freely choose jobs outside of market influences, and collective ownership of possessions. However, while Auroville’s promise lies in its rejection of capitalism, its experiment fails to provide workable alternatives in the realms of money, labor, and community relations.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Like many of his elite Indian contemporaries, Aurobindo Ghose went to the West for his education.² While at Cambridge, he joined other Indian students to form a group called the “Lotus and Dagger.” The group’s mission was resisting British imperialist rule.³ Back in India, Ghose began writing fiery articles after the partition of Bengal; in his writing, he relied on a highly gendered nationalism, identifying India as Mother and goddess.⁴ Robert Minor writes that in Ghose’s eyes, the “ultimate goal of Indian independence...was to present India to the world as the world’s spiritual teacher.”⁵ Ghose’s casting of India

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³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid, 20.
as a “spiritual teacher” is notable for its parallel to the ideas of another famous nationalist, Mahatma Gandhi. Both men were Western-educated. Both men came to their laudatory positions on Indian spirituality after returning to India from their times abroad. Bernard Cohn, in his work on the British colonizer’s first Census in India, wrote that it was Western-educated Indian elites who made Indian culture “a ‘thing’”; by going far from home, they were able to “stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity.”

Ghose’s Cambridge education exposed him to an academic system that had practically objectified Indian culture from first contact with the subcontinent. The British had an acute interest in classifying and understanding the colonial state, and it was European scholars like Indologist Max Muller who translated many of the sacred Hindu texts that Ghose would eventually encounter. After his arrest by the British for fanning the flames of anticolonial sentiment with his essays, Sri Aurobindo went to French-controlled Pondicherry to lead an ashram (a Sanskrit term referring to a spiritual hermitage, similar to a monastery) and live the remainder of his life devoted to his practice of yoga, teaching disciples, and writing philosophical texts.

In Pondicherry, Aurobindo encountered Mirra Alfassa, the French-born woman who he would later title “the Mother.” Alfassa’s attraction

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to India evokes colonial relationality to the “mystic East” and perceptions of India as exotic and spiritual. (Later she would even “insist that all Indians were spiritually in tune with the ideas of Auroville.”)\(^7\) Alfasa quickly became a devotee of Sri Aurobindo and grew close to him. As his health worsened with age, Aurobindo informed disciples that she would be a figure of authority within the ashram. Much of the trust Aurobindo invested in Alfasa came from his belief that she represented the “Supermind” that he had theorized extensively about: “he believed she was its avatar or descent into the earth plane. As the incarnate Supermind she was changing the consciousness on which the earth found itself, and as such her work was infallible.”\(^8\) Ultimately, Alfasa repaid Aurobindo’s trust by paying homage to his name and philosophies with a profoundly ambitious new project: Auroville.

### Auroville in Theory

In Auroville’s 1968 charter, “The Mother” wrote that the city would belong to all of humanity, be a place of “constant progress” and “a site of material and spiritual researches for a living embodiment of an actual Human Unity.”\(^9\) These idealistic objectives have direct links to Sri Aurobindo’s philosophies. In the Pondicherry ashram, Sri Aurobindo promoted karma-yoga—an “active, world-changing life that would bring the supramental consciousness he saw down into the “earth-consciousness” to promote its evolution toward Divine manifestation.”\(^10\) Aurobindo wrote that the experience of a “Supermind” on Earth is a necessary prerequisite for evolutionary development of humanity.\(^11\) Alfasa recommended that followers “promote the evolutionary process” by accepting the fallibility of religion, as compared to Aurobindo’s “Reality.”\(^12\) The future-oriented language of evolution highlights how Auroville’s founding fits into a discourse of teleological development. The idea that mankind is destined to progress through set stages of growth, fulfilling certain prerequisites before ascending, feels highly reminiscent of American economist Walt Rostow with his “Stages of Economic Development.”

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\(^8\) Minor, 41.


\(^10\) Minor, 36.


\(^12\) Minor, 45.
Growth” model. But just as not all countries necessarily should, or even can, follow identical economic paths, not all individuals must follow identical paths in spiritual exploration to achieve a better world. Yet this assumption goes unquestioned in the founding documents of Auroville.

Beyond its broader mission, the vision for Auroville also included ideals for more concrete issues, such as money, labor, and admittance. Like Marx, Alfassa was highly critical of the increasingly preeminent role money played in modern society. In planning Auroville, she determined that money would not be exchanged amongst citizens; “money would be no more the “Sovereign Lord”, and individual value would have a greater importance than the value due to material wealth and social position.”¹³ She saw money as a proxy for ownership, saying that “This idea of possessing money has warped everything. Money should not be a “possession”; like power it is a means of action which is given to you, but you must use it according to…what we call the “will of the Giver,” that is, in an impersonal and enlightened way.”¹⁴ The only people who should be using money were those with an “integral, comprehensive, and universal vision.”¹⁵ Such a vision did not include conspicuous consumption: upon arriving in the city, new residents would give up their possessions for collective use.¹⁶ Ostentatious status symbols and miserly guarding of private property would be replaced with collective amenities for everyone to use and no one to own.¹⁷ In this instinct towards “commoning,” Alfassa’s vision evokes comparison to the approach of Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy, who advocated reclaiming property for collective use in Take Back the Economy.¹⁸

Alfassa promoted a socialist approach not only to ownership but also towards labor. For their labor within Auroville, residents would eschew any kind of salary, as to reject the use of money within the city.¹⁹ Alfassa believed that labor was a powerful means of achieving the “Divine Consciousness” that the city’s charter referenced. The

¹⁴ Minor, 58.
¹⁵ Minor, 58.
¹⁶ Namakkal, 76.
¹⁷ Singhi, 24.
¹⁹ Singhi, 47.
Mother stated that “all Aurovillians must take up a work and do it as Yoga.”

This understanding of labor as a spiritual task meant also advocating for individuals to retain the freedom to determine their own labor roles according to their own interests and spiritual direction, rather than according to specific community needs or what would make the most money. This would elevate labor to a self-expressive, collaborative, and non-coercive act. The Aurovilian, then, is neither living to work, nor working to live, but rather working to find some spiritually transcendent experience. This ideal of labor as the product of an emotional rather than economic calculus evokes comparison to the pleasure in work profiled by Firer-Blaess and Fuchs in their article on Wikipedia contributors who labor for free, motivated only by what one contributor titled “the Wikilove.”

Motivating labor with spiritual gain means rejecting neoclassical economics’ persistent notion that individuals are cold, economically rational actors and instead acknowledging the tremendous pull of emotional rewards. Another example of the profound power of the emotional comes from the historical example of Thai citizens attending quasi-religious ceremonies to surrender massive quantities of baht (Thai currency) during that country’s 1997 monetary crisis, in an effort to stave off disastrous levels of national debt. Both the Wikipedia and Thai examples reflect the necessity of a sense of belonging to a collective and willingness to sacrifice; in the Wikipedia example, time that could otherwise be monetized is the sacrifice; in the Thai example, it is hard-won baht.

Although these examples point to the possibility of motivating hard work with spiritual gain, they are exceptional in large part because of their rarity. Financial shortfalls often present difficulties for utopian communities; as the idiom goes, “There’s no such thing as a free lunch.” Like contributing to Wikipedia or helping the Thai national financial situation, the emotional rewards of being an Aurovilian do not come freely. The question of admittance to Auroville and who would get to become an Aurovilian was a thorny one. Aside from being dedicated to the ideological precepts of the community, there were a number of requirements Alfassa and her colleagues wanted potential residents to satisfy. Applicants submitted answers to 24 questions, the last of which

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20 Minor, 52.
21 Singhi, 23.
was “What can you donate to Auroville?” It is ironic that a community whose charm comes from the rejection of money would screen applicants with such a question. Part of the rigor of the application process stemmed from a fear of the wrong kind of applicant: drifters with lofty aims but no money. As Jessica Namakkal writes bluntly, this was “a type of person they did not desire.”

Auroville in Practice

Today, Auroville’s adherence to the Mother’s ideals are imperfect at best. The city’s website shows earnest attempts to function as a cashless economy (e.g., its “Free Store,” where people can take anything for free, and even avail themselves of tailoring at no cost). However, visitors use cash to load an “Aurocard,” essentially a prepaid credit card for use in Auroville, when they first arrive in the city. There are also numerous bank branches with ATM services available nearby. Despite the encouragements to use the Aurocard in lieu of cash, one Slate journalist who visited recently found that most places still demand cash. Furthermore, Auroville’s small businesses and commercial enterprises pull in large revenues from tourists every year. However, this prosperity is not distributed in such a way that it can meet all residents’ basic needs. After the Mother’s death in 1973, the Sri Aurobindo Society leadership began to make several controversial decisions regarding the city’s finances. They stated that they were “no longer able to provide the funds for food for Auroville’s community kitchens.” In April 1976, they froze the assets of the Pour Tous Fund, a central food distribution system, as the Society’s accountants found serious irregularities in the financial management of Auroville pointing to gross mismanagement.

After this situation, followers of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother from around the world pleaded with the Indian government to intervene,

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24 Namakkal, 73.
25 Namakkal, 73.
30 Namakkal, 61.
31 Minor, 67.
32 Minor, 71.
leading to a Ministry of Home Affairs investigative committee that found evidence of diverted funds, absence of promised projects, and missing records.\textsuperscript{33} Today, the Pour Tous Distribution Center bills itself on Auroville’s website as a “step towards the economy Mother wished for Auroville” and a step away from market-based food distribution.\textsuperscript{34} Yet it requires a monthly subscription fee and tracks consumption patterns at the individual level, with the vaguely ominous warning that “people will be made aware if they regularly ‘over-consume.’”\textsuperscript{35} This model does not seem starkly different from existing options that exist within market economies, such as subscription-based ready-made meal and grocery delivery services, or university meal plans. Meanwhile, a long list exists on Auroville’s website of commercial enterprises, which includes architecture firms, music studios, boutiques, bakeries, and makers of Japanese art furniture and French cheeses.\textsuperscript{36} One Auroville retailer, Aurospirul, sells 1kg bags of barley grass powder for more than fifty US dollars on its online store.\textsuperscript{37} Clothing retailer Upasana, features women’s dresses and kurtas ranging from Rs3900 to Rs8900 (around $57-$131).\textsuperscript{38} These enterprises reflect the limits of Auroville’s discouragement of conspicuous consumption and individualistic ownership of possessions.

The pitfalls of Alfassa’s vision for Aurovilians to find spiritual enlightenment through freely-chosen modes of labor are also evident. Although new Aurovilians were supposed to discover that manual labor could be “indispensable for inner discovery,” many Westerners who moved to Auroville were simply “unaccustomed to working in this capacity.”\textsuperscript{39} Larry Shinn, a professor who visited Auroville, reported that one summer in 1975 that the Aurovilians’ ability to choose their jobs led to a surplus of one job in particular: out of a small community of just 300 adults, 5 were working full-time as photographers “to record the activities of this fledgling city.”\textsuperscript{40} Labor ultimately became a flashpoint of differences between Aurovilians (many of them educated transplants from North India or the West) and the neighboring Tamil communities.

\textsuperscript{33} Minor, 73.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Namakkal, 76-77.
\textsuperscript{40} Shinn, 247.
The dark corollary of Sri Aurobindo and Mirra Alfassa’s shared belief in bringing the “Supermind” to Earth and advancing human evolution is that those people who do not actively work toward this goal are obstacles to progress (or even less evolved as people themselves). Namakkal comments that “many Aurovilians viewed the labor of the Tamilians as less valuable than their own,” viewing Aurovilian work as spiritually-driven while viewing Tamil work as part of the domain of a “traditional” lifestyle, alien to “progressive” Auroville.\footnote{Namakkal, 77.} It was this dichotomization of local Tamils versus the expatriate Aurovilians that allowed for the development of Auroville to exacerbate capitalist alienation and exploitation. For instance, Auroville bought land from desperately poor local farmers who needed cash, but those farmers found themselves monetarily worse off afterwards.\footnote{Ibid, 76.} The Aurovilians hired Tamil workers to build much of the new city, including its centerpiece: the orb-like Matrimandir.\footnote{Ibid, 77.} But like migrant workers all over the world, from the fruit farms of California to the skyscrapers of Dubai, the Tamil workers were alienated from the products they helped create. They did not find themselves welcomed into the Auroville community as equals.
nor did they get to enjoy the fruits of their labor that the wealthy Aurovilians did. But these Tamil workers weren’t migrant workers. They constructed Auroville in their own backyards, making the impact of their alienation perhaps more severe.

As Namakkal says, the hierarchy the Aurovilians created “transformed the indigenous Tamil population into an “Other” on their own land.”\textsuperscript{44} This relationship was exploitative not only in capitalist terms, but also in cultural ones, with the Tamils implicitly painted as less advanced and progressive, ancient and static while the Aurovilians represented modernity and the future.\textsuperscript{45} This dichotomy sounds familiar because it is Orientalism all over again, the same descriptors of “ancient” versus “modern” and “static” versus “future-oriented” frequently applied by Western colonizers to the “exotic” East. Namakkal argues that Auroville reproduced such colonial relationships on a local scale, through its strident belief in the universality of its mission and spiritual precepts. Too frequently, this focus on universality meant ignoring the “different subjectivities of the local populations.”\textsuperscript{46} Indeed, perhaps Auroville’s simultaneous promise and peril lies in its goal to be a universal city. Chakrabarty writes in Provincializing Europe that “European history is no longer seen as embodying anything like a ‘universal human history.’”\textsuperscript{47} Following that, it would stand to reason that European ideals can no longer embody universal ideals. On some level, Auroville’s ideals seem profoundly European—as seen in Sri Aurobindo’s ideas of the “Supermind” and evolved man that developed in response to the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche\textsuperscript{48}, or the “liberal ideologies of universal equality” that provided the foundation of Auroville’s model.\textsuperscript{49} Auroville purported to embrace a vision of unity and reject relationships based on race, nationality, sex, caste, and class; yet, to the skeptical eye, this earnest ideal reads like a white person saying “I don’t see color” amidst an empirically racist society. After all, Auroville’s wealthy, foreign residents could claim to insulate themselves from communalism, but it would not change anything about colonial histories or present-day material conditions.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 79.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 79.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, 62.
\textsuperscript{49} Namakkal, 80-81.
\textsuperscript{50} Singhi, 22.
In conclusion, Auroville is better at sounding good than being good, at least in the ways that its founder described. Evaluating it purely in terms of its success at providing an economic alternative to capitalist society means confronting numerous failures in the areas of money, labor, and community relations. To an outsider considering this tantalizing utopian experiment, it appears that the evolution of man Sri Aurobindo and Mirra Alfassa eloquently envisioned remains incomplete.


THE NEW SELF-DETERMINATION OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

Harry Liu

ABSTRACT

China has recently made global headlines as the surprise power that has challenged the dominance of the United States, both in Asia and around the world. While statistics and analysts point to a great future, the truth is that China, while having risen fast, is far from becoming the supreme international power. Rather, the best future for China lies in balancing its ambitions of becoming both a supreme and a regional power. A major strategy for the accomplishment of supremacy in Asia would be through the unification of Asian states to create a powerful front that would be powerful against the United States as a dominant power. However, this has been complicated by countries that have been alienated by China’s aggressive foreign policy, and U.S. allies in the region. While China is fierce and aggressive in its growth, displacing the United States and its power in Asia and the world is not an easy task, nor is China as advanced politically and militarily as it is economically. The discussion follows a five-section format that begins with a review of China’s diplomacy in the past 50 years, its geopolitical environment, its contemporary position in the global sphere, and its contemporary position in Asia. The paper concludes that China must follow a new path of self-determination that would ensure that it maintains its position as a power in the East and does not recede its progress on the global scale, continuing its attempts to resolve both internal and external challenges.
Part I: Overview of China’s Diplomatic History

Following the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) seizure of control in China, the country has undergone monumental transformations from a weak, closed country to a (somewhat) open democracy that enjoys world power. China’s international affairs can be divided into three dimensions: the first dimension is the relationship with other supreme powers (i.e. the U.S., Russia, UK, France), the second dimension is relationships around the Chinese territory, and the last dimension is the country’s relationship with other nations.

In the first dimension, China has sought to avoid the significant diplomatic mistakes that supreme powers like the U.S. and Russia have made. China has sought to maintain space from the competition between other world powers, giving the country the ability to focus on the growth of its own power. Thus, the dimension of relations with supreme powers has been historically guided by the elements of peace and harmony for the sake of China’s diplomatic growth.\(^1\) While this China’s path may not appear to be linear from the historical perspective, and has been strenuous at times under the leadership of the CPC, an overview of this China’s progress reveals that this tactic has lead to China’s overall development.

In the early 20th century, China sought a policy of harmony to create a favorable external environment, thus ensuring that the country could develop both its internal and external positions. However, due to the instability created by the World Wars, the external and internal stability and harmony China sought worsened and deteriorated the diplomatic objectives of the state and the CPC. The efforts were further undermined by the interference of the U.K. and the U.S. as the world powers attempted to interfere in the local liberation efforts.\(^2\) During the Cold War, however, China gained a sort of independence from the influence of the dominant supreme powers (U.S. and USSR), which greatly influenced the development of the country’s diplomatic strategy. Following the Sino-Soviet Split in the 1960s, China’s international identity, while communist, aligned neither with the communist Soviet Union nor the democratic United States constrained the country’s development. The lack of alignment thus formed the main part of China’s long-term diplomatic strategy, seen today with its lack of alignment with another major power. Another component of this strategy was China’s perusal of deepened economic globalization and the formation of prominent Chinese diplomatic strategies that promoted peaceful development and harmony with other third world countries. Thus, the rise of a prominent and non-aligned China drew international

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\(^1\) Yang, xvi.  
\(^2\) Zhuang and Wu, 9.
attention and support, resulting in the country becoming an emblem of the new trend of emerging countries that sought to integrate within the existing international system and carve out a place for themselves within the system, rather than seeking a new system of international affairs.\(^3\)

China’s desire to be un-aligned from any of the supreme powers trend became more pronounced during the Mao era, a lasting legacy of China’s “Century of Humiliation.” Mao Zedong, known popularly as Chairman Mao, rose to power as a major element of the CCP’s leadership even before the People’s Republic of China (PRC) was formed. While Mao became one of the most revered revolutionaries in the world, inspired leaders such as Cuba’s Fidel Castro and Peru’s Abimael Guzman, he was a poor public official and his focus on class struggle undermined his effectiveness in achieving development. Nevertheless, his leadership unified China as a country that sought to reoccupy its place in the world after suffering from western power domination and colonization. Thus, Mao’s policies were an embodiment of the legacy of China’s “Century of Humiliation” and nationalist movements that were formed in the early 20th century.\(^4\)

The Century of Humiliation began with the Opium wars of the mid-1800’s when the Qing Dynasty fell to the powers of western nations.\(^5\) During this period, the Chinese empire lost many territories to foreign powers like Japan and Great Britain. One of the most humiliating and insulting results of these subjugations by foreign powers was the Treaty of Shimonoseki of 1895, and the Treaty of Versailles that respectively ceded Shandong to Japan. In the 1930’s Shandong served as the staging ground for Japan’s invasion of China. Collectively, these losses became a representation of the betrayal of the Chinese people by the international community and its neighbors, and have had a lasting impact on the formation of its foreign policy and its willingness to work with or trust other supreme powers.\(^6\)

In the second dimension, relations around the Chinese territory, the country’s relations with its neighbors are strained due to both China’s actions, territorial disputes, and the legacy of the “Century of Humiliation.” Under Mao, China supported and trained many communist guerrillas and governments in the Southeast Asia, including Vietnam Communist Party and Khmer Rouge Government. This harmed relations with Noncommunist Southeast Asian countries, who were angered by China’s violation of the international norm of noninterference in another state’s internal affairs. China’s relations with its surrounding neighbors have also been effected by territorial disputes with Japan, Vietnam, India, the Philippines, and most importantly, the dispute surrounding the sovereignty and territory of Taiwan.

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3. Zhang, 45.
4. Wachman, 122.
5. Wang, 40.
6. Ibid, 60.
Like its relationship with the supreme powers, relations with its regional neighbors have also been impacted by the legacy of China’s “Century of Humiliation.” According to Mao, ending this humiliation would be achieved through the defeat of the imperialist powers that had destroyed China and through the unification of China’s lost territories. This view was incorporated by Mao’s successor, Deng Xiaoping, a reformist that sought to change China’s foreign policy towards a format that would integrate it the international system. Through the “Four Modernizations” (agriculture, national defense, science and technology and industry), Deng changed China’s policies towards hegemony, reunification, and modernization in the economy. This led to China strengthening its focus on the reincorporation of lost territories such as Taiwan and Tibet, a focus that it perpetuates to this day through education which promotes those territories as China’s and emphasizes the unjust nature of the loss of the territories.

In the third dimension, relations with other nations, China currently possesses less influence than it had before, and relations with other nations have rapidly shifted across different leaders. In the 1970s, Mao propagated the “Third World Theory,” which was used by China to establish a platform for the establishment of peaceful coexistence. China, then considered a “third world” country, sought to strengthen its unity with other third world nations. The strategy behind this theory was that China would use this unity and cooperation and union with third world nations, as well as with less threatening second world countries, to assert a power against US and USSR. Thanks to these unity efforts, Maoism gained many leftist followers in the third world countries, including western hemisphere countries such as Cuba and Peru. However, during his reforms of China, Deng Xiaoping stopped this output of revolution after the Tiananmen Massacre and closed China from the international view. Under Jiang Zemin’s leadership, however, China moved towards opening up to the world. This period focused on building nationalism and support for the CCP among the masses of Chinese, which was reflected in the country’s international affairs. Throughout the 20th century, China supported many dictators internationally, as China sympathized efforts to establish a support base and the western condemnations over human rights violations these efforts drew. However, over time these dictators lost their power one by one, leaving China without its friends.

Over time, China’s foreign policy has been shaped by different leaders, whose influence has been significant. The inconsistency of China diplomacy is apparent, especially when different rulers hold power and personal factors plays a role in the establishment of foreign pol-

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7 Wang, 85
8 Chang, 299.
9 Wang, 96.
icy. The influence of these figures and the inconsistency of foreign policies between leaders is clear: Mao inspired rebellion to international forces, Deng emphasized on territorial integrity, while Jiang and Jintao opened China to the world. While these methods have played a significant role in the development of China, the nation needs to find its position in the world and develop a consistent approach to foreign policy.

**Part II: China’s Geo-Political Situation**

Present-day China is an island: while China is not surrounded by water on all sides, the country is surrounded from all sides by terrain that is impossible to overcome. Mountains, wastelands, and jungles not only contain but also protect China and make up the nation’s unique landscape. While this terrain makes it hard to invade China, the nation is not immune from geo-political challenges both internally and with its surrounding neighbors. China has fourteen neighborhoods on the land, while eastern China faces the lock of the first islands chain. Western China faces threats from minorities’ independence movement and disputes with India; while southern China faces disputes with Vietnam and Philistines over sea. Among these geo-political issues, the most consuming and primary issue of China leaders is the country’s relationship with Taiwan, as Chinese tradition seeks unification of Taiwan with the mainland. Overall, these geo-political issues compose a significant amount of the issues China’s foreign policy must address, and the close proximity of these issues complicate China’s ability to devote attention to other area.

Internally, China is formed of two major components: the Chinese heartland and the non-Chinese barrier regions that surround it. The Chinese heartland is predominantly occupied by the Han ethnicity, which is considered by the world as “Chinese.” The heartland is further divided into two parts, the north and the south, which represent the major dialects of Mandarin and Cantonese, respectively. Surrounding the heartland are the regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria, which form most of the non-Han regions and provide a buffer region. These regions have become controversial in recent times due to their renewed moves towards self-determination as they seek independence from the mainland. While these buffer regions were historically under the control of China, this control and relations between these areas and China was complicated when western forces interfered in the region during the “Century of Humiliation.” The legitimacy of these regions’ separationist claims has caused friction, but the dominance and settlement of the surrounding Han has ensured that the conflict is minimal thus far.

Pirie and Huber, 271.
While China could boost its foreign policy reputation globally by withdrawing from these regions as its involvement in these regions frequently draws international condemnation and is a point of contention in its relations with Western countries, the regions do play greater roles in the stability and national security of China. Historically, these regions formed paths for nomadic forces that invaded the farming and merchant regions of the Chinese heartland. For example, the Mongols under Genghis Khan invaded and occupied China via the buffer regions; ever since, China has sought to assert control over these regions in order to ensure its protection. This protection-driven objective thus drove China towards the occupation and dominance of these buffer regions to ensure that its north and western boundaries were not vulnerable to attack. Furthermore, these external regions would act as potentially defensible positions against foreign aggressors, making the southern borders with Vietnam and Myanmar also critical for China’s security.

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However, this terrain does not protect China from all threats, particularly those of the supreme powers and their overwhelming military

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11 Gilpin, 106.
capabilities. Currently, the United States Navy forms the greatest threat to China’s security. If the United States were to enter into conflict with China, it would have the power to cripple the country’s water borders successfully through its unparalleled sea power. However, due to the power and primacy of China on the world scale, such conflict may be unlikely. Rather, to maintain its dominance and influence internationally, the United States actually needs the help of China in the realms of international security affairs, nuclear nonproliferation, and in the post 9/11 War on Terror. Another geopolitical challenge is the country’s need to engage in international trade. China has tried to achieve international trade while keeping foreign influences at bay, which can undermine the goals of the central government.12

Thus, China’s international position is greatly influenced by its geopolitical situation. For China to be a successful power both in the Asia-Pacific region and globally, it requires internal stability that is seen mostly through the complicity of the Han Chinese in the Chinese heartland, as well as a strong grasp over the buffer regions. Continued stability is crucial for both the CCP’s successful governance and for the China on the global scale as the nation increasingly aims to assert its power internationally.

Part III: The Contemporary Status of China on the Global Stage

In the past ten years, one of the most-discussed issues in the field of international relations has been the rise of China. While the trend has observed in the past few decades, the speed at which the nation asserted its domination in the world was unprecedented. Initially, China gradually increased its dominance through advanced agriculture, technology, and industrialization, allowing the country to position itself as a power. This development has seen China move from the sidelines to become one of the most significant nations in the world, with a presence in both the developing and developed worlds. Through this economic rise (and the associated political clout it gave the country), China has become a supreme power; its rise undoubtedly challenging and threatening the existing world order that was previously dominated by the West. This section will examine the economic, political, and military components of Chinese power, and if and how they pose a threat to the West.

12 Chunli, 406.
Yan Xuetong, the director of the International Relations Institution in Tsinghua University claims that the main component of China’s rise is the economic field, while the rise of its military and political situation is not as strong as people commonly assume. From these three components, China’s overall national power can be examined. The political scientist Ray S. Cline has an equation to calculate comprehensive national power:

\[ P = (C + E + M) \times (S + W) \]

Where \( P \) = the power of a state, \( C \) = critical mass, \( E \) = economic ability, \( M \) = military power, \( S \) = strategy purpose, \( W \) = will to purpose national strategy.

The parameters of the equation include natural resources, economic growth, the education of people, the size of territory and military power. Yan explains Chinese international status in three fields: politically, the economy, and military. He says that China is a superpower in the economy, while the political status of China has both risen and fallen in the past thirty years and its military status is weaker than before.

While China is currently a world leader economically, with projections showing that the nation will surpass the United States by the year 2025, it still has major hurdles to overcome. While China’s growth may be viewed as some as miraculous overnight success, in reality, the nation’s economic strategy was planned and influenced by the former regimes. A major influence in China’s economic growth occurred during the Mao era, where China underwent many changes both socially and politically as Chairman Mao emphasized the overthrowing of imperialist rule and called for industrialization. Western influence in the country was replaced by an internal focus on its advancement and assertion of its power as a nation, actively engaging in policies that countered all forms of imperial influence and aggression, both economically and diplomatically (i.e. through supporting revolutions and movements against Western powers in the third world nations). Today, however, capitalist China is more inclined towards the formation and maintenance of bilateral agreements and investment pacts that have been critical in its journey towards economic power. This has affected the advancement of China in other areas, such as militarily and politically, as the nation has sought to create a favorable identity with both small nations and superior powers, such as the United States, in order to advance. China is one of the leading consumers of oil, steel, cement, and copper, which are some of the most valuable commerce items on the international market. This makes China an important player on the world market, with an influence over the flow of capital and the exchange of goods and services. Furthermore, through the coun-
try’s investments and actions in third world countries, especially those in Africa, China has challenged the U.S.’s position as global economic leader. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the country has distanced itself from Western influence, as China has continued to entertain western values through education and accommodation of Western principles. However, the nation’s huge trade surpluses with the United States has ensured that it can maintain a hold on global economic leadership.

In terms of military power, today China lacks sufficient military endowment and empire building, rendering the nation secondary to Western and American power in this area. Through the United States’ military superiority, China has been forced to access resources and markets warily, and this has made the nation’s advancement challenged and ineffective at times. China’s international strategy had thus metamorphosed to become one that centers on business-first, a strategy that was first developed when the country was a minor player in the global economy. A major advantage of China’s business-first policy of international relations, however, is the fact that the country maintains state control over the most basic capital. Through the state-directed industrial policy, the country has been able to maintain control over western powers in its territories, and has boosted its ability to establish dominance in the overseas markets. Similarly, to bridge this gap between China’s military power and that of the West, China can build its soft power. China has worked towards the building of its soft power through the global media. Through sponsored English based television stations and other media outlets, China has popularized its unique perspectives to the world. China can also utilize diplomatic channels open to it, such as its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). China has also been able to strengthen its opposition to American military efforts through the UNSC, as seen through the recent crisis in Syria, where China opposed the United States’ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton when she questioned the legitimacy of the Chinese State when it failed to support the United States’ intervention on Syria.

China’s rise politically has also been undermined by western forces. Alliances between European nations, the United States, and China’s regional neighbors in Asia and the Pacific, such as Vietnam, South Korea, Thailand, and Myanmar, have affected and slowed the advancement of China’s ability to exert its political power in the Pacific, blocking it from becoming the sole dominant regional player. In the 21st century, China seeks to overcome its past flaws to become one of the most influential democracies in the world, the sole power in the Asia-Pacific region and a global superpower. With a fast growing population and one of the largest populations in the world, China is expected to become the world’s biggest economy by 2025. Politically, the nation that has experienced lower points, such as the
Tiananmen massacre, but hopes to establish itself as a prominent power vis a vis improved relations with its regional neighbors through the RCEP trade deal (the competitor to the American Trans-Pacific Partnership) and expanded relations with third world countries, such as those in Africa.

Part IV: The Probability of China’s Dominance in Asia

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been the most powerful nation in the international sphere, a status attained by its control over economies around the world. The American influence in the Asia-Pacific region began as early as the 1800s, but was introduced most dominantly during the Second World War. The influence of the United States was crucial for the maintenance of peace and stability in the region following the end of World War II, as it oversaw the post-war economic development of countries such as Japan and South Korea. However, with the rise of China, the Asia-Pacific is undergoing economic transformations which has seen power be redistributed from the U.S. to China in many locations. The advancement of China has greatly challenged American primacy in the region, and the balance of power has shifted; the U.S. can no longer be considered the sole economic or political power in the region. Helping China in this growth is that China is a local power, whereas the U.S. has to project its power across the Pacific Ocean.

Historically, China looked to its neighbors as the key targets of its foreign policy. From the Qing Dynasty forward, China interacted with its neighbors through various forms of culture, traditions, and commerce that established a favorable platform for exchange. For example, Japan’s culture draws greatly from the Tang Dynasty. Furthermore, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam all adopted the Chinese characters of writing that were integrated into their systems and collectively, they formed a unifying foundation for the communication in East. However, in the modern times, these relations have not been as easy for the nation, as it has engaged in conflict with neighboring Asian nations, and has only recently begun to rebuild its alliances in the region, many of which remain fragile. These conflicts include the wars with Japan during the World Wars, the Korean War in 1950, incursions into Vietnam, border wars with India, and cross-strait disputes with Taiwan. These conflicts have shaped and complicated China’s relationship with its neighbors, and its aggressive foreign policies isolated the country. Following the Tiananmen massacre, China faced countless sanctions from the United States and other Western allies that impacted its global standing, and forced China to search for stronger allies in Asia so it would have other countries to back it up.

14 Department of Defense, 49.
15 Mearsheimer, 381.
China’s alliances are primarily based on the economic opportunity they present for other nations. For example, despite the dispute it has over Taiwan’s sovereignty, China has developed business ties with Taiwan, as well as economic ties with Japan and South Korea. Trade with countries such as that include South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, India, and the Philippines granted these countries geographically closer economic trade, and granted China strong relations with many of these nations, as the recognize their economic development is tied to both the US and China. This, however, does not mean that China’s place in the East has no opposition. As any major power, over time, China has alienated some nations in its quest for political, economic, and military dominance. In addition, China is unlikely to ever enjoy strong support from South Korea, Japan, or Taiwan, all strong American allies.

Overall, it is doubtful that China’s power in the East will wane anytime soon, as the nation has successfully asserted its influence across the Asia-Pacific region, with its economic strength and the political clout its economy grants it. This power, however, is limited by the still-substantial influence of the United States in the region, whose Navy and control over international powers is formidable. Thus, it is equally unlikely that China will be soon to dominate the Asia-Pacific region unilaterally.

Part V: Conclusion

China has undergone transformations and overcome challenges to reach its current position. From the historic Century of Humiliation, through the Great Chinese Drought and the Cultural Revolution, China’s path has not been a linear one. Its tumultuous past and its perusal of development and growth reveal that China’s rise and power were not attained by luck, but through perseverance, dedication, and planning. While it is true that China’s rise has been rapid, it is also true that China does not currently possess the necessary qualities and attributes to accomplish its journey towards world domination. Currently, China’s status is one divided between attempting to gain regional and global power, and its best interest for the future lay in balancing these two ambitions. Currently, the United States holds the position of the dominant international power, which has maintained a grip on the Asia-Pacific region especially. China has traditionally been a lone wolf in world politics and economy, but this situation is increasingly changing thanks to both new alliances both in Asia and Africa. Ultimately, the success of China relies on solving of its problems both internal (such as maintaining control over its buffer terri-
tories and re-unifying with Taiwan) and external (the challenges posed by Japan and other U.S.-backed neighbors); a move that would ensure that the nation overcomes the hurdles posed by a world dominated by the United States and neighbors hostile to its rise. As China tackles these challenges, the nation must maintain its primacy as a power in the East and while not receding from the progress it’s made on the global scale. In order to do so, it must develop a new policy of self-determination.
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CIVILIAN THINK TANKS
AND THE STATE IN
CHINA: ALOOF
FRIENDLINESS

Yiwen Zhang

ABSTRACT

Based on a case study of a Chinese civilian think tank, this article identifies the relationship between Chinese civilian think tanks and the state to be “aloof friendliness.” Through utilizing their personal attachments to gain financial autonomy, developing their distinctiveness of expertise, and cooperating with other nongovernmental institutions, civilian think tanks try to keep a clear distance from the Party-state system. At the same time, however, their willingness to participate and to influence the policymaking process stimulates the interdependence between civilian think tanks and the government, resulting in an increase in policymaking pluralism and state capacity. As a representative of the community of Chinese intellectual organizations, the case that will be presented in this article also shows that Party-state connections (guanxi) within civilian think tanks still play an important role in the application of think tanks’ intellectual products to the Central government’s policies, leaving an inevitable dilemma for today’s Chinese policy-engaged intellectuals.
Introduction

On January 20, 2015, the State Council and Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party promulgated “Opinions on Strengthening Construction of New-type Think Tanks with the Chinese Characteristics,” in which the Central leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) stated that “new-type think tanks with Chinese characteristics” would improve the advisory system of state decision-making. This is not the first time that the government has tried to bring think tanks to the public view and regard them as a way to diversify participation in state decision-making. Quite different from the Maoist period, in which most people worked in state-owned enterprises, the Reform era has generated a considerable amount of semi-official and private research organizations since 1979. In the 1980s, government-affiliated research institutes, which were gathered by many “policy entrepreneurs” who promoted economic reform, played a crucial role in economic policymaking and were highly supported by key Central leaders. After a two-year silence due to the events of June Fourth in 1989, many research institutes were restructured and reorganized. As a result, civilian think tanks rapidly mushroomed and developed under the cautious encouragement of the government.

The establishment of intellectual organizations and think tanks has not only influenced the intellectual community; it has also lead people to think about the relationship between these organizations, especially between nongovernmental research institutes and the Chinese state as an authoritarian regime. Government-affiliated think tanks (or what some may call semi-official think tanks) have mainly followed the model of socialist corporatism with relatively increasing autonomy since the 1990s. Funded by related state departments, these types of institutes have been

1 “Guanyu jiaqiang zhongguo tese xinxing zhiku jianshe de yijian [Opinions on Strengthening Construction of New-type Think Tanks with the Chinese Characteristics].” Xinhua News Agency, last modified January 21, 2015.
2 Chinese Central leaders such as Deng Xiaoping, Hu Yaobang, Hu Qiaomu, Zhao Ziyang and Deng Liqun believed that the traditional government departments were not sufficient for making more empirically based, less ideologically focused, and more innovative policies for rapid economic reform. See more in Murray Scot Tanner, Changing Windows on a Changing China: The Evolving “Think Tank” System and the Case of the Public Security Sector, 2002. In addition, Zhu Rongji also highly supported the influence of think tanks in policymaking process in the late 1990s during the market economy development. See more in Barry Naughton, China’s Economic Think Tanks: Their Changing Role in the 1990s, 2002.
continuously tasked with certain research topics, especially projects assigned by the CCP under research regulation. This paper tries to focus on the relationship between the state and civilian think tanks, the other kind of institute, which “are centered on civilian nonprofit legal persons and enterprises” and are less dependent on the government in terms of organizational steering and financial support. Their relationship tends to be more complicated and varied, as I will argue in this paper: civilian think tanks maintain a relationship of “aloof friendliness” with the state by maintaining a clear distance from the Party-state system while simultaneously participating in the state’s policymaking process. By utilizing their personal attachments to gain financial autonomy, civilian think tanks make efforts to develop their distinctiveness of expertise and increase nongovernmental cooperation among institutions, resulting in a natural distance between civilian think tanks and the state. Meanwhile, their willingness to contribute to and influence the policymaking process stimulates cooperation and interdependence between civilian think tanks and the government, contributing to an increase in policymaking pluralism.

This paper is based on a case study of a civilian think tank, also known as an independent think tank. Discussing the “aloofness” and “friendliness” of its relationship with the government respectively, I will begin by analyzing the personal and horizontal connections of the Charhar Institute, an international relations think tank that I chose to represent the civilian think tank community. I will specifically focus on how civilian think tanks utilize personal ties to seek funding, develop expertise, and expand their partnerships horizontally through other institutes and organizations. Later, I will move to analyze their intentions of cooperation with the state and their willingness to participate in policymaking in order to show how civilian think tanks and the state maintain a non-confrontational and friendly relationship. Examining the relationship between Chinese think tanks and the Party-state also reveals broader changes underway in the world of China’s intellectuals, especially policy-engaged intellectuals and the certain dilemma they have been facing in their daily lives. Through this discussion of civilian think tanks, it is interesting to see how “aloofness” and “friendliness” exist paradoxically but manage to balance each other out and contribute to state-building.

3 Margaret Sleeboom-Faulkner, Regulating Intellectual Life in China: The Case of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Author(s), 2007.
The Charhar Institute

In order to select a think tank as my research case, I referred to the 2015 “Global Go To Think Tank Index Report” published by the University of Pennsylvania,\(^5\) an annual global think tank publication which ranks the world’s leading think tanks in diverse categories. I find that the Charhar Institute, which fits under the worldwide list for “Best Independent Think Tank” and ranks 108th among the “Top Foreign Policy and International Affairs Think Tanks,” would be a good case. Founded in 2009 in a county in Hebei, China, the Charhar Institute has been called “a non-official, non-partisan and independent or civilian think tank” on diplomacy and international relations.\(^6\) With concentrations in public diplomacy and peace-making studies, its goal is to become a global Chinese independent think tank, provide advice and innovative ideas on major diplomatic policymaking, and create a platform of communication between official decision-makers, unofficial think tanks, and the mainstream media.\(^7\) Admittedly, there are many different types of think tanks in China and it is not sufficient for international relations think tanks to represent the whole community of civilian think tanks. However, over the past two decades, along with civilian think tanks that focus on other areas such as economic development and environment, Chinese international relations think tanks have developed in both quality and quantity. Furthermore, the Charhar Institute has a fairly new, small research team composed of elites, which is similar to most newborn civilian think tanks in other areas, so the Charhar Institute would be a fairly good representative of civilian research institutes in today’s China.

Financial Autonomy and Personal Attachment

Although criticized by many scholars because many well-known civilian think tanks in the West are heavily dependent on government funding,\(^8\) financial autonomy is one of the best ways to differentiate civilian think tanks from government-affiliated ones, and the personal ties of these think tanks greatly help to reach this goal. Instead of receiving a steady flow of research funds for projects assigned by the government from a supervising agency, civilian think tanks usually have more diverse sources of funds including enterprise, overseas funds, domestic funds,

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\(^5\) “2015 Global Go to Think Tank Index Report,” University of Pennsylvania, http://repository.upenn.edu/think_tanks/10/
\(^6\) The Charhar Institute. Available at: http://charhar.china.org.cn
\(^7\) Ibid.
and individual sponsorship. Six companies from different fields, from a tea group to an auto group, for example, support the Charhar Institute. One of the Institute’s sponsors is the TCL Corporation, a multinational electronics company whose former vice president is also the founder and president of the Charhar Institute, Han Fangming. Currently a director of Le.com, a technology company, Han is also a major sponsor of the Charhar Institute. In addition, senior researcher and founding vice president of the Institute Zhou Hucheng is the former lead editor of Southern Daily at the Southern Media Group, another sponsor of the Charhar Institute. These two examples may not be enough to convince people that the Charhar Institute receives its funding exclusively through personal connections. However, it is nevertheless evident that the Charhar Institute financially benefits from these personal ties. Utilizing personal ties with enterprises outside the state system to seek funds is a common strategy used by civilian think tanks to maintain financial autonomy.

In addition, contrastingly from government-affiliated think tanks such as the Chinese Association of Social Science (CASS) and the Development Research Center of the State Council (DRC), civilian think tanks have much fewer government links. According to the law of “freedom of association” in the Chinese Constitution, every registered social organization is required to be affiliated to a “supervisory unit” which is usually a government agency. As many scholars have mentioned, this establishment of “affiliation relationships” can offer organizations social connections (guanxi) which are important and helpful in the process of institute construction and operation. Interestingly, the Charhar Institute is located in Yishang County in the city of Zhangjiakou, Hebei, three hours from Beijing. Rather than choosing to be affiliated to a state agency in Beijing or another larger city, the Charhar Institute chooses its supervisory unit to be the Science and Technology Division in Yishang County. Another fact that draws attention is that Yishang County is also the hometown of Han Fangming, who serves not only as the president of the Charhar Institute but also as the Deputy Director in the Committee of External Affairs of the Chinese.

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9 Zhao Xinli. “External communication of the civilian think tank, the Charhar Institute.” External Communication, 2012.
10 The Charhar Institute. Available at: http://charhar.china.org.cn
People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Due to Han’s political and social status, the Charhar Institute could have easily chosen a supervisory unit with a higher administrative level if they truly wanted to take advantage of the relationship instead of choosing to be located in an isolated county based on its founder’s personal attachment. This decision reveals that Han Fangming and the Charhar Institute intentionally try to both physically and nominally keep their distance from Beijing and the Central.

Admittedly, it is rare for civilian think tanks to give up the opportunity to be affiliated to and located in Beijing where they can procure more resources; not every think tank has a founder who would choose headquarters based on personal history. But even if a civilian organization is supervised by a government agency, its relationship with the supervisory unit is generally very loose and no government-nominated personnel take positions within the think tank, enabling think tanks to be “aloof” with the government.14

**Distinctiveness of Expertise**

Civilian think tanks receive diverse sources of funding outside the state system through their connections. This helps them to form teams with unique expertise and concentrations distinct from those of other research institutes, especially those of state-related ones. This enables civilian think tanks to maintain academic autonomy and independence. As the amount of civilian think tanks has rapidly grown since the 1990s, their professionalism has become more and more important under intense competition. Han Fangming stated in an interview, “Chinese civilian think tanks can make efforts on ‘strategic innovation,’ concentrating resources on a specific field, especially an emerging field.”15 The Charhar Institute followed Han’s plan by employing all of its resources for the development of public diplomacy, which mainly refers to one type of diplomatic strategy that uses cultural exchange and government-civilian interaction to increase mutual understanding. The Institute focuses on public diplomacy through city diplomacy, enterprise diplomacy, and religion diplomacy. Most of its researchers are highly educated, holding doctorate degrees in political science, economics, international politics, religion, and philosophy; nearly all

15 “Han Fangming: youxu kaifang jiji fazhan zhongguo de minjian zhiku [Han Fangming— develop Chinese civilian think tanks with order and encouragement].” Xulu.com, last modified on July 3, 2013.
of them have had overseas experience as students or as visiting scholars.\footnote{The Charhar Institute, “Research team.” Available at: http://www.charhar.org.cn/research.aspx} One of the efforts Han Fangming and his team have made is Public Diplomacy Quarterly, whose Chief Editor is Zhao Qizheng, the former Director of the Information Office in the State Council and a big believer in public diplomacy, cultural exchange, and public interaction. Gathering a powerful team of experts on public diplomacy, the Charhar Institute maintains the distinctiveness of its expertise, which is seldom covered by government-affiliated institutes. The Charhar Institute’s platform and concentration continue to attract many researchers and scholars who share similar beliefs and study similar fields, resulting in more developed expertise.

Developing independent expertise to gain academic status and autonomy is not just a strategy of the Charhar Institute, it is also a general trend for civilian think tanks who want to succeed in a competitive environment. Another successful civilian think tank, the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), specifically focuses on the field of “international talents,” including globalization, overseas study and returnees, and immigration. CCG, similar to the Charhar Institute and many other civilian think tanks, is connected to this research field and gathers many young professionals who have overseas experience, further expanding through these connections.\footnote{Center for China & Globalization, “Our team.” Available at: http://en.ccg.org.cn/our-team/#1457361402334-94c8da37-a82c} In this case, civilian think tanks utilize their connections and concentrations to develop their own research teams and expertise, which ensure academic autonomy and independence from the state.

**Horizontal Relationships and Cooperation Among Institutes**

In addition to autonomous funding and distinctive expertise that help civilian think tanks create distance from the state, many of them choose to form intellectual coalitions with other research institutes, including university-based think tanks and internationally famous institutes. Before the 1990s, horizontal links between research institutes barely existed, let alone academic discussion and exchange. As Glaser and Saunders mentioned, “China’s system is ‘stove-piped’ into vertical hierarchies or systems and research products are transferred upward, not downward.”\footnote{Glaser, Bonnie S., and Phillip C. Saunders. “Chinese Civilian Foreign Policy Research Institutes: Evolving Roles and Increasing Influence.” The China Quarterly, 2002.} However,
since the 1990s and especially in this past decade, horizontal relationships have flourished and developed through conferences, forums, and seminars, which bring together not only state-affiliated research institutes but also a large amount of intellectuals and civilian think tanks who may have overlapping interests in certain topics. Developing horizontal relationships also enables civilian think tanks to cooperate with each other, granting them larger social influence, higher reputations and their own niche in the field.

Holding different types of academic events over thirty times a year, the Charhar Institute believes that increasing horizontal relationships can generate new thoughts and ideas and promote research output. In 2015, with over 200 attendees and widespread media coverage, the Charhar Roundtable Discussion on One Belt One Road (OBOR), another part of the strategy of public diplomacy, created a platform for academic discussion on the OBOR and gave the Charhar Institute an opportunity to emphasize their own distinct expertise and publications. Media coverage, an important strategy used by civilian think tanks to raise their reputation and recognition, enabled the Charhar Institute to gain more respect and popularity in the international relations field. As Ke Yinbin, a Senior Researcher at the Charhar Institute, mentioned in an interview, “For Annual Meeting, we cooperate with Southern Media Group; for Public Diplomacy International Forum, we cooperate with Dutch International Relations Research Institute and Germany Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations; for National International Relations Ph.D. Students Academic Forum, we cooperate with Department of International Relations at Peking University; for International Symposium of Peace Studies, we cooperate with History Department at Nanjing University.” Cooperation with other research institutes, from domestic ones to international ones and from civilian think tanks to university-based institutions, provides the Charhar Institute with more opportunities and resources, leading to more recognition from different academic entities and broader social influence. This influence also helps civilian think tanks maintain a unique academic position and status which would not be wavered by state or government-affiliated think tanks.

In the analysis of “aloofness,” we can conclude that civilian think tanks are good at utilizing their attachments, including founding members’ personal connections and academic connections, to seek independent fund-
ing and develop autonomous, elite-composed expert teams. In addition, by developing their own research expertise and cooperating with other institutes, civilian think tanks successfully maintain a powerful social status, academic distinctiveness, and autonomy that differentiate them from state-affiliated think tanks. However, does this mean that civilian think tanks such as the Charhar Institute do not want official government relationships at all?

**Policymaking Participation**

As Han Fangming suggested in an interview on today’s think tanks in China, “[the] Chinese government should include civilian think tanks in the list of ‘thought products’ for government procurement and for policy research partnership . . . [it is important to] treat civilian think tanks and official think tanks as equals, and in some certain fields, even give civilian think tanks a priority.”\(^{21}\) It is evident that Fangming does not oppose academic partnership and cooperation between the state and civilian think tanks; he is instead very willing to participate in the state policymaking process and believes that a healthy relationship based on respect and equality should be adopted and encouraged.

The major research focus of the Charhar Institute is public diplomacy; this civilian think tank is actually the first research institute to study this topic since its establishment in 2009. The Institute has already made progress on this issue, with *Public Diplomacy Quarterly* being the most promising sign. Published since 2010, it is one of six publications by the Charhar Institute. It has been directly sponsored by the Committee of External Affairs of the CPPCC and highly supported by its chief editor, the former director of the Information Office in the State Council, Zhao Qizheng.\(^{22}\) Partnership with the CPPCC reveals that the Charhar Institute wants to present their research products to the state and to join in the policymaking process.

After being presented to the National CPPCC every year since 2010 through support from Zhao Qizheng, *Public Diplomacy Quarterly* was mentioned and praised as an achievement in the field of public diplo-

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\(^{21}\)“Han Fangming: youxu kaifang jiji fazhan zhongguo de minjian zhiku [Han Fangming— develop Chinese civilian think tanks with order and encouragement].” Xulu.com, last modified on July 3, 2013.

\(^{22}\) The other five publications are *Charhar Express*, a series of books on Charhar public diplomacy, a series of books on Charhar international relations, *Charhar Report*, and *Introduction to Public Diplomacy*. 

67
macy in the Report of the CPPCC of 2011. Receiving government leaders’ commentaries on think tanks is quite rare in China; public commentary on the work of the Charhar Institute could reveal the contribution that the Charhar Institute has made to the state. Eventually, at the 18th National Party’s Congress meeting in late 2012, “public diplomacy” was mentioned in the Central leader’s public speech for the first time and was proposed as an important policy. Now, it has been adopted by the government as an official, diplomatic policy along with the policy of “increasing soft power.”

Although it is insufficient to conclude that it was the Charhar Institute which turned the idea of “public diplomacy” into reality and led the government to adopt this policy, it is noticeable that the Charhar Institute has actively promoted its theory of public diplomacy through different types of media coverage and the development of horizontal connections through conferences, symposiums, and forums. These methods have improved the Institute’s reputation and popularity, strengthening the distinctiveness and autonomy of their academic status and expanding access for civilian think tanks in decision-making. By listening to suggestions on state policy such as the Charhar Institute’s promotion of public diplomacy, the government not only receives more professional voices of policy advice, but also indirectly increases the pluralism of political participation, particularly that of the intellectual community. This has helped strengthen state-building as well as legitimacy. Allowing scholars and professionals to take part in the policymaking process is helpful for building mutual trust between the state and the civilian think tanks and enables think tanks to recognize the government’s work. This makes it more likely for these institutions to give out better suggestions in the future.

Zhao Qizheng and Han Mingfang are not the only two people at the Charhar Institute who hold political positions. Despite the fact that most of the members at the Charhar Institute are highly educated elites, mostly professors at universities, there are several members who are retired government officials who worked in foreign re-

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lations-related departments. Those people who have personal ties with the state would utilize their connections as keys to open the door to policymaking or advisory participation. This structure of the Charhar Institute is quite common within the community of civilian think tanks. Sometimes, highly-educated researchers within civilian think tanks such as Han Fangming also hold political positions within the state and both their expert knowledge and personal ties make it easier for civilian think tanks to present their research achievements to the government.

Therefore, despite their autonomy and “aloofness” with the Party-state, many civilian think tanks look forward to participating in the policymaking process by cooperating and presenting their academic products to the government. Party-state connections within think tanks have contributed much to this, and some may argue that these connections also enable civilian think tanks to be independent and balance their “aloofness” and “friendliness” with the state.

Implications on Chinese Policy-Engaged Intellectuals

After analyzing civilian think tanks and the case of the Charhar Institute, what can we find out about the community of Chinese intellectuals, especially those intellectuals who are engaged in policy research and wish to participate in decision-making? Although they work in civilian think tanks such as the Charhar Institute, Han Fangming and other intellectuals would still be considered “establishment intellectuals.” As Edward Gu and Merle Goldman have said of Chinese intellectuals, “some establishment intellectuals may criticize the regime, though the majority do not. . . . Critical establishment intellectuals may seek to promote reform of the regime or even a transition of the regime, but none seek the regime’s collapse”.

Similarly, intellectuals involved in civilian think tanks, rather than asking for the development of liberal democracy as many people might expect, are willing to cooperate with the government and help state-capacity building by making suggestions on policies. Pluralistic policy participation enables Central leaders to hear voices from not only the advisory within the government but also from expert scholars, resulting in more comprehensive and professional policies.

“Autonomy does not mean to drift away from the state, nor to

26 The Charhar Institute, “Research team”. Available at: http://www.charhar.org.cn/research.aspx
oppose the government on all of the aspects,” suggested Han in another interview, “Think tanks should not become the tool of government’s rent-seeking nor become the spokesperson of a certain interest group; think tanks should provide the state and the society with independent and neutral ‘thought products.’” Han’s views may represent the majority of policy-engaged intellectuals. These intellectuals cherish the relative autonomy they gain in civilian think tanks or other areas through personal attachments and horizontal connections with other academic institutions, but they are also willing to make a difference in Chinese society. By trying to provide different voices and expertise in policy-advisory, they also help improve the stability and legitimacy of the Chinese state. Party-state connections (guanxi) within civilian think tanks still play an important role in the process of transformation of “thought products” for the Central government’s policies. This creates an inevitable dilemma for intellectuals: it may be less possible for intellectuals and civilian think tanks to make differences in policies if they do not have any government connections like those of the Charhar Institute and the majority of Chinese civilian think tanks.

In conclusion, applying the Charhar Institute as a representative of the community of civilian think tanks in China, it is evident that these civilian think tanks try to maintain a relationship of “aloof friendliness” with the Party-state. It is a neither fully independent nor fully cooperative relationship because most establishment intellectuals in the think tanks look forward to taking part in the policymaking process and making contributions to state-capacity building, but they also try to keep a certain distance from the government by sustaining financial autonomy, distinctiveness of expertise, and the development of horizontal connections with other institutions. We could also conclude that the community of Chinese policy-engaged intellectuals, although it enjoys relative autonomy and have opportunities to make a difference in state decision-making, continuously faces the dilemma that access to policy-making participation is still heavily based on connections with the state.

28“Chinese think tanks face the new opportunities of development”. China.com, last modified on October 23, 2014.


“Chinese think tanks face the new opportunities of development”. China.com, last modified on October 23, 2014.


“Han Fangming: youxu kaifang jiji fazhan zhongguo de minjian zhiku [Han Fangming—develop Chinese civilian think tanks with order and encouragement]”. Xulu.com, last modified on July 3, 2013.

The Berkeley Student Journal of Asian Studies is proud to present the following research submission in collaboration with Project Pengyou. Project Pengyou, UC Berkeley Chapter, is a national organization supported by the Ford Foundation and the Committee of 100 that strives to empower a new generation of U.S.-China bridge-builders. For its Spring 2017 Case Competition, Project Pengyou asked participants to pretend that they are policy advisers for the new Trump administration. The goal is to craft a realistic policy proposal that would help better relations between the U.S. and China. Participants were to take into account two of three main variables: relations with Taiwan, China’s trade policy, and territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The following policy proposal won first place in the Case Competition for its in-depth assessment of each issue and originality.
Trade Policy

The new Trump administration is seemingly at odds with the Chinese government over a variety of different issues. It is our belief that, while there is much to be gained from cooperating with the Chinese (especially in the realm of trade), the United States must also maintain a strong presence in Asia in order to ensure more countries do not fall under the realm of Chinese influence.

With regards to trade, it would be most beneficial for the Trump administration to maintain America’s current trade relationship with China while investing in restructuring the economy of the “Rust Belt” through subsidizing college education by expanding the Pell Grant program and encouraging the growth of small businesses in the region through lowering payroll taxes and expanding existing federal grant programs through the Small Business Administration; at the same time, the administration should negotiate a new trade pact that will replace the Trans-Pacific Partnership that would act as a counter-weight to the Chinese-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

The Rust Belt, expanding roughly from the Great Lakes region through the upper Midwest, was the traditional center of American manufacturing for much of the 20th century. However, since the 1970s, the region has been in economic decline as manufacturing jobs became scarcer and scarcer.\(^1\) Detroit, which was once one of America’s wealthiest and most populous cities, has since declared bankruptcy and lost over half of its citizens. Unemployment has remained stubbornly high, and many social ills such as crime and drug abuse have plagued the region.

As deindustrialization increased, Detroit and other industrial cities saw steep declines in population.\(^2\)

A strong response from the federal government is necessary to reverse this downward economic trend. Doing so is in the interest of the United States, as an economically rejuvenated Rust Belt would increase the American tax base, foster increased innovation which would help create future jobs and wealth, and decrease unrest in a region which has become increasingly dissatisfied with the national government. In addition, Donald Trump was able to secure his presidential victory by winning several Rust Belt states, namely Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio. If Trump wishes to win reelection in 2020, it is imperative to take steps in improving their economic situation.

During the campaign, Donald Trump has frequently blamed China for taking America’s manufacturing jobs, and he has pledged to overhaul America’s trade deals with China. While it is true that many of these jobs have been outsourced to China, opposing trade with China would have three serious negative effects:

- First of all, outsourcing manufacturing jobs to China has resulted in cheaper goods for American consumers, which in turn has increased most Americans’ purchasing power and thus their

quality of life.\textsuperscript{3} If the US and China were to enter a trade-war, consumer goods would likely become much more expensive, negatively impacting families.

• Secondly, many American companies, from Ford to McDonald’s to Boeing, generate much of their profits from selling goods to China, and increased trade barriers would result in these profits going away and the loss of many American jobs.\textsuperscript{4}

• Thirdly, if manufacturing jobs were to return to the United States from China, this would only be temporary as they would soon be automated anyway.\textsuperscript{5} Robots and other machines are quickly replacing manufacturing jobs that were once only performed by humans.

Instead, the Trump administration should continue current trade deals with China, as these deals have benefited the economies of both nations, and instead focus on restructuring the economy of the Rust Belt to make the region best suited for a post-industrial economy. For example, one important barrier that prevents many workers from entering high-paying jobs is the price of a college education. College tuition rates have been rising much faster than the rate of inflation over the past couple decades, and this trend hurts those from economically disadvantaged areas the hardest as they are least able to pay these high prices. The Trump administration could counter this by expanding the existing Pell Grant program, which provides scholarships to students from low-income backgrounds, which in turn would result in more highly-skilled workers able to earn high-paying jobs. This action should be done in conjunction with expanding grants to small businesses through the federal Small Business Administration and lowering payroll taxes in order to ensure that these small businesses are able to expand and hire the newly educated workers.

While these initiatives would help transform the Rust Belt’s economy in the long term, the Trump administration could help the economy in the short term by announcing

plans to rebuild the infrastructure of the region. Many areas have seen their infrastructure deteriorate to the point where it becomes a hazard to public safety, such as the water crisis seen in Flint, Michigan. A large-scale effort to rebuild crumbling roads, buildings, and other facilities would help provide jobs that will ease the deindustrialization of the region.

To pay for these initiatives, the Trump administration should increase taxes on the owners of the companies which have outsourced jobs. This is only fair, as lax trade policies have benefited these owners the most at the expense of the Rust Belt, so they should be the ones who help finance their economic revival.

In addition to maintaining trade relations with China, the United States should also work towards creating a trading bloc in Asia that would help counter China’s proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). When Trump came to office, he scrapped Obama’s proposed Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), stating that the trading pact would help ship American jobs overseas. However, the absence of an American-led trading bloc likely means that more countries would be enticed to join China’s RCEP. It is crucial that the United States renegotiate a new trading pact in Asia, not only because such a trading pact would boost the economies of all member nations through the absence of tariffs and other trading barriers, but also because it would help preserve American influence in the region and stem the rise of China, which would help ensure that China does not become powerful enough to threaten the United States directly.

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The nations in the TPP constitute a large share of U.S. imports, so the agreement would have had an enormous effect of the U.S. economy, likely in the form of cheaper goods.\textsuperscript{7}

Obama’s proposed TPP was largely unpopular because of the following controversial provisions:\textsuperscript{8}

- The TPP would have potentially hurt American manufacturing by flooding the market with cheap foreign goods.

- Pharmaceutical costs would increase, as the agreement’s strong protection of patents would make generic drugs less available.

- Individual countries may lose autonomy when it comes to regulating international corporations.


The Trump administration, in negotiating a new pact, could alleviate these fears by doing the following:

- Announcing plans to restructure the economy of the Rust Belt through methods previously discussed in order to mitigate the effects of deindustrialization.

- Exempting pharmaceutical goods from the agreement’s patent protections in order to ensure healthcare costs do not increase.

- Create a provision in the agreement stating that international corporations would have to follow the laws of whatever countries they operate in.

These new provisions would help assuage fears about the deal and make it more palatable to the American public.

Another policy issue the Trump administration must address are the competing claims over the South China Sea, which remains, from its beginning to now, a hugely contentious issue. China, which claims all the islands in the South China Sea, makes its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) overlap that of Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia’s. An EEZ is a country’s exclusive right to exploit the resources of a certain area of the ocean. In response to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN) claims, China has been building artificial islands, stating that because it falls within the borders of the “nine-dash-line”, the South China Sea and all the islands that fall within it are considered to be China’s, and this has led to clashes and high tension running throughout the entire region.
The different competing claims in the South China Sea.\textsuperscript{9}

These competing claims have created so much tension mainly because of how valuable this region is. The South China Sea is the second most used sea lane in the world, carrying huge amounts of natural resources, i.e. hydrocarbons.\textsuperscript{10} It is also an extremely diverse marine ecosystem (that is being overfished, mostly from the Chinese side).

There have been some key developments in the region before the current administration came to office:

- Despite the UNCLOS (The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) ruling on the South China Sea, China has

viewed the situation as a matter of contested sovereignty, rather than an international issue. It has since dismissed the ruling.

● China does have the best claim to the islands compared to Vietnam or the Philippines, and Beijing isn’t likely to budge, considering the unimaginable backlash it would face domestically from its citizens.

● The US should not seek for a confrontational approach, as it may (and most likely will) escalate the situation. It should continue to act as a neutral mediator between the two entities; China is aware that ASEAN does not wish to pick and choose between either the US or China. Certain elements of current US policy towards the South China Sea issue should just be revamped and emphasized.

Since the beginning of the Cold War, the US has favored bilateralism in solving security problems in Asia and adopted an exclusive “hub and spokes” system to gain influence over Asia. Recently in the face of maritime conflicts between China and its neighbors, the US carried on its previous approach and carefully cultivated a series of bilateral relations with Southeastern nations, especially Vietnam and the Philippines. Although Obama showed an inclination toward multilateral cooperation, in practice he did not reject his predecessors’ belief that the US needs unilateral allies to effectively manipulate its allies and counter China’s rising power in the region. However, even though such an approach has helped the US enhance its influence during the Cold War, since then the Asian security landscape has transformed significantly and any bilateral actions taken by the US would cause more harm than good.

Although the US perceives China as a major threat to US supremacy in the Asia-Pacific, China is aware that it is still far behind the US in both its military and diplomatic capacities. As a result, China has chosen to pursue a multilateral approach to further its regional interests, depicting itself as a non-violent rising power instead of an outright challenger to

US dominance.\textsuperscript{13} Even though there is enormous domestic pressure for President Xi to play tough in the South China Sea, he is likely to act more cooperatively if the US engages with Asia through multilateral platforms and guide China to follow international norms and become a constructive regional power.\textsuperscript{14}

Therefore, in the case of the South China Sea, a multilateral approach would be most appropriate. We can look to similar events in history, and mimic successful elements of various proposed treaties - most notably, the 1925 Svalbard Treaty between Norway and Russia, which:

- Granted Norway sovereignty over the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, but allowed other countries certain privileges and rights while limiting complete Norwegian wield of power in the region.\textsuperscript{15}
- Implemented a lower taxation rate.
- Allowed anyone to become a resident, so long as they followed Norwegian law.
- Stated that Norway was to protect and conserve the environment within this region.

However, as history progresses, so do countries and its policies: we must keep in mind that environmental awareness has been steadily growing since the 20th century. Most countries realize that preserving the natural ecosystem is in their best interest, and will formulate policies with some degree of environmental protection in mind. We thus base our proposed policy around the first and last elements of the Svalbard Treaty, in order to benefit both the U.S. and China.

To ease tensions and improve relations between China and the entity of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian

Nations), a treaty should be created to preserve the ecosystem in the South China Sea region out of environmental concerns through an establishment of a joint fisheries committee, serving as a channel of communication to encourage circulation of information between all relevant parties. Operational hotlines should also be implemented to build trust and allow an easier way of information-sharing between the various countries, as well as for distinct laws and protocols to be set in place. Moreover, in return for China’s cooperation and approval, the United States will also assuage its military presence and gradually demilitarize in the Asia Pacific to lessen tensions. With the enactment of these two proposals, both the US and China could hope to work towards a peaceful and stable compromise.
Works Cited


“Self and the Sri Lankan Identity” is really the confluence of two different streams of thought and analysis, resulting in a paper with two distinguishable, but intertwined facets. As a reader, it may help to have a bit more concrete of a roadmap before delving into the depths of a paper brimming with the excitement of one who has ruminated on this topic for twenty-one years. The study in “Self and Sri Lankan Identity” was designed to discover ways diasporic Sri Lankans acquire a sense of their cultural identity and determine its personal significance for themselves. The Sri Lankan identity is acquired through various influences and combinations of family interactions, and community networks both formal and informal. As individuals are then exposed in different but overlapping ways to these settings, they learn to interpret this identity in their own terms, depending on factors that support, challenge, or reinforce the identity they present to the world. Interviews with several students at Berkeley yielded different accounts of how different forms of Sri Lankan identity were learned, and that Sri Lankan identity is a spectrum, whose different features become salient at different times and in different contexts. This is the main study, and thesis of the paper. The second facet of the paper is the process of how I formulated the argument of how Sri Lankans acquire this identity—and how I discovered the variability in the ways this identity was acquired, defined, and experienced. As I explored this topic, I learned that there is ambiguity and variety in what constitutes Sri Lankan identity, both amongst those in the diaspora and within Sri Lanka. I faced that ambiguity time and time again, as I looked for commonalities in the testimonies of Sri Lankan students here in the United States, and struggled to determine what the content of their identity was, and where it came from. Different students learned different versions of Sri Lankan identity based on their
immediate situations and combinations of formational factors, and those versions became their ultimate form of Sri Lankan identity. This more reflective part of the paper describes the uncertainties and setbacks faced in moving forward to pursue this study of the identity formation process in a fragmented diaspora. It is through the struggles of forming a thesis on identity formation that I discovered the lack of singularity in Sri Lankan identity, as well as understood that the roots of the versions of it that are encountered in the United States have traces back in the complex and sometimes traumatizing history of Sri Lanka itself, and the interaction of those traces with the current realities faced by individuals. The discussion of the identity formation, in my view, is inseparable from the process of forming the thesis that resulted from studying it. The first part of “Self and Sri Lankan Identity” focuses on the formulation of the thesis ultimately concluded from the study, and the second part of the essay expands on that thesis through findings and conclusions analyzed from interviews. “Self and the Sri Lankan Identity” evolved to become such a transformative experience and rich project, because of the candor and willingness with which people shared their experiences with me, and the vulnerable honesty with which they presented themselves. I am deeply humbled and indebted to them. I hope this personal reflection, and sociological analysis can be enlightening to both those within and outside of the Sri Lankan identity, and offer some insight about what an identity means, and the many ways by which people can come to claim it for themselves.

Greeting Enigma, and Struggling to get Straightforward Answers

If Sri Lanka were a woman, people would likely call her Enigma. She would be the cruelly intriguing, impeccably dressed person at a bar, sipping from a smoky Merlot. We’d all have recognized her from some point in our lives—a few of us would associate her with feelings of inexplicable emotional connection, while others would be coolly detached. Others still would feel content with the contradictory relationship they had with her alluring persona, amidst the barriers she put up to anyone ever truly getting to know her. In the early and middle stages of my investigation of the Sri Lankan identity, it felt like I kept on running into this infuriatingly enigmatic woman, but I couldn’t learn anything more about her besides the fact that she existed. For much of the time, in my attempts to unearth the sociological processes and significant factors that led to an acquisition of Sri Lankan identity, and figuring out what that identity entailed, it seemed that the only conclusion yielded from any of my informants and struggles with obtaining a study
site, was that Sri Lankan students were aware that we were Sri Lankan. There didn’t appear to be a consensus about what that entailed, or whether there was even something universal enough about that identity to seek out the company of other students who could be identified as such. But why?

It makes sense for there to be some confusion about what an ethnic identity entails—part of why ethnic identities can lend such rich dimension to our lives is that they themselves are not easily packaged into discrete and easily identifiable components. What fascinated me, though, was why there was so much confusion amongst people my age about what a Sri Lankan identity even meant. That fascination stemmed from a desire to contextualize my own unique experiences of growing up as a Sri Lankan Tamil girl who hadn’t met her homeland until the age of 20, in the larger background of what it meant to partake in the peculiarity of the Sri Lankan experience. Over the years, it felt more and more as though there was something unique about being Sri Lankan, that made me Arany. I was not as alone in that mode of thinking as I had originally thought—O’Brien cites the “twenty statements test”\(^{16}\), a study led by social psychologists Kuhn and McPartland, who were able to conclude that a “sense of self is formed in terms of social roles or positions and our ideas about what other people think of us.”\(^{17}\) I had started seeing myself in reference to others through my identification as Sri Lankan, both because I identified with my social role as a member of the Sri Lankan Tamil community, and because I had been used to being a minority outside of that particular community, and was aware of other people’s impressions on me as a Sri Lankan Tamil. Recognizing my identification with this role led me to wonder how my peers were coming to terms with their connection to the Sri Lankan island. Initially, this project began as a vague quest in search of similarities in the processes that made us Sri Lankan. Over time, interviews yielded vastly different conceptualizations of a Sri Lankan identity, making it clear that seeking a unifying commonality was not the right focus. Even the comparing and contrasting of acquisition and loss of a Sri Lankan identity, which initially seemed to categorize some experiences fairly well, didn’t encompass the full data being amassed, because that still depended on a rather unified idea of what constituted a Sri Lankan identity. Instead, there seemed to be far more interesting terra incognita to be unearthed by asking why I wasn’t seeing a unified conception of Sri Lankan identity, and look-

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
ing into the processes that facilitated the manifestations of these differences in Sri Lankan identity. Thus, the investigation evolved into exploring a sample of diverse Sri Lankan backgrounds, and reflecting on how people acquire the type and strength of Sri Lankan identity they have. The personal significance I had attributed to the general Sri Lankan identity was mirrored in the testimonies of my informants. Even across varying levels of self-identified strength of identity, people were readily able to recognize their Sri Lankan-ness as meaningful in their familial or personal heritage, and worth processing as they transitioned to other parts of life. In the duration of this paper, we will discuss how differences in significant others and processes have led individuals in this exploration to construct Sri Lankan identities of varied strength and emphasis. More specifically, we will find that varied experiences with several factors led to Sri Lankan identities that were weak and optional, strong and driven by a specific ethnic alliance, or strong and driven by a holistic sense of reconciliation. It is our hope that the following sections will shed light on how these processes and significant others contribute to creating these shades of Sri Lankan-ness.

Honing in on Study Sites to observe Socialization Processes of Sri Lankan-ness

In the process of exploring why there wasn’t cohesion in the concept of a Sri Lankan identity, and the resulting struggles of finding a unifying field site, I began looking for study sites that were more reflective of the different strengths and types of Sri Lankan identity that I was encountering in this investigation. When it came to learning of the sociological processes Sri Lankan students besides myself had experienced in internalizing their own identity, I turned to the then inactive Sri Lankan Students Association group on Facebook. After a few individual interviews with friends I had come to know through other friends, we had discussed the possibility of reviving this defunct student organization into more of a casual, relaxed conversational group to sit down and talk about this Sri Lankan aspect of ourselves, what it entailed in our individual lives, and why it was also a source of confusion in understanding ourselves and relationships with others who may or may not identify as Sri Lankan. The idea of meeting up for tea and talking about Sri Lankan-ness in our lives generated significant interest — about 10 people from the group of 40-50 responded to the poll, and were excited about this conversational group. Sadly, the vision didn’t materialize in time, due to logistical difficulties of finding common days
with reasonable availability. I then relied on individual interviews with people who had been interested in the conversational group and had volunteered to talk to me about their journeys into varying levels of Sri Lankan-ness. There was also a population I had neglected to seriously consider until late into my study, though, that proved to be an invaluable source of data and observations—the community of Sri Lankan Tamils in the Bay Area, around whom I had grown up, and who had played a significant part in the shaping of my own Sri Lankan identity. Using the testimonies from individual interviews, as well as attending a Tamil New Year’s celebration in the Sri Lankan Tamil community to add insights into my view of the processes and significant others who made me as Sri Lankan as I am today, helped me begin to differentiate between the formation of varying strengths of Sri Lankan identity. I will first elaborate on my findings in the study site of the Sri Lankan Tamil New Year celebration, that took place in mid April at the Fremont Community Center. After we have mined this study site for the factors that helped me identify as strongly Sri Lankan driven by an ethnic alliance, I will discuss findings from the interviews, and how they gradually helped me identify regions on a spectrum of Sri Lankan identity.

The Sri Lankan Tamil community in which I had grown up, is a grassroots organization formally known as the Tamils of Northern California (TNC). The TNC was founded some decades ago by Sri Lankan Tamil families who had moved to the area, and were seeking a community of people who understood the cultures, traditions, and beliefs that they identified with as Tamils back in Sri Lanka. There is a hierarchy to some extent, with board members who are elected each year. They organize cultural events celebrating holidays throughout the year, but the strength of the TNC has always been the community itself, and it is the families who participate and attend who set the tone for these events. Events are generally structured by a line-up of organized performances from adults and children in the community, followed by general socializing and food consumption. We gather in these commemorative social settings to educate younger Sri Lankan Tamil children about the culture and language of our people back home in Sri Lanka, and to pass on our heritage to future generations, despite being so far away from the motherland. The founding principles and core values of the TNC are simple: fostering the growth of Tamil people through the appreciation of Tamil culture, and education of the welfare of Tamil people in Sri Lanka. These values are highlighted in

18 Although I’m happy to report that the group has indeed been revived as a social group, with a few successful gatherings to date since this essay was written.
every event—at this New Year’s celebration, it was in the form of a powerpoint presentation and speech given by the 2016-2017 TNC President.

The appreciation and preservation of Sri Lankan Tamil culture is inextricably tied to understanding why it needs preservation or saving in the first place. Through these events, and the stories of community members, we learn of the history and and background of ethnic persecution in Sri Lanka that has resulted in the diaspora that brought many of our community members here. Collective impression management is very much a part of the TNC. The macro-social conditions of political and economic strife for Tamils in Sri Lanka trickle down to the discussions permeating from within the individual home to the community about the genocide’s origins and aftereffects. From a young age, we are encouraged to participate in performances (such as songs, skits, speeches, and dances) that highlight cultural traditions and beliefs, and these performances are in our native Tamil tongue. By these cultural performances that keep moving the discussion of our heritage forward, as well as fundraisers which raise awareness of the refugees back home, there is a cultivation of “shared understanding [that] constitutes the symbolic estate ‘inherited’” by the Sri Lankan Tamils, as well the “invisible social cement binding” us together and separating us from other groups.19 At first, I wondered if there were people who might view how the TNC fostered a Sri Lankan Tamil identity not unlike the way Goffman characterized how a mental patient’s moral career was created in a psychiatric ward.20 I was not drawn to the comparison of Goffman’s study because of a belief that the TNC functioned as a group to indoctrinate people into an identity that the facilities created. Rather, I was curious as to whether the incentives in Goffman’s psychiatric ward to encourage a patient’s compliance with the mental patient identity21 were analogous to anything in the TNC. I realized that there were a similarity in the system of incentives, but the methods by which incentives were carried out in both systems varied significantly. In the Goffman view, a psychiatric ward system treats patients as “social infants” who “end up, within the year, on convalescent wards are resocialized adults.”22 “This resocialization perspective” emphasizes, in his opinion, the extent to which the

21 Ibid.
22 Ibid, 163.
best patients are truly those who are “ready and killing to play the social
game.” After having been broken down from their pre-patient identities, patients are incentivized by the restoration of small gains to these stripped selves to work their way back up to a new and resocialized self, and comply with the characterizations created for them by ward staff. The TNC also encourages people to embrace their identity as Sri Lankan Tamils, but there isn’t any breaking down of identity—never was I told that I was worthless if I didn’t choose to engage with Tamil culture. Children of families aren’t forced to come, and there is never anything even remotely authoritative as even attendance that is enforced at these gatherings. Instead, from what I remember of my own experiences, and what I learned by talking to many of the kids at the New Year’s celebration, the social aspect is an incredibly incentive itself to partaking in these community events. As kids, speaking the native language allows us to engage with older community members, and leads our parents to be proud of us, which generated a kindred friendship amongst other adults and families who appreciated this similar desire to engage in Sri Lankan Tamil heritage. Adults in the community appreciate the chance to see other Sri Lankan adult friends, and younger children love being able to see their own friends at these events. During the performances, kids will sit up front, alert, and excited to see their peers on stage. Once performances are over and serious discussion or debates begin, parents don’t make their children stay to watch—kids freely run about the premises of the event in their friend groups. Some kids stay amongst their parents and other adults, and listen to the more serious performances and speakers, but no one is forced to be somewhere they don’t want to be. There is always a choice, and thus, younger members of the community are not embittered by expectations that they feel are unreasonable or unpleasant. When they return to these events time and time again throughout adolescence and as they become adults, they do so out of their own desire. In this way, as social ties within the community are strengthened, the community’s “invisible social cement” is also reinforced, leading to a bolstering of the identification as a Sri Lankan Tamil.

Further findings from Interviews, and developing a Thesis

My family’s participation in an organized network of Sri Lankan Tamils who had direct experiences with the war was hugely instrumental

23 Ibid.
in leading me to identify as so strongly Sri Lankan Tamil. The processes by which others acquired their varying levels of Sri Lankan identity were dependent on their own factors. These factors were not a cohesive cluster that translated easily across different types and strength of Sri Lankan identity. Rather, a sufficiently different grouping of factors seemed to be responsible for constructing each Sri Lankan identity, and accounting for differences in strength and content of what that identity entailed. In a sample size of around eight individuals, three delineations of identity arose, each offering insight into a different aspect of the Sri Lankan experience. We will now explore the factors that lead to each of these identities, highlighting some of the qualitative data that came from a sample size of about 8 interviews.

**Strong Sri Lankan Identity, driven by an Ethnic Alliance**

My experiences with the TNC built a strong foundation for continuing discussions about ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, within the home, and outside of home and TNC when I went to college. I developed a strong sense of loyalty to my community and heritage, and by extension, the community of Tamils back home in Sri Lanka. The strong sense of identification with Sri Lankan Tamils arose from the combination of a vibrant social network of Sri Lankan Tamil people in the US in tandem with continuously deepening knowledge of the Sri Lankan Civil War—direct experiences of the community became my indirect experiences, and manifested in what Uchitelle characterizes as a transgenerational trauma.25 Though I did not experience the trauma directly, I felt that I was affected by the persecution endured by my parents, and other countrymen and women. This transgenerational trauma became the catalyst that led me to pursue research on the war’s origins and continued persecution of Tamils in present day, even after the war had ended. Learning the term “white privilege” in a seminar on race and ethnicity my first semester at Cal gave me a powerful lens through which to understand, in a term coined by Herbert Blumer, the “group position”26 of persecuted and disenfranchised Tamils in Sri Lanka. And through my research and writing on the war’s aftermath, I further internalized the struggles of those whom I wrote for and about. I had always taken pride in my Sri Lankan heritage, but it was in the process of recognizing how strongly I viewed that

heritage intertwined with the group position of persecuted Tamils, that I learned my strong Sri Lankan identity was driven by a strong alliance to my Tamil ethnicity within the country. Identifying as Sri Lankan Tamil was an act of preservation—a statement that as a Tamil woman, despite the attempts to erase that minority from the country, and normalize the majority ethnicity as the Sri Lankan ethnicity, that I too, was Sri Lankan.

G\textsuperscript{27}, a fellow Cal student, cites the civil war and conflict as what polarized people to take up binary identifications within the Sri Lankan ethnicity, as Sinhalese or Tamil. As a resident of Colombo, Sri Lanka for all of her life, G affiliates much stronger with being Sinhalese than just Sri Lankan. The war played a different role in her life than it did mine—she was actually in Sri Lanka as the strife unfurled, but since Colombo wasn’t the direct site of attacks, she characterizes the war as “a big part of [their] lives but something that didn’t affect [their] lives.” Her mother always recounts how G used to play tennis, and one time while practicing serving, a bomb had apparently gone off. G turned around, looked, uttered, “Oh, a bomb” and immediately turned around and continued playing. The war ended when she was young, so much of her thoughts and research on the war came after it ended, and she was in college. There were two incidents that seemed to be influential in strengthening her Sinhalese Sri Lankan identity. One was watching a particular speech by Hillary Clinton that struck G as embarrassing for the Sinhalese identity. In the speech, Clinton appeared to make the L.T.T.E (the rebel forces considered to be a terrorist group by many governments) seem innocent, while blaming the Sri Lankan government for war crimes. The other incident G recounted was feeling annoyed by a Facebook friend’s comments characterizing the war as a genocide/ethnic cleansing—she recognizes that the Facebook friend’s strong Sri Lankan Tamil identification gave her a different view on the civil war than G’s, but in G’s view, it was wrong to call the war a genocide, or what the Sri Lankan government did, an ethnic cleansing. This was striking to me—that what had happened to Tamils in Sri Lanka was an ethnic cleansing was never something about which I had expected to hear disagreement. However, I also knew that in the philosophy of Tamotsu Shibutani, my point of view as a Sri Lankan Tamil had become my “working conception of the world, and a frame of reference for each

\textsuperscript{27}The names of my interviewees have been replaced with letters (that have no relation to their initials or their name) so as to maintain anonymity.
I encountered, and that it was possible that my iron identification as such prevented me from considering alternatives on a matter I had taken for granted. I tried to explore what had led G to have this view of the Sri Lankan ethnic strife. It hadn’t been discussed much in schools, she said, noting that “by the time 2008 rolled around, people were just glad the war was over and wanted to move on.” Her knowledge of the war initially came from her parents, who explained its origins as the LTTE instigating violence because they wanted a portion of the country’s land, with the government refusing to comply. How had her view of the war ended up so different than mine? One factor of course, was the lives her parents had in Colombo. As educated and wealthy members of Colombo society, and as part of the majority ethnicity, G’s parents did not need to consider leaving Sri Lanka for safety or better opportunity. And as part of the majority ethnicity, even if they did not identify with the violence or its origins, they had more to be gained from the status quo of dynamics between group positions. It was beneficial to attribute the origins of war to an insurgent group, rather than systemic prejudice and inequality, because that would entail admitting Sinhala privilege and its role in perpetuating the inequality of Sri Lankan social structures. In some ways, the definition of the situation bears resemblance to the Salem Witch Hunt detailed by Mary Beth Norton. Norton notes that those in charge “quickly became invested in believing the reputed witches’ guilt, in large part because they needed to believe that they themselves were not guilty of causing New England’s current woes.”

This comparison is not to vilify the Sinhalese ethnicity in any way—but rather, identifying that there was similar capital to be gained in attributing a situation’s origins to a group other than one’s own stature or privilege, because that was far less painful than the alternative. Thus, it seems that the position of being Sinhalese in Colombo was conducive to aligning the war as something that could easily be “moved on” from by causation attributed to an external group, rather than features of the internal group position. There was much to benefit from by identifying as strongly Sinhalese, and a need to reclaim the Sinhalese identity when it was threatened by generalizations that defaced an entire cultural identity with allegations of genocide—claims that would be encouraged as wrong, given the benefits of doing so in that particular position of Sri Lankan society.

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Weak or Optional Sri Lankan Identity

A few of my interviewees had a strikingly different perspective on being Sri Lankan—that it was something that was flexible, and something with which they had hesitated to identify at some point. To B, born and raised in California to Sinhalese parents who identified as both Buddhist and Hindu, it was difficult to identify as Sri Lankan, because the term felt too unified for a country that itself didn’t seem unified in the slightest. B’s Sinhalese identity was never emphasized while growing up—though his family had Sinhalese friends, Sinhalese wasn’t spoken around the house, and his identity came mostly from a confluence of Buddhist and Hindu traditions, as opposed to Sinhalese cultural traditions. A pivotal moment in B’s identity formation came in the form of a Sri Lankan Tamil student at Cal telling him “Fuck you. Your people kill my people.” Cooley describes the looking glass self as how we “look to see how others are responding to us.” If we perceive the other person’s reaction as positive, we feel pride, but if we perceive a negative reaction, we in turn feel mortification. Justifiably, B felt that he had been characterized negatively on the sole basis of his Sinhalese ethnicity. This led him to feel sad about not just how he had been perceived, but how deeply rooted the prejudice in Sri Lanka was, on the sides of both Tamil and Sinhalese ethnicity. While this incident did not embitter him to the point of denying his Sinhalese ancestry or Sri Lankan-ness, it did cause him to hesitate to identify as Sri Lankan after that incident. The war had not featured prominently in the background of his life, until stereotypes and prejudice had confronted him so directly. Not strongly identifying as Sri Lankan before had allowed him to develop a more balanced sense of self through religious exploration, and being attributed with such negative stigma that he didn’t identify with certainly did not encourage him to engage strongly with a Sri Lankan identity. B says he has been working on reversing that thought process, but it’s taking time, and that he still experiences hesitation to identify as Sri Lankan. His views echo similar thought processes to those of interviewee C.

C is a Muslim student who was born in Sri Lanka. She grew up in Dubai, but spent two months in Sri Lanka every year until the age of 10, and still goes back to Sri Lanka once a year. She characterizes her Sri Lankan-ness as something that fluctuates—she feels less Sri Lankan when

31 Ibid.
she is around Sri Lankans, but more Sri Lankan when she is surrounded by non Sri Lankans. This flexibility is something she noticed as she grew older and there was less and less that she could relate to while visiting her cousins each year. There were aspects of the Sri Lankan culture—the emphasis on extracurricular tuition outside of classes, social relationships with people there—that became the focus of many conversations she could no longer participate in. When she visited Sri Lanka, she found her Sri Lankan-ness being questioned by locals, because she could not speak Sinhalese as well as her cousins. In Sri Lanka, people wouldn’t believe or accept that she was Sri Lankan, because she didn’t identify as either Sinhalese or Tamil. But upon coming back to Dubai, people would not accept any other identity from her but her Sri Lankan-ness. It was around that time, and entering college, that C noticed she felt more Sri Lankan when not in the presence of other Sri Lankans—she would feel a fierce need to differentiate herself as Sri Lankan when people tried to assume she was Indian, for example. When her identity as a Sri Lankan wasn’t questioned, she could actually demonstrate her authority and knowledge on the identity, with her own personal experiences in the country. Similar to G’s experiences, C describes the war as having been a constant presence in her life, in the background. It was something they accepted was happening, and the reason she lives in Dubai, but the war never drove her away from identifying with Sri Lankan-ness. In terms of safety, it was seen as more of an inconvenience in Colombo than a danger. In terms of philosophy and origin, her family maintained the view that it wasn’t a personal thing between individuals, or a problem on a human level. It was a removed conflict of political origin, and not something that affected their personal lives or claim to being Sri Lankan. In many ways, C’s thoughts on her Sri Lankan identity are reminiscent of the points brought up by Waters in discussing “symbolic ethnicity”, or the optional nature of ethnicity for whites in 1960s America onwards. In Mary C Waters’ study of “socially mobile, middle class whites,” she found that “people who assert a symbolic ethnicity do not give much attention to the ease with which they are able to slip in and out of their ethnic roles” and that it was “quite natural to them that in the greater part of their lives, their ethnicity does not matter”—that when it did matter, it was also taken for granted just how “largely a matter of personal choice and source of pleasure” that it was. C is able to transition between having her Sri Lankan identity strengthened

33 Ibid, 165
34 Ibid, 158.
and weakened because it is not incredibly consequential to how she is perceived by most people in the United States. She cites her “increased Sri Lankan-ness” coming to Cal as an increased desire to explore and connect with the cultural parts of that Sri Lankan heritage, which she recognizes is for her own enjoyment and fulfillment, but not something upon which her larger identity is contingent. C was one of the first students I approached the idea of reviving the Sri Lankan Students Association with, and she was one of the first to express difficulty with understanding what her Sri Lankan identity meant to her. She expressed confusion because it wasn’t clear to her how much of a different person she would be without a Sri Lankan passport, or how essential this identity was to her if she only felt Sri Lankan when not immersed in it, or whether forming relationships and friendships with people based on this characteristic of being Sri Lankan in some form, was superficial and impeding on other possible friendships she could be making. It was in her discussion of these things she had clearly pondered quite deeply, that the unclear nature of an optional Sri Lankan ethnicity was apparent. The resistance she had encountered growing up from those who didn’t see her as fitting some arbitrary Sri Lankan mold had induced feelings of a weakened Sri Lankan ethnicity. Not feeling compelled to identify as strongly Sri Lankan because of an ethnic alliance heavily tied to the war further weakened that identity, because there was no necessity of identifying as Sri Lankan to preserve a cultural identity or reputation. Her Sri Lankan identity then became something malleable, and optional—something she could afford to play with and explore in ways I hadn’t even considered when it came to my identity as a Sri Lankan Tamil.

Strong Sri Lankan Identity, driven by a Holistic sense of Reconciliation

On the spectrum of Sri Lankan identity that was slowly being built in my study of limited sample size, weak and optional, malleable identities emerged, in addition to strong Sri Lankan identities motivated by cultural preservation and an ethnic alliance. The third type of identity I encountered was one that was also a strong Sri Lankan identity, but not as motivated by an ethnic alliance. Rather, this third identity seemed to come about through a holistic sense of reconciliation. I had the fortunate experience of being able to talk to one of my last interviewees, who I will refer to as E. E was born in Michigan to Sinhalese Buddhist parents, and for much of her early life, she thought that being Sri Lankan was synonymous with being Sinhala Buddhist, because that is all her experience growing up with similar families had shown her. It wasn’t until she attended a small elite private college, and all three of the school’s Sri Lankan students were
put in the same dorm, that her view of Sri Lankan-ness was expanded, and she began to grapple with questions about being Sri Lankan, amidst learning about systems of privilege and power. E struggled with a reversal of privilege upon arriving in Sri Lanka for a prestigious fellowship. She had always grown up considering herself a minority amongst the majority white population of the US and her college. Now, all of sudden, she found herself included in the grouping of an oppressive Sinhalese majority, and privy to unwanted privileges that came with not being of the minority within Sri Lanka. She was confused—people she was close to were Tamil, and her education had fostered within her far more empathy for minority populations in Sri Lanka than the majority population. This was a huge part in grappling with her identity, E noted. Her understanding of white privilege in the US translated to how she began to see her own Sinhala privilege in Sri Lanka—the doors it opened for her, and its prevalence in several aspects of Sri Lankan society. Sinhala privilege, she noted, normalized Sri Lankan to be synonymous with Sinhalese. This finds analogy with Pamela Perry’s study of two high schools [one with a predominantly white population of 83% (“Valley Grove”), and another with a white population of 12% (“Clavey”), where a student at Clavey equated the term “white” with “American”, not specifying “White American” until the end of his quote—and that mistake is a common result of the “dominant construction of white as the “unhyphenated” American standard.”35 In spaces where multiculturalism was promoted, white students gained an appreciation for tools that enhanced sociability, but failed to reflect on their sociocultural location as whites,36 furthering the harmful idea of white identity as cultureless, and thus the norm. E noted that this prevalence of Sinhala privilege extended to even Sri Lankan student groups in the US, and that her experiences led her to notice a need for more recognition of this privilege and its negative effects of other groups in these spaces. She came to recognize that her relationship with Sri Lanka was different because she could associate with the country’s majority. She realizes that as someone who identifies strongly as Sri Lankan, she needs to acknowledge her Sinhala privilege, and cannot deny its role in shaping her experiences—from the things she didn’t have to think about growing up, to the ability of her parents to leave Sri Lanka by choice and not by force. Her education led her to think deeply about what Sri Lankan-ness meant to her, though, and identify that while she is of Sinhalese descent, and has loving ties

36 Ibid, 213.
to Sinhalese family back in Sri Lanka, her interests had more to do with helping disenfranchised minorities. She is cognizant of how Sinhala privilege has steamrolled important Tamil viewpoints of the country, noting how the civil war was fought along the lines of ignoring Sinhala privilege. Her unique educational background of privilege reversal has led her to identify as strongly Sri Lankan, but in a holistic sense—one that comes from recognizing her privilege and ties to the Sinhala part of Sri Lanka, as well as her care for leveling the playing field for Tamil minorities.

Conclusion

When I started investigating the acquisition of the Sri Lankan identity, I could only process a lack of unity, clarity, and coherence in the narratives I was seeing. It wasn’t clear until much later, that there was a logic to the macroscopic social processes that translated into the myriad of microscopic social experiences that led people to identify as Sri Lankan in any capacity. Economic and political privilege within the country, as well as how that privilege was processed, constituted a major role in how strong one felt their Sri Lankan identity was. The desire to preserve one’s ethnic and cultural identity could stem from being disenfranchised of this privilege, or being ignorant of it. To simplify differences in Sri Lankan identities as due to privilege would be a grave oversimplification, and ignorance of other factors, such as organized communities, educational backgrounds, and confrontation with prejudice. But the exciting thing is this: there are defined factors, quantifiable factors, that lead to different constructions of Sri Lankan identity. We saw a few examples of them in this investigation, but with a larger sample size, with more testimonies, that could easily be validated and refined to more concise patterns. Even with the small sample size though, we were able to elucidate some of those factors, which may hint at a pattern that can offer some clarity to those of us in the confused Sri Lankan Diaspora, and even outside of it. The process of learning identities is highly variable, contextual, subject to contested evaluation, and ultimately, fairly subjective in the results of how these identities are held and considered by one who bears them. This turmoil and triumph in unearthing this aspect of oneself is also not unique to only Sri Lankan identity, but rather, all ethnic, national, and cultural identities. And in that respect, perhaps understanding more deeply how it is someone becomes Sri Lankan, can offer revelations into how it is each of us acquire our own ethnic and cultural identities—and in at least one sense, how we become ourselves.
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THE ROLE OF ISLAM AND TERRORISM IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA

Khairuldeen Al Makhzoomi

ABSTRACT

“We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’an, in order that you may learn wisdom.” (The Qur’an, Yusuf 2)

Terrorism is an international security concern that affects the entire world. However, cultural and religious differences have prompted terrorism activities in Malaysia and Indonesia. Malaysia is a religious country, one of the most successful nations to use both the Koran and selected selections of Hadith to manage its political, social and economic environment. On the other hand, Indonesia used Islam to extend the reach of its authoritarian government, but after reforms, the nation has remained secularized and Islam became the main religious lifestyle. Therefore, Islam plays a more critical role in Malaysian politics than in Indonesia in many ways, partly because it is tied to Malaysia’s national heritage. Malaysia and Indonesia are both affected by intense political, socioeconomic, and religious challenges that can lead to the growth of terror groups networks, each working to protect specific religious factions or support particular political agendas. The Malay people use their Islamic faith, the primary facet of their identity, as a way to assert dominance over Malaysia, but the Javanese people (Indonesians) are more tolerant of religious differences, causing Islam to play a more passive role in Indonesia. This essay will also discuss the role of terrorism in both Malaysia and Indonesia, and how it relates to the critical role intolerance religious groups play within national politics.
The Role of Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia

The Indonesian media plays primarily secular television programs and music, while the Malaysian media is influenced by Islamic-related ideas. Malay networks offers a diverse selection of music, news, and educational programs supporting national adherence to the Hadith and promoting a religious lifestyle. Moreover, Malay magazines discuss a wide spectrum of contemporary ideas, but every theme is centered around Islamic life. For example, a feature highlighting the ‘Hadith of the Day’ is present in every television broadcast (Weintraub 1). Malaysians’ national heritage is anchored in Islamic values and customs, which are popularly expressed through film, music, and online/print media (Miller 1). In contrast, the Indonesian media is much more secularized, as Islam holds only a religious significance to Indonesians, rather than the kind of national sway it holds in Malaysia. This is due to Indonesia’s diverse cultural and social beliefs. Thus, while Islam is a central tenant of Malaysian media and mass culture, it is not aggressively integrated into the nonreligious aspects of Indonesian life.

I will discuss the commercialization and politicization of the Ulama texts of Islam in Indonesia and its role in the spread of Islamic extremism. Similarly, I will consider Malaysia’s record of relative inaction on religious matters to find out why the country has experienced a high rate of religious intolerance and prove that the difference in the way these two nations relate to and practice Islam may not be the cause of this terrorism. Then, I will explore different political perspectives from each of the two states – including those of Islamic organizations, and government officials, and members of the public – in relation to the application of Islam. Lastly, my research aims to shed light on the government and public’s reaction to the Ulama and secularized political organization in relation to terrorism in the two countries.

Commercialization of Islamic way of life in Malaysia than in Indonesia

There is a higher degree commercialization of the Islamic way of life in Malaysia than in Indonesia. Islam is the dominant religion in both countries. However, the media of Malaysia is filled with comics, fashion, and internet culture-centric information interpreted from an Islamic perspective (Miller 2). On the contrary, the forms of media practices that accompany the production of information in Indonesia have changed from Islamist to secular over time. Indonesian political reforms have
secularized many aspects of daily life – areas that, in Malaysia, are still tied to the Islamic faith. In Malaysia, the media concentrates the Quran as the main word of Allah, portraying it as a model for citizens’ behavior. Similarly, the Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad influence the social life of the both nations (Miller 10).

Both Indonesia and Malaysia uphold the holy Quran and the Hadiths to define many aspects of their national identity and culture. But despite this, the Javanese people identify with only the specific Islamic teachings that appeal to their local culture. This localization of Islam is supported by the divergent differences in Indonesia’s ethnic and sects make-up. As an illustrative example, Javanese Shi’ite Muslims, a minority group in Indonesia, have a long tradition of using figurative language to express their interpretations of Prophet Muhammad’s teachings. The Javanese city of Kowal has a very high Shi’ite Muslim population. Shortly after the independence of Indonesia gained its independence, the government established a Shiite university in Kowal called Syiah Kuala University. This stands in contrast to the Malaysians’ adoption of a single form of Islam as their chief religious identity. These differences in the application of Islam explain why Malaysia is more prone to promote state religion and use Islamic laws than the far more secularized Indonesian government.

**Islamic culture in Malaysia and Indonesia**

Islamic culture is closely tied to the expression of Quranic exegesis, or *tafsir*, in which vernacular language plays a critical role in understanding the Quran (Weintraub 3). There are three main types of tafsir (Sayyid Qutb: A Study of His Tafsir 28):

- *al-Tafsir bi al-Riwayah*, based on the Quran and the *Sunnah*.

- *al-Tafsir bi al-Duraya*, based on *Ijtihad* “independent reasoning”

- *al-Tafsir bi al-Ishari*, which explains hidden meanings based on esoteric knowledge
The Malaysian and Indonesian media often use *tafsir* parables and metaphors that blend with local customs. This customization of Islamic beliefs has created popular Islamic literature that can appeal to the young and old alike. The texts center on the exegesis of the Quran and Hadith, and they are mass-produced and passed to the public for mediation (Miller 3). For example, the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) movement sought to educate all Malaysian people about the Islamic principles of *Da’wah* – the proselytizing or preaching of Islam – through publications and audiotapes containing the exegesis of the Quran (Esposito and Voll 131). In order to differentiate mass-produced Islamic literature and advertisements from the original Islamic texts, both nations accept the classification of the Quran texts as *Ulama*-those recognized as scholars or authorities” in the “religious hierarchy” of the Islamic religious sciences.- However, in both Malaysia and Indonesia, there is a class of radicalized orthodox Islamic adherents who represent the original ideologies of the Quran and Hadiths of Muhammad.

Both countries’ respective governments play a moderate role of Islamizing urban and rural, village-born youth, helping them to learn the modern culture of their religion. The New Order government under Suharto the former president of Indonesia started a liberal process by reforming the public institutions. The regime created new financial institutions, based on *Sharia law*, to ensure that Indonesian youth had access to credit and can engage in economic activities (Von der Mehden 23). The Sharia banks charged no interest on loans, which attracted high numbers of young borrowers. Therefore, the expanded governmental role of Islam helped to expedite Indonesia’s modernization. Besides establishing Islamic schools and banks, both countries’ governments sought to build Islam-based political parties as a way of promoting multiculturalism. For example, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir bin Mohamad opened up the country’s public sector to civilians, allowing Malaysian youth to be indoctrinated with the goal of creating a religiously conscious nation, in which Islamic values defined the behavior of college graduates, workers, and civil servants. Religious and cultural tolerance was promoted in Indonesia through debates in the mass media about Indonesians’ reputation as a people who accept more moderate Islamic principles. For example, *The Dakwah* radio station in Surakarta airs Islamic-oriented debates that also touch on socioeconomic issues within Indonesia (Burhanudin and Dijk 201). Islam is widely regarded as the state culture of Malaysia and pervades public life, unlike Indonesia, where every ethnic community develops its own independent interpretation of Islam based on *tafsir*. 105
Since the two states have neglected more orthodox, fundamentalist Islamic ideologies, they have formed a liberal form of Islamic culture that is localized and readily acceptable to their respective cultures. Moreover, the application of vernacular languages in Malaysia and Indonesia has encouraged the development and free expression of Islamic thought. Thus, the commercialization of Islamic beliefs and values is easily reflected in the way of life of the Malay and Indonesian people. Films produced in both nations focus mainly on sociopolitical and economic concerns. For example, in Malaysia, *Kulliyah (lecture)*, produced in audiotape and videotape form, is a series of lectures by government officials on both political and economic themes and how they relate to Ulama (Miller 6). But unlike Malaysia, the commercialization of Islamic culture in Indonesia is supported by the liberal practices that span throughout the regions, with each tribe using its own language. The total abandonment of scripturalist Islam in Indonesia has created a more moderate Islamic culture (Weintraub 4). While Malaysian legislature prescribes a more extremist form of Islam, Indonesia sees religion as something only to be used as a personal moral compass. For example, in Malaysia, the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) urged the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) government to allow the passage of the *hudud* – meaning “limit”, or “restriction” – laws, which punished adultery, theft, heresy, and consumption of alcohol (Miller 6). Indonesia uses a comparatively moderate form of Islam used to define the basic democratic rights of the individual. A multitude of local differences in interpretations of Islamic scriptures have created a widespread expectation of religious tolerance, which allows the people of Indonesia to debate political issues in a civil manner. Islam is a core political force that mobilizes the Malay people to form political movements, but Indonesians reject the political role of the religion.

**Institutionalization of Ulama**

Islamic beliefs are institutionalized in both the Malaysian and Indonesian government. However, the diversity of different ethnic backgrounds in Indonesia acts to minimize extremist beliefs regarding what should be forbidden or allowed according to Islamic law. For example, the *hijab* is commonly accepted as a traditional headscarf in Indonesia, worn by choice, while it is a mandatory article of clothing for Malays. In Malaysia, secular music is forbidden because of laws written according to orthodox Islamic beliefs. Islamic teachings in Malaysia assert that secular music encourages immorality and turns people away from the proper religious path. Moreover, Western-style dance and music that uses
explicit language and sexually objectifies the female body is highly prohibited, as a source of sexual sin. The Malaysian government banned this form of entertainment content from both the national media and Malaysian concert halls. Therefore, Malays reject the sexualization of women in song and dance. The Malaysian government’s cultural ministry has banned performances by American and Western musicians that either use profane language or promote subversive attitudes among youth (Weintraub 5). Malaysia thus approves religious thought based on *al-Tafsir bi al-Riwayah* as a way of ensuring the dominance of the Islamic lifestyle.

Indonesian President Suharto’s resignation in May 1998 and the subsequent fall of the New Order regime brought about many changes in the country. Suharto had imposed an authoritative leadership and conducted political affairs in ways that maximized the institutionalization of an Islamic lifestyle throughout Indonesia. His government had banned the publishing of Western notions of Islam, which could taint the reputation of Islamic culture (Sukma 78). The New Order’s radical political culture, based on *Sharia law*, was undone by president Habibie in 1999, paving the way for the ratification of the new Press Law (Sukma 83). In outlawing the censorship of the national press, Habibie’s presidency the immediate rise of many new publications and the transformation of the Indonesian media. However, lifting the media blackout did not change the Indonesian people’s devotion to Islam. Instead, the nation experienced a proliferation of print and online media, much which remained Islamic-oriented. For example, in Indonesia, the *Al-Hidayah* FM and RDS FM stations dedicate 80 percent of their airtime to Islamic programs. Islam also plays a critical role in restraining the media from publishing materials the public might find immoral. Islam has reformed the media to report according to *Islamic morality* in both countries.

Islam and Social Communications

Islam plays a critical role in encouraging social communication, which is essentially the collection, presentation, and conveyance of information from an Islamic-perspective. Deregulation of the media remains quite successful in Indonesia, but less so in Malaysia, as institutionalized Islamic law still controls the Malaysian public. The enforcement of prior restraint prevents the proliferation of critical reporting and discourages citizen journalism or public expressions of opinions on current events. The UMNO party and the more religious PAS typically conflict in Malaysia. Their competition has led to the creation of a political space that
tolerates either full Sufism or a full-fledged Islamic state (Nair 60). In contrast, the Indonesian deregulation process fostered the use of digital media in teaching societal values to the public. Preachers use the country’s new press laws to self-publish text, audio, and video content that attract young people and compel them to accept the Islamic way of life. For example, whenever preachers use the Qur’an to guide the public on engaging in entrepreneurship, their action spreads Islam to youth in an indirect manner by associating it with success and wealth. The democratization of the press in Indonesia has been very influential in encouraging the use of social media, especially when compared to Malaysia’s prohibitive broadcasting rules.

Indonesian musicians like Rhoma Irama can merge local issues with Islamic values to assert the role of Islam in Indonesian entertainment culture (Weintraub 6). The commodification of music in Indonesia and Malaysia is highly influenced by these countries’ respective values and beliefs surrounding Islam. Moreover, since the musicians know that their content is heavily scrutinized by both the government and society, they refrain from utilizing Western styles. Instead, an Indonesian or Malay musician writes music that appeals primarily to local ethnic groups. The Malaysian music industry, for one, is constantly changing, and their inclusion of Islamic content as an expression of national heritage keeps producers and musicians recording new tribal-style content. For example, 80% of Malaysian music is produced in the Malay language and contains localized Islamic principles (Rauf, Rahman and Arifin 10). However, in Indonesia, Islamic music and videos are broadcast only during the month of Ramadan (Weintraub 7). The time allocated to exclusively Islamic programs in Indonesia’s national television is mostly limited to holiday seasons. Because Malaysian consumption of video and audio content has steadily increased, Malaysian society’s Islamic values have become far more institutionalized. Both the government and the public generally approve of television programs featuring Islamic beliefs and edicts shown in a dramatic light. Much of the permitted online media in Malaysia allows users to take a virtual Hajj and engage in e-jihad (Weintraub 7). In contrast, Indonesian media also addresses topics unrelated to Islam, even in films. Malay films endorse Islamic principles, while Indonesian films use an independent logic typically free of religious interference.
Islam and Political Movements

Islam has played a lead role in forming Indonesia’s political movements. Clashes in public opinion have occurred since the 1940’s, when extremist groups wanted to carve out the country as an Islamic state. In the 1940’s and 50’s, the *Dar ul Islam* wanted to overthrow Indonesia’s independent secular leadership and create a Sharia-based government in its place. Likewise, the *Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)* used violent methods to express their rejection of an independent secular state, instead voicing support for an Islamic state (Saat 1). Extremist Islamic ideologies were also expressed by the *Komando jihad* group, which appealed to both Ulama and moderate Indonesians to accept their nation’s conversion into an Islamic state. The struggle to integrate Sharia law into Indonesia’s existing political system highlights Islam’s role in the country’s governance. Furthermore, the role of Ulama is seen in the calls by *Jamaah Islamiyah* and the *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI)* for a purely Islamic state to replace the secular independent government (Esposito and Shahin 346).

Similarly, during the formation of the first independent Malaysian state in 1951 by the United Malay-Muslim Party (UMNO), the opposition, led by the PAS party, called for the formation of an Islamic state (Esposito and Shahin 346). Prime Minister Mahathir rejected the idea, even as the Malaysian constitution enshrined Islam as the official state religion (Haniff 287). Mahathir’s argued that the state practiced religious pluralism, and the action would restrict the religious rights of non-Muslim Malaysians. He rejected an Islamic state by utilizing an Islamized political argument, rather than a constitutional clarification. The successor of Mahathir, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, similarly kept Malaysia a parliamentary democracy, and confronted the pro-Ulama politicians who denounced the government as secular (Esposito and Shahin 346). Though current Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Razak Najib advocated for the formation of an Islamic state during his campaign, he then rejected the notion as a backward idea upon winning the election. In promoting a more extremist Islamic rhetoric, Najib was able to win public approval and become Badawi’s successor (Reid and Michael 167). This strategy suggests that Najib was aware of the public support that the creation of an Islamic state in Malaysia might have. Malaysian government officials use Islamic ideology to control the politics of their country, reducing the relative influence of Christians, Buddhists, and Confucians.
The detachment of the Indonesian public from the Islamic faith has been perpetuated by conflict between Islamic fundamentalists, who aspire to create an Islamic state according to Sharia law, and the sitting government. The majority of Indonesians are liberal Muslims, who reject the radicalized ideologies regarding Islam and the law. Therefore, in contrast to the Malay people, who support the formation of an Islamic state, Indonesians take a more moderate political position. For example, the resignation of former Indonesian President Suharto caused political upheaval in Indonesia, causing violent clashes between radical and liberal Muslims and eventually leading to persecution of Christians by the *Laskar jihad* group (Esposito and Shahin 346). A majority of Indonesian society agrees with the Sufi ideals, but are against a more localized and politically entrenched Islamic faith. Meanwhile, a conservative Muslim minority still insists on applying the Ulama ideology to legitimate an Islamic state, with little success. Sufism has therefore not played a critical role in designing the modern Indonesian state, since it has failed to gain favor and traction among the more moderate populace.

According to Burhanudin and Dijk (227), the more gradual development of Islamic economic reforms in Indonesia can be attributed to the formation of a moderate public majority, unlike in Malaysia. The Indonesian people reject the authoritative nature of more conservative strands of Islam, instead agreeing with the beliefs of Javanese culture, which asserts primacy of indigenous customs. For example, the proliferation of *“Abangan”* culture in the 1950’s explored a mixture of Hinduism-Buddhism and Islam in Indonesian life (Burhanudin and Dijk 227). The Former President of Indonesia, Sukarno (r. 1945-1966), drew upon these Abangan cultural norms to justify his authoritative rule. Sukarno advocated for cultural tolerance and a multicultural society – one held together by secular government control, rather than by an Islamic legitimacy format (Ramage 2). Sukarno also created a *Pancasila* political culture, which promoted multiculturalism, mutual tolerance and respect (Ramage 5). His successor, Suharto, imprisoned political leaders who wanted to use Islam to overthrow the secular government, painting them as a threat to Javanese culture and indigenous custom. As such, the Javanese people rejected Sharia, ostensibly to preserve their roots and allow the practice of some aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam to continue in their private lives. In the 1970’s, Islamic groups started a radio station with the intention of spreading Islamized ideals to the Javanese people. Campaigns to spread...
radical Islam by the *Majlis Tafsir Al-Quran* through the media failed to gain traction with the public, who easily preferred the multireligious Abangan culture (Perwita 171). After the Suharto’s resignation in 1998, various Muslim groups and parties began to call for a Sharia-based government. Extremist paramilitary groups like the Laskar Jihad formed the Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Waljamaah (FKWAI) as a political party. The MMI and the Front Pembela Islam (FPI) came together to campaign for the removal of the secular government during both the 1999 and 2004 elections (Perwita 158).

Constitution, Ideologies and Ulama

Article 28 (E) of the Indonesian constitution gives its people the right to choose their religious practice without any restrictions, as does Article 11, its corollary in the Malaysian constitution. But despite having legal protections of freedom of religion, the Indonesian people have still struggled with religious violence in the post-Suharto era. To move forward, Indonesians have embraced *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity) as their national motto, in an effort to change national attitudes for the better. The Indonesian people reject Ulama, instead preferring to coexist regardless of differences in religious ideologies and ethnicities (Burhanudin and Dijk 164). The level of religious pluralism in Indonesia is thus very high, at least partly as a consequence of trying to avoid extremism by promoting an inclusive and multiethnic society. On the other hand, Islam provides most of the guidance for the modern Malaysian state, and functions as the only state religion (Nair 18). As Laffan (123) notes, the Javanese people differ from the Malay people, as they identify with Islamic culture for religious purposes only, while the Malay people see it as a politically ideology as well.

That said, some Indonesian political parties still advocate for the adoption of Islamic values at the national level. For example, the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS)’s manifesto calls for integrating Islamic customs into to marriage laws, the penal code, education, and anti-pornographic laws (Abuza 85). Policies attempting to regulate the media is quite anachronistic by Indonesian standards, yet the leaders of PKS still hope to get rid of Western habits that “promote immorality” in Indonesia. The PKS’ harsh policies, such as their use of the MUI’s *fatwas* to sanction political violence, ensured that it would not garner popular support with a majority of Indonesian people, who have shown a preference for a culture of tolerance. Even so, the PKS party, led by Hidayat Nur Wahid gained 38 seats during the 2004 general elections, giving them 45 of 560 seats in all (Abuza 96). These changes, which took place from 2004 to 2009, provide the best
example of the limits that extremist Islamic government members face in trying to alter Indonesia’s cultural values and norms. While the PKS was able to bring Muslims together in Indonesia, just as the PAS did in Malaysia, it still had little ability to effect radical political change. Ultimately, though, the PKS and the PAS have failed to fully convince a majority of the public to accept their conservative ideologies (Reid and Michael 168).

Similarities in Terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia

Terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia is primarily caused by differences in religious affiliation that create mutual distrust between groups. Religious terrorism, mainly sponsored by leftist and Communist movements, still permeate all of Southeast Asia (Gupta 27). Church bombings are common in Indonesia and Malaysia because of lingering religious intolerance between Christians and Muslims. Ambon province in Indonesia is especially prone to anti-Christian movements, which bomb churches to instill fear among the Christian faithful (Keling, Mohamad, Shukri, Mohd, and Achmad 38). For example, the Jemaah Islamiah (JI), the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (also known as the MMI) and the Malaysian Militant Group (KMM) are some of the terrorist networks associated with Abu Bakar Bashir, who acts as their leader (Keling et al. 38). These terror groups operate in Indonesia and Malaysia, and their violent activities have a negative economic impact in the region.

The second source of terrorism in the Southeast Asian region is associated with governments’ internal political instability, which weakens the structure of law and order. If government security agencies fail to curtail the growth of Islamic fundamentalist groups that attack churches, these groups grow into networks and start targeting governments that could oppose their power. The presence of rebels and militants in Indonesia and Malaysia also causes an uptick in ethnic and religious violence, as a way of causing further political instability. Clusters of these militant fundamentalists infiltrate various segments of society, where they disseminate religious teachings that advocate the use of violence. Additionally, Indonesia and Malaysia’s fragile legal systems tolerate extremism, aiding its growth. (Dittmer 45).

The current rebels and militants provide a platform that support penetration of the international terrorist groups into Indonesia and Malaysia. Lack of a proper government effort to curtail the growth of terrorist organizations in both countries has created instability that has allowed the larger
Al Qaeda network to infiltrate them. For example, the terror groups JI (in Indonesia and Malaysia) and KMM (in Malaysia) have destabilized their respective countries enough to allow Al Qaeda members to penetrate them (Keling et al. 40). The Al Qaeda network then trains local JI and KMM fighters, equipping them with survival techniques, all with the intent of targeting the host countries. This collaboration between global and domestic terrorist groups is meant to ensure the survival of both the local and international elements of extremist fundamentalism. The JI and KMM continue to receive support from the international terror networks to guarantee continued training for their fighters and the expansion of their domestic bases. The domestic terror groups then radicalize more people, ensuring the international terror groups have an adequate supply of human resources to accomplish their goals (Keling et al.42). Therefore, the development of terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia is associated with the weakness of these countries’ national security agencies and legal systems, and it proves the state organs’ inability to institute effective law enforcement measures and lock out terrorist elements. Islamic fundamentalist groups grow to become extremists due to the international support they receive from Al Qaeda. The failure of internal security forces to deal with ethnic violence, which can act as a breeding ground for terrorism, allows militants to capitalize on the weakness of law enforcement agencies and commit mass murder. This weakness remains the main cause of terrorism in Indonesia and Malaysia. The failure to control and prevent the spread of extremism through security and economic policies paralyses these countries’ entire defense systems, making them both vulnerable to terrorist activities.

The JI, the group behind major terror activities in Indonesia, has expanded from their earlier military development and training in Afghanistan during the 1980’s and 90’s. Moreover, the group maintains a collaborative relationship with Al Qaeda, from which it receives financial backing and military equipment. For example, after the 2002 bombing in Bali, the Indonesian government cooperated with the United States to destroy the JI cells responsible. Although the Indonesian government was able to arrest the main leaders of that JI group, there are still active elements of their terror organization left in the country. Indonesian law enforcement, after sharing information with the United States, was able to arrest several Islamic extremist leaders, including like Hambali, Dulmatin, and Abu Bakar Bashir (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 4). But this triumph was short-lived, as the JI bombed the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta in 2003 to avenge the arrest of their leaders and gain international attention. Bombings continued through 2004 when a Filipino ferry, the SuperFerry, was hit, followed
by an attack on the Australian Embassy in Jakarta later that year. In 2005, the JI carried out additional bombings in Bali, in an attempt to regain control of the Indonesian political agenda. (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 5). Another bombing took place in 2009, when the group carried out twin attacks on the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels in Jakarta. The heightened level of terrorist activities in Indonesia during this period can be attributed to the support – including real-world combat training in Afghanistan – that the Indonesian JI group received from Afghan extremists. Likewise, the ongoing conflict in Syria provides an analogous combat zone, in which the JI and other terrorist groups can develop their military skills and strengthen their ideology. For example, the jailed leader of JI, Abu Bakar Bashir said in an interview in 2012 that the Syrian conflict was a “university for Jihad training” (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 4). According to the Indonesian government, more than 500 Indonesian jihadis have joined the Syrian war effort in order to gain military skills.

Malaysia, too, was initially successful in capturing terrorist leaders, arresting both Azahari Husin and Noordin Mohammad Top in 2003 with the support of American intelligence (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 5). However, the Syrian conflict has worked to intensify terrorism in Southeast Asia – and specifically Malaysia – in many ways. Malaysian authorities have asserted that more than 70 Malaysian jihadists have traveled to Syria to fight for ISIS. The KMM, which has also sent militants to Syria, wants to use those who return to recruit and train additional fighters in Malaysia. The lack of a government strategy to stop the movement of jihadists from Malaysia to Syria will continue to destabilize the country and derail its ability to enforce security measures, making it especially vulnerable to the extremism and terrorist attacks. A lack of intelligence on these terror networks and their recruitment activities will continue to prevent the eradication of terrorism in Southeast Asia.

Similarly, some of the Malaysian opposition party’s leaders have also gone to Syria, under the pretense of fighting against the forces President Bashar Assad as a demonstration of their allegiance to ISIS. For instance, Lotfi Ariffin, former leader of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), travelled to Syria to join ISIS and bolster his political influence among the Muslim Arabs, Malaysians, and Indonesians (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 29). Future conflict in Malaysia will be common if the government does not conduct surveillance on such potential terrorists to keep tabs on their location and activities.
The political aim of both the JI and KMM is to establish a Islamic Caliphate in Southeast Asia, called the **Daulah Islamiyah**. Through ideological indoctrination and political destabilization, these terrorist groups wish to establish the Caliphate as the only authority capable of keeping the peace and preventing violence. The creation of an Islamic society, will certainly intensify existing religious conflicts and make Southeast Asia prone to extremist revolutions or attempts to eliminate minority religious groups. The idea is similar to ISIS’ agenda. ISIS operates under a strict code, derived from 14th-century texts, which it uses to establish law and order.

KMM and JI, comprised of Malaysian and Indonesian fighters, respectively, are directly under ISIS control, but maintain separate identities as regional units of Islamic revolution – at least until the establishment of the Caliphate. In addition, more than 18 other extremists groups have pledged their allegiance to ISIS, among them over 5,000 Indonesians who support the activities of terrorist groups (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 18). These groups include *Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid (JAT)*, *Jamaah Tauhid Wal Jihad (JTWJ)*, *Darul Islam Ring Banten*, *Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT)*- and *Forum Aktivis Syariat Islam* (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 17).

The Indonesian government’s security apparatus has faced the constant threat of attack from the MIT, JI and the **Mujahidin Indonesia Barat (MIB)** terrorist networks. Hardest-hit was Bima in West Nusa Tenggara, after Santos, the leader of MIT, led a series of armed attacks against the police. The MIT also struck in the town of Poso, where police officers were killed in a series of terror shootings. Police raids on terrorist cells have eliminated the current threat of the MIB network in Bima, though the MIB carried out a bomb attack on the Ekayana Buddhist Temple in West Jakarta during 2013 (9). Suicide attacks on the police by JI network have been drastically reduced following the capture of 54 terrorist associated with Noordin M. Top, who was killed in 2010. Indonesia banned open ISIS recruitment in 2014, but underground and online recruitment methods persist, is making it easier for associated terrorist groups to increase their followings. Moreover, there is a large presence of foreign extremists in Poso, who can train MIT and JI militants.

Malaysia is equally reeling from the impact of terrorism activities, since training and radicalization efforts continue unabated by the country’s law enforcement. Lotfi’s presence in Syria poses a security concern since the Malaysian government has taken no stand against his terrorist activities. Moreover, because he is known to be fighting the Assad regime
alongside ISIS, Lotfi has gained a significant social media following on Facebook and Twitter as the symbol of the pro-Islamic State movement in Malaysia. By asserting that he is fighting for the cause of Allah, Lotfi has been able to remain relevant in Malaysia and the wider Southeast Asian region. The first Malaysian suicide bomber directly associated with ISIS was 26-year-old Ahmad Tarmini Maliki, who killed 26 Iraqi soldiers in 2014. Furthermore, the escape of KMM leader Zulkifli bin Hir from Malaysia to the Philippines has given him the leeway to operate without fear of retaliation. That said, efforts by the Malaysian government have resulted in the disruption of planned terrorist attacks. For example, in August 2014, the Malaysian police discovered a plot by KMM militants to bomb government and civilian structures, including the capitol. In one instance, militants targeted the Carlsberg beer factory in Petaling Jaya, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur since the owners are non-Islam (Chan, Laura, Muh, and Nur 14). Foreign extremists, working in concert with local Indonesian terrorist groups, and ISIS create a constant security threat. These international terrorist networks continue to use the domestic groups like JI and MIT to attack security officers.

Indonesian Economy

Economic strains highly influence intolerance and the growth of violent groups, which consist of people who feel neglected by the national distribution of resources. Indonesia has had the biggest economy in Southeast Asia since the 1990’s and through the 2000’s, followed by Thailand. Indonesia’s GDP was $138.4 billion in 1990, and by 1995 it had incurred a growth of 8 percent, reaching just over $202 billion (Ellings and Friedberg 413). This economic growth slowed from 1995 to 1999, only increasing by 1.7 percent, due to political instability and terrorism within the country (Ellings and Friedberg 413). The GDP increased by 4.8 percent from 2000-05; this was attributed to a higher population, low output, and heightened terrorism activities that depressed the economy.

Terrorism affects Indonesia’s economic growth because it’s the main trading and export destinations are Japan, the U.S., and Singapore. Indonesia’s exports to Japan account for 21 percent of its total exports, while 14 of its exports go to the U.S. and 10 percent go to Singapore (Ellings and Friedberg 415). In 2000, a 7 percent increase in Indonesia’s increased its GDP was attributed to foreign direct investment (FDI) from Japan, which accounted for 20 of its total FDI. Investment from the United Kingdom contributed 17 percent of the country’s FDI that same
year, and Singaporean investment accounted for 9 percent. The FDI is directly related with the political environment of a country. Because of this, and because of Indonesia’s political turmoil and the terrorism it suffered, Indonesia’s FDI growth in 1999 was negative -$4.5 billion.

**Malaysian Economy**

Malaysia has the third largest GDP in Southeast Asia. However, Singapore developed rapidly in the 2000s, outperforming Malaysia. Malaysia’s economic output has decreased in part because it is too politically unstable to attract foreign capital. Terrorism can play a critical role in the economic output of a nation if it is not dealt with, and it can make giving both domestic and foreign investors the confidence to invest very difficult and alleviated altogether to give both domestic and international investors the confidence to invest. The Malaysian economy was only $56.5 billion in 1990 before it realized tremendous growth in 1995, jumping 9.3 percent to reach $88.8 billion (413), followed by a 5.2 percent increase to a record $111.6 billion in 2000 (413). Malaysia’s post-2000 economic growth was projected to change by 8 percent if the country maintained a political disposition that continued to encourage foreign investment.

Terrorism also affects Malaysia’s exports. The country sends the bulk of its exports, 21 percent, to the U.S., while Singapore receives 18 percent of its imports and while Japan receives 13 percent (415). The U.S., Japan, and Netherlands accounted for the highest flow of foreign direct investment into Malaysia in 2000, with the U.S. contributing 38 percent, Japan investing about 15 percent, and the Netherlands accounting for 11 percent (Ellings and Friedberg 415). Malaysia’s GDP increased by just 0.2 percent in 2000; a lack of foreign investment caused the economy to stall.

**Conclusion**

This research has discussed how political instability in Malaysia is caused by the extremist application of Ulama, and provided examples of how similarly weakened security and governmental apparatuses in Indonesia and Malaysia fail to protect them from terrorism. It has described Islam’s role in the political, social, and economic spheres of life in both countries, and how this can influence the the growth of fundamentalism and extremism. Malaysians who accept Ulama desire the creation of an Islamic state. This is why Lotfi, in his capacity as Malaysian opposition leader, fought beside ISIS – to gain military skills to later use in
Malaysia. In comparison, Indonesia has much more vigorously enforced the separation of church and state, but despite this, the growth of extremist groups is leads to intolerance that can eventually cause terrorism. Thus, both Indonesia and Malaysia experience different forms of internal and external political and cultural pressures, largely based around their respective conceptualizations of Islam’s role in society, that warp how terrorist ideology is perpetuated.

Indonesia’s comparatively successful attempt to create a multicultural society makes fundamentalist Islamic ideologies appear too intolerant and politically untenable. In Malaysia, however, there is popular support for an Islamic state, and these ideas can spread. Although the majority of Indonesians agree with religious pluralism and tolerance – a position spurred on by a more diversified and decentralized press, entertainment industry, and political culture, the country still hosts Islamic extremist groups. But the Indonesian people have rejected the totalizing role of Islam in their society, and they move instead towards accepting democratic reforms and more legitimate elections. This has not happened for the Malaysian people, whose culture, deeply rooted in Islam, makes them more amenable to the idea of an Islamic state.

Violent jihadist activities increased in Indonesia from 2004 to 2008, as Islamic extremist terrorists infiltrated the country and tried to erode its politically tolerant culture. Meanwhile, because Malaysia is less accepting of religious diversity and pluralism, Malaysian extremists are more likely to push for the creation of an Islamic state through violent means. Malaysia has a more Islamized culture than Indonesia, but both nations have ultimately seen the negative effects of extremists’ actions. By examining the development of each state, it is possible to know how Islam has influenced the unique forms of extremism in Indonesia and Malaysia.

In conclusion, the combined effects of poor security and political instability have allowed both Indonesia and Malaysia to be infiltrated by terrorist groups, who indoctrinate each country’s local populace with intolerant attitudes. Al Qaeda and ISIS infiltrated Malaysia’s political system by embracing Malaysian radicals. While Indonesia is a country without a stubborn Islamic culture, the presence of foreigners from the international terrorism networks within its borders still poses a security threat. Therefore, despite the differences in the application of Islam in Malaysia and Indonesia, the two countries share similar security threats and challenges associated with international and domestic terrorism.
“Whoever kills a person [unjustly]...it is as though he has killed all mankind. And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved all mankind.” (Qur’an, 5:32)

Key Terms

- **Sunnah**: Is the verbally transmitted record of the teachings, deeds and sayings, silent permissions (or disapprovals) of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, as well as various reports about Muhammad’s companions.

- **Shi’ite**: The second largest branch of Islam, Shiites currently account for 10%–15% of all Muslims. Shiite Islam originated as a political movement supporting Ali (cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam) as the rightful leader of the Islamic state.

- **Tafsir**: A Quranic tafsir will often explain content and provide places and times, not contained in Quranic verses, as well as give the different views and opinions of scholars on the verse

- **Hadith**: The Hadith is the record of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (swas). The sayings and conduct of Prophet Muhammad (swas) constitute the Sunnah. The Hadith has come to supplement the Holy Qur’an as a source of the Islamic religious law.

- **Sharia**: is the basic Islamic legal system derived from the religious precepts of Islam, particularly the Quran and the Hadith.

- **Da’wah**: Da’wah means a ‘call’ or ‘invitation’; which means to invite non-Muslims to Islam as well as the Muslims to the true understanding and practice of Islam, but many a times, in context, it refers to the invitation of Islam extended to those who are yet to believe in or accept Islam.

- **Kulliyyah**: lecture

- **Ulama**: is defined as the “those recognized as scholars or authorities” in the “religious hierarchy” of the Islamic religious sciences

- **Hijab**: is a veil that covers the head and chest, which is sometimes worn by some Muslim women beyond the age of puberty in the presence of adult males outside their immediate family as a form of modest attire
● **Sharia law**: Is the body of Islamic law. The term means “way” or “path”; it is the legal framework within which the public and some private aspects of life are regulated for those living in a legal system based on Islam.

● **Al-Hidayah**: Is an Arabic word meaning “guidance.” According to Islamic belief, guidance has been provided by Allah to humans primarily in the form of the Qur’an.

● **Islamic morality**: The Islamic moral system stems from its primary creed of belief in One God as the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. Islam considers the human race to be a part of God’s creation, and as His subjects.

As an illustrative example of this morality, the Almighty is quoted in the holy Quran as saying:

“It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces Towards east or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah-fearing.” [Al-Qur’an 2:177].

“This verse underscores the Islamic belief that righteousness and piety is based, before all else on a true and sincere faith. The key to virtue and good conduct is a strong relation with God, who sees all, at all times and everywhere. He knows the secrets of the hearts and the intentions behind all actions. Therefore, Islam enjoins moral behavior in all circumstances; God is aware of each one when no one else is. It may be possible to deceive the world, but it’s not possible to deceive the Creator. The love and continuous awareness of God and the Day of Judgment enables man to be moral in conduct and sincere in intentions, with devotion and dedication.” Tafsir

● **Rhoma Irama**: Rhoma Irama is an Indonesian dangdut musician, actor and politician. During the height of his stardom in the 1970s, he became the Raja Dangdut (King of Dangdut) with his group, Sone-ta. Prior to his pilgrimage to Mecca, he was known as Oma Irama.
● **Ramadan**: In Islam, Ramadan is a holy month of fasting, introspection and prayer. Fasting is one of the five fundamental principles of Islam. Each day during Ramadan, followers of Islam, known as Muslims, do not eat or drink from sunrise to sunset.

● **Dar ul Islam**: is an Islamist group in Indonesia that aims for the establishment of an Islamic state of Indonesia. It was started in 1942 by a group of Muslim militias, coordinated by a charismatic radical Muslim politician, Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo. The group recognised only Shari’a as a valid source of law. The movement has produced splinters and offshoots that range from Jemaah Islamiyah to non-violent religious groups.

● **Majelis Ulama Indonesia**: is Indonesia’s top Muslim clerical body. The council comprises all Indonesian Muslim groups including. The Ahlul Bait Indonesia (Shi’ite) and Jemaat Ahmadiyyah Indonesia (Ahmadiyya) could not be accepted as its member. It was founded by the Indonesian New Order under the Suharto administration in 1975 as a body to produce fatwā and to advise the Muslim community on contemporary issues.

● **Komando jihad**: an Indonesian Islamic extremist group that existed from the 1970s until it was dissolved through the actions of the security services in the mid-1980s. The group’s foundation was an offshoot of Darul Islam, an extremist group fighting for an Indonesian Islamic state that began in the 1940s.

● **Fatwas**: In Islam, there are four sources from which Muslim scholars extract religious law or rulings, and upon which they base their fatwa. The first is the Quran, which is the holy book of Islam, and which Muslims believe is the direct and literal word of God, revealed to Prophet Mohammad. The second source is the Sunnah, which incorporates anything that the Prophet Muhammad said, did or approved of. The third source is the consensus of the scholars, meaning that if the scholars of a previous generation have all agreed on a certain issue, then this consensus is regarded as representing Islam. Finally, if no scripture is found regarding a specific question from the three first sources, then an Islamic scholar performs what is known as *ijtihad* = (independent reasoning)
- **Jemaah Islamiyah**: Meaning “Islamic Congregation is a Southeast Asian militant Islamist terrorist group dedicated to the establishment of a Daulah Islamiyah (regional Islamic caliphate) in Southeast Asia. On 25 October 2002, immediately following the JI-perpetrated Bali bombing, JI was added to the UN Security Council Resolution 1267 as a terrorist group linked to al-Qaeda or the Taliban. (UN Press release)

- **Laskar jihad**: Is a violent Muslim paramilitary extremist group in Indonesia renowned for its fanaticism and brutality that aimed to eliminate Christians from the Moluccas and Sulawesi Island, announced it had disbanded after the October 2002 Bali bombing.

- **Sufism**: Is a school for the actualization of divine ethics. It involves an enlightened inner being, not intellectual proof; revelation and witnessing, not logic. By divine ethics, we are referring to ethics that transcend mere social convention, a way of being that is the actualization of the attributes of God.

- **Abangan**: Refers to Javanese people who are muslims who practice a much more syncretic version of Islam than the more orthodox santri

- **Abu Bakar Bashir**: Is an Indonesian Muslim cleric and leader of Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid

- **Daulah Islamiyah**: Islamic State or Islamic Caliphate.

- **Hudud** – meaning “limit”, or “restriction”

- **Pancasila**: “pañca” meaning five, and “sīla” meaning principles. It comprises five principles held to be inseparable and interrelated:
  1. Belief in the one and only God
  2. Just and civilised humanity
  3. The unity of Indonesia
  4. Democracy guided by the inner wisdom in the unanimity arising out of deliberations amongst representatives
  5. Social justice for all of the people of Indonesia

- **Majlis Tafsir Al-Quran**: Foundation Majlis Tafsir Al-Quran (MTA) is an educational institution and propaganda Islamiyah based in Surakarta. MTA was founded by the late Ustadz Abdullah Thufail Saputra in Surakarta on the date 19 September 1972 with the aim to bring Muslims
back to the Qur’an. In accordance with its name and purpose, the assessment of the Qur’an with an emphasis on understanding, appreciation and practice of the Qur’an become the main activity of the MTA.

- **Malaysia Militant Group**: a clandestine group of southeast Asian terrorists organized in 1993 and trained by al-Qaeda; supports militant Muslims in Indonesia and the Philippines and has cells in Singapore and Malaysia and Indonesia.

- **Mohd Lotfi Ariffin**: or ‘Abu Afghan’ (46 years) is a Malaysian citizen who was killed fighting against the government of Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad in Syria on 14 September 2014. He was seriously injured in the attack military fighter jet Bashar al-Assad. Malaysian activists leader in Syria, Mohd. Lotfi Ariffin, 46, died in hospital Hatay, Turkey, after five days in a state of coma. Bombing of jet fighters about it on 9 September 2014.

- **Mujahidin Indonesia Timur (MIT)**: is a Poso-based terrorist group led by Abu Wardah, also known as Santoso, one of Indonesia’s most wanted terrorists.


CHINA AROUND THE WORLD: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOFTPOWER THROUGH CHINESE ARTS AND CULTURE

Samantha Yen

ABSTRACT

In this paper I examine the increased efforts by the Chinese government to develop and disseminate Chinese culture both at home and abroad, to create soft power. China can leverage their soft power to shift global perceptions from being a manufacturing state to a model of cultural and political significance. I will also examine the growing need of the Chinese to cultivate more soft power from both an economic and political perspective. This will uncover the motivations behind investment in cultural infrastructure and distribution both domestically and internationally. I illustrate how such efforts affect populations at home and abroad, allowing China to cultivate and sustain international human and economic flows. This shows China’s position to continue their rise in power in an increasing bipolar global system and to extend real authority on policies and issues that affect nations worldwide.

Introduction

I begin with a look at soft power from a cultural perspective. It is important to view an increase in soft power through this lens because so much of soft power is focused on diplomatic relations and foreign policy. However, culture and the arts can play an imperative role to soft power agendas, because it is the human-to-human interaction and connections that will ultimately sway perceptions and attitudes of others towards China. While diplomacy achieves these connections, they are under conditions that may make them disingenuous. Chinese arts are becomingly increasingly popular across the world, and the equity it can provide for China is evolving. The implications of the proliferation of Chinese arts is still yet to be seen, but if utilized in a delicate fashion, can serve Chinese policies more effectively than traditional methods of politics.
China has undergone a tremendous transformation during the past half century. Its history has seen war and revolution, the founding of the People’s Republic of China under Mao Zedong, and finally more peaceful development in recent years. Not only has their political philosophies radically changed, their economy has shifted from being a primarily agrarian to industrial and more recently, China has become the leaders and innovations industries like technology and renewable energy. Just 30 years ago China was seen as an iron clad and monolithic communist country with various points of tensions with other Asian countries and super powers like the U.S.

Today is a much different story. China is becoming increasingly capitalistic, globalized, urban and modern. Cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen have become cornerstones for economic activity and culture prominence. China’s skyline is not just the Great Wall anymore, but rather the bright lights and skyscrapers of these vast cities, bustling with opportunities that weren’t even present just a few years ago.

Finally, China is in the perfect position to increase its growing soft power. Originally coined in the 1990s by Joseph Nye, soft power is the ability to shape preferences of others through appeal and attraction—it is “non-coercive.” Historically, sources of “hard power” such as military capability have shaped political, economic and social landscapes. However, the need to create a united front with global cities acting as the junctions of a global network is rising due to economic, social, or environmental issues larger than any one country can tackle. These global cities not only create an international network to relay commodities, ideas, and people, but they also serve as cultural beacons and become a cornerstone of a country’s identity. China has increasingly pushed developments that have allowed their cities to be among global status.

Rather than law enforcement or weapons, the soft power currency is culture, political values, and foreign policies. When these are seen and respected they can form social structures and norms that have the capacity to shape behaviors and values. When you think of China, you may imagine the Shanghai skyscrapers, the Great Wall in Beijing or beautifully detailed pottery and jewelry. All these things attribute to China’s “cultural credit.” This credit can be strategically used to develop a growing trajectory for China both as an economic power and socio-political icon.
What is “Soft Power”?

The term “soft power” was coined by Joseph Nye in the 1990s, when America was raw and reeling from the Cold War. Nye claims that “factors of technology, education, and economic growth are becoming more significant in international power, while geography, population and raw materials are becoming somewhat less important.”¹ Soft power defines who holds the privilege of running the world. It is non-coercive and in many ways more effective than hard power such as law or military enforcement because it affects change at a cultural and ideological level rather than change through fear or control. It is also largely defined by a country’s culture, political values, and foreign policy. The world has become too interdependent on various economic, ideological, political, or social variables to strictly limit power in terms of historically traditional sources such as colonization, war, or population sizes.² China has focused their domestic policy on building a spiritual civilization that will make China an attractive model for its people and other countries around the world.

The need for a different interpretation of power may also arise from shifting goals of governments. In traditional view, states gave priority to military security to ensure their survival.³ Today, “survival” has encompassed a multifaceted notion of national security, measured not by the survival of a people, but the livelihood of their culture; ecological, economic, and social factors ensure a stable future that countries now need to invest in. Moreover, traditional channels of control such as the military are becoming an increasingly expensive investment because the opportunity cost of investing or maintaining a military runs at the expense of diverting capital from significant factors of international power listed above.

Simply put, the global fabric of commerce, communication and growth cannot ignore the growing need of soft power and its manifestations and implications around the world. Modernization, urbanization and increased communication have taken the foreground to territorial expansion.

³ Nye Jr., Joseph S. “Soft Power”
What is “Culture”?

For this argument, the definition of culture is crucial to understanding its function to China and its relationship to soft power. A quick Google search of the word “culture” returns the definition “the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively.” While we typically think of manifestations of culture behind glass display cases in a rigid institution like a museum, culture has continued to evolve to become an integral part of collective identity in the present and will continue to do so in the future. Individuals and institutions constantly create and re-create culture. This has already happened in Chinese history—traditional Chinese identity rejected during the agendas of Maoist China for culture that praised the common man, only to be revived again once China opened up to Westernization and embraced their place in a rapidly industrializing world and global economy.

Culture constantly conveys information to us of what people have in common. This can include experiences, perceptions, values, and shared consciousness. It is through this medium that outsiders to a culture can absorb and synthesize information. However, it is also a way that can be highly manipulated. Museums are typically excellent examples of amassing a great amount of information and relics of a culture, but how they communicate such a narrative may be a residual of political or social ideas and agendas. Choosing what to display and what to omit can communicate two very different ideologies.

Furthermore, I would specifically like to discuss the notion of “visual culture,” as I believe this is an effective vehicle of cultural education and becoming visually literate. It has always been an attractive traditional power, but is now entering the realm of global popular culture as well. Society is essentially a spectacle and never before have images been so self-referential and central the creation of identity. What distinguishes visual culture from cultural heritage is its symbiotic relationship with new technologies, economic arrangements and changed social transformations—everything that societies must be cognizant of in the presence of a desire to cohabitate in a global system. Art and social life are no longer

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separate entities because we turn our values, beliefs and attitudes into images.

To some extent China has already developed some success in visual culture by achieving visual literacy. Without ever having to take a class on Chinese Art, you can identify that the pale glassy green of intricately sculpted jade or the dark strokes of calligraphy belonging to Chinese heritage. Their defining artistic characteristics are distinct from European Oil Paintings or Meso-American murals. Of course Chinese arts and culture has evolved to other forms of culture such as these, but the legacy of ancient Chinese art in academia and pop culture bears the most recognition. Like the artifacts in a museum, visual culture can be controlled and strategically distributed to increase national image, cultural reverence, and social relevance. Further, it may be used as a basis to introduce visual aesthetics and ideology in contemporary China.

Growing Pains: The need to increase soft power through the History of China’s Rise to Global Status

The China we know today has been the result of many tumultuous years of struggle and uncertainty, experiencing rapid change from just one generation ago with Mao Zedong. It’s history is one of the longest documented civilizations with a rich development of culture. Ruled for millennia by various dynasties, the final fall of the Quing Dynasty gave way to a new era of government. 19th century foreign encroachment—especially by the British—on Chinese sovereignty further weakened the country. The opium trade left massive amounts of personal and economic destruction in its path. It is estimated that almost 10% of the country was addicted to the drug, which resulted in vast amounts of silver flowing out the country to pay for the addiction. By summer of 1842, the British were threatening to overtake the then capital city Nanjing. The emperor had no choice but to agree to peace treaty terms set by the British, which resulted in the beginning of Western exploitation of China.

Entering into the 20th century, China had almost no industry, a corrupt government, and no real influence on the world stage. Various leaders such as Chaing Kai Shek and Sun Yat Sen sought control after the final fall of the Quing Dynasty. Rising tension and conflict such as the

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Sino-Japanese war called for a strong sense of leadership and government. Bankrupt and defeated, Mao Zedong founded the People’s Republic of China in 1949 and provides the security the Chinese population desperately needed. However, his agendas such as the Great Leap Forward and the Proletariat Cultural Revolution left his as a controversial figure—the advancement of Chinese culture, economy, and political power came at the cost of millions of lives.

China also saw a dramatic increase in population and urbanization, cities swelling with people and industry. The growth of these cities created livelihoods and places of economic interest to both the Chinese population and the rest of the world. Finally, Deng Xiaoping was able to extend the development of the Chinese economy under Mao after his death by leading a strong agenda of market economy reforms. Deng’s reforms included modernization of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the military. His economic reform encouraged investments in light manufacturing and ultimately shifted China’s developed strategy to being export-led. Deng also set up special economic zones that attracted foreign investment and encouraged market liberalization. China is now a major player in world markets and their growth is projected to surpass the U.S. in 2026. These historic progressions in Chinese economic philosophy are the permutation that will allow China to influence world affairs.

Relations between China, Other Global Powers, and Developing Countries

China’s relationship building strategy with other nations serves as another reference point in understanding their position on the world stage. Identifying and analyzing international relationships between China and a plethora of other countries reveals implications for all players involved. While international relationships are far more comprehensive and complicated than that of the nature I describe in this paper, it serves as a vehicle to understand the position of China in the past and where it may go in the future.

China’s Relationship with the U.S., a Global Power

Within the last half a century, each nation has identified the other as a potential adversary, as well as ally. China once threatened Ameri-

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can democratic thought but now plays an imperative role to the American Economy and remains the largest foreign creditor of the U.S., holding about $1.8 trillion (10%) of U.S. debt. U.S. culture—anything from the glamour of Hollywood films to our foreign policies—holds a tremendous amount of soft power and is thus leveraged accordingly in Sino-American relations. A fundamental difference in governing ideology has dictated a historically turbulent relationship. For example, American views of the Chinese fell significantly after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, an abuse of human rights and violation of internationally recognized norms. Subsequently, the U.S. and other allied nations enacted various restrictive economic sanctions, suspended relationships and called for Chinese reform at various international conferences such as the G7 Summit. U.S.-China trade relations were interrupted, investor confidence and interest in China mainland fell dramatically, and tourism slowed down to a trickle.

In more recent years, relations have improved. This is evident in the cooperation and cohesion between the Chinese and Americans. For example, an influx of “cultural exchange” is much more prominent, with a significant number of Chinese students seeking to study in the United States. There are approximately 300,000 Chinese students in America, making them the most visible international presence across college campuses. These numbers have increased five-fold from the 2004-2005 academic year, when the International Chinese student population hovered just above 60,000. Conversely, while some American students chose China as their destination for higher education, the flow of Chinese students is much more weighted into the U.S.

**Money as “Non-Coercive:” China’s Involvement with other Developing Nations**

For economic reasons or otherwise, China has engaged in some sort of contact with a vast amount of countries in the world. While China aspires to elevate their status in the world by interacting with other global powers, there is still value in interacting with developing countries that can be extracted. Today, China it the third largest trading partner in Africa and has a particular interest in the continent’s deposits of raw ma-

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9 Ibid.
terials and hydrocarbons. In such a delicate trading situation, China has invested financial capital into Africa that fosters closer ties with African governments, wins support for China’s worldview, and reassures Africans of China’s friendly intentions. This supports a better trading relationship in the future and is a perfect example of extending soft power to impact other policies.

China’s diplomacy in Africa has proliferated Chinese ideology and values to African populations. First, China emphasizes their respect for African nations and identifies with the common interest of developing nations in a just, equitable global economy. Africans are free to negotiate arrangements and the Chinese are expected to be responsive to their demands. This is reflected in the fact that China comes to Africa as a business partner, not to offer charity. In another example, China has also pushed to strengthen cultural exchanges with Africa, just as it has with the United States. The spread of Confucius Institutes—which will be addressed later—can be seen in 19 individual locations throughout the continent. These state sponsored institutes offer Chinese language and cultural programming to the general public. Additionally, the Chinese government has sponsored thousands of scholarships for African students annually and has extended cultural and visitor programs with the establishment in 2004 of an African Cultural Visitors Program. These investments in cultural ideology will allow China to sustain human and economic flow throughout the continent and develop a cultural hegemony respected and value by African populations that has the potential to turn into trade deals and partnerships.

China’s Motivations for Cultural Investment at Home

Developing domestic culture exudes a national confidence and security in cultural identity and communicates values and lifestyles to outside perspectives. The 20th century saw great regression in Chinese culture and identity with Mao’s campaigns. Creativity was significantly hindered and largely, cultural expression was taken under the government. What resulted was a highly regulated and censored production of the glo-

12 Ibid. 34
13 Ibid. 34
14 Ibid. 34
rification of the common man over the majesty of the state. Furthermore, an artistic schism between identifying with traditional Chinese heritage and adopting foreign techniques and media to reform Chinese art arose. This was inevitable when trying to bring together such diverse regions of the country.

Attitudes towards culture—and more specifically visual culture—have dramatically shifted in the 21st century. The government has increased both human and financial capital into supporting and promoting Chinese contemporary art which has been previously “unofficial” and definitely underground. It has introduced new institutions to disseminate culture such as Confucius Institutes abroad as well as entities such as the Ministry of Culture taking on new domestic roles. A harmony between the traditional Chinese Art—which was once destroyed—and a hybridization of modern techniques has signaled the shifting functions of culture within China to that which serves political agendas.

Because of such developments, select Chinese cities have risen to global status. Some of the most recognizable ones are Beijing and Shanghai, the political and economic centers of China respectively. Not only have they become the nodes of a global network that provides access and commerce with various parts of the world, these cities have become cultural icons and have developed the “cultural credit” China needs to develop their soft power. The ebb and flows of financial, people, and cultural capital on a daily basis is a nod to the efforts to make China a special interest to various parts of the world. Gaining world status means integrating with other regions of the network and implies that once this status is achieved, it is unlikely it will lose it as the world commerce depends on such city as an access point.

Not only have the two cities risen in terms of global status, but cities like Beijing and Shanghai are imperative to the development of soft power for China. They not only radiate influence to regions far and near, but becoming a melting pot of ideology. This is what has propelled the development of culture in China. It gives China a chance to move towards the center of this global network and extend real, tangible influence in other parts of the world.
China’s Motivations for Cultural Investment Abroad

The distribution of Chinese art and culture builds cultural capital across the world. The goal to improve the national image among major players as well as developing countries can be achieved by the flow of financial capital to promote cultural presence in bases outside Chinese boarders. It breaks away from a previous notion that China is inward looking and closed off. Chinese presence in these fields shows their willingness to participate in worldly affairs and can be extrapolated to imply a friendly and productive nature should the development of relationships for other areas of interest occur.

China on the World Stage: Cultural Dissemination in Various Artistic Fields

Art—a stuffy, intellectual field only meant for the few who study or understand it—is increasingly becoming more accessible and consumable for larger populations. China being the longest standing civilization in history has an equally impressive collection of historical artifacts, all breathtakingly beautiful and communicative of various aspects of their society throughout the years. Since the late 1990s, a large number of exhibitions have been dedicated to Chinese art by major museums and art galleries in Euro-American countries and have appeared in western media. Additionally, the demand and prices for Chinese art in the international art market have also seen spectacular increases, as well as the number of scholars in the West who have taken up Chinese art as their academic research topic. These exhibitions serves as a visual opportunity to observe not the best of what China has to offer but the adaptation of Chinese art from traditional, ancient forms to modern curiosities of progressive thinking. For the Chinese, art has taken the form of being political.

The Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, California widely publicized their exhibition 28 Chinese in 2015, a collection of 48 pieces of contemporary works from 28 different Chinese artists. The show featured installations as well as photography, painting and new media. I personally visited this exhibition that summer and saw the multiplicity of artistic practices that showcased the uniqueness of artists such as Ai WeiWei. This exhibition juxtaposed to their permanent Chinese collection clearly

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15 Wang, MeiQuin. “Confrontation and Complicity: Rethinking Official Art in Contemporary China”
16 Ibid., 2.
showed the lineage of art under sponsorship—which was housed in their permanent collection two floors up—to a free enterprise approach in which Chinese artists questioned the values and processes of their own country.

The interest in Chinese arts doesn’t stop with art. Non-profit organization Shen Yun has becoming a worldwide phenomenon by weaving an amazing 5,000 year narrative of Chinese culture. Their goal is to revive traditional Chinese ideals almost once lost in the communist revolution.\(^{17}\) A Shen Yun performance features dance and orchestral music. These mediums are seen as a “universal language,” making the show insanely popular for audiences across the world and working to the advantage of proliferating Chinese ideology through forms of performing arts. For the 2017 season, they have five separate casts of performing arts troupes touring the world simultaneously. The expansion of Shen Yun is evidence of an increasing Western fascination with Chinese arts and signifies and shifting perception that places importance on the richness of Chinese culture rather than political agendas or world politics.

**Cultural Education: China’s influence In Education Around the World**

The increase presence of the Chinese in education has led them to extend their resources to the outside world. This has been realized at both a basic and accessible level, all the way up to higher education.

For example, a large part of Chinese state sponsored scholarship has come through the dissemination of Confucius Institutes around the world. Founded in 2004 under the Ministry of Education, it aims to promote Chinese language and culture, support local Chinese teaching internationally, and facilitate cultural exchanges. These institutes partner with host colleges and universities. They also host competitions where K-12 students can get involved before reaching the university level.\(^ {18}\)

In addition to the dissemination of Confucius Institutes around the world, China has also encouraged scholars to study in China by offering appealing degrees and scholarships. In 2015 there were approximately 400,000 International Students enrolled in Chinese Universities, which is almost triple the amount in 2005. About 5.5% of those students were


\(^{18}\) http://www.sfsu.edu/~ci/
Americans. Furthermore, the number of students from the U.S. has doubled from 2005 to 22,000 and students from other western countries such as France have tripled to 10,000 over the last decade.\textsuperscript{19}

Chinese degrees are also offering students a range of flexibility in their studies. Yenching Academy of Peking University aims to build bridges between China and the world through an interdisciplinary master’s program in China Studies for graduate students.\textsuperscript{20} Its goal is to shape a new generation with a nuanced understanding of China and its role in the world. It is fully funded and has become a melting pot for scholars around the world, bringing foreign academic intellect and human capital to Chinese cities. Students’ studies range from law, business, public policy and the arts. The establishment of these academies shows the rise in prestige of Chinese higher education as 2016 was the first year that universities from mainland China have broken into a global top 100 index in an annual ranking.\textsuperscript{21} Tsinghua University ranked 58th while Peking University sat at 71st place, respectively. The highest ranked University from the Asia-Pacific region, University of Tokyo, sat at number 20 overall.\textsuperscript{22} China’s ascension in the world of academia has drawn both individual and global attention and aids the movement of ideas and people across borders.

\textbf{Conclusion: Shifting Perceptions for World Impact}

China’s investment in culture both at home and abroad has turned into a multitude of implications for the advancement of their soft power. Defining their culture, having confidence their cultural identity, and finally proliferating it throughout the world in art, performing arts, or education allows the Chinese to create a global hegemony of harmonious ideology and respectful trading agreements. As it seeks to portray itself as non-threatening and responsible international power, we can expect China’s rapidly expanding engagements to provoke a multiplicity of reactions. But whatever these reactions may be, now is the perfect opportunity for China to elevate their cultural equity to increase their soft power agendas. These agendas not only provide for China’s seemingly insatiable thirst for resources, but can benefit other countries—both global powers or developing ones alike—by fostering connections that can translate into mean-

\textsuperscript{20} http://yenchingacademy.org/
\textsuperscript{21} https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/15/chinese-universities-break-into-top-100-global-index-for-first-time
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
ingful foreign policy and economic or social impact. Perhaps China has the ability to tip the scales of the current global order if they continue along the path of building its soft power dynamic. They can truly rise to become a respected and imperative global power for political, economic, and social issues that cannot be tackled by any one country.
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139


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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN CHINA: THE FORGING OF A STRONG NATIONAL COMMITMENT

Yilun Cheng

ABSTRACT

Since China signed the “UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons” in 2009, it continues to exhibit increased efforts to combat human trafficking. The 2013 national action plan, for example, illustrates China’s endeavor to close its gap with UN standards throughout all stages of anti-trafficking work—prevention, prosecution, and protection. Nonetheless, China has not addressed more fundamental problems in its legal and political frameworks, including its legal code that fails to criminalize all forms of human trafficking and its “re-education through labour” system that allows the government to make profits out of forced labour. Observing both noticeable improvements and significant gaps, I want to examine what has changed in the past few years that prompted the Chinese government to show more initiatives in this policy area, and what is still preventing the government from addressing more substantial problems in its anti-trafficking platform. Specifically, does China’s failure to push forward its reforms come down to a lack of national will or inadequate capacities on the local level? Contrary to conventional wisdom that emphasizes the role of ineffective implementation, I argue that China’s action and inaction regarding human trafficking is in fact a problem of national will. Furthermore, I analyze the role of foreign influence on the Chinese government’s decision-making process. In the case of human trafficking, international pressure has both pushed China to conduct gradual reforms in the past decade and hindered the emergence of more radical changes.
An Evaluation of China’s Action and Inaction

China is a hotspot for human trafficking. Firstly, China’s traditional culture largely condones and even endorses forced marriage and bondage labour, especially in rural communities. Secondly, China shares borders with many developing countries prone to organized crimes, such as North Korea, Vietnam, and Myanmar. Moreover, the country’s one-child policy has led to increased sex imbalance and exacerbated the problem of sex trafficking. Data suggest that in an average Chinese village the sex ratio of unmarried men to women between the ages of thirty and thirty-five could reach as high as 75.0, creating an enormous demand for the kidnapping and trafficking of women. In China the most common forms of trafficking include forced marriage and prostitution, forced labour, and forced begging and theft. Those with lower socioeconomic status and unstable livelihoods are particularly vulnerable to trafficking both internally and abroad. It is hard to estimate the exact number of victims, but it is known that out of over 294 million of China’s migrant workers, 90 percent of them look for work opportunities through unofficial and unregulated channels.

While the United Nations strictly defines human trafficking in terms of “recruitment, means, and purpose”, and clearly separates trafficking from smuggling, China’s criminal code and policy framework provide a less clear-cut definition, grouping together a number of criminal activities concerning the abduction, trading, and exploitation of persons. Since I am not mainly concerned with legal categorization and more interested in the political dynamics involved in China’s anti-trafficking efforts, for the purpose of this paper I will adopt a more relaxed definition and include all offences related to abduction, smuggling, sexual exploitation, and forced labour. According to the official statement, China’s national efforts against human trafficking began in 1991, when the Standing Committee of the

2 “China Human Trafficking Datasheet”. 2010. STRATEGIC INFORMATION RESPONSE NETWORK.
National People’s Congress introduced Article 141 of Criminal Law to criminalize the commerce of women and children. Three years later in 1997 the country’s new Criminal Law increased the range of and sentences against human trafficking. In the meantime, there are many other laws and regulations that specifically target offences in this area, including the Protection of Minors Act in 1991, the ministerial notice in 1994 to eliminate pornographic activities by illegal immigrants, and the ministerial notice in 1996 to screen Chinese children adopted by foreigners.\(^6\) Other regulations regarding education and child protection have also contributed to the establishment of an anti-trafficking framework. It is noteworthy that China’s legal code provides severe punishment against trafficking, with over 60 percent of convicted traffickers receiving more than 5 years of imprisonment, which is approximately 45 percent higher than the ratio of heavy sentences in other criminal cases.\(^7\) However, China’s anti-trafficking regulations have been scattered and lacking of a coherent national plan. Also, until recently there have been few initiatives over the years to combat trafficking with tools other than legal penalties and few efforts to ensure that these legal documents even translate into tangible solutions for victims and their families.

Nevertheless, since 1991 after almost two decades of near inaction, in the past few years there have been observable improvements in this policy realm. China finally ratified to the “UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons” in 2009, and since then has taken continuous steps to reform its policies and narrow its gap with international standards. In 2013 the government invested significant resources into writing a new national action plan to systematically improve prosecution, prevention, and protection. It is noteworthy that the plan for the first time changed the definition of trafficking to include all persons (from “the abduction and sale of women and children” to “the abduction and sale of persons”).\(^8\) China has been criticized for refusing to criminalize the trafficking of male victims, and although the government has not yet


\(^{7}\) Supreme People’s Court, Supreme People’s Procuratorate, Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Justice,. 2010. Notice To Print And Distribute Opinions On Severely Punishing Trafficking In Women And Children According To Law.

made the same alternation to its legal code, this change of wording in the action plan was still a major step for China to revise its definition of human trafficking according to the UN standard. After the 2013 national action plan came into effect, the Ministry of Public Security (MPS) continued to meet semi-annually in order to coordinate different departments in the execution of the new plan, allocating budgets and responsibilities to local offices and officials. In terms of awareness, between 2009 and now, the government not only funded movies, television shows, and radio programs centered on human trafficking, but also actively communicates with the public through social media forums. The MPS regularly posts on its official “microblog” account to exchange information with the public about suspected trafficking case and also to raise awareness in general. The ministry also strategically placed a number of anti-trafficking advertisements at train and bus stations, where migrant workers are most like to receive the information. Anti-trafficking endeavor also benefited from China’s corruption crackdowns. Because the solicitation of prostitution constitutes a severe violation of government officials’ ethic code, after President Xi’s anti-corruption campaign took off in 2012, the demand for commercial sex has been greatly reduced.

However, despite a new recognition within the government of this issue’s importance and these gradual efforts to address it, more substantial changes are yet to be seen. The U.S. Department of State has remarked in its “trafficking in persons report” every year that China does not meet the minimum standard for the elimination of trafficking, which requires countries to impose stringent punishment on all trafficking activities. China’s legal code still does not criminalize all kinds of trafficking. It excludes men as potential victims of trafficking and does not consider forced labour a crime punishable under the anti-trafficking law. Moreover, there exist many loopholes preventing more effective prosecution process. For example, in the case of forced marriage, the husband is still able to lay claim to any child conceived within the marriage. All legal solutions are also extremely costly to victims and their families. In many instances, cases are

13 Forced labour is addressed by other provisions of the criminal code.
Another critical political problem is in regards to what the international community labels “state-sponsored human trafficking” in extra-judicial facilities. China remains outrageously silent about the notorious system of “re-education through labour”, which was nominally abolished in 2013 but still exists in practice in government-affiliated rehabilitation facilities and detention centers. Many marginalized groups—political activists, ethnic Uighurs, women arrested for prostitutions, etc.—were held in such facilities without due process and forced to perform labour without compensation. According to the UN definition of “recruitment, means, and purpose”, such practice is clearly a form of trafficking, and yet the Chinese government continues to make profits out of it. As a result, although the U.S. reports acknowledge that the Chinese government has become more attentive to the problem of human trafficking during the past few years, most reports also comment that the government “did not demonstrate overall increasing efforts to address anti-trafficking compared to the previous year” and “did not demonstrate significant efforts to comprehensively prohibit and punish all forms of trafficking and to prosecute traffickers”. Consequently, China’s anti-trafficking status was never able to rise above Tier 2 Watchlist. Overall, even though officials constantly boasts about China’s modest progress regarding the implementation of the new national plan, the government is still unwilling to put in substantial efforts into reforming the country’s outdated legal framework in the field of human trafficking, which should in fact be a priority if China ever wants to push forward its anti-trafficking endeavor in a meaningful way.

Local Implementation vs. National Priority-Setting

When evaluating governmental efforts to combat human trafficking, conventional wisdom always emphasizes the implementation problem. The UN Institute of Training and Research claims in a report that even though the national government is responsible for building a comprehensive legal framework in support of local law enforcement efforts, it depends on local officials to establish an efficient response mechanism

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14 Yunnan Province, China Situation Of Trafficking In Children And Women: A Rapid Assessment. *International Labour Organization*, 2002. For *ILO Mekong Sub-Regional Project o Combat Trafficking In Children And Women.*


16 Ibid.
throughout prevention, prosecution, and protection, especially when addressing the needs of individual victims. The quality a country’s anti-trafficking platform depends on whether relevant local offices contain sufficient financial and human resources to actually carry out any plan made by the central government. In many developing countries, the objective lack of capacity on the local level will thus prevent any vision on the national level to translate into practice.¹⁷ Chinese scholar Junping Wang expresses a similar opinion in his article, “An Analysis Of The Smuggling Of Persons”.¹⁸ He highlights the fact that victims of human trafficking usually come from poor rural areas and are often transported to other underdeveloped regions. This problem of “double poverty” has given rise to practical difficulties when law enforcement attempts to access information, gather evidence, and rescue victims. What is more, there exist a variety of obstacles that are inherently local and even personal, such as the lack of awareness among local residents, the conspiracy between criminals and local elites, and the local cultural and economic pressures that essentially tolerate bondage labour and forced marriage.¹⁹ These are long-standing, deeply rooted problems and cannot be resolved by a simple alteration to the legal code. In fact, interviews suggest that when confronted, China’s high-level officials always justify themselves by referring to human trafficking as a matter of local law enforcement rather than a concern of the centre.²⁰ According to them, the incompetence of and resistance from local officials constitute the main reason behind China’s failure to bring about substantial reforms.

Nonetheless, even though technical difficulties on the local level undoubtedly exist and have contributed to the centre’s inaction, the absence of a strong national will is indeed a more prominent factor that has led to the lack of any meaningful progress. In order to assess the role of national commitment in China’s anti-trafficking efforts, we need to first consider China’s state capacity in general. China’s top-down management system has been experimenting with a series of reforms to strengthen the centre’s control over lower-level governments. For example, utilizing

¹⁷ UNITAR., 2015. Human Trafficking And The Role Of Local Governments.
market forces, the cadre responsibility system employs a range of personal incentives and disincentives to ensure that local officials do exactly what the centre wants. Other measures including the cadre rotation system and the mandatory performance contracts also contribute to increasingly stringent local-central relations. Maria Edin argues that given China’s incredible state capacity, when the government fails to execute a certain policy, it is usually due to the centre’s own conflicting priorities rather than its inability to exert control over local governments. The distinction among “soft targets”, “hard targets”, and “priority targets with veto power” in government employees’ performance reviews perfectly exemplifies how the centre’s own sense of priorities dictates policy implementation on the local level. Christian Gobel uses the example of the Rural Tax and Fee Reform to illustrate the government’s policy implementation capacity. First outlined by the central government in 1998, the Rural Tax and Fee Reform aimed to improve rural stability and boost the national economy, yet officials encountered serious problems while attempting to carry out the reform in practice. The inability of poorer villages to endure the loss of government revenues led to the reform’s uneven implementation across the country. Also, many local cadres were incapable of or unwilling to engage in political competition, which resulted in widespread local resistance to the new policy. However in 2014, despite such implementation problems, the centre decided to prioritize the reform and was able to overcome technical difficulties on the local level by making its enforcement a “hard target”, further abolishing the agricultural tax, and funding the bill itself. By doing so, the central government makes clear that it possesses enough political power to enforce all policies which it deems necessary.

The case of human trafficking shares many similar features with other instances of central initiatives, most noticeably the administration of the Rural Tax and Fee Reform. In the first place, anti-trafficking initiatives face the same problem of local resistance. Local officials’ inertia and indifference has been the main impediment to anti-trafficking progress. During an interview, Liping Wu, a resident of a southern village and the sister of a trafficked victim, reveals that after reporting to local law enforcement the disappearance of her brother, the police only made an unofficial note of the case and never got back to Wu’s family. Wu explains

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that everyone in her village knows who the trafficker is but local cadres usually ignore all trafficking cases in order to stay out of trouble. Göbel offers a solution transferable to this case: if the central government is committed to a policy area, it could carefully make use of different “steering instruments”—hierarchical control, market forces, and network persuasion—to bring out more cooperation and less resistance on the local level. The central government has actually tried to utilize the cadre responsibility system to further its anti-trafficking policies. Since President Xi’s anti-corruption campaign commenced in 2012, the central government amended the cadre responsibility system to hold officials responsible for the “unethical lifestyle” by both themselves and their employees. Many officials were removed from their posts because of either their own solicitation of prostitution or their facilitation of such illegal activities. Till now more than 9000 leading cadres have undergone investigation and punishment because of prostitution-related charges, which constitutes a warning for all government employees and reduces the demand for sex trade. The centre enacted this policy change because of its relevance to President Xi’s overall anti-corruption endeavor. Had the Chinese government elevated its anti-trafficking platform to the same level of importance as the anti-corruption campaign and closely tied all aspects of anti-trafficking to the cadre management system, it is reasonable to speculate that the results would be even more desirable.

Furthermore, the problem of human trafficking also has its unique characteristics that make a strong national presence even more crucial. Firstly, many local cadres are themselves involved in trafficking-related crimes. Zhang Sheldon and Chin Ko-lin explain in a study on China’s organized crime that human trafficking in China is not dominated by traditional crime groups but is actually conducted by local elites with extensive political or familial networks. Traffickers are almost never professional criminals, but rather are government officials or businesspeople who engage criminal activities only occasionally and see their involvement in trafficking as just another opportunity to take advantage of their political connection. Even professional criminals, or “snakeheads”, rely on their

connection with government authorities to blatantly manage their trafficking business in their respective territories.\textsuperscript{27} Secondly, even when local cadres do not actively engage in trafficking offenses to seek out private profits, the political pressure to perform well economically also prompts them to condone trafficking activities. It is estimated that in China prostitution generates an annual profit of one trillion RMB, contributing approximately 6 percent of China’s GDP.

The situation is even more serious in cities with a disproportionately high number of entertainment venues. In the notorious “sex town” Dongguan, a city of no more than 8 million residents, the sex industry generate as much as 50 billion RMB each year, which accounts for about 10 percent of the local GDP.\textsuperscript{28} Because whether local officials receive promotion opportunities and monetary rewards largely depends on the economic performance of their counties, after a cost-benefit calculation, it simply does not make sense for local cadres to arrest traffickers and bring down the sex industry. The same applies to forced labour. A number of more economically developed provinces such as Fujian, Guangzhou, Shandong are currently experiencing severe labour shortage. Therefore, local governments have an interest in supporting the use of forced labour in factories and mines, since the influx of bondage labour maximizes production while minimizing costs, allowing officials to keep up the appearance of rapid economic growth.\textsuperscript{29} In other words, the lucrative nature of the trafficking industry has given rise to an incredible amount of predatory behavior by local cadres. It is thus more indispensable for the central government to demonstrate a strong national will and employ various policy tools so as to correct cadre behavior on the local level.

As a matter of fact, the 2013 national action plan marks the beginning of a strengthened national will to tackle human trafficking and has already brought prominent results. Most trafficking activities in China take the form of cross-provincial crime, rendering their crackdowns especially expensive. Statistics reveal that the average cost of rescuing a trafficked victim is about 20 to 30 thousand RMB, and that of destroying an orga-


nized trafficking group is as high as millions of RMB. Nevertheless, until recently 90 percent of China’s provinces received no funding designated for anti-trafficking work. Most local governments simply could not afford to tackle trafficking cases, not to mention building an efficient response mechanism. Out of China’s 34 provinces, only five of them have set up their own anti-trafficking offices. Shiqi Chen, the director of the Office to Combat Trafficking in Persons, agreed in an interview that the most fundamental obstacle to China’s anti-trafficking platform is indeed insufficient funding on the local level. He insisted that if the centre could fund 3000 more special personnel to establish provincial offices and conduct anti-trafficking work across the country, most technical difficulties facing local law enforcement could be overcome.\(^{30}\)

Highlighting the importance of “safeguarding financial resources available to local law enforcement”, the 2013 national action plan outlines steps to allocate more money to this policy realm and for the first time makes it mandatory for governments of all levels to address anti-trafficking work in their annual budget plans.\(^{31}\)

Even though the new plan has not been fully realized, the MPS already started a special fund to combat human trafficking, and last year further devoted 55 million RMB in support of local and central law enforcement efforts.\(^{32}\)

Besides daily law enforcement work, the funding also goes to various nation-wide initiatives, including the creation of a DNA database and a national victim identification service, both of which have been strongly suggested by the US “trafficking in persons report” for multiple times.\(^{33}\) \(^{34}\)

As a result, the number of resolved trafficking-related cases has been rising steadily since the centre carried out its new action plan. Noticeably from 2014 to 2015, the number of arrested traffickers whose cases were publicly reported grew from 194 to 1932, reflecting both increased effectiveness in law enforcement and significant improvements in the government’s information system, which now more accurately documents

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trafficking-related offenses and more efficiently reaches out to the public.\textsuperscript{35} It is still unclear to what extent the Chinese government intends to actualize the action plan, but China’s objective improvements since 2013 perfectly illustrates that although technical difficulties regarding policy design and implementation still exist, even a slight increase in national commitment can lead to rapid progress in a short period of time.

**Domestic vs. International Pressure**

I have argued and shown that the mainstream view which attributes China’s unsatisfactory anti-trafficking framework solely to the problem of local implementation fails to take into account both China’s high state capacity and the unique characteristics of human trafficking that demand a strong national presence. Indeed, China’s recent action and inaction is not accidental but intentional. Therefore, in order to understand why China has been making consistent progress yet refuses to make substantial reforms, we need to examine various push and pull factors that affect the centre’s priority-setting process. I now move on to analyzing the role of foreign influence in this policy area. Interviews and surveys suggest a low level of awareness among Chinese citizens regarding the issue of human trafficking. Most Chinese people are unfamiliar with the concept of human trafficking or its detrimental effects. For example, China was a predominantly agricultural society with the cultural tradition of male preference and a high demand for male labour on family farms. As a result, forced marriage and illegal adoption of male babies is often considered a norm in most rural villages. Many rural residents get involved in the trafficking of women and children without even realizing that they are facilitating an outrageous form of international crime. Moreover, Chinese migrant workers and rural farmers tend to fantasize about working in coastal cities or abroad without considering the potential risk involved in migrating through unofficial channels, rendering them especially vulnerable to the increasingly sophisticated trafficking networks.\textsuperscript{36} It is true that there has been a slight rise of anti-trafficking consciousness due to the MPS’s awareness campaigns in recent years. Yet researchers observe no noticeable increase in domestic discontent regarding this issue. It is thus


unlikely that the government has been taking steady actions since 2009 in response to growing domestic pressure.\textsuperscript{37}

The case of human trafficking highlights the influence of international laws, foreign agencies, and international NGOs on China’s human rights policies. In today’s international community, ideas and values assume increasing importance in inter-state relations and China has been struggling to seek sympathizers regarding its human rights conditions. Always being on the defensive side of international accusations comes at a cost and has to some extent pushed China to address its human rights issues in order to restore its image on the world scene. From the late 1970, especially after the Tiananman Square massacre in 1989, there was a rise of international criticism pointed at China’s violation of basic human rights. The Freedom House, for instance, assigned China a score of 6 out of 7—with 7 being the lowest score—in both political and civil rights.\textsuperscript{38} China responded positively by starting to engage with international laws and organizations on the issue of human rights. The central government published a few sympathetic statements on various international covenants and started to actively communicate with the outside world about its reforms to handle political prisoners in a more humane way. By the end of the 1980s, China finally decided to sign the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.\textsuperscript{39}

However, there is a limit to what foreign pressure could do. Even though China understood the advantages of following UN human rights standard and welcomed its beneficial effects in terms of attracting foreign investment, the government did not wish to compromise its diplomatic independence or Third-World leadership. In the first place, China’s conception of human rights is greatly influenced by its previous association with the Soviet Union and is fundamentally different from the Western perception. From a legal standpoint, there exist no natural rights and all rights are given by the state. There is also the prevailing idea that national rights hold priorities over private ones. Therefore the rise of human rights interventionism after the Cold War exacerbated the perceived conflict between national self-determination and citizens’ political rights.

As a result, the debate between China and the international com-

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
munity surrounding whether human rights is a global concern or an issue within China’s domestic jurisdiction has dominated China’s human rights discourse till now. From the perspective of today’s Chinese leadership, human rights pressure from the West is inherently ill-intentioned and aims to weaken China’s national sovereignty. This mutual hostility has taken a toll on China’s bilateral and multilateral relations with other countries, especially the United States, creating difficulties for negotiations on otherwise routine issues such as trade and arms sales. It thus does not come as a surprise when China adopted a new law on the “Management of Foreign Non-Governmental Organization activities within Mainland China” last year in April. Foreign NGOs have been operating in a gray area till now and usually register as for-profit corporations so as to hire personnel and conduct activities in China without much obstruction. Nevertheless, the new NGO law prescribes more stringent regulations regarding the status of foreign NGOs, making it easier for security agencies to supervise and interfere with their day-to-day operation. Furthermore, the new policy also require foreign NGOs to find local sponsorship in order to obtain a license, but given the larger context of Xi’s political purge, officials are extremely anxious not to commit any political error and are often unwilling to sponsor foreign NGOs, especially those related to human rights issues.

It is logical to suspect that when dealing with the problem of human trafficking, the Chinese government is also not insolent to foreign pressure. Chinese officials, even lower-level cadres, conduct anti-trafficking work with much attention to the larger international context. Researchers from the US Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons disclosed that during most of their meetings with Chinese officials, the latter spent most of the time criticizing their negative evaluation of China in the “Trafficking in Person Reports” and trying to justify China’s actions to a foreign agency. In fact, most of China’s governmental efforts are made after 2012 when US Department Of State downgraded China’s anti-trafficking status from tier 2 to tier 2 watch list. If a nation’s ranking falls to tier 3, the United States could in theory impose sanctions and with-

hold foreign assistance. Even if President Obama decides not to punish China for its inadequate anti-trafficking framework, such a possibility still constitutes a serious consideration that has prompted the centre to exhibit stronger will in this policy area.

There is no denying that human trafficking is an area of human rights issues that is less about political sensitivity and more about the general welfare of the people. The Chinese government refuses to recognize and address most of its human rights problems, including the absence of rule of law or freedom of speech, because opening up such discourse is potentially subversive to the regime. Anti-trafficking, however, seems to be an innocuous issue that no one would object to and is actually in line with the government’s primary goal to maintain social order. The government’s official guideline emphasizes the strategic importance of anti-trafficking work in the promotion of “public security and social harmony”.43

However, if anti-trafficking work is beneficial to China’s domestic welfare and international reputation while generating virtually no threat to the regime, why is China so hesitant about reforming its legal and political frameworks according to the international standard? Clearly, the negative aspect of foreign pressure also applies to this case. Public policy theories provide a probable explanation: Barry Bozeman argues in his study on decision-making that an innocuous issue could become more contentious if there are multiple actors involved from both inside and outside the government.44 In other words, foreign agencies’ insistence on exerting influence on China’s anti-trafficking platform has led to a lowering of goal consensus and has given a political character to originally technical problems. Apparently, given China’s long-time defensive attitude toward foreign pressure, criticism from the international community naturally elicits China’s concerns with its national sovereign and thus results in resistance that otherwise would not exist. Therefore, foreign pressure plays a prominent role in China’s conscious decision to both make gradual progress in its anti-trafficking work and limit its efforts to smaller areas of improvements.

Conclusion

At the first glance, China’s slow progress in its anti-trafficking work seems to come from technical difficulties on the local level. However, after closely investigating China’s governmental measures to combat human trafficking, we can conclude that although the complicated nature of this issue has indeed created many implementation problems, both China’s action and inaction in the past decade actually reflect the central government’s conscious decisions after carefully examining its interests and priorities. For the centre, whether or not to further increase its investment in this policy area depends on a number of political rather than technical considerations. The field of anti-trafficking is just another policy area in China where the result largely relies on the centre’s own intention. One crucial factor that has been affecting the centre’s decision-making process is the pressure exerted by foreign agencies and international organizations. Similarly to other human rights issues, the case of human trafficking also exhibits the positive and negative effects of international criticism. Although China is motivated to make gradual improvements in hope of gaining a better international reputation, the mutual hostility between China and the outside world has actually led to a lowering of goal consensus and consequently hinders China’s progress. By looking at an area of human rights issues that is less controversial, we learned that too much pressure on the Chinese government could easily backfire even within a seemingly innocuous policy realm. Therefore, in the future when seeking to influence China on its human rights platform, the international community needs to be extremely mindful of the way it interact with the Chinese government and strike a balance between positive motivation and negative sanction. Only by opening up a genuine dialogue could the outside world properly incentivize the Chinese government and prompt it to provide a strong leadership throughout the policy design and implementation process.


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The Indian education system, which is on track to becoming the biggest in the world, is not without its problems. Although India currently has twenty-two percent of the world’s population, it also has forty-six percent of the world’s illiterates; thankfully, the country has taken several major steps in recent years in order to raise the participation rate in primary schooling. With these improvements, the country is on track to become one of the world’s leading educators. The Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 provides the framework for creating positive direction towards the encouragement of school enrollment, however, the Act does not make an effort to actually improve the education in the schools themselves. The inferior quality of the education in public schools has hindered the progress of the overall advancement of the Indian education system; this inferiority is also the catalyst in the debate of public versus private. The government currently has two possible routes to take regarding improvement of India’s primary education: (1) invest more resources into bettering the public education system and (2) fund more low-income students to attend private schools, the number of which have grown substantially in the past decade. The government’s efforts to improve their own institutions have succeeded only marginally, which would help to explain the rise in enrollment in private schools. This paper will review recent evidence about the impact of private institutions in India and whether or not they offer a solution to the problems of public education.

The Indian education system has a long and complicated background that explains the states of both public and private institutions today. There has long been contention between public and private institutions, but more recently there has been a massive growth in private institutions. This is likely because public education has become dilapidated to the point that even low income parents are unwilling to send their children to a government school. The reasons for this are twofold. First, many government schools lack the infrastructure to support successful schools. For example, many schools do not have basic necessities such as blackboards, drinking water, functioning toilets, or playgrounds. Second, parents are rightfully perturbed by the huge amount of teacher absenteeism that is present; it is especially rampant in rural areas, where there is almost no government accountability. A study conducted in 2003 found that on any given day, twenty-five percent of teachers were absent in government primary schools. This is perhaps the biggest factor influencing the decision of whether or not parents are willing to send their kids to a public school. In addition to this, teacher absenteeism is ultimately harmful to the image of the government as a whole—teachers are widely known to be associated closely with politicians, and politicians rarely do anything to stop their absence in schools in order to increase their own support base. This creates an environment of distrust, as residents begin to doubt if the government is looking out for their best interests, which puts further pressure on families look elsewhere to educate their children. These two problems explain the overall decrease in enrollment in public schools, as well as the increased enrollment in private institutions. Though public schools have clearly had their problems in the past, the government has taken several steps in order to fix the system, and is continuing to do so today. One way in which they have directly addressed the issue is by creating a program to fix a wide array of educational issues. This program, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, implemented in 2000, provides services such as funding for more teachers, free textbooks for females, and grants for teaching materials.


3 Kingdon, 182.

4 Ibid.


6 Kingdon, 189.
The program is designed to tackle the most obvious problems facing most government schools by primarily providing money in ways the government sees fit. Overall it has been hugely successful by reducing the number of children who are out of school by over three million each year. The other way in which the government is taking initiative to improve is through the Mid-Day Meal Scheme. This program provides every student with a lunch, which has been proven helpful to rural students. This program not only helps to alleviate the burden placed on rural families to provide a meal for their child, but it also convinces more students to attend school daily. These two programs have taken Indian public education in a new direction; however, it does not seem to have had much effect in decreasing the continued proliferation of private institutions.

On face value, the implementation of these two programs seems to indicate that government education has increased in quality. In 2007, seven years after the implementation of SSA, the impact of the program was analyzed. The study found that school infrastructure has gotten better and dropout rates have decreased. It also found that SSA has indeed increased the enrollment of children in elementary school. However, increasing enrollment unfortunately does not guarantee that the education these students are receiving is quality—since private enrollment has still increased exponentially (after implementation of SSA), it implies that government schools are still not to be trusted. Despite SSA’s progress, the study also found that “many states have failed to provide an adequate number of teachers for elementary education.”

It is undeniable that private institutions have seen incredible growth within the last few decades. Since 2001, there has been a three-fold increase in enrollment in private schools by eight year olds living in rural areas (from ten percent in 2001 to thirty-one percent in 2009).

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8 Kingdon, 189.
10 Ibid, 22.
11 Ibid.
12 Woodhead, 69.
In fact, it is now believed that the private sector is actually three times that shown in official statistics. This is because most private schools are unaided and unrecognized by the government, despite the government’s insistence in the Right to Education Act that all private schools must have government recognition. The blatant snubbing of this rule is indicative that “schools and parents do not take government recognition as a stamp of quality.” No doubt it is for the previously stated reasons. If parents do not enroll their children in government schools in the first place, it is likely that they don’t respect the government anyways, making a private school’s “recognition” by the government irrelevant. Despite not having this recognition, private schools are indeed excelling overall in test scores and future prospects, indicating that private institutions do know better than the government. Also, the government’s inability (or unwillingness) to crackdown on these technically illegal schools further calls into question their legitimacy, which is a problem when trying to analyze the impact of the rest of the Act. For example, the Act contains a clause that allocates at least twenty-five percent of all seats in any public or private school to the most marginalized. Though on the surface this seems radically progressive, it is undermined by the government’s inability to ensure recognition from private schools—how can the government ensure that these seats will be set aside when it is unable to ensure that privates schools follow the Act’s other laws? In total, these discrepancies are harmful to the image of a trustworthy and responsible government, further casting doubt on the legitimacy of public schools.

The growth in the private sector is also likely due to a combination of factors, some stemming from the perceived decline of government schools and some stemming from the private schools themselves. Today, private schools are associated with higher test scores, as well as having better facilities, resources, and infrastructure, the last three of which are always compared to the perceived lack of these things in public schools. Private schools simply have the necessary funding to improve these aspects.

13 Kingdon, 184.
15 Kingdon, 184.
16 Woodhead, 65.
17 Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act: 5.
18 Woodhead, 66.
They are also able to pay their teachers a lower wage, as they are not restricted by any government minimum wage; this in turn allows them to hire more teachers, reducing the student-to-teacher ratio. Because of these advantages it is natural to assume that they are also associated with aspirations for higher social status and better employment opportunities. The combination of all of these factors has tangible, quantitative results. Out of a study of almost 1,000 students in Andhar Pradesh, chosen randomly from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, it was discovered that 27% of students in public schools dropped out by age fifteen, compared to just 6% for students in private schools. Unsurprisingly, children in private schools achieved higher test scores in English and math than their public school counterparts. These clear signs have furthered the divide between a public and private education.

Not only socially, but fiscally, private institutions are the solution for a more efficient state budget. Right now, despite a falling share of basic education expenditure in state domestic product, some states have actually improved their educational outcome indicators, showing that the government is saving more money and improving their education system without the help of the actual government. This is almost entirely due to the rise of the private sector, and is an indication that private schools can and already have saved government money. Experts say that “even with six percent allocation of GDP to the education budget, universal school education would not be achievable for many years if the government school system is used as the only vehicle.” If this is the future, clearly the government cannot by itself improve its own system. It is unquestionable that private institutions are growing quickly, and there is good reason for it, however, it brings into question whether private institutions can truly be available for all of India, and not just for the small fraction who can afford it.

Impeding the way to universal and accessible private education are deeply imbedded cultural, geographic, and economic factors that are difficult to overcome. The government has tried to make private

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19 Kingdon, 188.
20 Woodhead, 65.
21 Ibid, 68.
22 Ibid, 66.
23 Kingdon, 186.
24 Woodhead, 169.
education more affordable by encouraging the growth of low-fee private schools, but these still are not cheap enough for the poor. 26 Interestingly, the largest factor affecting a child’s chances to attend schools is not their ability to afford it, but is instead whether or not they live in an urban area. 27 Though these two factors are closely linked, as living in an urban region implies greater wealth and living in a rural region implies lesser wealth, it suggests that some poor families are actually able to attend private school. The problem would therefore lie in a lack of supply in rural areas. The next factors that are impeding enrollment include the primary caregiver’s education level, caste, and the gender gap. 28 Gender appears to affect education heavily, especially as seen in the documentary, Dadi’s Family. In the film, the girls are encouraged to go to school and the parents even state that they are working on the farms to provide a better life for their children. However, when the girls actually take time to do their homework, there are complaints that they are not helping with household chores. 29 This shows the different types of hardships that female children have to go through—there are obstacles in the form of price (from private schools) and pressure (from the household). In order to come the obstacles of gender, caste, and religion, deeply imbedded cultural norms will need to break away. All of these factors combined creates obstacles to the dream of attending private schools.

In addition to these impediments, there are several possible negative effects of the exclusivity of private school enrollment as well. One of these effects is the gentrification of education, where the wealthier parents send their children to private schools, and therefore care less about government education. 30 This disincentivizes many government officials from reforming their education system, as the pressure from the most influential is lifted. This gentrification also risks the reinforcement of “tradition economic, social and cultural divisions” that could deeply affect the psyche of government-educated students. 31 Gentrification imposes another social division on society—whether a person has been privately educated or government educated creates another opportunity for bias. The rise of private institutions with no government intervention

26 Ibid, 72.
27 Ibid, 71.
28 Ibid.
29 Dadi’s Family, DVD, directed by Michael Camirini and Rina Gill (The Odyssey Series, 1981).
30 Woodhead, 66.
31 Ibid., 72.
at all will no doubt make these divisions worse, especially in rural areas where children do not yet have the opportunity to attend private schools, even if they can afford them.

However, despite all of the shortcomings of private education, there are several reasons why their development should be encouraged, and why providing the opportunity for more rural-resident low-income students is a superior policy choice over investing resources into bettering the public education system. Though the aforementioned social divisions are indeed a possibility, the government certainly has enough time to mitigate these issues through a variety of targeted policies; many of these policies are already in place and the effects can be seen. By providing more avenues for low-income students, the social negatives can be mitigated. In order to increase the availability of private institutions while also reducing the possible negative social impact, there are several routes the government could possibly take. Since the biggest impediment for rural students to attend school is the lack of supply of private schools in rural areas, as well as the lack of funds, the government has many laws they could implement to mitigate these issues. One way would be to provide incentives for private institutions to build in rural areas by directly providing the funds to do so and to provide tax breaks. This will increase the supply of private institutions for rural students, helping to decrease the possible negative consequences such as discrimination. Another way to increase rural enrollment would be to provide free transportation from rural areas to urban schools, which would be a more targeted approach and would be able to be implemented immediately, as opposed to having to wait for private schools to be built from the ground up. To ease the financial burden, the government could directly fund rural students’ tuition to private institutions and create scholarships for low-caste and low-income families. By integrating these low-income families into the private sector early on, it will be easier for social stigmas to be relieved. The continued gentrification of private education would also be stemmed, thereby eliminating the obvious effects of class differences.

It is not entirely safe to place the future of India’s education system in the hands of private institutions—right now, they perform better because they are paid to and have the right resources. Wealthy parents are able to keep these schools accountable. If more poor students begin to attend, and private schools become the only recourse, it would be easier for these institutions to take advantage of the system and to put less effort into improving their schools. Families are also wary of an expanded
private sector, as they are aware of the possible abuse that could occur. Therefore, it is necessary to keep the government aware of what goes on in private schools and to have the government regulate private education; this will keep the private schools in check and will keep them from taking advantage of a system where they could have free reign. The government has the laws in place already, in the form of the Right to Education Act, and it only requires more accountability and institutions that are able to enforce their laws. By already having an Act such as this, the government saves themselves a step in the regulatory process—it is a clear indication that education is headed a more beneficial and positive direction. In order to make private education available for every student, it is also not feasible without government help, as private schools would not be incentivized to actively include rural and low income students. Therefore, the role of the government should not be to continuing to fund their own system, which is clearly broken and cannot keep up with the educational demands of the world, but to regulate the private sector, which already has a head start.

With a combination of government involvement and support, along with an increased presence of private institutions, the Indian education system is on track to become one of the most effective in the world. The government must help support poorer, rural students gain access to the same education as their peers. It must also be careful, however, to not overly rely on private schools, and to oversee their workings without meddling. This careful balance is possible with increased government accountability and the stringent implementation of the Right to Education Act. A better system of primary and secondary education will transform not only India’s educational sphere, but the social, political, and economic realms of India as well. In India’s society, where there are rapidly changing social norms, an increasingly educated population is key to India’s continued growth.
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