

PERCEPTIONS

JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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Relations
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Transcultural Asia: Unlearning Colonial/Imperial Power Relations

Pınar BİLGİN* and L.H.M. LING**

“Asia” currently resides at the margins of the academic study of world politics, a.k.a. international relations (IR). This is in contrast to the historical centrality of Asia to the evolution of world politics. It is also in contrast to the centrality of Asian affairs in present-day world politics.

IR produces international knowledge. Its claims to universality render IR both parochial and limited,¹ but such parochialism is not inconsequential for world politics. That IR has limited tools in making sense of “Asia” means that policy-makers are disadvantaged in making sense of the biggest continent on Earth; some of the most populous countries in the world; and some of the most dynamic economies- not to mention civilisations, cultures, religions, dynamics of tradition and change- that have helped to make the world what it is.

Students of IR, too, suffer as a result of IR’s limitations. Not being able to make better sense of “Asia” impoverishes our understanding of the international and its production of knowledge.² Notwithstanding recent attempts

designed toward “worlding IR”,³ our academic field has yet to discover the nature and extent of its impoverishment.

We present this special issue of *Perceptions* as an initial step to making better sense of “Asia” in IR. This is not to overlook the rich literatures in the humanities and other branches of the social sciences (including area studies) that provide knowledge about “Asia”.⁴ We build on their valuable analyses but try to do something different.

Specifically, this special issue examines how cultures/traditions in Asia have responded to *difference* and *change* over the millennia and what this implies for IR theorising generally, and for “security” specifically. By “Asia”, we include all those geographical and cultural linkages that constitute the continent today: e.g., the Indian subcontinent, Turkey and the rest of what was called “Asia Minor”, the Mediterranean, the Arab world and Central-Northeast-Southeast Asia. By difference, we mean any challenges to the ideologies, institutions, policies and practices of ruling elites. By change, we mean the globalising dynamics of world politics, not only in terms of the 20th century but also throughout millennia of

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give-and-take between Asia and the rest of the world. Such instances of *difference* and *change* could come in the form of an event like a war or unsanctioned trade, an internal political struggle due to domestic dissent or contending ideological factions, or a more profound contestation due to civilisational encounters as manifested in alternative aesthetics or ways of being.

Put differently, we seek to draw on the problem-solving repertoires of *pre-colonial* Asia to refine our concepts and strategies for *postcolonial* times. This approach aims not to idealise the past. Rather, we seek to recuperate ways of knowing, doing, being and relating that have been lost or marginalised due to centuries of Euro-American hegemony. Not only does this hegemony impose “subaltern” politics on the rest of the world, but it also *freezes in time* indigenous forms of colonialism and imperialism rationalised under the guise of nationalism. As will be seen in the contributions to this special issue, such ways of knowing, doing, being and relating are alive in the practices of non-state actors and their everyday politics.

Some call to “de-colonise”, “de-imperialise” and “de-Cold War” Asia.⁵ Doing so requires seeing-again: that is, recognising that the continent of “Asia” reflects dynamic civilisational encounters and interactions that have occurred over millennia and will continue to do so. These interactions have produced a large repertoire of coping strategies practised in daily life but rarely recognised in IR

studies. We need to draw on this rich pool of thinking, doing, being and relating for IR theorising. A first step is to identify what we need to refine in terms of concepts, theories and methods.

Four central themes resound in this special issue:

- Security is critically important for identity, whether this is articulated in terms of civilisation (Bilgin), cosmopolitanism (Silina), development (Banerjee) or modernity (Ahmed);
- Postcoloniality’s security dilemma stems from a disruptive mismatch between pre-colonial and colonial governance structures (Mishra), reflecting unresolved contestations in not just ideology but also worldview (C. Chen), thereby leading to foreign policy preferences that Westphalian IR would label “ambiguous” (B. Chen);
- Yet critical scholars need not reinvent the theoretical wheel: the “Eastern Other” is already in world politics, contributing to what we know today (Hobson), just as Western social science has the epistemological capacity to self-transform into a transcultural discipline (Duffy); and,
- At the same time, we can draw insight from Asia’s own traditions, philosophies and discourses for a more globalised IR (Ikeda, Ling).

This approach departs markedly from current understandings of IR. Theorising in IR continues to be dominated by one

paradigm (realism/liberalism) based on one world historical experience (Western, colonial and androcentric). This hegemony totalises problem-solving and problem-framing. For an arena like world politics, where multiple traditions, practices and worldviews apply, such singularity and inflexibility can only lead to a war-like ultimatum: i.e., either you convert to become like us or we will annihilate you. In either case, the result is a losing one for those who have more in their historical and cultural legacies than a realist/liberal, Anglo-American-European colonial patriarchy.

We aim to open conceptual and discursive space in IR not just epistemologically but also ontologically. By recognising and drawing on the multiplicities that have made “Asia” what it is, we aim to globalise IR specifically, and world politics generally. This will help us resolve old problems in new ways, rather than reproduce the same old approaches that tend to fix problems in place, turning them into sites of “intractable” or “eternal” conflict.

Critical theories of IR have long called for such expansions, if not emancipations, in and for the discipline.⁶ Postmodernists, poststructuralists, neo-Gramscians and feminists led the movement starting in the 1990s.⁷ Constructivists and postcolonialists have joined the chorus more recently.⁸ All have focused on the cultural constructions of IR and possibilities for reformulations. In this special issue, we have participants from

India, Japan, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. In terms of academic disciplines, they represent more than IR, including sociology, urban studies, communications and philosophy.

If not IR, then what? One way of approaching “Asia” has been through studying Asian civilisations. Indeed, much has happened along the civilisational front in world politics. Unfortunately, it has bypassed the mainstream of IR. In 1998, the United Nations (UN) resolved to name 2001 as the “UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations”. By chance (or not), that year was also when al-Qaeda operatives attacked the US in New York and Washington, DC, on 11 September. These attacks have hampered the UN’s efforts to foster dialogue among civilisations. At the same time, they have highlighted the need for precisely such efforts. Since then, Spain and Turkey, under the auspices of the UN and supported by the European Union (EU) and the Vatican, have formed an “Alliance of Civilisations” to enhance exchanges between “Islam” and “the West”. While the discursive jump from “dialogue” to “alliance” has yet to transpire in policy practise, Track II efforts have flourished across the Mediterranean.

Notwithstanding such efforts at reviving civilisational dialogue, we have remained hostage in IR to notions of culture or civilisations as pre-given and unchanging. Richard Ned Lebow’s *A Cultural Theory of International Relations*

offers a significant example.⁹ A work of magisterial scholarship, the book, nonetheless, fails to recognise the role and impact of “non-Western” cultures, societies, traditions or philosophies on “the West”. Instead, Lebow universalises IR in classical Greek concepts only. In so doing, he “eternalises” Anglo-American-European IR, leaving no room for alternative discourses, traditions, norms and practices. Where mainstream IR may acknowledge civilisational encounters, they are seen as a “clash” only between two pristine sets of thought and behaviour.¹⁰

Most problematic about this “clash” scenario, as Amartya Sen has critiqued, is “the presumption of the unique relevance of a singular classification.”¹¹ There is little appreciation of the interactive dynamism between worlds that lead, eventually, to a hybrid legacy. We see this in conflict resolution, intervention and treatment of migrants and the re-integration of the former East Germany into the “Western” fold.¹² Critical IR scholars have responded by tracing the continuities and disruptions between so-called civilised vs barbaric divides. For example, John Hobson has detailed, in the *Eastern Origins of Western Civilization*, centuries of give-and-take between peoples presumed to belong to distant and distinct civilisations.¹³

Notwithstanding the richness of this critical literature, there is, as yet, no satisfactory response to Huntington’s challenge to his critics: “If not

civilizations, what?”¹⁴ Seeking to replace “civilisation” with another equally problematic category may not necessarily be a solution. After all, working through the notion of civilisation allows inquiries into the international politics of a category, its emergence and various uses in the worlds of policy and academia. That said, operating with the notion of civilisation as currently conceptualised is too limiting. Not only does it reinforce the differences between civilisations, thereby marginalising attempts to recognise centuries of give-and-take across and within civilisations, but also the conventional take on civilisations tends to fix in place nationalist reactions outside the West to Orientalist impositions, typically reproducing the violence of such in the process.¹⁵

While IR power centres have treated civilisations as pre-given and unchanging entities, thereby failing to make sense of multiplicities that is “Asia,” scholars have long examined the issue of civilisational encounters. We mention only a small sample here. Research by Gerrit Gong and Shogo Suzuki, for example, on “non-Western” responses to the “standards of civilisation” has brought to light the international politics behind the use of civilisational rhetoric.¹⁶ Antony Anghie has pointed to the ways in which contemporary international law rests upon notions of sovereignty developed through interactions shaped by such “standards”.¹⁷ Cemil Aydin has connected “anti-Westernism” in Asia to “Western” policy-making, showing how

admiration for the “West” eventually turned into disappointment and resentment in response to European powers’ self-serving resort to “standards of civilisation.”¹⁸ And Brett Bowden has tracked the evolution of the idea of “civilisation” from its imperial/ist origins to the contemporary era.¹⁹

We clearly need a fresh take on theorising about civilisations, in general, and “Asia” in particular. IR must recognise the pluralities of and within “Asia”, and its mutual dynamics with the rest of the world. IR must also learn ways of thinking, doing and being in “Asia.” This new theorising must inquire into the enmeshments that have re-produced similarities as well as differences, traditions as well as change within and between what we choose to refer to as “civilisations.” Only in this way can we emancipate IR from its colonialist, imperialist and Cold-War foundations that render international knowledge parochial.

Our special issue for *Perceptions* will be a first step to do so. Please find within the following essays with their respective authors:

- Pinar Bilgin (Bilkent University), “Dialogue of Civilisations: A Critical Security Studies Perspective”. Bilgin invites advocates of “civilisational dialogue” to discourse with students of critical security studies. Both sides are tasked to focus on the ways in which civilizations co-constitute each other through dialogue, how insecurities get constructed within as well as between civilizations, and whether emancipatory practices could be adopted with a view to addressing insecurities of multiple security referents.
- Everita Silina (The New School), “Cosmopolitan Disorders: Ignoring Power, Overcoming Diversity, Transcending Borders”. Silina questions the notion of cosmopolitanism under globalisation. Cosmopolitanism, she argues, amounts to mere elitism, without due considerations of an identity’s intimate dependence on security.
- Payal Banerjee (Smith College), “Energy Security through Privatisation: Policy Insights from Hydroelectric Power Projects (HEPs) in India’s Northeast”. Banerjee shows how the government of India today continues to define energy resources as a crucial component of national security.
- Rafiul Ahmed (Sikkim University), “Anxiety, Violence and the Postcolonial State: Understanding the ‘Anti-Bangladeshi’ Rage in Assam, India.” Ahmed brings the analysis “inside”. A “cartographic anxiety”, he finds, still besets the postcolonial state, leading to violence against and repression of religious minorities.
- Binoda K. Mishra (Centre for International Relations and Development), “Nation-State Problematic in Asia: The South Asian

- Experience”. Mishra argues that the modern state in South Asia has always entwined nationhood with security due to its origins in Western colonialism and imperialism.
- Ching-Chang Chen (Ritsumeikan Asian Pacific University), “History as a Mirror: What Does the Demise of Ryukyu Mean for the Sino-Japanese Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute?” To address this escalating dispute, C. Chen proposes that we need to understand the pre-Westphalian relationship between China and Japan, and the norms that guided state action in this area at that time.
 - Boyu Chen (National Sun Yat-sen University), “Sovereignty or Identity? The Significance of the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute for Taiwan”. B. Chen finds that national identity is neither monolithic nor fixed, as highlighted by Taiwanese responses to the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute. Yet Taiwan’s ambiguity reflects a typical postcolonial conglomeration of pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial identities.
 - John M. Hobson (University of Sheffield), “The Paradox of Eastern Agency”. Postcolonial efforts to “bring Eastern agency in” need to acknowledge that many scientific racist and Eurocentric scholars of various persuasions already award certain levels of agency to Eastern peoples. Accordingly, we need to be extra careful when conceptualising Eastern agency as the antidote to scientific racism and Eurocentrism.
 - Gavan Duffy (Syracuse University), “Justifying Transcultural Studies”. Duffy underscores that the seeds of self-transformation towards a transcultural IR already exist *within* Western social science. This contrasts with extremist views on either side of the ideological spectrum that tout “the West is Best” or “Death to America!”.
 - Josuke Ikeda (University of Toyama, Japan), “The Idea of the ‘Road’ in International Relations Theory”. The concept of a “road,” Ikeda argues, could serve as a metaphor for a post-Western IR. It entails comparative studies of ideas and how they have travelled.
 - L.H.M. Ling (The New School), “Romancing Westphalia: Westphalian IR and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*”. What goes on “inside” and “outside” national borders, Ling contends, need not align geographically given colonial intrusions. Instead, postcolonial IR could articulate world politics culturally and normatively by region. Doing so helps to curb Westphalian hegemony by (1) provincialising the West as one regional world among many and (2) making the Rest visible in all its entwined complexities. Ling refers to the 14th-century Chinese epic *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as one way to signify East Asia as a regional world.

Endnotes

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- 12 Jacinta O'Hagan, "Civilizational Conflict? Looking for Cultural Enemies", *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1995); Roxanne Lynn Doty, *Imperial Encounters: The Politics of Representation in North-South Relations*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Patrick Thaddeus Jackson, *Civilizing the Enemy: German Reconstruction and the Invention of the West*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2006.
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Dialogue of Civilisations: A Critical Security Studies Perspective

Pınar BİLGİN*

Abstract

Civilisational dialogue initiatives are currently considered our best chance to prevent a potential clash between states belonging to different civilisations. Critical approaches to security are concerned with insecurities as experienced by multiple referents, including individuals, social groups, states and the global environment. This article argues that students of critical security studies and proponents of civilisational dialogue initiatives potentially have something to talk about. In presenting a two-step critique of civilisational dialogue initiatives, this article explores such potential, which could allow for further dialogue with a view to addressing insecurities of multiple security referents.

Key Words

Dialogue of civilisations, critical security studies, human rights, security.

Introduction

In the fall of 1998, United Nations (UN) member states agreed on declaring the year 2001 the “UN Year of Dialogue among Civilisations”.¹ One of the major players behind the proposal, then President of Iran Seyyed Mohammed Khātāmī, described the UN initiative as an attempt to counter the primacy of Huntingtonian axioms in world politics. The 9/11 attacks against the United States hampered the UN’s efforts while at the same time created a new impetus for dialogue. That said, while President Khātāmī’s initial proposal portrayed the Dialogue of Civilisations initiative as a way for managing “chaos and anarchy” and seeking “harmony” in world politics,² subsequent revivals of the project explicitly invoked the challenge posed “terrorism” for world security in justifying the need for dialogue.³ The point being is that civilisational dialogue initiatives have their origins in security concerns and have been offered by their proponents as responding to threats to world security.

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Over the years, civilisational dialogue initiatives have received support from the scholarly world as well. For Richard Falk, civilisational dialogue is not merely a “normative effort to appreciate the relevance of the civilisational interpretation of the historical situation, but at the same time seeking to avoid reproducing the Westphalian war system in the emergent inter-civilisational context”.⁴ Consider Fred Dallmayr, who views civilisational dialogue as contributing to efforts towards “strengthening... the prospect of a more peaceful world and more amicable relations between peoples”.⁵ More recently, Marc Lynch has explored whether civilisational dialogue constitutes an instance of an international public sphere in the making (in the Habermasian sense).⁶ Fabio Petito, in turn, has offered civilisational dialogue as an important alternative to those other discourses of world order that fail to consider the need for “reopening and rediscussion of the core of Western-centric and liberal assumptions upon which the normative structure of the contemporary international society is based”.⁷

Without wanting to underestimate the significance of such critical explorations for a peaceful world order amidst rampant fears of a “clash”, the article presents a critical security studies perspective on civilisational dialogue initiatives. Critical security studies are concerned

with insecurities as experienced by multiple referents, including individuals, social groups, states and the global environment. This article argues that students of critical security studies and proponents of civilisational dialogue initiatives potentially have something to talk to each other about. In presenting a two-step critique of civilisational dialogue initiatives, this article explores such potential, which could allow for further dialogue with a view to addressing insecurities of multiple security referents.

Civilisational dialogue initiatives are currently considered our best chance to prevent a potential clash between states belonging to different civilisations.

The growing literature on critical security studies has produced multiple ways to approach security critically.⁸ In what follows, I will be building upon the insights of Aberystwyth School of Critical Security Studies. From an Aberystwyth School perspective, thinking differently about security involves first challenging the ways in which security has traditionally been conceptualised by broadening and deepening the concept and by rejecting the primacy given to the sovereign state as the primary referent for, and agent of, security. Critical approaches also problematise the militarised and zero-sum practices

informed by prevailing discourses and call for a reconceptualising. Second, this perspective rejects the conception of theory as a neutral tool, which merely explains social phenomena, and emphasises the mutually constitutive relationship between theory and practice. What distinguishes the Aberystwyth School from other critical approaches to security is an explicit commitment to emancipatory practices in addressing insecurities as experienced by multiple referents, including individuals, social groups, states and the global environment.⁹

Through pursuing world security as peace between states belonging to different civilisations, “the problem of difference” would be “deferred”.

The first section of the article argues that civilisational dialogue initiatives, in their current conception, overlook insecurities of referents other than those they are seeking to secure (i.e. states). The second section focuses on the notion of dialogue on which civilisational dialogue initiatives rest, and calls for approaching civilisational dialogue in a way that is dialogical not only in ethics but also epistemology as well.¹⁰ The third section highlights untapped potential in civilisational dialogue initiatives as

viewed from a critical security studies perspective.

Overlooking Insecurities of Non-state Referents

From a critical security studies perspective, civilisational dialogue initiatives, given their primary concern with preventing a potential clash between states, come across as prioritising state security to the neglect of other referents. The issue here is not only that they do not prioritise non-state referents’ security, but also that they are not concerned with the potential implications such a state-focused approach would likely have for the security of individuals and social groups. What follows briefly highlights three such instances of insecurity.

One instance is that through focusing on the ontology of civilisation and considering individuals and social groups insofar as they are members of this or that civilisation, civilisational dialogue initiatives risk marginalising other ways of engaging with people and social groups. This is because civilisational dialogue initiatives ultimately locate “the problem of difference” outside civilisations, with little consideration for differences inside. To paraphrase a point Naeem Inayatullah and David Blaney made in another context, projects of civilisational dialogue constitute “a deferral of a genuine recognition, exploration,

and engagement of difference” with difference being “marked and contained” as civilisational difference.¹¹ In other words, through pursuing world security as peace between states belonging to different civilisations, “the problem of difference” would be “deferred”. Such deferral, in turn, could potentially allow for insecurities inside civilisations, including marginalisation of insecurities of those with “interstitial identities”- to invoke Homi K. Bhabha.¹²

Highlighting insecurities as experienced by myriad referents should not be taken as underestimating potential contributions dialogue between civilisations could make.

Second, given prevailing conceptions of “civilisations” as having an unchanging “essence” (an assumption shared by Samuel Huntington and some of his dialogue-oriented critics) there will not be much room left for inquiring into power/knowledge dynamics in the (re)production of differences. Indeed, civilisational dialogue initiatives often fail to acknowledge that “identity is not a fact of society” but a “process of negotiation among people and interest groups”.¹³ More significantly, oftentimes such negotiations themselves are sources of in/security, while at the same time taking identities of people as “pre-given”. As Bill McSweeney has

argued when writing on insecurities in Northern Ireland, “the security problem is not there because people have separate identities; it may well be the case that they have separate identities because of the security problem”.¹⁴

Third, envisioning a world order structured around civilisational essences could potentially amplify the voices of those who dress their rhetoric in terms of cultural “essence”. One concrete instance of such insecurity was observed when Pope Benedict XVI embraced civilisational dialogue initiatives and sought to re-define “Western” civilisation along religious lines. This is not to reduce the former Pope’s interest in dialogue to his “in-house” concerns, but to highlight how engaging in civilisational dialogue allowed Pope Benedict XVI to form alliances with like-minded leaders from other civilisations and justify various policies that overlooked women’s insecurities (among others).¹⁵

Highlighting insecurities as experienced by myriad referents should not be taken as underestimating potential contributions dialogue between civilisations could make. Indeed, I join Fabio Petito in underscoring the need to

acknowledge something like a fundamental ethical-political crisis linked to the present liberal Western civilisation and its expansion, and recognize that dialogue of civilisations seems to enshrine the promise of an answer, or rather to start a path toward an answer.¹⁶

However, what civilisational dialogue initiatives currently offer in terms of contributing to security is a potential, a potential that needs exploring, but with a view to what Friedrich Kratochwil referred to as “interpretative struggles”¹⁷ that are going on within civilisations, and the insecurities of myriad referents that follow.

That said, it is important to note that the proponents of civilisational dialogue do not prioritise non-state referents’ insecurities for a reason. Their thinking is that given the urgency of preventing a potential clash between states belonging to different civilisations, the current insecurities of non-state referents could be postponed till later.¹⁸ Without wanting to underestimate the potential planetary consequences of such a clash, what is also important to remember is, first, that such “short-termism” may not allow for the addressing of medium- to long-term consequences.¹⁹ The steps we take here and now allow some future steps to be taken while disallowing some others. Second, focusing on the short-term as such betrays a non-reflexive approach to security. Non-reflexive approaches to security do not reflect upon insecurities generated as we put various security policies into effect.²⁰ The point is that civilisational dialogue initiatives do not reflect on potential insecurities that may follow the adoption of state-focused security policies as such. Cold War policy-making is a scary but

useful reminder of potential implications (for individuals, social groups and the environment) of adopting such short-termist, state-focused and non-reflexive notions of security.²¹

Dialogical in Ethics but not Epistemology

Civilisational dialogue initiatives, in their current conception, embrace dialogue as ethics but not as epistemology, which, in turn, limits their horizons. In making this point, I build upon Xavier Guillaume’s explication of Bakhtinian notion of dialogue. Critiquing those approaches that adopt a narrow notion of dialogue, Guillaume writes:

This discovery of the “other” within the “self” is a peculiar and narrow approach to dialogism since it only considers dialogue as a “possibility of conversation” between civilisational actors, and not as a general process underlying continuous active and passive interactions.²²

Whereas Bakhtinian dialogism, argues Guillaume, underscores the need for adopting dialogue as ethics and epistemology:²³

Ethically, the completion and perfection of a self is determined by the reflexive and dialogical integration of otherness. This, in turn, is opposed to an unethical approach, which would understand otherness through monological lenses, and thus as an object. Epistemologically, dialogism enables us to tackle the identity-alterity nexus through the existence of a hermeneutical locus-a

concept that draws on the three main characteristics of an utterance (expression, context, and relation) and which I will develop further in the next section-by using its definition as an interweaving of mutually-responsive utterances. A dialogical approach, then, illuminates both the formation and performance of an identity.²⁴

What is at stake is recognising multiple civilisations' contributions to what are popularly portrayed as "Western" ideas and institutions.

An example of monological approach to dialogue was exhibited by Pope Benedict XVI, notes Mustapha Kamal Pasha:

Pope Benedict's recent remarks on the inextricable association between violence and faith as a durable feature of Islam offers a striking example of essentialism's immunization against modernity or globalizing currents, economic integration, cultural flows, or scientific exchange. The other's past, present and future are simply identical.²⁵

In contrast, seeking sociological insights into civilisations would "afford sensitivity to differentiations and distinctions of locale, class, gender or ethnicity" among Muslims.²⁶ Avoiding essentialism, then, needs to go hand in hand with efforts at avoiding monological epistemology. Adopting a dialogical epistemology to look at historical dialogue of civilisations amounts to- in philosopher Susan Buck-Morss's words- "[rejecting] essentialist

ontology and [returning] to critical epistemology".²⁷

While major proponents of dialogue recognise some give-and-take between civilisations, they consider such exchanges to have taken place at the margins, thereby leaving civilisations largely untouched.²⁸ As such, civilisational dialogue initiatives overlook historical dialogue between civilisations. What I mean by historical dialogue is the give-and-take between civilisations that has, throughout the ages, gone beyond surface interaction, as explored by John Hobson in his writings.

What Hobson means by "dialogue" is different from the conception of dialogue that civilisational dialogue initiatives rest upon. For Hobson, dialogue is

a fundamental concept that underpins the non-Eurocentric global-dialogical approach, referring to the ways in which civilisations mutually shape each other as new ideas, technologies and institutions invented in one civilisation diffusion to another.²⁹

As such, Hobson adopts a dialogical epistemology toward imagining "the identity of the West along polycivilisational lines".³⁰

That such give-and-take had taken place centuries ago does not render it a historical curiosity that is inconsequential for present day world politics. What is at stake is recognising multiple civilisations' contributions to what are popularly portrayed as "Western" ideas and

institutions. Such acknowledgement, in turn, would potentially have significant consequences for averting a potential clash and allowing further dialogue.

Stated in less abstract terms, recognising civilisations as dynamic, pluralistic and co-constituted entities allows recognising multiple agency in the emergence of ideas and institutions such as human rights, rationalism and democracy, which are presently viewed by Huntington, as well as some of his critics, as exclusively “Western” inventions.³¹ Indeed, the historical give-and-take between civilisations, Hobson reminds us,

was vital in enabling not just the early phase of the rise of the West but in positively shaping Europe’s cultural identity (especially through the Renaissance)... the Muslims acted as “switchmen” in that they served to retrace the path that European development underwent, helping to put it on an eventual collision course with capitalist modernity. But while the Muslims were vitally important in making and remaking of the West between about 650 and 1500, the progressive baton of global power and influence was then passed on to the Chinese who ran with it right down to the early nineteenth century.³²

Even more relevant for the purposes of this paper is Hobson’s point that, “the very term European ‘Renaissance’ is problematic, since it exaggerates its Ancient Greek foundations and denies its substantial Eastern heritage”.³³ Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen concurs:

There is a chain of intellectual relations that link Western mathematics and science to a collection of distinctly non-Western practitioners. For example, the decimal system, which evolved in India in the early centuries of the first millennium, went to Europe at the end of that millennium via the Arabs. A large group of contributors from different non-Western societies- Chinese, Arab, Iranian, Indian, and others- influenced the science, mathematics, and philosophy that played a major part in the European renaissance and, later, the Enlightenment.³⁴

Hobson makes a similar point about the Reformation and highlights how the idea of “man [as] a free and rational agent” was integral to the works of Islamic scholars and that “these ideas were also strikingly similar to those that inspired Martin Luther and reformation”.³⁵

The point being, writing values and institutions such as human rights and democracy out of the history of civilisations other than “the West” do not only render invisible others’ contributions to the making of (what is popularly referred to as) the “civilised way of life” but also ends up substantiating extremists’ theses. For, it is based on the presumed absence of such values and institutions outside the “West” that Huntingtonians have called for strengthening their own vis-à-vis the rest; likewise Muslim extremists have warned against “Western” plots to export “alien” values (such as democracy or women’s rights as human rights) to the land of Islam and have called for *jihad*.³⁶

In contrast a dialogical approach to civilisational give-and-take would uncover multiple beginnings to human rights norms. Among others, Zehra Kabasakal-Arat has warned against reading the history of human rights norms through the categories of current debates:

Although the current vocabulary of human rights has more easily detectable references in Western philosophical writings, this does not mean that the notion of human rights was alien to other cultures or that the Western cultures and societies have been pro-human rights.³⁷

It is based on the presumed absence of such values and institutions outside the “West” that Huntingtonians have called for strengthening their own vis-à-vis the rest.

Siba N. Grovogui has challenged assumptions regarding the “Western” origins of human rights, and pointed to other imaginaries that could allow expanded domains of human rights.³⁸ Comparing French, American and Haitian revolutions’ different formulations of human rights, Grovogui has maintained that

human rights have multiple genealogies, and it is possible, as often happens in the Global South, to imagine protected human rights as existing outside of Western norms, without negating

the possibility of universalism or universality, which is the appeal of the concept of human rights.³⁹

Meghana Nayak and Eric Selbin’s *De-centering International Relations*, in turn, has highlighted multiple authorship of the human rights convention.⁴⁰ Kabasakal-Arat has provided further evidence:

The Universal Declaration was formulated through debates that involved participants from different cultures. Although representation in the UN Human Rights Commission, which drafted the Universal Declaration, was not global, it was not limited to the Western states either. Two of three main intellectual forces in the drafting subcommittee, Charles Malik from Lebanon, and Peng-chun (P.C.) Chang from China, had their roots in the Middle Eastern and Asian cultures.⁴¹

Finally, Gurminder Bhambra and Robbie Shilliam have pointed to the agency of social movements in different parts of the world who framed their struggles in human rights terms.⁴² Taken together, these writings point to multiple beginnings of what is popularly portrayed as the “Western” origins of human rights, and highlight potential for further and worldwide dialogue on human rights.

This is not to lose sight of the fact that the world has changed since 1948 when the human rights convention was written. Arab representatives to the United Nations at the time (Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia) are

currently under different leadership. There are other state and non-state actors in the Arab world and beyond that vie for shaping Muslim minds. Aziz Al-Azmeh reminds us that whereas late 19th and early 20th century was characterised by Muslim thinkers inquiring into “Reformist Islam”, recent decades have witnessed marginalisation of such efforts.⁴³ As such, highlighting multiple beginnings of human rights norms is not meant to imply their universal acceptance in present-day politics. Rather, the point here is that what renders human rights a contentious issue is not a question of “origins” of ideas about human rights (for we know that there are multiple beginnings),⁴⁴ but present-day contentions of world politics. A dialogical approach to history of civilisations would help uncover historical dialogue of civilisations and allow further dialogue toward addressing insecurities experienced by multiple referents.

A Critical Security Studies Perspective on Civilisational Dialogue?

Students of critical security studies and proponents of civilisational dialogue initiatives potentially have something to

talk to each other about. Critical security studies approaches (broadly conceived) are concerned with insecurities as experienced by multiple referents—individuals, social groups, states and the environment. Those critical approaches that originate from the Aberystwyth School tradition rest on a notion of security as emancipation, understood as the “political-ethical direction” of security scholarship.⁴⁵

Emancipatory approaches are almost always criticised for their reliance on “Western” traditions of thought. Over

Highlighting multiple beginnings of human rights norms is not meant to imply their universal acceptance in present-day politics.

the years, critics have pointed to the ideational origins of critical approaches to security and have argued that they are bound to be of limited use in analysing insecurities

in “non-Western” contexts.⁴⁶ What the critics sometimes overlook is that the notion of emancipation adopted by students of critical security studies pushes the term beyond its Western European origins and conceptualises it as— in Hayward Alker’s turn of phrase—“political convergences on needs, not agreement on foundations”.⁴⁷ Indeed, reflecting on the Enlightenment roots of emancipation, Booth has maintained that “what matters is not where ideas come from but how well they travel.”⁴⁸ Susan Buck-Morss’s remark, made with

reference to the possibility of alliances between critical actors in the aftermath of 9/11, is highly relevant to the discussion here:

...the rejection of Western-centrism does not place a taboo on using the tools of Western thought. On the contrary, it frees the critical tools of the Enlightenment (as well as those of Islam) for original and creative application.⁴⁹

Indeed, a dialogue of civilisations could potentially help us find multiple beginnings of our key notions in different civilisations.

Recently, Jürgen Habermas has identified dialogue between civilisations as a remedy to “Western” roots of our key concepts including emancipation.⁵⁰ Indeed, a dialogue of civilisations could potentially help us find multiple beginnings of our key notions in different civilisations. However, to achieve such an end, civilisational dialogue initiatives would need to embrace dialogue not only as ethics but also epistemology as well. From a Critical Theory perspective, the goal, in Buck-Morss’s words,

is not to “understand” some “other” discourse, emanating from a “civilisation” that is intrinsically different from “our own”. Nor is it merely organizational, to form pragmatic, interest-driven alliances among pre-defined and self-contained

groups. Much less is it to accuse a part of the polity being backward in its political beliefs, or worse, the very key embodiment of evil. Rather, what is needed is to rethink the entire project of politics within the changed condition of a global public sphere- and to do this democratically, as people who speak different political languages, but whose goals are nonetheless the same: global peace, economic justice, legal equality, democratic participation, individual freedom, mutual respect.⁵¹

Students of critical security studies, in turn, could adopt a twofold strategy. On the one hand, they could focus on highlighting how emancipation, to quote Booth,

As an ideal and a rallying cry, in practice, was prominent in many nineteenth-century struggles for independence or for freedom from legal restrictions; notable examples included Jews in Europe, slaves in the United States, blacks in the West Indies, the Irish in the British state, and serfs in Russia.⁵²

This would also allow moving civilisational dialogue initiatives from their current focus on state security. On the other hand, students of critical security studies could inquire into multiple beginnings of their core ideas (as with human rights, see above).⁵² Towards this end, approaching civilisational dialogue as ethics *and* epistemology carries significant potential.

Conclusion

Civilisational dialogue initiatives are currently viewed as our best chance to

prevent a potential clash between states belonging to different civilisations. Critical security studies are concerned with insecurities as experienced by individuals, social groups, states and the global environment. In this article I have argued that students of critical security

studies and proponents of civilisational dialogue initiatives potentially have something to talk about toward rendering possible further dialogue with a view to addressing insecurities of multiple security referents (including states).

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Cosmopolitan Disorders: Ignoring Power, Overcoming Diversity, Transcending Borders

Everita SILINA*

Abstract

The Cosmopolitan discourse on global governance invokes a global, normative ethic. It presumes a kind of shared civic identity that ignores the burdens of history, obstacles of geography and diversity of peoples, uniting all under a set of identifiable global problems. Critical scholars have moved away from such universalism by advancing their own brand of Cosmopolitan ethic, one anchored in a spatially limited and bottom-up definition of the good life. Yet critical scholars continue to emphasise individual agency, underplaying the structured nature of global inequalities. Consequently, they reinforce, rather than challenge, the current global order. I consider the implications of these models of Cosmopolitanism for issues of power, identity and agency. Any approach to global governance, I argue, must begin by analysing the relationship between identity and (in)security.

Key Words

Cosmopolitanism, liberalism, critical cosmopolitanism, global governance, identity, power, security.

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Globalisation

The discourse on global governance tends to dissociate time and space. Based on broadly Cosmopolitan principles, it invokes a global normative ethic, a kind of shared civic identity, that ignores the burdens of history, obstacles of geography and the diversity of peoples, uniting all under a set of identifiable global problems. Despite the proliferation of Cosmopolitan arguments and models of governance, it is not an easy task to present a succinct account of current Cosmopolitan theory. Every single text on Cosmopolitanism starts with an observation or recantation that there is nothing resembling a consensus regarding “what constitutes Cosmopolitanism, who can be described as Cosmopolitan or where Cosmopolitanism is to be found”.¹ And no less than a dozen strands of Cosmopolitanism exist.² In what follows, I focus on the dominant approaches to Cosmopolitanism and their critical alternatives.

At its core, Cosmopolitanism believes that all people have equal worth and dignity as members of a common human

family. This commitment to the bond of shared humanity leads Cosmopolitans to call into question the moral significance of national (or any other) borders and identities attached to them. At best, territorial boundaries have only derivative value.³ The argument is traced back to the Greek Stoics and Cynics who are credited with coining the term-Cosmopolitan- to describe their new identity that transcends the boundaries of the *polis* to embrace the *cosmos*, the only true community. According to David Held, the Stoics believed that “[e]ach person lives in a local community and in a wider community of human ideals, aspirations, and arguments”. Of these, humanity is the only moral identity and association, the former being merely an accident of birth.⁴

The exaggerated role assigned to Europe, and now its institutional progeny, the European Union (EU), does not advance the impartiality claims of Cosmopolitans.

More recently, Cosmopolitans have taken inspiration from the writings of the 18th-century German philosopher, Immanuel Kant. He proposed the idea of a global civil society and an international order composed of republics or democracies “operating

under the rule of a Cosmopolitan law”.⁵ Kant saw the emergence of such an order as a natural progression of history, an expression of “the fundamentally moral nature of humanity”.⁶ He perceived the interactions between states to be driven by the same “state of nature” logic for which Hobbes had argued the necessity of a social contract in the domestic sphere. All states would strike a global social contract, Kant extrapolated, voluntarily entering into a binding agreement to limit their sovereignty and power. A global civil society would buttress from below and Cosmopolitan international law from above. The result would be nothing less than an end to all wars.⁷

Kant’s recommendations seem particularly relevant in an era of rapid globalisation and the perceived decline of the state. Eşref Aksu sees Kant’s writings on “perpetual peace” as laying the conceptual ground for the current theorising on various global governance arrangements, both in their normative and institutional guises.⁸ Kant’s belief in the principles of reason and his emphasis on global consciousness and understanding appeal to many who seek “novel” solutions for “inter-cultural” problems in a post 9-11 world. Kant understood that a better international order could not rely on international law alone. Its success required the right attitudes and dispositions. Reason would be a way to escape from “dogma and

unvindicated authority”.⁹ According to Kant, only impartial reasoning could foster a productive dialogue and mutual understanding. Human ability to reason bestows on us a *Cosmopolitan right*. This means that an individual has “the capacity to present oneself and be heard within and across political communities; ... the right to enter dialogue without artificial constraint and delimitation”.¹⁰ Presumably, Kant believed that this open-ended communication would lead to more worldly attitudes and the identity of a world citizen.

When borders seem less permanent and technological developments in communications allow millions around the world to connect easily, distance and separation (or even isolation) lose their power to divide and alienate.

Kant’s argument is echoed in John Rawls’s *The Law of Peoples*.¹¹ Though the book contributes poorly to the debate and remains woefully out of touch with a rapidly changing world,¹² what remains important, particularly in Rawls’ definition of justice as fairness, is the intimate connection between Cosmopolitanism and Liberalism, specifically the American brand.¹³ Charles Jones notes: “Cosmopolitanism

is a moral perspective that is impartial, universal, individualist, and egalitarian”.¹⁴ Much like Liberalism, Kantian Cosmopolitanism aims to reconcile (and promote) liberal notions of individualism with multiculturalism and respect for value pluralism. In Ulrich Beck’s recent interpretation, Cosmopolitanism differs from nationalism and globalism/universalism in that “[i]t neither orders differences hierarchically nor dissolves them, but accepts them as such, indeed invests them with a positive value”.¹⁵ Cosmopolitanism perceives “others as different *and* at the same time as equal”;¹⁶ it dismisses “either/or” conjunctions and permits a “both/and” principle to operate, embracing the “unity in diversity” outlook of liberal pluralism. Quite simply, nothing in Cosmopolitanism’s core tenets or its multiple incarnations conflicts with the liberal agenda and its principles. But, as I argue, this means Cosmopolitanism suffers from all the same dilemmas and criticisms- and more!- that afflict Liberalism. Indeed, Liberalism’s dilemmas now drive a wedge among Cosmopolitans. When the clash between local and global cultures cannot be avoided, Cosmopolitans divide into two separate camps, each privileging one level of association over the other. While Liberalism has tried to negotiate the divergent pulls of individual and group identities, Cosmopolitanism has for the most part abandoned any attempt to understand the nature of

identity. Nor are Cosmopolitans able to escape the accusation that a common human culture of individualised and rights-bearing citizens is just another hegemonic attempt to impose the values of a particular culture and society onto the rest of the world. The exaggerated role assigned to Europe, and now its institutional progeny, the European Union (EU), does not advance the impartiality claims of Cosmopolitans. Finally, like Liberalism, Cosmopolitanism suffers from an under-theorised notion of power, especially through economic interest. Therefore, Cosmopolitanism responds weakly to the rapid integration of global markets and the spread of a corporate homogenised culture that poses a threat to any notion of diversity.

In short, both Liberalism and Cosmopolitanism ignore structural inequalities and their effect on societies and identities. Consequently, they tend to reinforce rather than challenge the dominant power imbalance in the global order. Any approach to global governance, I argue, must begin by analysing the relationship between identity and (in)security.

Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism reflects, above all else, a frame of mind. In historic accounts, a Cosmopolitan is often portrayed as a worldly person (usually

male) influenced by many cultures and committed to none. He is a child of the modern era of mobility and unlimited choice in everything from what one wears to who one is and what identity one creates. He is a traveller, a global tourist and a connoisseur of all the diverse experiences that the world has to offer. An essential characteristic of a Cosmopolitan is his open orientation to the rich cultural tapestry of humanity. Along with this liberal attitude comes the sense that he is equally at home anywhere in the world. No place or community claims special and permanent loyalty from him. In this sense, a Cosmopolitan is a figure who is typically associated with “the comfortable culture of middle-class travellers, intellectuals and business people”.¹⁷

Many emphasise the virtues of Cosmopolitanism in a globalising world order. When borders seem less permanent and technological developments in communications allow millions around the world to connect easily, distance and separation (or even isolation) lose their power to divide and alienate. A resulting physical and virtual mobility means that cultural interactions are more frequent, leading to hybridisation, exchange and understanding. Most students of globalisation assume that the growing interconnectivity among different groups of people results in more frequent dialogue, which grants greater access to alternative perspectives. This

inter-subjective exchange of meaning figures essentially in the formation of empathy and understanding. They agree with Cosmopolitan authors like Salman Rushdie who “celebrate hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs”; they “rejoice in mongrelization and fear the absolutism of the Pure. Mélange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world. It is the greatest possibility that mass migration gives the world...”¹⁸ Cosmopolitans believe that mere exposure to other cultures and ways of being is sufficient to nudge one towards a Cosmopolitan identity. A journey has a transformative effect of turning a traveller into a thoughtful and reflexive world citizen.

An insight clearly lacking from Cosmopolitan arguments is a recognition that identity is inextricably linked to a sense of security.

Nonetheless, identity remains an unsettled topic for most Cosmopolitans. There is little agreement on a moral ordering of different levels of identity. *Thick* Cosmopolitans believe that only global identities are valuable, moral and

significant; local ones, as Nussbaum argues, are nonessential. This, in turn, leads to the claim that local identities cannot and should not take priority over broader human loyalties. Our conationals, therefore, do not have any extra-claims on our allegiance, loyalty or assistance. Local attachments and conflicts suggest a return to barbarism. Hence, to the extent that Cosmopolitans are interested in identity at all, it is to overcome these limits.

Thin Cosmopolitans object to such unflinching impartiality and universalistic identity formation. Some point out that our attachments are parochial and grow outward. In embracing universal affiliation, we risk “[ending] up nowhere- feeling at home neither at home nor in the world”.¹⁹ Or as Heidegger observed, “the frantic abolition of all distance brings no nearness”.²⁰ Nor is it clear that embracing a conceptually borderless world, where local identities are considered shameful and backwards, will lead to anything other than utter alienation. As many cultural critics have observed, we already lead very individualised lives.²¹ The expansion of human rights globally has granted many the freedom of a rights-bearing individual; the spread of global markets has further unravelled our connections to various communities, including familial ties. The growth of these global markets certainly has not led towards any common sense

of responsibility among free market actors. In fact, some would argue that the marketisation of all human spheres has diminished the power of all appeals to a common identity, however broadly imagined. “Intimacy”, Martin Jacques has argued, “is a function of time and permanence”.²² Deep loyalties cannot simply be engineered and the breaking down of borders that separate us may not generate any positive feelings among us. Intimacy “rests on mutuality and unconditionality. It is rooted in trust. As such, it is the antithesis of the values engendered by the market”. If he is correct that “[w]e live in an ego-market society”, how can we generate the necessary commitment to human flourishing implied in *thick* Cosmopolitanism? Nussbaum and other *thick* Cosmopolitans presume that moral arguments alone can establish a sense of commitment and care for the well-being of others that usually exists between members of small communities. But as Jacques points out, although “[o]ur relationships may be more Cosmopolitan... they are increasingly transient and ephemeral”.²³

Despite the rhetoric in favour of global regimes, at the moment states are the only political structures that can mitigate the devastating externalities of the global market.

Cosmopolitans fail to recognise that material considerations and context perforate cultural interactions. Culture is intimately connected to materiality. Here, most Cosmopolitan thinkers are unable or unwilling to reflect critically on their own social status in local, regional and global contexts. As Sypnowich recognises, the Cosmopolitan stance is one of inequality *vis-à-vis* the rest of the human community. “[T]he Cosmopolitan is typically a privileged person, who has access to foreign travel, some knowledge of art and the means for enjoying it, who possesses sophisticated tastes and a cultivated, open mind”.²⁴ The relatively privileged position of most academics in Western democracies makes them natural allies and advocates of the Cosmopolitan ethic. It is puzzling that the very people who write about a Cosmopolitan ethic for everyone else are unable to reflect on their own social, economic and cultural embeddedness and recognise that “those who express mistrust of Cosmopolitanism, however bigoted and pernicious their views, might well be giving expression to a resentment of cultural inequality that is spawned by material inequality”.²⁵ Hence, an insight clearly lacking from Cosmopolitan arguments is a recognition that identity is inextricably linked to a sense of security. A Cosmopolitan identity owes much to the sense of security and permanence provided by the socio-economic and cultural support systems

that allow individuals to venture beyond the immediate and the familiar.

Note, for example, America's economic dominance. Not only does it mean that the world's wealth is unevenly distributed but it also normalises the vulnerability of cultural practices in underdeveloped countries to the behemoth of Western consumerism.²⁶ While Appiah is willing to concede the overwhelming presence of American pop culture in remote corners of the world, without a theory of global economic order he is unable to link the presence of American goods and the influence of American practices to any clear power inequalities.²⁷ The most he can concede is that the US benefits from its sheer size and economies of scale and that more open trade is good.

This limited understanding of structures and actors that wield power in the global order betrays an equally limited notion of power. Cosmopolitanism, like Liberalism, tends to equate power and coercive force with the direct power of the state. Most Cosmopolitan thinkers perceive the state as an embodiment of all that is wrong with the current world order. Yet, the focus on the state as the main culprit of the 21st century is unfortunate. It tends to equate all major problems associated with modern society with the rise of the nation-state. Hence, they find themselves in an uncomfortable situation of having to argue against the only viable actor that can put into effect the very policies dear to the Cosmopolitan

cause. Human rights enforcement and universal legal principles such as R2P depend entirely on state enforcement.²⁸ Similar observations can be made about the state's role in social redistribution. Despite the rhetoric in favour of global regimes, at the moment states are the only political structures that can mitigate the devastating externalities of the global market. Finally, by directing all their critiques against the nation-state, Cosmopolitans underestimate the structural role played by other forces in shaping the international order. Tara McCormack underscores that much of the critical agenda has become part of the mainstream with global norms like the R2P enshrined at the highest level of global governance organisations.²⁹

Cultural/Critical Cosmopolitanism

In contrast, Boon and Delanty see Europe, for example, as a dynamic space.³⁰ It cannot be reduced either to European nation-states or equated with some broader global mission. Instead, Europeanisation is something much more multi-layered and polycentric. It relates simultaneously to local and global elements, it exists "*both within and beyond* the boundaries of the nation state".³¹ To them, Europe represents "a newly emerging social reality", criss-crossing discourses and identities and giving rise to various socio-cognitive

transformations.³² Rather than undermining national identities and eroding the foundations of nation states, “Europeanisation” involves a cultural logic of self-transformation. This “self-reflexive development of one’s social, cultural and political subjectivity” is a learning process that might lead to self-transformation.³³ In other words, through the process of Europeanisation, Europeans are learning that identities are not stable or fixed but are always changing and adapting and are called into question by the transformation process itself. Indeed, even Europe itself has no substantive cultural or social identity, since its subjectivity too is an ambivalent concept.³⁴ The new post-national belonging is an empowering development for in recognising the fluid and open-ended nature of identity and borders, it gives force to those categories disadvantaged by the concept of territorial citizenship-migrants and ethnic minorities.³⁵

Without a proper accounting of power and the nature of politics, dialogical Cosmopolitanism remains an academic distraction only.

Finally, Boon and Delanty see Europeanisation as springing forth from creative tensions between “the inside and

the outside of our affiliations”.³⁶ They agree with Beck and Grande that most dichotomies no longer usefully mark understandings of the fluidity of the current epoch. We must adopt a new frame of analysis: border thinking. “In the context of Europe, border thinking (or the upsurge of polyvocality) amounts to an increasing awareness of the vacillation of borders- of the *vaporization* [emphasis added] of old established certainties”.³⁷ This radical uncertainty leads us to realise that we, too, are borders “in that we are not quite this nor quite that”.³⁸ According to Boon and Delanty, the loss of certainty is positive for it constitutes a new discursive space, allowing us to embrace more communicative logic.³⁹

Similarly, Chris Rumford offers a concept of “Critical Cosmopolitanism”. To Rumford, Europe presents an excellent counter-hegemonic discourse to globalisation. Like Boon and Delanty, Rumford conceives of Europe as a fluid space, a borderland, where different borders are constantly being reconstituted by different actors and increasingly by citizens themselves.⁴⁰ Similarly, Rumford sees this process of Europe’s Cosmopolitanisation as an emancipatory project: that is, a release from the narrow constraints of national identity and national belonging.

But this cultural interpretation lacks any notion of structural power. Emancipation thus does not envision freedom from the constraints of the

neo-liberal economic order or those imposed by poverty and inequality. Cultural/Critical Cosmopolitans do not see in migrants economic actors fleeing destitution. For Cultural Cosmopolitans, these represent only challenges to the rigid territoriality and identity resulting from the nation-state system.

In Greece, the electoral showing of Golden Dawn bluntly reminds us of how, under the right conditions, even the crudest forms of xenophobic nationalism can seem a “progressive” alternative to the Liberalism of an integrated EU.

In this way, Cultural/Critical Cosmopolitanism fails to engage with the very categories it seeks to undermine with its critical perspective. Culture, identity, belonging and territoriality (borders) all form the core of cultural arguments, yet none of the writers contributing to the debate offer a clear genealogy of these essential concepts. Boon and Delanty recognise that Nussbaum’s radical critique of local attachments is problematic for our ideas of political mobilisation but they proceed, similarly, with a claim that we have no stable identities left. This chronic uncertainty seems not very different in its political implications from Nussbaum’s

universalism; in fact, it might lead to psychological developments that are more dangerous and destructive of all genuine political life than is remoteness induced by moral Cosmopolitanism. Hence, while cultural Cosmopolitans embrace radical uncertainty and celebrate increasing insecurity, they fail to consider the possibility that these states of being are not compatible with any stable notion of the self. The embrace of insecurity and uncertainty advocated by Critical Cosmopolitans may produce the toxic localism that they seek to overcome. The rise of the Golden Dawn party in Greece, for example, cannot lead us to such a sanguine position on radical uncertainty.⁴¹ Furthermore, none of these discussions distinguish between a process of Europeanisation that is freely chosen and one that is so clearly imposed by other forces and actors. Hence, while some might celebrate “hybrid identities”, many have no choice in the matter. The latter’s experience with European transformation has been and remains highly disempowering. Finally, as an analytic, Cultural/Critical Cosmopolitanism is short on praxis. At times, it appears to be of no immediate import beyond academic musings. The emphasis on dialogical Cosmopolitanism and global discourse communities contributes usefully to a debate on the nature of democracy in post-national world but a practical import remains missing. As Duncan Kelly says, while

such conversations are crucial, “Politics as endless conversation... ultimately leads to a neutered discussion”.⁴² Without a proper accounting of power and the nature of politics, dialogical Cosmopolitanism remains an academic distraction only.

Conclusion

As Gideon Ranchman notes, “[t]he idea that the European Union might represent the culmination of world history is depressing”.⁴³ Certainly, today’s debates in Europe, about how to deal with the crises in Greece and Spain, who is responsible for the euro’s poor performance and the lack of economic growth, and the proper relationship with Europe’s internal Others, should leave any Cosmopolitan dispirited. All these debates are necessary and significant. But contrary to Beck’s assessment, they do not constitute a critically engaged and reflexive public sphere. The proposals that have been adopted for various economic solutions signal a return to pre-crisis austerity measures and an overall neoliberal agenda. This is hardly a hallmark of critical engagement with the problems that caused the crisis in the first place. Inability to address societal fears about the economic situation has certainly contributed to the rise of far-right parties and attitudes that a few decades ago would have existed mostly on the fringes of society. Today, far-

right parties are making steady inroads in the core countries of the EU and are forming alliances across state boundaries to solidify their appeal and political muscle. In Greece, the electoral showing of Golden Dawn bluntly reminds us of how, under the right conditions, even the crudest forms of xenophobic nationalism can seem a “progressive” alternative to the Liberalism of an integrated EU. Cosmopolitan models for all their variety do not engage with these realities and do not offer a workable answer for the forms of governance that could offer a chance for a different future. Even critical versions of Cosmopolitanism remain stubbornly uninterested in the enormous structural power exercised by the global economy and its agents.

As I have argued throughout, most of the problems faced by Cosmopolitan models of global governance are imported directly from its theoretical foundation in Liberalism. At its core, Cosmopolitanism seeks to identify a common first principle of co-existence upon which to build the institutional framework to resolve thorny issues such as “the criteria of inclusion/exclusion, the nature of the society/community to be governed, and the similarity of interests/principles of the subjects of governance”.⁴⁴ Like Liberalism, Cosmopolitanism’s emphasis on individual agency focuses on the power that constrains individual choice (including the choice of identity), through the coercive power of the state.

Most Cosmopolitans, therefore, have a difficult time recognising the insecurities created by economic and financial globalisation. Indeed, free trade and the market are typically listed among the core values to be embraced by Cosmopolitan commitments.

The emphasis on consensus, too often hides the fact that there are clear winners and losers in a globally integrated order.

Yet ironically, Cosmopolitans and Liberals overlook human agency. Most people in most societies cannot, in fact, choose among competing visions of reality and future. Despite the platitudes that we get from Cosmopolitan writers, choice has little to do with how globalisation is perceived and how it appears in people's lives. What happens to identity communities under the stress of a violent conflict provides a quick glimpse into the nature of the relationship between identity and insecurity that might be instructive. What we see in Darfur, former Yugoslavia, and again in Syria, is an increased pre-eminence of identity ties as insecurity increases. In Sudan, even prior to the onset of the Darfur crisis, "a half-century of brutal military confrontation has sharpened the place of race and religion in the conflicts".⁴⁵ As the citizens of Sarajevo found out in 1995, once the bullets start flying and

the bodies are piling up, the only rational choice is to retreat to one's identity group even where strong cross-community ties had existed prior to the conflict. The relationship between identity and security provides crucial insight into the nature of societal relations and their breakdown and caution us against over emphasis on flexibility and uncertainty in the formation of self-understanding. Indeed, emphasis on the fluid nature of identity can lead to a great sense of ontological insecurity as person's stable sense of self is eroded. This in turn can lead to a retreat into a more rigid identity.

We cannot reduce politics to a game of catch-up and a rubber stamp for the "naturalised" economic order. Much of what passes for vigorous accounts of analytic thinking in today's literature on global governance is plagued by an odd revulsion for all things political. Cosmopolitans argue against the very notion of power or interest-based politics. They see the post-modern era as a dawn of a new, more conciliatory, more benign, less violent and less contentious politics based on mutual recognition of universal commonalities and a consensus culture. The emphasis on consensus, however, too often hides the fact that there are clear winners and losers in a globally integrated order. A truly critical approach to the problem of cross-cultural engagement would recognise that we need secure foundations to engage each other as equals.

Endnotes

- 1 Chris Rumford, "Globalisation: Cosmopolitanism and Europe", in Chris Rumford (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism and Europe*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2007, p. 1.
- 2 Here is a small sample of variety of Cosmopolitanisms occupying the debate in the current literature: Kantian legal Cosmopolitanism, moral, cultural, civic, rooted, methodological, democratic, realist (or Cosmopolitan realism), populist, actual existing, "cool", critical, new, capitalist, thin (or weak), thick (or strong), layered, "dialogic", "distributive", embedded and embodied, impartialist, aesthetic, institutional Cosmopolitanism, "cosmo-lite" and even "Cosmopolitanisation". Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe*, translated by Ciaran Cronin, Cambridge, London, Polity, 2007; Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse, "Globalisation", in Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2005; David Held, "Principles of Cosmopolitan Order", in Brock and Brighouse (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*; Andrew Dobson, "Thick Cosmopolitanism", *Political Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1 (March 2006), p. 165-184; Nigel Harris, *The Return of Cosmopolitan Capital: Globalisation, the State and War*, London, I.B. Taurus, 2003; Vivienne Boon and Gerard Delanty, "Cosmopolitanism and Europe: Considerations and Contemporary Approaches", in Rumford (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism and Europe*; Eleonore Kofman, "Figures of the Cosmopolitan: Privileged Nationals and National Outsiders", in Rumford (ed.), *Cosmopolitanism and Europe*; Chris Rumford, *Cosmopolitan Spaces: Europe, Globalization, Theory*, New York, Routledge, 2008.
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- 6 Boon and Delanty, "Cosmopolitanism and Europe", p. 21.
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- 8 Eşref Aksu, *Early Notions of Global Governance: Selected Eighteenth-Century Proposals for "Perpetual Peace" – with Rousseau, Bentham and Kant unabridged*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2008, pp. 1-11.

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- 11 See for example essays in Gilian Brock and Harry Brighouse (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*.
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- 14 Charles Jones, *Global Justice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, cited in Christine Sypnowich, "Cosmopolitans, Cosmopolitanism, and Human Flourishing", in Brock and Brighouse (eds.), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*, p. 56.
- 15 Beck and Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe*, p. 13.
- 16 Ibid.
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- 18 Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-1991*, London, Granta Books, 1991, p. 394, cited in Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2006, p. 112.
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- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Sypnowich, "Cosmopolitans, Cosmopolitanism, and Human Flourishing", p. 57.
- 25 Ibid., p. 58.
- 26 Ibid., p. 71.

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28 Focus on human rights, human security and other individual-based normative principles has highlighted the gaps in and put a pressure on existing state institutions that fail to ensure equal and effective protection of rights. R2P puts a particular emphasis on the positive obligation of states towards the citizens as a condition of sovereignty.

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31 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

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34 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

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Energy Security through Privatisation: Policy Insights from Hydroelectric Power Projects (HEPs) in India's Northeast¹

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Abstract

The question of India's energy security, and by extension growth and national development, has been addressed in recent years through extensive power sector reforms organised around the modalities of privatisation and deregulation. Such policies have incentivised the entry of independent power producers as important stakeholders in the energy sector and helped establish a specific convergence between two arenas: that is, the linking of energy security imperatives with the commercialisation of natural resources and development projects. Based on empirical research in India's northeastern Himalayan region, this paper reviews the country's hydroelectric power policies, their recent implementation methods and the range of socio-economic and ecological concerns that have surfaced through anti-dam movements in response to hydroelectric power projects (HEPs). This paper suggests that the instances of socio-economic dislocations and ecological hazards ensuing from development projects like the HEPs, specifically given the existence of state-mandated counter-mechanisms to prevent such problems, are not cases of "implementation gaps", but rather are manifestations of a deeper crisis in the policy framework that has prioritised the commercialisation of resources and privatisation of mega-projects to achieve energy security.

Key Words

Energy security, development, India, HEP.

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Introduction

Many contemporary discussions on India's future prospects as an engine of growth within the cluster of emerging economies, particularly in the context of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, focus on the subject of energy. Whether in terms of energy deficits or an increasing carbon footprint due to rapid development and energy use, both India and China, and increasingly Brazil and Russia, get placed at the centre of international debates on energy needs and consumption.² In 2002, the Indian Planning Commission estimated that the country's demand for energy is expected to increase by at least 350% over the next two decades.³ Indian policy-makers and their international counterparts in development fields have been fairly consistent in emphasising the role of hydroelectricity as the ideal energy source to meet this demand in view of the dual context of market expansion and the need to harness renewable *green* energy.⁴ Government policy-implementation measures in India have increasingly reflected this perspective. A series of

new state guidelines and commitments have subsequently sanctioned the construction of an unprecedented number of hydroelectric power projects (HEPs) and dams across the country. Moreover, the decades following the post-1991 economic liberalisation (broadly, the New Economic Policy) have also witnessed an episodic but extensive privatisation of the energy sector. These reforms have created for many private companies a new opportunity to expand their repertoire of operations and enter the hydropower and thermal sectors as power producers.⁵ A range of incentives and promotional packages- including key policy changes favouring companies' ability to sell power based on market principles- reversed previous entry barriers and state controls, and welcomed private developers into the hydropower sector as important stakeholders. Given that the arrival of private HEPs represented the very lucrative prospect of revenue generation, individual state governments have persuaded the newly emerging power companies to invest in their regions.

India's high economic growth rates, combined with increased power production since the mid-1990s, have also translated into extensive demand for new infrastructure and raw materials. An unprecedented rate of natural resource exploitation has ensued as a result. Both public sector units and private companies have intensified the extraction

of resources from forests, mines, water-bodies and coastal areas, contributing to serious ecological problems and conflicts with communities over ownership rights, displacement and compensation. In an effort to address social inequality in general and avoid mega-project induced displacements and environmental problems in particular, the Indian state has implemented a larger number of protective measures. The consensus from past and present research, however, is that such policies have not successfully served the majority of those affected by development projects.⁶

A series of new state guidelines and commitments have subsequently sanctioned the construction of an unprecedented number of hydroelectric power projects (HEPs) and dams across the country.

The method of dealing with India's energy needs via the modality of privatisation has not only incentivised the entry of independent power producers as key stakeholders, but also established a specific link between two arenas: the imperative of energy security has become aligned with the push towards the commercialisation of development projects and natural resources. Based on

empirical research in India's northeastern Himalayan region, this article takes a closer look at India's hydroelectric power policies, their implementation methods and the socio-economic and ecological concerns that have surfaced in response to the HEPs over the last decade.⁷ The urgency of these concerns, specifically given the presence of state-mandated counter-measures to prevent such problems, reveals a deeper crisis in the development logic that upholds that the privatisation of investments in mega-projects that are vital mechanisms for achieving energy security.

The Policy Framework: Hydroelectric Power (HEP) Projects and Dams in India

Indian policy-makers and leaders in the post-1947 independence era had placed immense hope, often following Western development experts' advice, on the capacity of hydroelectric power plants and large dams to generate electricity and harness water for irrigation and industry. Investments in such capital-intensive mega-projects under state leadership were thus viewed as the pathway to development. The number of large dams increased from 300 in 1947 to over 4,000 in 2000 (the majority being irrigation dams). Although hydroelectricity represented about 50% of India's power supply in the 1960s, its contribution began to fall over time. By

the early 1970s, the share of hydropower declined to 44% and decreased further to 25% over the successive decades (partly as other power sources got developed). More recent data from the Ministry of Power (2010) indicate the following distribution for the different sources of electricity in India: hydropower represents 25% (37,086 MW), thermal power contributes 65% (106,433 MW), nuclear power provides 2.9 % (4,560 MW), and renewable energy sources cover 7.7% (16,429 MW), while the share of small scale hydropower stood at 2,820 MW.⁸

Both public sector units and private companies have intensified the extraction of resources from forests, mines, water-bodies and coastal areas, contributing to serious ecological problems and conflicts with communities over ownership rights, displacement and compensation.

Development needs during the post-1991 liberalisation era, along with widespread concerns about the damaging effects of potential energy deficits in a rapidly growing economy, prompted the Indian government to review the country's energy policies.

The state has subsequently proceeded to implement various reforms in the power sector, wherein the promotion of hydroelectric projects acquired a renewed emphasis. More importantly, a pro-market orientation became vital to the restructuring of the power sector. The Policy for Hydro Power Development of 1998 placed hydropower as “the most economic and preferred source of electricity” for the country’s development.⁹ Specific “Policy Instruments” underscored in this instalment of measures prioritised the role of private investments in hydro-projects. The reform objectives identified for “accelerating the pace” of hydro power development included the following: ongoing emphasis on hydropower in future Plan Periods; increasing the role of private investment in hydropower generation; and, building a tripartite partnership involving the central administration, the state governments and the corporate sector.¹⁰ Overall, the policy measures introduced during the 1990s and early 2000s have facilitated the gradual privatisation and deregulation of certain core functions- in areas such as power generation, transmission and distribution- that were previously under the authority and management of the State Electricity Boards, or SEBs. The Electricity Act (2003) expedited these processes by permitting “direct commercial relationships between generating companies and consumers/

traders”, which then enabled the entry of corporate stakeholders as independent power producers.¹¹

A review of policy documents and forums on India’s energy concerns reveals the unmistakable articulation of a link between the northeast region’s hydropower potential and the country’s energy security.

The Indian Prime Minister’s “50,000 MW Hydroelectric Initiative”, launched in May 2003, imparted fresh momentum to the country’s prospects in hydropower generation. With a sanction from the Ministry of Power, India’s Central Electricity Authority (CEA) formulated the initiative and launched the project by commissioning a series of what are called the Preliminary Feasibility Report (PFR) of Hydroelectric Schemes. Seven state-affiliated public sector consultants prepared PFRs, which identified a target 162 HEPs in 16 states nation-wide, with an aggregate installed capacity of 50,560 MW, to be executed over the 11th and 12th Five-Year Plans between 2007 and 2017. This project would require an estimated US \$60 billion during the proposed 10-year timeline. To further expedite India’s hydropower potential, the government charted an updated policy framework

under the New Hydropower Policy of 2008, which advanced the state's commitments towards the HEPs and invited private sector participation.¹² The policy statement clarified this vision as follows:

Even though public sector organisations would continue to play an important role in the development of new schemes, this alone would not be adequate to develop the vast remaining hydro potential. Greater private investment through IPPs [independent power producers] and joint ventures would be encouraged in the coming years and atmosphere conducive for attracting private sector funds would be provided.¹³

The Controversy of HEPs in India's Northeast

India's northeast- a region which has historically been under-represented in the mainstream of national political priorities- has attracted prime attention in discussions on energy security over the last decade.¹⁴ Recent estimates suggest that the northeast region, endowed with about 37% of India's river-waters, has the potential of contributing approximately 41.5% of the country's hydropower. The World Bank, a regular contributor of knowledge on India's development and energy issues, projected that the region will be placed at the forefront of India's hydropower generation over the course of the country's 13th and 14th Five-Year Plans between 2020-2030.¹⁵ Other

studies total the northeast's hydroelectric generation capacity at 59,000 MW of India's total hydropower potential of 84,044 MW (a total which is based on a 60% load factor and would thus roughly equal 148,000 MW of total installed capacity).¹⁶ Currently, the region hosts about 168 HEPs, either in operation or in various phases of construction. These enumerations have earned the northeast a new designation: India's "future powerhouse".¹⁷ Of the 162 HEP schemes identified in the feasibility reports for the 50,000 MW Hydroelectric Initiative, a large share of the 72 projects have been proposed for the northeast, particularly in the states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, representing a substantial area in the eastern Himalayan mountain ranges and forests.¹⁸ Furthermore, a review of policy documents and forums on India's energy concerns reveals the unmistakable articulation of a link between the northeast region's hydropower potential and the country's energy security. The Pasighat Proclamation on Power adopted during the North East Council's Sectoral Summit on the Power Sector in 2007 is a notable example in this regard.¹⁹ The definition of what counts as a mega-project- and therefore qualifies for policy measures and special provisions under this status- has been recalibrated for this region's projects in favourable terms. For the eight northeastern states (and Jammu and Kashmir in the north), HEPs with a capacity of 350 MW or more meet

the criteria for mega-project status (compared to a capacity of at least 500 MW to be classified as such elsewhere).

The importance of social equity and inclusive growth, particularly for people whose livelihoods are inextricably linked with land-based resources, has figured prominently in the government's policies at the national level.

Within this larger context, the northeastern state of Sikkim, its small size and population of 607,688 notwithstanding, has become a frontrunner in HEP development efforts in the country and is likely to become one of the most dam-dense regions of the world. The PFRs of the Prime Minister's 50,000 MW Hydroelectric Initiative have proposed 10 out of the total 162 HEPs for Sikkim. The 10 projects identified are Dikchu, Rongni Storage, Panan, Lingza, Rukel, Rangyong, Ringpi, Lachen, Teesta-1 and Talem.²⁰ Prior to these initiatives, Sikkim hosted about a dozen of what the Indian government calls Hydrel Schemes during the period between 1966-2000.²¹ In view of substantial revenues from the HEPs, the Sikkim state government has encouraged investments in this sector and awarded project contracts to public sector entities,

such as the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), and to many private companies, such as Teesta Urja Limited (TUL) and Gati Infrastructure Limited (known primarily as a courier services company) among others.²² The state of Sikkim retains the status of a joint-venture partner in these projects. From the late 1990s, the number of hydropower dams increased following the proposals for roughly 29 new HEPs on the Himalayan river Teesta and its tributaries across the state.

The Indian state and its private sector partners have maintained that HEPs are indispensable for development, given their ability to generate electricity for industry and consumers in rural and urban India, thereby increasing revenues and creating employment. Despite these claims, a large number of the hydel projects have met with opposition from civil society nationwide on the grounds that these projects cause environmental degradation, increase the severity of natural disasters and violate socio-economic rights. The Sikkim government's HEP initiatives have also encountered similar resistance since 2007.²³ Organisations such as the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) and the Sikkim Bhutia Lepcha Apex Committee (SIBLAC) have been at the forefront of the anti-dam movement. Research on this protest movement reveals an on-going contestation involving activists from Sikkim's various ethnic groups and

religious leaders against state officials and the hydropower corporations over a list of socio-economic and environmental concerns. Activists have documented that construction activities- blasting, digging, tunnelling, extensive use of concrete and heavy machinery, sound pollution and the felling of trees and deforestation to make space for roads, power houses and other infrastructure- have resulted in acute ecological problems in the mountains and surrounding forests. The dams have restricted river and tributary flows, while the dumping of excavated waste materials and construction debris has polluted riverbeds and forests. The HEPs have also severely impacted residents' physical safety and living environment, as many homes got damaged with wide cracks on the ground and walls. Biophysical transformations associated with shifts in the river system have contributed to people's dislocation. Activists have drawn attention to the questionable methods by which power developers, backed by the state and the development mandate in the HEP sector, have exploited the provisions of specific land acquisition laws to secure land for the dams. The companies have been also accused of renegeing on their promises of providing adequate compensation and/or employment to those affected by the HEPs: jobs, when offered, were short-lived or mismatched with the skills of the local residents. The Sikkimese activists' critique of development via mega-

projects and privatisation is paralleled in the findings of a report by International Rivers,²⁴ which has indicated that one of the key reasons behind the thrust in "hydropower is [that] private companies [are] looking for profits". Over the last few years, about 11 HEPs in Sikkim have been scrapped in the wake of long-standing protests, investigations under Right to Information (RTI) petitions, as well as recent cases of Public Interest Litigation (PILs) filed by the citizen groups. In response, the Sikkim High Court passed orders with injunctions until the release of writ petitions. It is not uncommon, however, for local governments to revive projects previously scrapped in response to protests or sanction new ones elsewhere on the same river.²⁵

Are Energy Policies Compatible with Socio-economic Equity and Environmental Protection Policies?

All the charges of violations- environmental and socio-economic- associated with the HEPs have occurred in a political atmosphere in India where the state itself has legislated protections to specifically deter the kinds of transgressions that activists/members of civil society have challenged. Let us consider a small sample of measures

in place that aim to positively and responsibly deal with social inequity, environmental concerns and the lack of transparency in matters of state administration. The government's Environment Protection Act (1986), the National Environment Policy (2006), the National Water Policy (2012), the National Forest Policy (1988) and the Environment Impact Assessment (2006) laws, among others, seek to promote conservation measures and establish regulation for the use of natural resources. These policy measures not only provide a detailed survey of India's environmental situation, but also reveal quite unequivocally the respective state ministries' awareness of the country's present environmental crisis and outline strategies to redress these problems. Moreover, some of the mandatory requirements for mega-project development include the preparation and approval of environmental impact assessment studies, which are often overseen by state agencies. To bolster such measures, the Ministry of Environment and Forests has been entrusted with "the planning, promotion, co-ordination and overseeing [sic] the implementation of India's environmental and forestry policies and programmes" in a manner

The hydropower policies do not neglect to explicitly identify social and environmental measures necessary to prevent or minimise human dislocations and ecological hazards.

that, one must remember to add, underscores "sustainable development and enhancement of human well-being".²⁶

In Sikkim, the state government has, out of its own initiative, implemented the *Green Mission*, a set of multi-dimensional strategies that encourage sustainable development, organic agriculture, bio-diversity conservation and responsible eco-tourism. The importance of social equity and inclusive growth, particularly for people whose livelihoods are inextricably linked with land-based

resources, has figured prominently in the government's policies at the national level. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of

Forest Rights) Act of 2006 (or the Forest Rights Act of 2006), for instance, seeks to protect the rights of communities that need access to forests for livelihood.²⁷ The National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy (2007) provides another example in this context. The recent Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Bill of 2013 has established mechanisms to ensure adequate compensation and prevent cases of land-rights violations and displacement witnessed in the past

decades. The Right to Information Act of 2005 seeks to promote transparency and mandates timely responses to citizens' requests for government information. Other examples of large-scale social equity and inclusive growth oriented policies include: the Right to Education Act (2009), the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (1975), the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005), measures for food security and the Mid Day Meal Scheme for under-privileged children in schools, to name just a few.

The corpus of these measures, most of which are now part of the country's legal framework, undeniably indicate the existence of an acknowledgment of intersecting environmental and socio-economic issues and the state's proactive role in addressing these concerns via legislation across the different levels of the bureaucracy. The 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-2012), structured on the vision of "Inclusive Growth", reflected this very imperative. And yet, the HEP development ventures- where the state itself is often a partner and stands for the "public" in public-private partnerships (PPP)- are replete with acute violations of state-mandated environmental laws and socio-economic safeguards.

What Do these Gaps Signify?

At the very basic level, one might attribute these violations to inefficient

gaps in implementation practices or the inevitable challenge that India's size, population, and socio-political heterogeneity pose to bureaucratic coordination among the various government departments. The partial validity of these points notwithstanding, this paper proposes that the contradictions, observed between social and environmental safeguards on one hand and development initiatives on the other, expose a much broader systemic crisis. The state's prioritisation of a specific growth model- manifested by state-backed commercialisation of resources and privatisation in the name of energy security- has reached such an intensity that even the state has to bend some of its own environmental regulations and social safeguards or even take recourse to violence against its own people. The following section provides a brief outline of how the emphasis on creating an investment atmosphere amenable to private enterprise in development projects has come at serious social, economic, and environmental costs that are faintly attributable to benign-sounding manifestations of "implementation gaps".

Post-independence India's economy recorded the most impressive growth rates in its history during 2003-2008, averaging 8-9% per year. Since 1991, industrial production has increased three times and the production of electricity has more than doubled.²⁸ Demands

of high-growth and urbanisation-construction of highways, ports, airports, new urban development and real estate, bolstered with economic zones and commercial services hubs- has intensified the use of land and natural resources. In 2006, the mining of major minerals in India generated about 1.84 billion tonnes of waste. Between the periods of 1993-1994 and 2008-2009, the rate of mineral extraction increased by 75%. Underground water sources and aquifers have been depleted rapidly as a result of water mining at twice the rate of natural replacement. India currently experiences one of the highest levels of underground water overuse in the world and this often occurs at locations where multinational corporations run manufacturing sites.²⁹ Extensive use of forests for mining and infrastructure development has resulted in the rapid decline in forest cover, land degradation and the displacement of communities reliant on forests for livelihood. Even a cursory survey of news and academic materials published over the last decade would reveal numerous examples of both legal and quasi-legal means by which resources have been accessed from mines, water bodies, forests, coasts and agricultural and pastoral lands.³⁰ Massive tracts of land from *adivasi* or tribal areas and forests nation-wide have been leased out for industries, steel plants, mining ventures and dam construction.³¹ The *adivasis*, one of the most marginalised groups in India, have not received much of the share of development and

there are growing concerns about the effectiveness of the Forest Rights Act.³² A conservative estimate of development project affected and physically displaced people stands at 60 million since 1947. The Planning Commission's recent assessments of about 21 million of such displaced persons suggests that over 40 % are tribals, when demographically this group constitute only 8% of India's population.³³ In Sikkim, some of the proposed HEPs fall near or within the protected land of local ethnic groups, such as the Dzonghu region of the minority Lepcha community. Other HEPs have encroached within the protected zones surrounding national reserved forests. When these violations provoked protests, the state's response ranged from relatively benign actions (negotiations with activists) to more repressive ones (arrests, direct orders to quit hunger strikes), along with other long-term tactics to delegitimise or ostracise leaders (e.g., unwritten policies to blacklist activists and their family members).

The state's current *Green Mission* might provide, if allowed to manifest some of the core tenets of the state's civilisational resources in meaningful terms, an ideal platform to expand sustainable development projects.

There is also growing evidence that the government itself may waive preliminary assessment requirements to incentivise the early monetisation of natural resource discoveries. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, for example, has permitted companies like Reliance Industries and Cairn India to begin operations for oil and gas production before the approval of field investment reports.³⁴ In Sikkim's HEP sector, certain projects were granted clearances before environment and social impact assessments were approved, while in other cases the HEP developers' construction activities were in blatant violation of Supreme Court orders, environmental clearance requirements, and forest and wildlife protection policies.³⁵ The Ministry of Environment and Forests recently admitted that environmental clearances are eventually granted to almost all development projects.³⁶ These moves gravely undermine the legitimacy of mandating environmental assessment approvals as a precondition for HEP development. Further, there are no meaningful provisions to ensure continued monitoring of companies' environmental compliance once projects are granted clearances.³⁷

The Foundations for Alternatives

The hydropower policies do not neglect to explicitly identify social and

environmental measures necessary to prevent or minimise human dislocations and ecological hazards. And yet, a review of the HEP development trajectory in the northeastern states, as in other parts of India, suggests that social and environmental mandates have largely been marginal to the mega-projects' implementation methods. State initiatives that facilitate rapid commercialisation, as seen in the example of granting preliminary assessment waivers to boost early monetisation of energy resources, create the circumstances that exacerbate ecological problems and displacement, while transferring environmental risks to the public. The fundamental rationale, pace and depth of mainstream growth imperatives mobilised on the rationale of large-scale commercialisation have severely undercut and contradicted the social-environmental protective measures. As a corollary, one might even propose that the very existence of social and environmental safeguards allows the state to orient and attune its commitments in favour of privatisation. The safeguards provide a convenient justification to adopt development measures that ultimately compromise social equity. The energy question has thus become one that is deeply entrenched in processes involving massive transfers of the public commons from communities onto to private/corporate ownership. Indeed, the growing consensus is that these practices- particularly those established

in the name of energy and national security- have contributed greatly to displacement, loss of livelihoods and escalating poverty, often especially for those who are already marginalised. This makes the question of power generation- particularly the production of the so-called “renewable green and clean” hydropower- inseparable from the other dynamics of Indian national security: namely, social and environmental justice.

To offer alternative approaches, Sikkimese activists have not limited themselves to analyses of the political economy of privatisation or the scientific indicators of ecological degradation. They have drawn equally skilfully from the state’s civilisational resources. The epistemologies of Sikkim’s popular legends, which emphasise the importance of rivers *Teesta* and *Rathong Chu* along with the state’s plural spiritual traditions, which are characterised by notions of

a sacred presence in the landscapes, forests and rivers, have become integral to the activists’ formulation of why the question of energy generation for countries like India cannot supersede concerns around land acquisition/land-grabs, livelihoods and the environment. The characterisation of Sikkim’s mountains and rivers as the people’s treasury of invaluable cultural and civilisational legacy that continue to be relevant in terms of everyday spiritual practices, provides immense possibilities for imagining economic activities that are not reliant on corporatised mega-projects that treat forests and water as mere raw materials.³⁸ The state’s current *Green Mission* might provide, if allowed to manifest some of the core tenets of the state’s civilisational resources in meaningful terms, an ideal platform to expand sustainable development projects.

Endnotes

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Anxiety, Violence and the Postcolonial State: Understanding the “Anti-Bangladeshi” Rage in Assam, India

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Abstract

Fear, insecurity and anxiety seem to be the enduring sources of genocidal impulses against the Bengali-speaking Muslim minorities of contemporary Assam, India. This paper explores how the tripartite matrix of the border, census and citizenship categories has become indispensable in inscribing fear and anxiety in contemporary Assam's body politic. Using insights from postcolonial states' practices, the paper shows how the state suffers from a persistent neurosis, characterised by an “incompleteness-anxiety”, and how attempts have been made to resolve this sense of crisis by mobilising the majority to align its Assamese identity in the direction of an imagined purified “national whole”. Further, the paper elaborates upon the implications of these anxieties with reference to Indo-Bangladeshi relations, in which Assam figures prominently both as a prime border state and as a place that is integral to the region's riparian borderlands as a whole. Moving away from the official discourses of contemporary Indo-Bangladeshi relations, which are guided largely by postcolonial cartographic anxiety, the paper points towards the creative possibilities of exploring the “relational registers” within the region's shared civilisational resources as an alternative, in which Assam can act as a bridge between India and Bangladesh.

Key Words

Cartographic anxiety, border, census, D-voter, Bengali-speaking Muslims, Assam Movement, AASU.

Introduction

Fear, insecurity and anxiety seem to be the enduring sources of genocidal impulses against minorities across the globe. Contemporary Assam- one of the major states in India's Northeast region- has witnessed widespread violence and killings over the last few decades. Identity and population politics based on notions of ethnic, religious and linguistic markers have mobilised specific equations of belonging, equations charted on the matrix of the border fence, census numbers and the new category of D-voters, which was invented to identify citizens perceived to be of doubtful citizenship, all of which have come to embody a specific form of genocidal violence in contemporary Assam. At the centre of this political storm is the Bengali-speaking Muslim community- a minority community whose long history in Assam is part of the

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larger story of migration and settlement from neighbouring Bengali-speaking regions dating back to the plantation economies and labour practices of the British Raj.¹ Although this clash had previously been based along ethnic and linguistic markers involving Assamese and Bengali-speaking people, the state has increasingly deployed religion-based rhetoric of Hindu-Muslim communalism to characterise such tensions in recent times.

The rhetoric of erecting “barbed” fencing and sealing-off the border has become a stable marker of Assam’s regional politics.

The widespread rage against Bengali-speaking Muslims has influenced the dominant image of this community: an “enemy alien”, posing an existential threat to Assamese people, land and security.² The slogan “Bangladeshi go back” has echoed repeatedly in the popular media, which has represented Bengali Muslims as “foreigners” and “illegal” migrants. A day in Assam does not pass without the daily newspapers covering demands for the creation of a barbed-wire fence along the Assam-Bangladesh border and the use of spurious statistics as evidence of an unabated Bengali Muslim migration that is threatening the state’s demographic

profile. Stories and images of so-called Bangladeshi migrants in the state are also ubiquitous in the local Assamese press. Migration from Bangladesh is framed as Assam’s “most fatal malady”, a “plague” and a “ticking bomb”. Migrants are referred to as “infiltrators”, “encroachers” and “invaders”.³ This representation of Bangladeshi migrants as a horde unlawfully occupying scarce cultivable land represents them as a threat to the cultural identity, economic wellbeing and national security of *Axomia*. This characterisation of Assam has drawn widespread attention to the Northeast region in India while creating the impression that the state is hovering at the edge of perpetual insecurities.

Speaking of violence and ethnocide in the age of globalisation, Appadurai has raised a fundamental question: *why do minorities across the globe appear to be so threatening despite the fact that they are so few in numbers and are powerless?*⁴ One has to ask the same question in the context of Assam, where the much-vilified Bengali-speaking Muslims largely constitute a peasant community that is fairly underrepresented in government jobs, higher bureaucracy, the army and politics in general. To be precise then, it becomes important to ask: *how are the multiple layers of fear and anxiety of the majority manufactured and reproduced to construct the perceived threat?* To explore this question, this paper uses postcolonial theory that examines the nature of

modern states and their practices. In this regard, Sankaran Krishna's formulation of the postcolonial state's "cartographic anxiety" in relation to its body politics is a useful analytical tool.⁵ Taking the broader meaning of the term, this paper explores how the tripartite matrix of the border, the census and citizenship categories has become indispensable in inscribing fear and anxiety in Assam's contemporary body politic. Further, the paper elaborates upon the implications of these anxieties in reference to Indo-Bangladeshi relations, in which Assam figures prominently both as a prime border state and as a place that is integral to the region's riparian borderlands as a whole.

(Re)Romancing the "Border"

Every time Nazir Rahman Bhuiyan, a villager in Bangladesh, walks on foot from one part of his own house to another, he crosses an international border, the recently fenced boundary between India and Bangladesh. A spokesman for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs said that the rationale for the fence is the same that compelled the United States and Israel to build fences between Mexico and the West Bank respectively: to prevent illegal migration and terrorist infiltration.⁶ This "fencing" rhetoric has not only preoccupied official discourses about borders at the national level, but it has also got deeply entrenched within

regional politics in Assam given that the state, in India's Northeast, is located in a geopolitically volatile zone where there are a number of contested international boundaries with China, Burma and Bangladesh. Accessible only through the narrow "chicken-neck" area via the neighbouring West Bengal state, the Bangladesh borderlands in the Indian Northeast span territorially to form a triangular corner in Assam to down along the slopes of the Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills in the state of Meghalaya and further down through an elongated strip in the state of Tripura.

It has become part of a constituency building political ritual on the part of the parties in government to pay physical visits to the border area and comment upon its progress.

A major portion of the Assam-Bangladesh border is formed by the river Brahmaputra which flows along the border of the Dhubri district. The peculiarity of this part of the borderland is its porous nature as the landscape gets punctured by the Brahmaputra River and its myriad *chars* (riverine islands), which gets dried up during the winter months and thereby creating a perforated land bridge. This very nature of the border defies the cookie-cutter

image of a closely bounded national geography. Despite the porous nature of this landscape, the popular rhetoric of the Assam-Bangladesh border often gets carried away by the forces of “imaginative geographies”-the notion that a landscape can be easily “sealed off”. The rhetoric of erecting “barbed” fencing and sealing-off the border has become a stable marker of Assam’s regional politics. The intention to physically preserve the sanctity of the border, which is seen as being synonymous with building barbed fencing, reflects an irresistible obsession with the idea of an “alien” infiltration embodied by shadowy “foreign hands” that aim to destabilise the region and, by the extension, the nation. To begin with, what came to be the border between India and East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) post-1947 owed little to modern concepts of spatial rationality. The partition of the eastern territories was marked along the hastily and ignorantly drawn Radcliffe Line, and political pressures played no small part.⁷ In fact, the partition process or the drawing of the border is in a sense an operation which seemed to be concluded in August 1947 was a matter open for contestation in days to come.

The idea of erecting a barbed-wire fence along the Assam-Bangladesh border is not a new phenomenon. It is rather a historical product of the Assamese elites’ imagined territorial construction that dates back to the 1950s. Chief Minister Bimala Prasad Chaliha of the former

Congress-led Assam government, for instance, launched a campaign to deport migrants who had settled in the state since January 1951. He, along with his party, advocated extensive operations to clear up the border area of migrants in order to better deal with what was then described as Pakistani infiltration. Although the Assamese politicians were not able to persuade the central government in New Delhi to embark upon specific actions against the threat of migration from East Pakistan, they did however manage to acquire a sanction for 180 additional police watch posts and to erect a barbed-wire fence in selected places along the Assam-East Pakistan border.⁸

In postcolonial Assam, Muslim minorities with cross-border family ties and lineages are seen as an existential threat to the border and national security.

The rhetoric of fencing the border resurfaced with new vigour in Assam’s politics in the wake of state-wide anti-foreigner agitation spearheaded by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in the late 1970s. The movement mobilised around the articulation of an *Axomia* identity against the “Others”, who were constituted initially by the general outsiders (*Bohiragoto*) including people from other parts of India and later by those who were considered foreigners (*Bidexi*), specifically the Muslim

minorities of Bengali origin. The AASU and later their representative political party, Assam Gana Parishad (AGP), played a pivotal role in giving rise to a *cessus-beli*—a fervent cry to save the homeland on behalf of the sons-of-the-soil. The movement’s heyday came to be defined by the rhetoric of recovering Mother Assam’s (*Axomi Ai*) lost sanctity by deporting all “illegal” migrants to the other side of the border.

The AASU found a resolution in the reconciliatory Assam Accord of 1983, signed between the movement leaders and Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian Prime Minister at the time. To address the infiltration of the so called “illegal” Bangladeshis, the movement leaders made the demand to completely “seal off” the Assam-Bangladesh border and proposed the construction of a fence. In response, the Indian government approved the Indo-Bangladesh Border Road and Fence project in 1986 to prevent illegal (or irregular) migration from Bangladesh. Subsequently, a two-phase project to build a fence got sanctioned. The AASU’s identity politics and notions of territorial sanctity and demands for a fenced border, followed by the central government’s authorisation of such projects, coalesced into a specific discourse in which the border fence itself emerged as a vital symbol and barometer of Assamese nationalism. For instance, the title and contents of a recent widely cited state publication, the *White*

Paper on the Foreigners’ Issue,⁹ which was prepared by the current Congress government in Assam, provides an update of the fence project’s progress. These measures illustrate the extent to which the construction of a border fence has become a signifier for the “foreigners’ issue”. Consider, for example, a brief segment from this document: “a total of 228.118 km of new fencing was sanctioned under Phase-I&II, out of which, based on field conditions, the actual required length was 224.694 km. Against this 218.170 km of fencing (97.1%) has been completed”.¹⁰ The detailed description of the project, the various units of measurements, proportions and projections delineate the coordinates from which to measure the states’ own progress in establishing its identity. The fear and anxiety around fencing the border have also been accentuated through certain speech acts and gestures of the politicians. It has become part of a constituency building political ritual on the part of the parties in government to pay physical visits to the border area and comment upon its progress. These visits embody a stocktaking exercise, which seeks to update and reassure the state’s anxious people of the status of the construction project. The completion rate of the fence has thus become one of the barometers for judging political leaders’ efficiency and the seriousness of the state’s concerns with the border.

While the issue of fencing has become the Holy Grail for politicians at the regional and national level, the Indo-Bangladesh border has been converted into South Asia's killing field. The increasing militarisation and securitisation of the Indo-Bangladesh borderlands- a densely populated area interspersed with paddy fields and grazing areas along with forested lands- have contributed to untold miseries for poor Muslim peasants who live on the either side of fence. In a recent report, Human Rights Watch described the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) as "trigger happy" for the unit's involvement in indiscriminate killings and torture of unarmed migrants. The report estimated that well over 1,000 people have been killed over the last decade.¹¹ A reporter from the *Guardian* newspaper commented that while a single casualty by US law enforcement authorities along the Mexican border makes headlines, the deaths of hundreds of villagers at the hands of Indian forces have been ignored and no officials have been prosecuted so far.¹² In postcolonial Assam, Muslim minorities with cross-border family ties and lineages are seen as an existential threat to the border and national security. This territorial phantom pain, emerging out of the porous and fluid Assam-Bangladesh borderlands, is a cautionary reminder to guard and "seal" the border with metal and guns.

The Census and Its Political Arithmetic

In 1997, S.K. Sinha, a former governor of Assam with a previous career in the Indian Army, submitted a report to Indian President R.K. Narayanan. With a sense of great anxiety and urgency, Sinha concluded in the report that Assam was at the verge of a "silent and demographic invasion". The report estimated that 4 million Bangladeshi migrants were in Assam, with another 5.4 million in West Bengal, 0.8 million in Tripura, 0.5 million in Bihar, 0.5 million in Maharashtra, 0.5 million in Rajasthan and 0.3 million in Delhi. The report claimed that this pattern of unabated illegal migration from East Pakistan/Bangladesh was irreversibly altering the demographic complexion of Assam and thus posed a grave threat to Assamese identity and compromised national security.¹³ In recent years, army and intelligence bureau officials have devoted considerable efforts into devising a quantitative analysis of data from various sources, including the Indian census. At the time when the noted MIT political scientist Myron Weiner wondered about whether there exists some numerical threshold of "overforeignisation" that triggers reactions from the natives,¹⁴ several Indian scholars were busy with the task of estimating the number of so-called "illegal" Bangladeshi migrants in Assam. Nath et al., using the Leslie

Matrix method, estimated the number of undocumented or illegal migrants in Assam and calculated that there were 830,757 illegal migrants between 1971-1991 and 534,819 between 1991-2001, which brought the total to 1,365,574 over the 30 years from 1971 to 2001.¹⁵ Goswami et al. used the Survival Method to study the 40 year period between 1951 and 1991 and came up with 2.9 million immigrants in Assam, and concluded that out of this figure, 0.9 million (31%) were interstate migrants and 2 million (69%) were international immigrants. Further, of the two million international immigrants, 0.69 million (24%) were legal and 1.3 million (45%) were illegal migrants.¹⁶ In addition to these prominent studies, there have been, of course, innumerable other instances of research devoted to identifying conclusive numerical evidence that can show how the Muslim community has grown, and how this growth negatively affects Assam. When Indian statistical figures seem inadequate, researchers turn to proxy measures, such as calculating the proportionate decrease in the Hindu population in various districts of Assam, or even measuring the population change in neighbouring Bangladesh to ultimately come to the same conclusion: the alarming growth in the number of Muslim immigrants to Assam. The state appears to be under the grip of a Malthusian fever where terminologies like “demographic invasion”, “demographic

aggression”, “demographic time-bomb”, “influx” and “infiltration” regularly occupy titles of news report as well as academic publications in journals and books.

The rationalisation and naturalisation of statistics or rather *state-tricks* to authenticate the varieties of claims as an improvisation to unsullied personal accounts signifies the establishment of the sacrosanctity of numeral facts.

The rationalisation and naturalisation of statistics or rather *state-tricks* to authenticate the varieties of claims as an improvisation to unsullied personal accounts signifies the establishment of the sacrosanctity of numeral facts. At the heart of this hysteria with numbers is the Malthusian poster boy of Assam, C.S. Mullan, the superintendent of census operations in 1931, who was posted to the region during the British Raj. Mullan was the chief author of the Census of India 1931, which for the first time used the term “invasion” in the Assamese context. He instigated what has since the 1930s evolved into a “hate campaign” in the state. To provoke the Assamese against the Bengali, Mullan wrote, “wheresoever the carcasses, there will the vultures be gathered together- where there is waste

land thither flock the *Mymensingh*”. He had further added that “it is sad but by no means improbable that in another thirty years Sibsagar district will be the only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself at home”.¹⁷ Noted historian Amalendu Guha described Mullan as an irresponsible European civil servant who, in an effort to predict the future, “mischievously” used the word “invasion” to describe the migration of people from East Bengal’s Mymensingh district at a time when no national boundary existed.¹⁸ Mullan’s verdict on the Bengali invasion makes it possible for those inclined to historicise and authenticate the threat of a Muslim invasion back to days of the British Raj.

To a large extent, the legacy of Mullan’s Census Report 1931 initiated the Assamese-Bengali conflict. The growing hatred towards the Bengalis was primarily guided by the Assamese middle class’s envy, given that the Bengalis occupied a majority of the lower tier administrative jobs in colonial times, especially in the plantation and railways, which were often denied to the Assamese as a matter of policy. The colonial administrative system played no small role in racialising occupational and employment hierarchies, which embittered relations between the Bengali and the Assamese middle class.¹⁹ This history, however, has largely been obscured. In post-independence India, a mutual mistrust got channelled into many conflicts

surrounding the hegemonies of language and ethnicity. Assam witnessed extensive violence under the rubric of the *Bongal Khedao* movement, which sought to evict Bengali settlers in the 1950s and 1960s. The AASU during the 1980s further fuelled these issues and caused indiscriminate violence and death. In Nellie, a small town not far from the state capital, around 3000 Bengali Muslims were massacred. The majority of these victims turned out to be women and children. In response to the AASU leaders’ demands at the time of the Assam Accord, the Indian government, eager to resolve the problems associated with this agitation, dropped all charges against those who were accused of committing the atrocities in the Nellie riot. As a result, those who had instigated or participated in the riots were never tried for their crimes.²⁰

The deployment of a communal line- the Hindu-Muslim binary- to deal with the Bangladeshi migrant issue has allowed politicians to stretch India’s current border insecurities. The early protagonists in the anti-foreigner movement in India’s northeastern states had not discriminated against migrants on religious grounds. The right-wing elements in Indian politics, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), however, have singled out religion, specifically Islam, to underscore questions of population movements across India. The BJP is well known for popularising the

idea of “competitive breeding”, which argues that Hindus in India will soon be outnumbered by Muslims. Along with its Hindutva-oriented collaborators like the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), the BJP has criticised erstwhile official policies towards Bangladeshi migrants as being overly lenient and accommodating. After successfully politicising the religious dispute in Ayodhya (1992), the BJP unleashed nation-wide propaganda against Bengali-speaking Muslim migrants. The party’s ideologues published populist articles and full-length books on the issue and organised systematic campaigns (speech acts) to mobilise people against the threat of illegal migration. The captions of the leading BJP ideologue Baljit Rai’s essays, such as *Demographic Aggression Against India: Muslim Avalanche from Bangladesh* and *Is India Going Islamic*, stoked people’s fear of Bengali Muslim infiltration.²¹ These polemical writings and speech acts made the distinction clear between a Hindu “refugee” and a Muslim “infiltrator”. Publications in this vein also take care to inform the public that more than 15 million Bangladeshi Muslims have settled in various parts of India and warn Indians against the “grim consequences of the exodus of Muslims from the Islamic and densely populated country called Bangladesh”.

Such writings have dramatically re-instilled prevailing beliefs about

quantitative rationality and the sacrosanctity of numbers into the body politic of Assam. The various iterations of counting and classifying minority Muslims on the basis of census data reflect both an enduring anxiety and efforts to somehow name and categorise the problem in order to bring it under control. These projects of enumeration, even when executed in good faith, rationalise and naturalise population politics based on numbers and bolster notions of competitive-breeding (the majority being outnumbered by high birth-rates among minorities). Meanwhile, the state’s role in upholding an image of a homogenous and pure Assamese nationhood goes unexamined.

Legal Citizen vs. Illegal Migrants

Rastam Ali, from Borpayek in Nellie, Assam, is 45 years old and a small trader by profession. His father, Kalam Shah Ahmed, was a cultivator and an inhabitant of the same village. Rastam had been qualified to vote in India up until 1996, and had even exercised his voting rights twice. Suddenly in 1996, Rastam became a “D-voter” and was ineligible to vote. Ironically, his brothers and other family members somehow were not marked as D-voters. Like Rastam Ali, a large number of Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam recently have come under a new category of citizens, the “D-voters”,

where the letter “D” stands for doubtful or disputed citizenship status.²² This new classification is a by-product of revisions made to the National Register for Citizenship (NRC, the electoral roll) in the late 1990s in Assam whereby the letter “D” has been marked against the names of many previous voters, who could not prove their Indian citizenship status to the officers especially appointed for the verification purpose. According to the Government of Assam’s recently published *White Paper on Foreigners’ Issue*, the letter “D” (doubtful/disputed) was marked against a total of 2,31,657 people who could not prove their citizenship.²³

The juxtaposition of discourses on the border, census and citizenship categories as a part of a larger story reveals some of the processes by which the “minority” comes to be performed by the “majority”.

The classification of a large number of Bengali-speaking Muslims as D-voters surfaced as non-urgent political issue in the state following the aftermath of the 2012 riots in the Kokrajhar district of lower Assam, which witnessed violent clashes between the ethnic *Bodos*²⁴ and Bengali-speaking Muslim settlers. These Kokrajhar riots provided momentum to the existing debate about illegal Bangladeshi migrants in Assam and

reinforced the immediate need to update the NRC. With reference to the conflict, a former Election Commissioner of India advocated prompt revisions to the NRC to expedite the deportation of those found to be “illegal migrants”.²⁵ Factions of the local leadership reflected similar sentiments. Sammujal Bhattacharya, a prominent AASU adviser, commented in the aftermath of the riots:

We want speedy identification and deportation of illegal migrants. The demography of Assam is under threat, indigenous communities are turned into minority all because both the Centre and the state have used them as vote banks and tried to legalise the illegal migrants. The fallout has been violence.²⁶

At the same time, the BJP in Assam made the issue of deportation a central component of the party’s election campaign ahead of India’s forthcoming 2014 general election.

The latest storm in the teacup in Assam is the issue of citizenship and the debate centres on counting and classification methods to update the NRC. The matter has become intensely contested with many cases pending at the Supreme Court of India. A number of Public Information Litigation (PIL) cases have been lodged both by AASU supporters and civil society organisations representing the interest of Bengali-speaking Muslim minorities in Assam. Meanwhile, the present Congress-led government, which has been ruling

Assam since 2001, has had a series of discussions with the AASU with regard to the preparation of specific modalities to update the NRC. Under increasing pressure, the state pushed back the cut-off year by 20 years and agreed to define the “indigenous” people of Assam as those whose names figured in the NRC in 1951, and this list is to be tallied with the 1971 voter list to ascertain their descendents. Moreover, in consultation with the AASU, the state government fundamentally altered the enumeration rule of the NRC through an amendment.²⁷ These changes have provoked protest from Bengali-speaking Muslims.²⁸

Within the realm of Indo-Bangladeshi diplomatic relations, Assam has been a significant reference point and that Assam’s regional identity politics has cross-border implications.

These recent political developments in Assam have reinvigorated questions about how the state determines who is a citizen, indicating an upsurge of “autochthony” that is increasingly becoming an unexpected corollary of democratisation. What is acutely troubling is the widespread usage of the prefix “illegal”, both in official and non-official discourses, to distinguish

between the native ethnic Assamese and the migrants. A well-known Assamese historian holds that hiding behind the term “illegal” is the connotation that a human being is condemned and reduced to an extent where his/her very existence is “criminal”.²⁹ At the same time the laws regulating citizenship, particularly with regard to minority communities, have become increasingly restrictive. The outcome of this politics of belonging- nourished on persistent anxieties of being “outplaced” and “outnumbered”- has been violent. This violence has been sustained through the creation of a new label for the minorities, particularly the Muslims- the D-voters- the doubtful or disputed citizens of the state. The D-voters have been made the constant reference point to remind people of the importance of protecting valuable and scarce resources, like land, state entitlements and deterring any hindrances towards achieving the developmentalist goal. The classic project of nation building in Assam is to be executed through the renouncing of Bengali-speaking Muslims.

Towards an Alternative

The juxtaposition of discourses on the border, census and citizenship categories as a part of a larger story reveals some of the processes by which the “minority” comes to be performed by the “majority”. Appadurai argues

that predatory identities emerge in the tensions between majority identities and nationalist identities.³⁰ Using this insight in the case of postcolonial Assam, this article shows that Assamese identity has attained a predatory status wherein the majority strives to close all gaps between itself and all that is marked to embody the purity of the national whole. This group has successfully mobilised the “incompleteness of anxiety” to merge and align national purity with Assamese identity. Krishna’s

conceptualisation of the postcolonial nation-states’ cartographic impulses is evident in the case of regional politics in Assam. The fantasies of sealed borders, a desire for quantifiable precision in population census and the efforts to define citizenship to conclusively separate legitimate citizens from the “illegal and deportable” have become indispensable requirements of today’s democratic politics. Needless to say, these expressions of democratic politics are also responsible for unaccountable violence. This has put a heavy premium on the lives of those who seem to be, in one way or the other, untraceable, illegible and uncountable. It appears that postcolonial Assam has

reached an aporetic stage in its quest for modern nation building, where Muslim minorities have been made an eyesore.

It is also important to note that within the realm of Indo-Bangladeshi diplomatic relations, Assam has been a significant reference point and that Assam’s regional identity politics has cross-border implications. India and Bangladesh have not been able to arrive at any consensus regarding the vital issues that concern both parties, such

Breaking this impasse involves undoing the remaining shell of the Westphalian nation-state framework and looking for “relationality” within the historical register of this contiguous region between India and Bangladesh, in which Assam can play the role of a bridge.

as regulating cross-border migration, reviving the older ties of commerce with Assam through border trade and sharing the water of the mighty Brahmaputra River. Although the Indian state persistently pushes the “Look East Policy” to

develop the Northeast as a growth corridor with South East Asian countries, it neglects to meaningfully engage in this regard with its nearest neighbor Bangladesh. It is quite ironic that Bhupen Hazarika, Assam’s foremost cultural icon, spent his lifetime writing and advocating about the significance of the *Xomnonoy* (confluence) of the rivers Brahmaputra, Ganga and Padda (reference to Bangladesh) in contributing to the a shared cultural history of the

region over centuries. And yet neither Hazarika's vision nor his reference to shared civilisational resources has found any place in current diplomacy. In a poll conducted in Bangladesh, Hazarika's song "*Manush Manusher Jonno*" ("Humans are For Humanity") was chosen as the second most favourite song after the Bangladesh national anthem.³¹ Although Assam shares a long history of cultural, social and economic exchanges with the territories of Bangladesh, civilisational resources from this riparian

borderland remain unacknowledged in diplomatic ties between India and Bangladesh largely due to the forces of cartographic anxiety that this paper has addressed. Breaking this impasse involves undoing the remaining shell of the Westphalian nation-state framework and looking for "relationality" within the historical register of this contiguous region between India and Bangladesh, in which Assam can play the role of a bridge.

Endnotes

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- 5 Krishna uses the term "cartography" to encompass representational practices- not only a line on the map, but also all kinds of coercive and bloody practices that produce moments of suspension in postcolonial societies. See, Sankaran Krishna, "Cartographic Anxiety: Mapping the Body Politic in India", in John Agnew (ed.), *Political Geography: A Reader*, New York, Arnold, 1997, pp. 81-92. See also Sankaran Krishna, *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
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- 7 Redcliffe destroyed all his notes and papers related to the boundary awards before he left India. In deciding the borders, his Boundary Commission was instructed to draw its lines on the basis of 'contiguous majority areas'; it was also to take into account 'other factors'. But neither these factors, nor the unit of the area to be divided, was ever specified whether it was the district, or smaller sub-units like *tehsils* or village that should serve as the unit in which 'majorities' and 'minorities' were determined, was left contentiously ambiguous. Redcliffe knew nothing about India other than the five perspiring weeks he spent there, trying with maps and pens to fulfill his impossible duty of devising a judicious cartography. Cited in Sunil Khilnani, *The Idea of India*, New Delhi, Penguin, 1999, pp.200-2001.
- 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

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- 27 The new rule of enumeration under the sub-section 3 of section 4-A of the Citizenship Act requires a person to apply in a prescribed form for their name to be included in NRC and requires supporting documents.
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The Nation-State Problematic in Asia: The South Asian Experience

Binoda K. MISHRA

Abstract

If nations and nationalism are products of industrialisation and modernity, then South Asia is not supposed to have the concept of nationalism since the region neither has experienced industrialisation nor has it undergone the transformation of modernity. The history of nation building in South Asia is a story of adaptation to alien values by the prudent manipulation of political elites. In the name of modernisation, South Asians were asked to relinquish their traditional values and opt for values that were purely western and projected as rational, and the only way to a better socio-political future. In the process, for political expediency, the colonial masters dissected the composite society into compartments, thus unwittingly preparing the grounds for debasing the concept of a composite nationhood that was endogenous to the Indian subcontinent. However, in the end the South Asian subcontinent was divided on religious grounds. The two infant nations set out to build nation-states that would be viable as modern states and united as nations. Both nations are still struggling to build their desired nation-states, and the primary threat has come from the question of "ethnicity" that has been haunting them both. The problems India and Pakistan face along with the other South

Asian nations are: a multiplicity of nationalities; the overlapping geographical boundaries among nationalities; and the failure to articulate a common nationality.

Key Words

South Asia, India, Pakistan, nationalism.

Introduction

If nations and nationalism are products of industrialisation and modernity, then South Asia is not supposed to have the concept of nationalism since the region neither has experienced industrialisation nor has it undergone the transformation of modernity. The region is atypical in a sense that there seems to be an acceptance of both modern and traditional values and institutions. Both modern and traditional value systems and institutional forms coexist side by side, though not always in harmony. Historically, political systems in South Asia have always been territorial states without any reference to nationalities and nationalism. The concepts of nation

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and nationalism are of recent origin to the region, and like every other concept are heavily loaded with modern/western characteristics. In the absence of suitable socio-economic base, the western/modern political concepts have created a conflict that seems unending now.

If nations and nationalism are products of industrialisation and modernity, then South Asia is not supposed to have the concept of nationalism since the region neither has experienced industrialisation nor has it undergone the transformation of modernity.

The history of nation building in South Asia is a story of adaptation to alien values by the prudent manipulation of political elites. In the name of modernisation, South Asians were asked to relinquish their traditional values and opt for values that were purely western and projected as rational, and the only way to a better socio-political future. In the process, for political expediency, the colonial masters dissected the composite society into compartments, thus unwittingly preparing the grounds for debasing the concept of a composite nationhood that was endogenous to the Indian subcontinent.¹ The dissection began as early as 1822 with the idea of divide and

rule adopted by the colonial masters. In a systematic manner the British managed to move nationalist feelings onto religious lines in the subcontinent. The landmarks of this endeavour include the partition of Bengal in 1905, the introduction of communal suffrage in 1909, the introduction of separate electorates in 1919, and the final act of partition of the subcontinent on religious lines in 1947. The partition of the subcontinent failed to create viable homogenous nation-states, and instead created permanent fissures that have the potential to put the subcontinent on the path of fission. It is important here to note that there was resistance to the introduction of the idea of a modern nation-state in the subcontinent, and this resistance was from within the two major religious communities of the subcontinent, i.e. Hindus and Muslims. Rabindranath Tagore and Muhammad Iqbal, the two leading poets and philosophers of late colonial India, criticised the introduction of the notion of the modern nation-state as the root cause for conflict in the subcontinent, and opposed the concept of homogenous nationalism as they were rightly apprehensive of its suitability for the socio-political consciousness of the people of South Asia. While Tagore, having seen the perilous effects of nationalism in other parts of the world, denounced nationalism as a destructive force, one having the potential to destroy the Indian civilisation, Iqbal blamed

the western notion of nationalism for creating modern conflict in the Indian subcontinent by making religion relative rather than universal, and by making religion territorially specific and unsuited to the temperament of other nations.

The problems India and Pakistan face along with the other South Asian nations are: a multiplicity of nationalities; the overlapping geographical boundaries among nationalities; and the failure to articulate a common nationality.

However, in the end the South Asian subcontinent was divided on religious grounds. The two infant nations set out to build nation-states that would be viable as modern states and united as nations. The attempt was desperate but there seemed to be irreconcilable problems that had been posed and is posing threats both to the viability of the state and the unity of the nation. The national leadership in India were hoping to capitalise on the nationalist fever that swept the country during the independence movement. The Pakistani leadership were hoping to ride on the religious nationalism that they had made the basis for statehood in order to create a strong and united nation. But both nations are still struggling to build their desired nation-states, and the primary threat has come from the question of

“ethnicity” that has been haunting them both. The problems India and Pakistan face along with the other South Asian nations are: a multiplicity of nationalities; the overlapping geographical boundaries among nationalities; and the failure to articulate a common nationality. Let us look at each problem in turn.

The Multiplicity of Nationalities

After creating one religious nation out of the South Asian subcontinent, it was hoped that the process of nation building would be smooth, with both India and Pakistan adopting representative forms of government. The independence movement in India was called the “nationality” movement to underscore the national unity of the Indian state. Similar terminology was used in Pakistan for creating an Islamic nation. But no sooner than the division had been effected, the seemingly benign fissures in the social spheres started widening and a web of nationalities appeared, not only in the multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-ethnic India, but also in the so-called homogenous Pakistan. The Pakistan nation-state, within a period of 25 years, proved to be a non-viable state, and more importantly a non-viable nation.

The religious nationalism that was supposed to be the cohesive force for

the Pakistani nationhood was challenged by another form of nationalism, namely linguistic nationalism. The Bengali-speaking majority of East Pakistan asserted their “Bengali” linguistic nationalism. Interestingly, this linguistic nationalism, though it shared borders across the Islamic community, did not accept the Bengali-speaking Hindu population either of India or of Eastern Pakistan. The new nation that emerged, and which set the precedence of secession of nations from nation-states, was called Bangladesh, meaning a nation of Bengalis or Bengal-speaking population. It did not show any interest to take within its fold the numerous Indian Bengalis. Thus, in a theoretical sense, one can call it an assertion of sub-nationality within the larger nationality of South Asian Islamic nationhood.

India also saw the rise of linguistic nationalism. The Indian leadership were alarmed at the prospect of linguistic nationalism escalating into crisis proportions that could threaten the unity of the Indian union. But the problem was managed, before it could actually reach crisis proportions, by a linguistic reorganisation of states in 1956. The essential lesson is the acknowledgement of the aspiration of Indian population to create linguistic nationalities (be it) within the Indian statehood. The conclusion from the linguistic movements and subsequent

reorganisation of states on linguistic lines can be that the population of India could not come to terms with the overarching Indian nationality.

Ethno (primordial)-nationalist movements are not unique to India; rather they are a feature of all South Asian countries and some of these movements often cross demarcated state boundaries, which, while rare, could cause inter-state conflicts.

The weakness of Indian nationality is also evident from the fact that it is fiercely challenged by geographical, ethnic and religious nationalities. The demands of regional autonomy, including the appeal for secession, are being raised by linguistically organised states, ethnically composed north-eastern states and not to mention the religious Sikh nationalism that has from time-to-time put constant pressure on the political sovereignty and national unity of India. This constant challenge to India’s nationhood exposes the fact that there is no congruity between the political and national identity that according to Ernest Gellner is the fundamental criterion for the evolution of the spirit of nationalism.² India, being the most heterogeneous in terms of ethnic configurations, faces

pressing challenges from these forces. This is not to argue that these ethnic identities are always well articulated. But the mere fact that these identities often pose themselves as binaries in relation to the political nationalism of India proves that there are nationalities based on primordial identities that prefer to be recognised outside the Indian national identity.

These ethno (primordial)-nationalist movements are not unique to India; rather they are a feature of all South Asian countries and some of these movements often cross demarcated state boundaries, which, while rare, could cause inter-state conflicts. The examples of India and Pakistan fighting over Kashmir and over Bangladesh are cases in point. Ethnic conflicts internal to the political systems of South Asian states, apart from India, include the Mohajir movement; the Sindh, Pukhtun and the Baloch problems in Pakistan; the Chakma problem in Bangladesh; and the violent Tamil separatism in Sri Lanka. There may be differences in their objectives but the fundamental thing that underlines these movements is their challenge to the sovereignty of the political systems they were supposed to merge into. In the case of India, it is sufficient to mention that the northeastern part of the country alone is home to 36 major or minor ethnic nationalist movements. Added to this, among others, the rise of Hindu

nationalism is the evidence of increasing weakness of Indian political nationalism. Bhutan, the other kingdom of the South Asian subcontinent, also suffers from pressures of exclusive ethno-nationalism of Drupka community, which has tried to “turn Bhutan into a mono-ethnic polity”.³ In Nepal, though it has not seen ethnic conflict as such, the provision for ethnic representation in the constituent assembly in the recently held election points towards the sensitivity of the population towards their ethnic identity vis-à-vis the national Nepalese identity. Most groups in Nepal, including the Newars, Tamangs, Magars, Gurung, Sherpa, Limbu, Rai and Tharu, do not accept the labels “ethnic groups” or “minorities”. They prefer to be called nations and believe they fulfil all the criteria of nationhood: language, religion, culture, territory and a history of independent statehood, which would be achieved again if the right for secession were granted.

The growing number and intensity of ethno-nationalist assertions and conflicts with the state-system in South Asia shows the lack of an accommodative ability of the political structures called nation-states. The problem persists not only because there are multiple nationalities in South Asian societies, but also because of the incongruity between the social and the geographical connotations of these identities.

Overlapping Geographical Boundaries among Nationalities

There is no unanimity over the definition of an ethnic group or ethnic community, but the working definition of what is an ethnic group is important for our analysis of nationalism since this definition provides the possible bases for formation of ethno-nationalism. An ethnic group is defined as:

Either a large or small group of people, in either backward or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress and customs and practices), racial similarity, common religion, and the belief in common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group.⁴

Defined this way, “ethnic communities can be of two types: *homeland societies* and *diaspora communities*”.⁵ Given the long history of inland migration within South Asia, none of the above-mentioned criteria could remain in a geographically compact area, and thus most of the ethnic groups or communities are dispersed within the region. The exceptions to this are the Maldives, to some extents the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the ethnic communities of the northeastern region of India who share fairly compact geographical locations. Such amalgamations of various kinds of identities make it difficult for identifying

nationalities and to take a measure of their potential to threaten the politically constructed national identity of the political systems in the region. One can argue that had there been congruous geographical connotations to each of the bases of ethnic identity formation in South Asia, the present political systems would have failed long ago or would not have been created at the first place. From this perspective this amalgamation seems to have created a social environment conducive for the evolution of a nation as defined by Ernst Barker:

A nation is a body of men, inhabiting a definite territory, who normally are drawn from different races, but possess a common stock of thoughts and feelings acquired and transmitted during the course of a common history; who on the whole and in the main, thought more in the past than in the present, include in that common stock a common religious belief; who generally and as a rule use a common language as the vehicle of their thoughts and feelings; and who, besides common thoughts and feelings, also cherish a common will, and accordingly form or tend to form, a separate state for the expression and realisation of that will.⁶

In a sense, 90% of the states in the world are multi-ethnic by virtue of the fact that they contain minorities in excess of 5% of their total population. Not all of these states are experiencing national assertions within their political boundaries. Some plausible explanations for the harmonious coexistence of multiple ethnicities in multi-ethnic states are: the inland

diasporic nature of the nationalities; the overwhelming presence of the majority ethnic community; and the proper assimilation of ethnic communities into the constructed national identity of the political system.⁷ Problems of ethno-nationalities challenging political nationalities appear in societies where the political system- the state- has failed to articulate a national identity that either accommodates the various nationalities or makes it preferable for the population vis-à-vis the exclusivist communitarian identities.

The Failure of the Articulation of Common Political Nationality

Since most nation-states are artificial creations, it is incumbent upon the political system to arrange for the constant reinforcement of the spirit of political nationalism among the ethno-nationalities that constitute, or are made part of, the political system. The methods adopted by nation-states to reinvigorate the spirit of nationalism vary with the social geography of the states, the nature of the natural nationalities and the nature of the government in charge. As implied in Brendan O'Leary's analysis, maintaining national solidarity is a matter of political expediency for the regime in charge. The two approaches, according to O'Leary, that regimes adopt are to eliminate the differences

among nationalities and to manage the differences. The techniques adopted include both negative and positive ones. Negatively, differences are eliminated by means of genocide and ethnic expulsion, as seen in the case of Germany during the Nazi period, and the positive methods include territorial elimination in the form of secession, decolonisation or partition.⁸ Central regimes or states try to manage differences among nationalities either through control strategies or through arbitration and federalism.⁹ Irrespective of the methods, the objective of the nation-state and the regime in control is the articulation of a concept of nationalism that stands outside the other primordial identities and into which all primordial nationalities will either spontaneously get assimilated into or can be forced to get assimilated into.

Identity formation keeps changing in most parts of South Asia, making the question of nationality fluid for the regimes, and causing difficulties in effectively controlling potentially threatening nationalities.

In South Asia all the methods mentioned above have been adopted in some degrees at some point of the process of nation building. The

partition of the Indian subcontinent and the further partition of Pakistan, the systematic assault on the Chakmas in Bangladesh, the federal features in the Indian constitution, the attempts of imposing Sinhalese ethnic hegemony in Sri Lanka, the recent resolve to turn Nepal into a federation and the expulsion of the Nepalese from Bhutan are examples of the possible methods to create homogenous (mono-ethnic) nation-states out of multi-ethnic states. Needless to say, all of these methods have proved to be inadequate. Ethnic cleansing is not practical in most South Asian countries owing to their democratic structures and long tradition of “inter-communal”¹⁰ comity. Due to the multiplicity in identity and their geographical overlapping, federalism on the basis of natural nationalities is also not workable. Moreover, for the same reason, identity formation keeps changing in most parts of South Asia, making the question of nationality fluid for the regimes, and causing difficulties in effectively controlling potentially threatening nationalities. Though secession has been adopted, seemingly successfully, in the creation of nation-states, it has not been entirely successful in the South Asian region due to the absence of congruity between natural nationalities and geographical requirements.

The amalgamated nature of natural nationalities and the tradition of

inter-communal comity present the regimes in charge with arguably the best opportunity to construct “political national identities”. But on the contrary, South Asian states periodically suffer from the assertions of natural nationalities. The question is why have political systems failed to articulate an inclusive national identity to which the citizens would willingly refer to instead of referring to their natural nationalities? Often this is answered in a nihilist fashion by blaming the colonial masters for creating permanent fissures in the otherwise coherent socio-political fabric of the region. It becomes imperative to look at the ways the South Asian states have tried to articulate a political national identity and/or the way they try and manage the questions of nationalities in the process of consolidating the concept of the nation-state. The various strategies adopted by the South Asian states are marked by two sets of approaches, namely structural and distributive.¹¹ While the structural approach does not address the ethnic questions specifically, the distributive approach is aimed at complementing the structural strategies to facilitate integration of natural nationalities into the constructed political national identity.

In India, the distributive approach has included strategies such as improvised secularism and protecting minority rights. The classical concept of secularism that implies a division of

jurisprudence between the temporal and spiritual spheres was modified to allow the regime in charge to create provisions for the minor religious nationalities to protect their identities. The objective of this is to reassure the religious minorities that the protection of their nationalities is guaranteed within the larger political nationality. Similar methods have been adopted to lure nationalities of other connotations. Provisions for minority education, special economic provisions for backward social categories and ensuring adequate political representation are other strategies the Indian political system has adopted for consolidating the political national identity.

In developing societies like in South Asia, the first upsurge of nationalism was more through emulation than an evolution.

Pakistan, for its part, had the task easy as the nation was created on the basis of a Muslim identity. But it was its cultural diversity that required the reformulating national identity in such a fashion that would encapsulate cultural diversities. In the initial period after independence, Pakistan debated two strategies: i) to create an Islamic nation based on Islam that would accommodate the other nationalities according to the provisions prescribed by the Quran and

Shariat; and ii) to promote Pakistani nationality that would accommodate all nationalities and would take care of the cultural diversities. However, Pakistan has not been able to create a consensus around the nature of Islamisation and often such strategies have evoked violent reactions. The best option for Pakistan has been to manage the cultural diversities through proper federalism but its periodic lapses into dictatorship and its natural requirement of concentration of power have turned the attempts of federalisation into unacceptable form of centralisation causing more pressure of (sub)nationalistic assertions on the political sovereignty of Pakistan. Bangladesh, on the other hand, has used Islam as a tool of national identity formation, though it has stopped short of using it the way Pakistan has been trying, but nevertheless Bangladesh's shift from the Indian model of secularism towards religious nationalism has certainly created more problems than its positive uniting effect. The non-Muslim population of Bangladesh, the Hindus and the Buddhist Chakmas, are dissatisfied. While the Hindus have adopted constitutional and political methods to get their grievances redressed, the Chakmas have turned violent and the problem is far from over for Bangladesh.

Sri Lanka is a case of strategy of concealed majoritarian domination. The regime in charge adopted constitutional methods to ensure minority representation but

the distributive mechanism was fixed to ensure the marginalisation of ethnic minorities. Among the positive strategies the Sri Lanka regime has adopted include secularism and ethnic electoral federalism. But such strategies have been trumped by the discriminatory distributive strategies and the dynamics of competitive electoral politics that ensures the dominance of the Sinhalese over the ethnic Tamils. The regime in charge in Nepal saw its best bet in articulating a

political nationalism that included the principal identity of most of the natural nationalities, i.e. Hinduism, and those who were left out of this identity were allowed to practise their own identities within the political identity of the Nepali nationality. A single language, Khas

(Nepali), was adopted as the official language to project a concrete image of Nepali nationality. Nepal, though it has not seen large-scale ethnic cleavage, has felt the pressure of nationalities standing against the attempt of the regime in charge to submerge their nationalities within the overarching Nepali nationality. Fresh attempts have been made to develop a nationality of the new Republic of Nepal. The provisions

for ethnic representation and plans for creating a federation are steps in that regard. Bhutan seems to have managed the problem of nationalities better than other South Asian states. There are two primary nationalities populating Bhutan: the ethnic Bhutanese and the ethnic Nepalis. There have been some concerns about the Nepalis trying to replace the ethnic Bhutanese from the position of majority and power. Such concerns have been fixed through imposing restrictions

on the movement of the ethnic Nepali population. The Bhutan regime has embarked on a strategy of inclusion by adopting a method of proportional representation, the absorption of Nepalis in official positions and encouraging social alliances between

the two ethnic communities. The nearly homogenous Maldives has had no problem of nationality but regionalism is emerging as a problem. After the withdrawal of the British from the Addu atoll, there seemed to be the problem of geographical nationalism, but the regime in charge has adopted the strategy of development to lure the population of the Addu atoll into the national mainstream of Maldives.

The alleged failure of South Asian political systems in articulating an all-inclusive nationalism is not due to them being illegitimate or artificial, but because of the attempt to develop nation-states in the region on the basis of homogeneity in line with Western Europe.

Conclusion

The discussions above on the attempts to promote political nationalism within South Asian countries by their regimes underlines the fact that the process of nation-building is still ongoing and there are both optimistic and pessimistic conclusions to draw about these states succeeding in constructing nation-states. The present forms of nationalistic assertions in the South Asian states are experiencing a transition of what Gellner calls from the “low cultures”¹² into the “high cultures”. This is essentially a part of the modernisation project that western societies experienced long back in history. But the essential difference in the two processes is that in the case of the west the transformation ended with the consolidation of nation-states, while in case of South Asia, it has led to instability of the political states and a perpetual fight between the primordial low cultures and the state, and among the low cultures themselves.

This generates the most important question: is the concept of nation-state inappropriate for South Asia? Or to put it differently, is it modernity with nationalism (with its emphasis on homogeneity) as its political offshoot that is preventing the articulation of nationality or national identity that is congruent to the nationalist aspirations of the population forming the political units in the region?¹³ By any analysis,

the development of nationalism was an evolution in western societies. In contrast, in developing societies like in South Asia, the first upsurge of nationalism was more through emulation than an evolution. The leaders of the freedom movements in South Asia had a notion of nationalism that was firmly grounded on the territorial connotation of the nation-state and the statist ideals inherited from the colonial masters, the west.¹⁴ The political units of South Asia qualify as nations only if we take Anthony Giddens’ definition of a nation. He defines a nation as a “collectivity existing within a clearly defined territory, which is subject to a unitary administration, reflexively monitored both by the internal state apparatus and those of other states”.¹⁵ He further suggests that nationalism is a psychological phenomenon, which is evident from “the affiliation of individuals to a set of symbols and beliefs emphasising commonality among the members of a political order.”¹⁶

If homogeneity is a pre-requisite for nationalism, South Asia lacks the geographical support to add territoriality so essential for the formation of nation-state.

South Asia as a socio-political space did not and does not have the requisite socio-economic infrastructure to build

and hold the western-defined political superstructure. Does that make South Asia an ancient or traditional state?¹⁷ There was a hope that if some Western nations such as the United States of America and Switzerland, which were not homogenous but could manage to evolve as successful nation-states, could also evolve into nation-states then political units in South Asia could as well. The hope was grounded on two historical facts: i) “prior to the British conquest, relations between the regional peoples and the sovereign power had never been regulated wholly by religion”, and ii) “a web of economic and social linkages had survived periods of imperial consolidation, crisis and collapse, to bind the subcontinent into a loosely layered framework of interdependence”.¹⁸ One can argue that the post-colonial nation-states in South Asia have survived for more than half a century (with one secession only), thus providing sufficient evidence of a functioning concept of civic nationalism. The counter argument to this is that mere survival of political units defined by a border does not prove the consolidation and success of nation-state. The essential measure of the strength of a nation-state lies in the functioning of the essential feature of modern nation-state system, i.e. the “representative form of government” or democracy.

The alleged failure of South Asian political systems in articulating an all-

inclusive nationalism is not due to them being illegitimate or artificial, but because of the attempt to develop nation-states in the region on the basis of homogeneity in line with Western Europe. The emergence of nation-states in the west provided evidence in support of the idea that nation-states are essentially homogenous and that multi-community societies are not suitable for nationhood. But such an argument is incomplete as it is based on the assertive quality of nationality or identity and ignores the adaptive and integrative natures of identity. The state, being an artificial creation, can certainly be maintained by creating and recreating civic virtues. The power of nationalism does not rest in inventing historical commonality to arouse emotional communal feelings; rather it rests in getting associated with demonstrated success as a unit, and if that unity is represented by geographical territory, then it creates a successful nation-state.

The South Asian experience of nation building exposes the weaknesses in the concept of nationalism.

The people of South Asia during colonial times had only one basis to get united into one nation and that was the “will” to belong to one nation. This “will” prevailed over all the other

criteria of group formation. But the important question is has the will been lost? Or have the people willed to form primordial nationalities? The answer lies in the failure of the political units in getting the constructed nationality endorsed through the daily plebiscite.¹⁹ Nation-building projects in most South Asian societies have a two goals: i) to articulate the concept of nationalism in the modern sense of the term; and ii) to preserve the distinctive feature of the endogenous culture vis-à-vis the cultural colonisation of the western form of modernity. On both the nation-building projects face severe challenges. If homogeneity is a pre-requisite for nationalism, South Asia lacks the geographical support to add territoriality so essential for the formation of nation-state. On the second front, nationalist movements lack the power of resistance owing to the fractures already created by percolation of western cultural values the South Asian society during the period of colonisation and sustained by the forces of globalisation.

The nationalism that created nation-states in the west is not as universal as it is made out to be. Its success in the west has depended upon its being imported from other places and rightly

modified in the light of the indigenous traditions. In South Asia, the idea of nation and nationalism were imported from the West through the colonial masters but the post colonial leadership have failed to modify it in the light of the rich tradition of the region, which has resulted in *a problem*. The reason for the non-modification of the original idea of nationalism by mixing up local traditions is the assumption that the local traditions are not modern and are against the modern idea of nation and nationalism.

The South Asian experience of nation building exposes the weaknesses in the concept of nationalism. It raises the central question: is nationalism an essential feature that every state must possess? The failure of the articulation of political nationalism congruent to the political boundaries of South Asian political units proves that it is not always possible to build states on homogeneity of any kinds, not even cultural as suggested by Gellner. The civic nationalism that inspired the Americans and the French to build nations or nation-states seems to not be working in South Asia, a development with calls for modifications to the concept of nationalism.

Endnotes

- 1 If nationhood has to have a territory then the concept of nationhood in Indian subcontinent is composite in nature. In his book *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Oxford University Press, 1994), Partha Chatterjee discussed various components of nationhood under the construct of “fragment”, though his categorisation is not exhaustive and many more components can be identified that constitute a nation in the subcontinent. The notion of nation in the Indian subcontinent certainly transcends the identity of each of such components and fragments.
- 2 Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964, p. 1.
- 3 Shibashis Chatterjee, “Ethnic Conflicts in South Asia: A Constructivist Reading”, *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (March 2005), p. 83.
- 4 Rajat Ganguly and Ray Taras, *Understanding Ethnic Conflict: The International Dimension*, New York, Addison Wesley Longman, 1998, p. 9.
- 5 Urmila Phanis and Rajat Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, (revised edition), New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2001, p. 19.
- 6 Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in its Formation*, London, Methuen, 1927, p. 17; quoted in Phanis and Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, pp. 19-20.
- 7 In most cases, particularly in Asia and Africa, state-building preceded nation-building, making the national identity of the state not as natural as ethnic nationalities.
- 8 Brendan O’Leary, “Introduction” and “The Elements of Right-Sizing and Right Peopling of State”, in Brendan O’Leary, Ian S. Lustick and Thomas Callaghy (eds.), *Right-Sizing the State: The Politics of Moving Borders*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 The term communal here is used to refer to groupings that could be formed on various identities.
- 11 Phanis and Ganguly, *Ethnicity and Nation-Building in South Asia*, p. 146.
- 12 “Low culture” here refers to the culture of the agroliterate societies. Gellner identifies nationalism with “high culture” prevalent in industrialised societies from the “wild” or low culture that characterises agroliterate societies. See, Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, pp. 50-52.
- 13 In line with the endogenous conception of nationhood in South Asia, nationalist aspiration means preserving the primordial identities within a composite political unit.

- 14 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, London, Routledge, 1998, p. 73.
- 15 Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1985, p. 116.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 There cannot be a single answer to what could have been better suited political structures for South Asia. A probable alternative could have been the creation of accommodative political structures that provided a space for the traditional institutions to operate and act as agents of modernisation.
- 18 Ayesha Jalal, "South Asia", *Encyclopaedia of Nationalism*, Academic Press, 2000, p. 2.
- 19 As Ernest Renan argues, "[a] nation's existence is a daily plebiscite". Ernst Renan, "What is a Nation?", translation of Renan's Lecture delivered at Soborne, 11 March 1882, at www.cooper.edu [last visited 12 January 2014].

History as a Mirror: What Does the Demise of Ryukyu Mean for the Sino-Japanese Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Dispute?¹

Ching-Chang CHEN*

Abstract

The on-going dispute over the ownership of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands between China and Japan has often been ridiculed by observers as an unwise struggle for rocks. One must question, however, why so much significance has been attached to those “trivial specks” in the first place. This paper maintains that the seed of contemporary Sino-Japanese rivalry cannot be separated from the “expansion” of European international society, after which China and Japan came to be obsessed with sovereign independence and territorial integrity. Following the demise of the Ryukyu Kingdom, Qing Chinese officials realised that Meiji Japan was no longer within the borders of a once-shared civilisation, which prepared the ground for a series of violent conflicts between them, unusual in their millennium-old, largely peaceful interactions. A sustainable resolution of the Diaoyu/Senkaku issue, then, should

move from calls for putting aside sovereignty differences towards a more inclusive, post-Westphalian bordering practice in East Asia.

Key Words

Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, international society, non-Western international relations, Ryukyu, Sino-Japanese relations, territorial dispute.

Introduction

A clutch of eight tiny, uninhabited islets in the Western Pacific, named the Senkaku Islands by Japan and the Diaoyu Islands by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), recently became one of the most headline-making flashpoints in East Asia. Administrated by Japan but also claimed by China, the ownership dispute further involves competition for fishery resources, potential oil deposits and, indeed, a “reputation for resolve”.² In September 2010, a Chinese trawler collided with a Japan Coast Guard patrol boat in waters near the contested islands; to press for the release of the detained

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captain, Beijing allegedly delayed the export of rare earth metals to Japan.³ Tensions continued to build up during 2012, which, ironically, marked the 40th anniversary of the normalisation of the diplomatic relationship between these two nations. Following Tokyo's naming of some islets early that year, Beijing countered with its own naming amid then-Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro's statement indicating his intention to purchase the three larger islets. To prevent the Senkakus from entering the hands of conservative nationalists such as Ishihara, the Japanese government proceeded to buy the islands from their private landlord in September. This move, in turn, set in motion a series of large-scale anti-Japanese demonstrations in major Chinese cities, a slump in Japanese exports to China and in Chinese tourists to Japan, and frequent appearance of Chinese petrol vessels and aircraft in the surrounding waters and airspace. With the increasing number of aerial and maritime near-misses, and without hotline-like conflict-prevention mechanisms between them, in January 2013, Chinese warships were said to have pointed their fire-control radar at a Japanese helicopter and a destroyer in close proximity in the East China

Sea.⁴ The Chinese foreign ministry in April referred to the Diaoyus as a part of China's "core interests", a term normally associated with Xinjiang, Tibet and Taiwan, for the first time.⁵

The on-going standoff between the world's second and third largest economies has been a cause of great concern for stakeholders of the region's peace and prosperity.⁶ The United States, in particular, is caught in an unwanted situation where it is obliged by treaty to defend territory under Japanese administration (which includes the

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Senkakus, despite Washington's avoidance of taking a stand on their sovereignty), while needing China's cooperation on a wide range of issues from cyber security to North Korea's

nuclear programmes. On the other hand, many wonder why Beijing and Tokyo have been so obsessed with those "trivial specks", which are of limited strategic and economic values. After all, any occupied islet is easy to invade and virtually impossible to defend in war. Moreover, possession of the Diaoyus/Senkakus does not represent a key to controlling the sea; the strategic advantage is at best marginal and can be easily offset by increasing military capabilities and/or building closer alliances. Likewise,

the size of the Diaoyus/Senkakus means that, even though the islands are used as legitimate baselines, they are deemed too small to have any significant impact on the Sino-Japanese maritime delimitation under the existing international law.⁷ Since there will be few real interests to gain but a lot to lose in solving the dispute by force, calls for “cooler heads to prevail” in Asia so as not to go to war “over a rock” have abounded.⁸

But why has so much significance been attached to the supposedly negligible Diaoyus/Senkakus in the first place? Beijing’s apparent belligerence over the islands is puzzling, because China did not resort to coercive diplomacy to prevent the Ryukyu Kingdom from falling under Japan’s full control during the 1870s. In a retrospective thought experiment, a more proactive Chinese intervention at that particular juncture might have altered the island kingdom’s fate as well as prevented the Senkaku/Diaoyu issue from becoming an issue today. To be sure, Ryukyu had been under the strict control of the Satsuma clan since 1609, but it maintained an ambiguous status as a “double tributary state” (*ryozoku no kuni*) to both Japan and China in East Asian international society; it was not until the kingdom being formally annexed and turned into Okinawa Prefecture in the late 1870s that the first border dispute between China and Japan broke out. Systematic inquiries into this old dispute will help

to illuminate why the present Senkaku/Diaoyu issue has often been handled by hotter heads.

To make sense of China’s underactive response to Japan’s gradual incorporation of Ryukyu in the 1870s, one cannot overlook the absence of compellence in Chinese strategic behaviour. In International Relations (IR) jargon, compellence refers to a specific type of coercion that threatens to use force to make another actor do (or undo) some action. The Qing dynasty did not resort to any military threat to get the Meiji government to change course at several junctures when the Ryukyu Kingdom was first reduced to a clan in 1872, then prohibited from sending tribute embassies to the Qing in 1875, and eventually abolished in 1879. Three possible explanations stand out. First, from the perspective of the coercion literature,⁹ compellence was simply not a credible policy for the declining Qing to adopt in its dealings with a modernising Japan. This materialist view and the mainstream scholarly works on Chinese strategic culture are complementary, for both maintain that the pacifist rhetoric and the principle of minimal use of force was no more than a temporary measure to compensate for China’s material inferiority.¹⁰ Third, in contemporary Chinese nationalist discourse, the “failure to act” is attributable to the corruption and incompetence of late Qing leaders who were unable to comprehend the

perils China was facing in the age of imperialism.¹¹ While China's lack of hard power at that time did limit the Qing court's ability to effectively respond to the *fait accompli* in Okinawa, material constraints (military capabilities) or strategic ignorance (having no knowledge of "realism") alone are not strong explanations and together do not make the puzzle more intelligible to us.

Careful inquiry into Sino-Japanese diplomatic history suggests that top Chinese officials such as Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) were not unaware of the consequences of their passive approach to the dispute, which included not exploiting Japan's weakness during the Satsuma Rebellion (1877) and not acquiring the southern parts of Okinawa as offered by Japanese negotiators following the US mediation (1879-80). Rather than following the logic of consequences that attributes action to the anticipated costs and benefits, various memorials to the throne by Qing officials reveal that opponents of the partition of Ryukyu (hence "losing" it to Japan altogether) were mostly informed by a logic of appropriateness, concerning whether their actions were considered legitimate in the tribute system. As a foundational institution of East Asian international society, the tribute system emphasised a formal hierarchy among its members. Within this hierarchical order, China sat highest and subordinate states were ranked by their proficiency

with Confucian norms, values and practices, not by their relative power (including territorial possessions). As such, the legitimacy of this hierarchy entailed a credible commitment on the part of the dominant state not to exploit the secondary states.¹² Employing compellence against Japan over Ryukyu or dividing up the islands with Japan, however, would violate this key aspect of status hierarchy and call into question China's position as the centre within Confucian cosmology and the assumed moral superiority of its leadership. China's difficulty in establishing clearly defined, exclusive borders enshrined in international legal treaties (instead of the Confucian influence of ritual protocol) at the expense of the secondary states, then, illustrates more about the extent to which it had been socialised into East Asian international society over centuries than how "misguided" or "incompetent" Qing leaders were in failing to turn China into a modern, sovereign state.

As a foundational institution of East Asian international society, the tribute system emphasised a formal hierarchy among its members.

The remainder of this paper is divided into three sections. To advance an explanation that does not force China and other regional actors into a

Eurocentric straitjacket, the first section revisits the constitutional structures and institutions of East Asian international society before the arrival of the Western powers, examining how they informed the members' identities and interests. Using primary Chinese sources, the second section retraces how Qing officials had debated various options and how Li Hongzhang's argument that China's reaction should not "start with a just cause but end up with satisfying self-interest" (*yishi lizhong*) prevailed. The concluding section discusses the implications of this study for the notion of international society and for understanding contemporary territorial disputes in East Asia.

International Society Outside Europe: The Case of East Asia

Unlike Martin Wight's famous categorisation of the Sinocentric world order as the product of a "suzerain system" rather than of an international society,¹³ the term "East Asian international society" has been consciously employed throughout this research to avoid the implication that only Europeans were capable of addressing the anarchy problem but East Asians were not. Given that there were only two major wars in this part of the world from the founding of the Ming dynasty (1368) to the Opium War (1839-42), it is not

convincing that East Asian countries managed to maintain their "long peace" without resorting to any sophisticated institutions but chance, or that the impressive stability simply reflected the power asymmetry between China and its neighbours.¹⁴

As Suzuki Shogo has indicated, the constitutional structures of East Asian international society involved three normative dimensions: the "moral purpose of the state" (the reasons for establishing a political entity to serve the common good), the "organising principle of sovereignty" (which legitimises the entity's possession of sovereignty) and the "norm of procedural justice" (the implementation of the above principles must also follow certain procedures).¹⁵ In the case of European international society, a legitimate state was expected to enable its citizens to pursue their individual happiness and achieve their potential. As a result, the state's internal affairs were to be free from foreign intervention so long as it commanded popular support. The principle of sovereign equality, in turn, was safeguarded through legislation (i.e. legislative justice) and embodied in institutions such as positive international law and diplomacy. By contrast, the "moral purpose of the state" in East Asian international society was to promote social and cosmic harmony. Such harmony was maintained when member states could conform to their "rightful" positions within this hierarchical society.

The principle of sovereign hierarchy meant that states (both suzerains and vassals) had to perform appropriate Confucian rituals to acknowledge their relative positions (i.e. ritual justice) if their legitimacy was to be respected, which led to the creation of the tribute system as the fundamental institution. Paying tribute to the suzerain, then, was more than a bribe to “buy” security; the participating states’ identities (and hence their interests) were inevitably shaped by their entering into tributary relations.¹⁶ Three interrelated points follow the above discussion. First, in principle, it was possible for a foreign people (*yi* or “barbarians”) to become a member of East Asian international society or even part of the “middle kingdom” or virtuous state (*hwa*), provided that they participated in the totality of Confucian civilisation- food, dress, language, rituals and so on- beyond their symbolic participation in tributary protocol. Second, while member states competed for the highest possible positions in the society, a state would run the risk of being “downgraded” or even losing its membership should it fail to perform the necessary rituals pertinent to its place in the hierarchical order. Third, although China normally took on the role of the “middle kingdom” at the apex of that order, it was also possible for other states to assert their “superior” moral status and demonstrate their ability to promote social harmony by constructing their

own alternative, non-Sinocentric tribute system.¹⁷

The extinguishment of the Ryukyu Kingdom can be seen as a first step of such internal change that prepared the ground for the region-wide adoption of norms and institutions originated in European international society.

What was the underlying logic that informed the functioning of East Asian international society? “Civilisation” seems to be a useful keyword here.¹⁸ According to D.R. Howland, Chinese conceptions of civilisation consisted of three elements.¹⁹ First, *wenming* literally meant a desired state of human society made luminous (*ming*) through writing or “patterning” (*wen*); when all was in harmony in the world, there was no need to resort to military subjugation (*wugong*) and the world was *wenming*. This ideal stage was possible because of the highest virtue exhibited by the emperor (“Son of Heaven”, who was supposed to have direct access to the will of the heavenly bodies) following the examples provided by history and the classics. Second, to the extent that a man could pattern his behaviour in accordance with the expectations of the Confucian texts, submitting to his rightful lord (*jun*) in particular (e.g. ruler-servant, father-son, etc.) he too was *wenming* or “civilising”.

Civilisation, then, ultimately signified a “spatially expansive and ideologically infinite” process of Chinese imperial lordship.²⁰ Third, based on the idea of proximity (*jin*) that connects space to morality, humankind would approximate moral behaviour in proportion to their proximity to the emperor, whose benevolent rule could bring the people close and cherish them. Accordingly, a concentric and hierarchical world order emerged with the emperor at the centre; the civilisational realm was instantiated by various regional bureaucratic offices, by the voyages of imperial envoys to and from the capital, and by those outside peoples who responded to the imperial virtue by sending tribute missions to the court. Tributary relations thus represented an act of reciprocity through which outsiders accepted the *nominal* lordship of the Son of Heaven and his calendar; on the other hand, the foreign lord received Chinese investiture as legitimate ruler of his domain.

China’s response to Japan’s incorporation of Ryukyu during the 1870s cannot be adequately analysed without understanding the aforementioned norms and institutions. As Hamashita Takeshi has noted, it would be remiss if one too readily assumes that East Asian international society collapsed completely soon after the intrusion of the Western powers:²¹

Considering the fact that the history of East Asian international relations

was founded upon the principle of a tributary relationship sustainable for over a thousand years, it is difficult to assume that its demise could be brought about by a single event, such as the Opium War... Rather, it is conceivably more acceptable to view it as a demise that was caused by internal change within the tribute system itself.

In this regard, the extinguishment of the Ryukyu Kingdom can be seen as a first step of such internal change that prepared the ground for the region-wide adoption of norms and institutions originated in European international society. The next section will illustrate this change, a change which led to rising Sino-Japanese rivalry in the following decades.

Extinguishment of the Ryukyu Kingdom and China’s Response

With the expansion of European international society in the 19th century and Japan’s decision to be recognised as a qualified member of that society for the sake of its survival, the existence of tributary states in East Asia following ritualistic, hierarchical Confucian norms also became increasingly hard to tolerate in the eyes of the Meiji leaders and intellectuals alike. Now ritualistic procedural norms of the East were to be replaced by legal procedural norms of the West. As a result, tributary states had to either turn themselves into sovereign

independent states or be absorbed by such sovereign entities.

The Ryukyu Kingdom's ambiguous status as a part of Japan *and* China's tributary state, then, looked rather embarrassing and even dangerous for the Meiji government. As Suzuki puts it:²²

The Ryukyu Kingdom's participation in the Tribute System could potentially highlight Japan's inability to conform [to] international law, and consequently its lack of commitment to fully join the international order as defined by European International Society. This would, in turn, jeopardize Japan's quest to attain the status of a "civilized" power as defined by the members of European International Society.

Japan's move to abolish the kingdom was therefore as much a realist act of securing its southern periphery as a political demonstration of underscoring its commitment to attaining international recognition as a qualified member of the European society of states.²³ The move was an incremental one. In 1872, the Ryukyu king Sho Tai received investiture as "lord of the Ryukyu fief", and the kingdom's treaty and diplomatic matters were henceforth taken over by Japan's foreign ministry. This was followed by Japan's success in getting China to admit that the former's 1874 expedition to punish "Taiwanese savages" was a "just act" to redress the murdering of *Japanese citizens*.²⁴ Then, in 1875, the kingdom was prohibited from sending tributary envoys to, and receiving investiture from, China, its trading mission in

Fuzhou was abolished, and the islands came under the administration of Japan's home ministry.

The crisis escalated into a Sino-Japanese diplomatic dispute after Chinese officials received petitions from Ryukyuan secret envoys in 1877. Seen from their memorials to the court, it is hard to sustain the charge that these officials were completely ignorant of the geopolitical/geostrategic implications of the demise of this tributary state or incapable of formulating feasible policy options. Viceroy of Fujian-Zhejiang and Fuzhou general He Jing, for instance, did not consider Ryukyu in itself crucial to the defence of China's periphery, but he was aware of the consequences of failing to protect the islands from foreign intrusions. He thus suggested that the Qing court should take advantage of the Satsuma Rebellion and apply diplomatic pressure on the Meiji government to deal with the dispute in accordance with international law.²⁵ Diplomat Huang Zunxian warned in "On the Liuqiu [Ryukyu] Affairs" (*Lun liu shi shu*) that tolerating Japan at that time amounted to "feeding a tiger which China can no longer rein in": "given Liuqiu's proximity to Taiwan, it would not be possible to maintain even one peaceful night in Taiwan and Penghu should Japan establish exclusive control over Liuqiu, turn it into a prefecture, train its soldiers and arm them to harass China's periphery".²⁶

The Chinese minister to Japan He Ruzhang predicted that the Japanese would not only prevent Ryukyu from sending tribute but also seek to eliminate the kingdom, and after that they would turn to Korea. To pre-empt Japan's expansion, He presented three options to the court: his first and best solution was to dispatch warships to demand Ryukyu's resumption of tribute missions while negotiating with Japan. The second was that, when persuasion failed, China could support Ryukyu's armed resistance with auxiliary troops should Japan use force against the Ryukyuan. The third resorted to international law, inviting Western diplomats to condemn the Japanese government.²⁷ He Ruzhang admitted that China was not in good shape to use force, but he still recommended the first two options as "Japan's recent situation [the Satsuma Rebellion] was even worse than ours".²⁸ Although the *Zongli yamen's* (International Office) subsequent decision not to engage in coercive diplomacy against Japan could not be separated from China's concurrent dispute with Russia in Xinjiang, concerns over the northwestern border were not the only reason for the Qing's forgoing of this rare "window of opportunity"; indeed, they might not even have been the strongest one. Viceroy of Zhili and minister of Beiyang Li Hongzhang, one of the most influential officials in charge of Qing diplomacy, would not have felt the need to offer the embattled

Meiji government 100,000 rifle bullets made by the Tianjin Arsenal had his purpose been simply to appease Tokyo or to prevent Japan from leaning towards Russia. Despite the Qing officials' increasing realisation that Meiji leaders would only yield to international law (a hallmark of European international society) or superior military might (a necessary instrument for any "civilised" state in the age of imperialism), Li apparently believed that the offer was what "ought to be done" for China's harmonious intercourse with Japan (*jiaoji zhong yinyozhiyi*).²⁹

The article that gave Japan preferential treatment was *not* the same as that which had allowed China's unequal treaties with the Western powers in the 19th century- it required Japan to give China *equivalent* treatment as well.

That Chinese leaders started using the language of Western international law yet continued to embrace the constitutional structures of East Asian international society cannot be overlooked in a letter of understanding to Shishido Tamaki, then Japanese minister to China, by Prince Gong (who headed the *Zongli yamen*) in 1879, which emphasised the significance of Sino-Ryukyuan tributary

relations and Chinese investiture while acknowledging the Ryukyu Kingdom's status as a "double tributary state".³⁰ The letter repeatedly stressed that Ryukyu was a part of China *and* recognised as an independent state by all countries (*Liuqiu jiwei Zhongguo bin geguo renqi ziwei yiguo*); the abolishment of the kingdom might have thus breached Article 1 of the Sino-Japanese friendship treaty (which stipulated that their respective territories should be "treated with propriety") and international law.³¹ Moreover, as a "weak and small" double

tributary state, Price Gong lamented, the Ryukyu Kingdom should have been protected rather than swallowed up by Japan (which went against the "moral purpose of the state", i.e.

promoting cosmic harmony, in East Asian international society). Shishido countered that it was not possible for the islanders to be subjects of Japan and China at the same time. Furthermore, the islands could only be an independent state *or* part of such a state; the two possibilities were mutually exclusive. By rebuffing the relevance of Chinese investiture and declaring the abolition of the "fief" as a domestic issue based on Japan's effective control over the islands, Shishido thus rejected ritual justice as the

"systemic norm of procedural justice" in favour of legislative justice grounded in positive international law.

The turning point for this dialogue of the deaf came when former US President Ulysses Simpson Grant was visiting China and Japan in mid-1879. Grant agreed to mediate the dispute at the request of Li Hongzhang and Prince Gong, and offered a proposal with American diplomats in Japan as a basis for negotiation. The proposal suggested dividing the Ryukyu Islands into three

This shocking experience does not mean that Chinese strategic behaviour would remain largely shaped by the rules and norms of East Asian international society when facing further challenges from Japan.

parts:³² the central part would belong to the residual Ryukyu Kingdom protected by Chinese and Japanese consuls, the southern part would belong to China, being close to Taiwan, and the northern part would

belong to Japan, being close to Satsuma (Kagoshima). The Japanese government agreed to come to the negotiating table, but demanded that China recognise that the Okinawa main island and the above belonged to Japan (Miyako and Yaeyama Islands would belong to China, as proposed by Grant) and that the 1871 Treaty of Trade and Friendship be revised to allow Japan to enjoy the privileges granted to the Western powers, especially inland trade. Considering that this compromise could help preserve

the kingdom and avoid pushing Japan to the Russian side (with which Beijing was also trying to conclude a border dispute in Xinjiang), the *Zongli yamen* signed an agreement with Shishido Tamaki in October 1880. However, due to Li Hongzhang's objection at the last minute, the agreement was never ratified and was forfeited in January 1881. Whether the legal status of Ryukyu was settled or not remains a contentious issue between China and Japan today, but one thing is certain: the familiar dispute over Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands that has plagued Sino-Japanese relations for decades would not have become an issue as it is now had the 1880 agreement been ratified.

Why did Li oppose (and effectively block) the deal? Contemporary Chinese historians have indicated that the progress in the concurrent negotiation with Russia led him to conclude that China should not make such a big concession to Japan over the Ryukyu question.³³ Some suspect that "inter-agency rivalry" had also played a part, for Li was in charge of the signing of the 1871 treaty but was not involved in the *Zongli yamen's* negotiation with the Japanese delegation over revision of the treaty.³⁴ This personal issue aside, Li still needed to make his case compelling enough for the Qing court. The question, then, is what kind of concession was too big to make for the Chinese leaders? In his memorial to the emperor, Li made two

main points to support his claim that the conclusion of the Ryukyu question should be "postponed" (*yandang*):³⁵ First, the Ryukyuan elite would not be willing to re-establish the kingdom in Miyako and Yaeyama, which were relatively impoverished (and historically peripheral). If so, it would be too expensive for China to administer and station troops on these remote islands. In addition to this, he argued, granting Japan rights to inland trade would not be in China's interest.

On the surface, Li seemed to have based his case on the costs and benefits of not ratifying the agreement. Under scrutiny, however, his calculation was not driven by pure material interests. In fact, the article that gave Japan preferential treatment was *not* the same as that which had allowed China's unequal treaties with the Western powers in the 19th century- it required Japan to give China *equivalent* treatment as well.³⁶ Like He Jing and Huang Zunxian, Li was also keenly aware that abandoning those "impoverished" islands to the Japanese or Westerners would lead them to control China's Pacific choke points (*e wo taipingyang yanhou, yifei Zhongguo zhili*); the consequences of doing nothing clearly outweighed the costs of administering the islands. Furthermore, Li must have recognised that time was running out for China as the Japanese *fait accompli* had continued to take root in Okinawa ever since He Ruzhang's call

for coercive diplomacy. A wise statesman would have reaped what was left on the negotiating table. To make sense of Li's puzzling (in)action, one must understand that his inclination against *yishi lizhong* (i.e. China's response to the annexation of Ryukyu should not "start with a just cause but end up with satisfying self-interest") was more a result of China's century-old socialisation into East Asian international society than a Confucian pretence. Likewise, his reluctance to allow Japan to enjoy the same benefits granted to the Western powers (*liyi junzhan*) was not so much that he was worried about Japanese economic penetration into China's inland (after all, it would have been hard, in 1880, to foresee Japan's emergence as a world economic powerhouse) but rather that treating Japan like a Western country would not reflect its supposed place in East Asian international society (hence disrupting the society's organising principle). Indeed, as Howland has noted, the Treaty of Trade and Friendship itself revealed how Japan was placed in an ambivalent position in the eyes of Chinese leaders during the 1870s, which was "neither as distant and different as the Westerners, nor as close and commensurate as China's dependencies".³⁷

Imagine China assuming the role of father in the East Asian family. Ryukyu, like Korea, was highly regarded within the family for his filial behaviour and resemblance to the father. Under the

surface, however, Ryukyu had been forced by Japan, an "outlier" of the family who had not come back to see China for a long time, to pay a "protection fee". With his newly developed muscles trained in Europe, one day Japan broke into Ryukyu's house and threatened to take Ryukyu's property and life. Astonished, China tried to stop Japan but found that there was little he could do, not necessarily because he was not able to fight Japan but more because the use of force would expose his failure to keep the family in harmony. China had almost agreed with his American neighbour's suggestion to divide Ryukyu's property with Japan in order to keep Ryukyu alive; in the end, China chose to accept Ryukyu's death, for the proposed solution would inevitably undermine his moral authority as the father at home. This shocking experience does not mean that Chinese strategic behaviour would remain largely shaped by the rules and norms of East Asian international society when facing further challenges from Japan. Rather, Qing officials learned from the Ryukyu fiasco that the normative restraints that had sustained the order of East Asian international society for centuries should no longer be applied to "treacherous" Japan, now an *outsider*. This was evident in diplomat Yao Wendong's assignment to compile a study of the geography of Japan upon the arrival of the second Chinese minister to Japan

in 1882. Despite his popularity among the major poetry societies in Tokyo and his ability to communicate with his hosts outside of “brushtalking” (writing classical Chinese or *Kanbun*, which was understandable to educated Japanese), Yao never referred to Japan as a country sharing a common civilisation (*tong wen zhi guo*) and completed *The Military Essentials of Japanese Geography* (*Riben dili bingyao*) with the express purpose to enable China’s military preparations “in case of some unexpected emergency”.³⁸ In this sense, the path leading to the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) over Korea had already been paved at the time when China “lost” Ryukyu as a member of East Asian international society.

Theoretical and Policy Implications

The theoretical and policy implications of this analysis are four-fold. First of all, it shows that the failure to “get China right” often has to do with the taken-for-granted assumptions that concepts and theories derived from the European states-system and Western experiences are valid across time and space and can be readily applied to East Asia. However, inquiry into the “loss” of Ryukyu indicates that China’s strategic behaviour was constrained as much by its limited military capabilities as by its normative self-expectation as the paternal figure of the concentric East Asian “family”

that was not supposed to abuse those in the lower ranks. On the other hand, criticising Qing leaders for failing to defend China’s “national interest” as seen through a modern, nationalist lens is both anachronistic and complicit in justifying the “expansion” of European international society that subjected millions of colonial peoples in Asia and elsewhere to misery.³⁹

Second, against an old myth in IR that treats the Peace of Westphalia (1648) as *the* emergence of an international society that removed the problem of religious conflict and affirmed a commitment to peaceful coexistence among sovereign states, this study adds to recent challenges to the “Westphalian narrative” which naturalises the Eurocentric conception of international society while equating other forms of arrangement outside of Europe with political disorder and religious intolerance.⁴⁰ Considering that East Asian states had maintained largely peaceful relations among themselves for centuries until they were forced to enter into European international society, intellectual production in IR needs to re-imagine the notion of international society that has thus far been too narrowly defined by mainstream theories, in order to accommodate diverse needs and voices in a globalising world.⁴¹ This should not lead us to a nativist intervention boasting that East Asian international society was superior than the European one (power relations still existed between China and

its neighbours, for instance); rather, the point is that it is imperative for Asians and other Third World peoples to recognise and reclaim their role as co-inventors of international society.

It is time to reconsider Asian territorial disputes such as this as a structural problem of human history wherein no victor can emerge without addressing the consequences of imposing one particular type of international society on another.

Third, if the arrival of Western powers only added the Westphalian states-system onto the tribute system rather than replacing the latter altogether as Hamashita has indicated,⁴² it is of academic interest and policy importance to explore the conditions under which contemporary East Asian states' behaviour may be shaped by the residual rules and norms of the century-old tribute system alongside the Westphalian states-system.⁴³ For example, the conclusion of an FTA-like economic agreement between the PRC and Taiwan in June 2010 can be understood as the island's increasing incorporation into the Sinocentric cosmology. Hierarchical relations were confirmed when Taiwan (a "vassal state") submitted to the paternal Chinese state (a "suzerain") by upholding the so-called "1992 consensus" (i.e.

presenting "tribute");⁴⁴ in return, the Taiwanese were granted generous trade privileges as gifts from Beijing (the "son of heaven"). Since secondary political entities historically enjoyed immense latitude within the tributary order regarding their economic, cultural and even military affairs, this perspective helps to understand why Chinese leaders formulated the "one country, two systems" proposal in dealing with Taiwan in the way they did (which precludes Beijing from exerting domestic control over the island), and why they have been willing to entertain issues pertaining to Taiwan's "international space" so long as Taipei adheres to the "1992 consensus".

Finally, since the members of East Asian international society were informed by a worldview different from that of the West, as well as what counts as valid representations of their world, the diplomatic problems Asian countries experienced in their dealings with the Western powers and between themselves in the second half of the 19th century were not simply outcomes of a "power transition" as described in the realist literature; indeed, they were inherently problems of knowledge and representations. As Howland points out, the earliest Chinese diplomats to Japan had hoped to mingle with like-minded Confucian gentry upon their arrival; far from being a *tong wen zhi guo* (a country sharing common civilisation), by the 1880s their perception was that

Japan had deeply inundated itself with Western ideas and things, hence turning itself into a rival more on the side of the Western powers than on the side of Confucian civilisation.⁴⁵ While the current IR literature on Sino-Japanese relations tends to focus on either “power” or “interest”, this study has illustrated how the Ryukyu debacle paved the way for transforming Chinese perceptions of Japan, or, to put it another way, the borders of a once-shared civilisation. In the early 21st century, it is no easy task to conceive an alternative, more inclusive bordering practice (another “1992 consensus” may be neither feasible nor

desirable for China and Japan) that can help reconcile the two countries without identifying a common enemy (e.g. pre-1945 pan-Asianism that treated the West as an evil, and ultimately inferior, Other). Nevertheless, it seems fair to conclude that the Diaoyu/Senkaku issue is not a uniquely Chinese or Japanese problem. Rather, it is time to reconsider Asian territorial disputes such as this as a structural problem of human history wherein no victor can emerge without addressing the consequences of imposing one particular type of international society on another.

Endnotes

- 1 Surnames precede given names for all East Asian individuals in the main text. Portions of this research had appeared in a 2011 symposium proceedings edited by the Afrasian Research Centre, Ryukoku University, Japan. Special thanks go to Pinar Bilgin and L.H.M. Ling for their warm invitation to the SAM conference in Ankara, and to Hitomi Koyama, L.H.M. Ling and Ming Wan for their valuable comments on an earlier draft. The author also would like to acknowledge generous financial support from Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Academic Research Subsidy.
- 2 Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1966, p. 124.
- 3 For an alternative interpretation of the incident as Japan's strategic outmanoeuvring over China, see, Linus Hagström, "Power Shift' in East Asia? A Critical Reappraisal of Narratives on the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands Incident in 2010", *Chinese Journal of International Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Autumn 2012), pp. 267-297.
- 4 The Sino-Japanese relationship was so tense that some media described the two countries as being on the brink of war. "Dangerous Shoal", *Economist*, 19 January 2013.
- 5 Taiwan itself is a claimant of the Diaoyus, but it has refused to form a united front with the PRC against Japan and its approach to the island dispute has been much less confrontational. The Chinese foreign ministry later modified the record of its press conference, broadly defining China's "core interests" as anything concerning state sovereignty, national security and territorial integrity, and that "the Diaoyu issue is related to the Chinese sovereignty". *Mainichi Shimbun*, 26 April 2013. Beijing proceeded to include the islands into its self-declared East Sea Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in November 2013.
- 6 At present China is Japan's largest export destination, whereas Japan is China's second largest trading partner and a major foreign investor.
- 7 Given the discrepancy in the length of the relevant parts of China's mainland coasts and the much shorter coasts around the disputed islands, an equitable boundary between Chinese coasts and the islands would not be equidistant. That is to say, the boundary between the disputed zones around the Senkakus and China's costal zones would have to be drawn much closer to the islands. In the Sino-Vietnamese Boundary Delimitation Agreement in the Gulf of Tonkin (2000), for instance, the Vietnamese-held Cat Long Vi Island is larger than the Senkakus and has several hundred inhabitants, but it only possesses an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 15 nautical miles (including 12 nautical miles of territorial sea).
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- 18 Recall Wight's argument that all known states-systems emerged among peoples who considered themselves belonging to the same civilisation, which, in turn, differentiated them from other less "advanced" peoples. See, Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1977, chapter 1.
- 19 Douglas R. Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization: Geography and History at Empire's End*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1996, pp. 13-15.
- 20 Ibid, p. 14. This seems to echo the Eliasian theme that civilisation is a process rather than a condition. See, Andrew Linklater, "Violence and Civilisation in the Western States-Systems", paper presented at the symposium on, *The English School Today: Order, Justice, and Multiculturalism*, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan, 26 March 2012.
- 21 Hamashita, *Choko sistemu to kindai Ajia*, pp. 8-9.
- 22 Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, p. 155.
- 23 Ibid, p. 156.

- 24 In 1871, 54 Ryukyuan were murdered by a native tribe (*Mudanshe* in Chinese or *Botansha* in Japanese) following their shipwreck on southern Taiwan. The survivors were rescued by local Chinese officials and escorted to the Ryukyuan trading mission in Fuzhou in 1872. From the perspective of international law, it was a misstep indeed for China to admit that the Ryukyuan were Japanese citizens; nevertheless, admitting Japan's effective governance over Ryukyu did not necessarily imply that China henceforth had lost Ryukyu as a vassal as far as their tributary relations were concerned. Suzuki, *Civilization and Empire*, pp. 158-159.
- 25 *Qing guangxuchao zhongri jiaoshe shiliao*, Vol. 1, p. 21.
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43 Regarding the consequences of institutional isomorphism and the internationalisation of norms, even conventional constructivists would agree that if states look alike it does not necessarily mean that they act alike. See, Michael Barnett, “Social Constructivism”, in John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 170.

44 The “1992 consensus” refers to a *modus operandi* under which Taipei neither openly challenges Beijing’s “One China Principle” (there is only one China and Taiwan is a part of it) nor accepts the latter’s definition of China (PRC). As such, Chinese leaders would not have demanded the “1992 consensus” as *the* foundation of cross-Strait exchanges had their mindset been fully and only under the influence of Westphalian norms.

45 Howland, *Borders of Chinese Civilization*, chapter 6.

Sovereignty or Identity?

The Significance of the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands Dispute for Taiwan

Boyu CHEN*

Abstract

Narratives of the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute expose the spectrum of Taiwan's national identity. While Taiwan has long been struggling to legitimise its claim of representing China or to become an independent state, some of the Taiwanese people still welcome their former colonial master, Japan. This paper draws on academic and journalistic work on how Taiwan has responded to the islands dispute. The author also turns to the internet to examine popular sentiments in the region by examining netizens' discourse on the islands from Taiwan's largest bulletin board system (BBS), Station-PTT. This survey finds that the sovereignty dispute surfaces issues of national identity.

Key Words

Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands, China, Taiwan, Japan, National Identity.

Introduction

Where does Taiwan fit in the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute? Officially, Taiwan's government could also make claims on the islands. But historically, Taiwan has had and continues to have intimate relations with both China and Japan. Former Ming Dynasty officials and scholars escaped to Taiwan in the 17th century to seek refuge from the newly installed, Manchur-run Qing Dynasty. After the Second World War, the Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek fostered an anti-Communist ideology and Chinese identity, reinforced by US dominance militarily, politically, economically and culturally. At the same time, Taiwan also shares an intimate history with Japan. Colonised by the latter between 1895-1945, Taiwan's elderly still wax nostalgically about Japan while the younger generation swarms to Japanese *manga* and *anime*. Indeed, Taiwan turned out to be Japan's top donor after the 2011 earthquake. Taiwan also enjoys a variety of bilateral relationships with Japan.¹ Nonetheless, Taiwanese do not

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disregard Japan's invasion and colonial rule of China from the 1930s-1940s. Some Taiwanese have called for a "brotherhood" between China and Taiwan against what they see as an imperialistic Japan;² others suggest that Taiwan join the US-Japanese alliance against China to prevent the latter from invading Taiwan after taking over the disputed islands.³

This paper explores the ambiguity of sovereignty in contemporary world politics. Even though international relations (IR) proceeds from sovereignty as a premise in inter-state relations, it remains elusive due precisely to Westphalian power politics, exercised most blatantly during the colonial/imperialist era of the 19th and 20th centuries, followed by US hegemony since the Second World War. Taiwan, as noted above, serves as a prime example of a state that has experienced all of the above.

While Taiwan has long been struggling to legitimise its claim of representing China or to become an independent state, some of the Taiwanese people still welcome their former colonial master, Japan.

This paper draws on academic and journalistic work on how Taiwan has responded to the islands dispute. I also

turn to the internet to examine popular sentiments in the region by examining netizens' discourse on the islands from Taiwan's largest bulletin board system (BBS), Station-PTT. This survey finds that the sovereignty dispute surfaces issues of national identity.

Let's see how.

National Identity and the Islands Dispute

Debates over the islands' sovereignty highlight the role of history on national identity. This historical legacy, moreover, frames Westphalian inter-state politics. For some Taiwanese, for instance, only Taiwan, as the Republic of China (ROC), has the legitimacy to claim sovereignty over the islands, not China. The latter suffers from the yoke of an outlaw government, the People's Republic of China (PRC), even though international society recognises it as the legitimate government of the Chinese people. In contrast, some declare that the islands belong to Japan: in the Treaty of Peace (1951), signed with China to return Taiwan, Japan did not relinquish its rights over the islands. Furthermore, many argue, the islands have nothing to do with China or Taiwan.

State actions reflect these ambiguities of history and culture. In response to Japan's claim over the Islands, Taiwan's government proposed "The East China

Sea Peace Initiative”.⁴ It proclaims Taiwan’s sovereignty over the islands based on three points: i) the islands were discovered, named and used by Ming China (1368-1644) and later became a territory of Qing China (1644-1912); ii) although the islands were annexed by Meiji Japan during the Sino-Japanese War, coupled with the cession of Taiwan to Japan in 1895, the post-Second World War arrangement “restored the islands to their pre-1895 legal status”; and iii) the transferring of administration rights of the islands by the US in 1971 does not “constitute a transfer of sovereignty”.

Some groups in Taiwan, however, are perplexed. The government’s references to the Ming and Qing Dynasties seem to echo a “one China policy”, suggesting no differentiation between the ROC and the PRC and thereby subordinating Taiwan to China.⁵ Those who propose Taiwan’s independence and rectification from “Republic of China” to “Taiwan” argue that the Treaty of Peace never claimed sovereignty over the islands; therefore, it is untenable for Taiwan to claim the islands as auxiliary territory. This argument reflects the position of some that Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang (KMT) party on Taiwan was an alien and oppressive regime. Some scholars argue outrightly that the islands belong to Japan, stating that it was the first application of international law in East Asia based on the doctrine of *terra nullius* under international law.⁶

The complexity of Taiwan’s national identity reflects contentions regarding “legitimacy”. Some Taiwanese regard Japan as their genuine place of origin; Japan represents a civilised and modern society. One observer notes, “[s]ome Taiwanese intellectuals believed Taiwan should denounce China for its backwardness and betrayal and welcome Japanese rule as an opportunity for the island to be modernised by administrators from Asia’s most advanced country”.⁷ In contrast, others insist on Taiwan’s Chinese origins, citing the historical and cultural ties across the Strait. They identify themselves as Chinese even though some of them deny the legitimacy of a Communist China.⁸

Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwanese as a national identity has emerged, and interaction among Taiwan’s different ethnic groups has become more prominent.

National identity issues surface most prominently where national security strategies are concerned. Those who call for a sense of “brotherhood” between Taiwan and Mainland China against an imperial Japan usually reflect a strong “Chinese” identity.⁹ Those who suggest Taiwan join the US-Japanese alliance against Taiwan’s enemy, China, are more

inclined to support a Taiwanese, if not Japanese, identity.¹⁰ In short, those who identify themselves as Taiwanese tend to have a positive perception of Japan relative to China, while those who identify themselves as Chinese are more prone to have a negative attitude towards Japan.¹¹ We hear two different voices, accordingly, within the same national entity. In contrast, the people of Japan and China seem united in their stance regarding the islands dispute. The background to these two different voices reflects deep-seated identity issues in Taiwan.

Chinese Identity and Anti-Japanese Sentiment

“Long divided, the world will unite; long united, it will fall apart”: Taiwan’s president Ma Ying-jeou quoted this famous opening line from the 14th century epic, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, to call on the people of Taiwan and China to create a new history through peaceful resolution to Cross-Strait relations.¹² This quote aimed deliberately to remind both Taiwan and China of their common origins in a Chinese cultural identity.

The KMT has long emphasised this Chinese identity, but in contrast to Communism in China. The KMT’s own half-century rule on Taiwan, however, defined politics as one-party rule only.

Democratisation did not begin until the late 1980s-early 1990s. Before then, the Taiwanese independence movement was strictly banned. “Taiwanese” was never an option as a national identity; any sign of insurrection or rebellion was directly and brutally suppressed.¹³ Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, Taiwanese as a national identity has emerged, and interaction among Taiwan’s different ethnic groups has become more prominent.

Indeed, ethnic, political, and cultural meanings infuse “Taiwanese” or “Chinese” as an ethnic label in Taiwan. Public opinion polls usually fail to elucidate these connections.¹⁴ Ethnically speaking, the term “Taiwanese” refers to the descendants of immigrants from China’s Fujian Province in the 18th and 19th centuries. They regard themselves as natives to the island and distinct from the “mainlanders” who escaped from the Chinese Communists in 1949. Politically speaking, however, those who identify themselves as “Chinese” are not necessarily those who came to Taiwan with the KMT forces or who, now, are their descendants. Rather, they are those who contend that the Taiwanese government represents the “true” China, not the Communist regime in Beijing. The ROC still retains “China” in its title, they reason. Although the ROC’s actual control only extends over Taiwan and the smaller islands of Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, along with some even smaller

islands, Taiwan's constitution still claims sovereignty over the entire territory of China.

Those who identify themselves strongly as Chinese emphasise their Chinese roots in history, culture and blood. The history of Japanese imperialism in the last century, they believe, should not be forgotten, even though they themselves have never engaged in any kind of anti-Japanese resistance or experienced Japanese colonial rule directly. Here, we see a continuing legacy of the Chiang Kai-shek regime. It propagated anti-Japanese education and forbade the use of Japanese language in broadcast media as well as imports of Japanese audiovisual entertainment products.¹⁵

Nonetheless, many in Taiwan embrace Japan. They often remember nostalgically their times under Japanese occupation. With the restriction on Japanese products lifted in 1992, Japan-mania in Taiwan fully flourished and spread nationwide, leading to a minority of Taiwan's younger generation to identify themselves as Japanese.

Japanese-ness and Anti-Greater China Sentiment

Japan remains popular in Taiwan. In 2011, the Japanese Exchange Association commissioned Gallup to poll popular impressions of Japan in Taiwan.¹⁶ The poll found that 75% of Taiwanese

people have amicable feelings towards Japan, higher than the 62% that had the same feelings in 2009. And the younger people were even more pronounced in their positive impressions of Japan.

According to Li and Chen, Japanese-ness has become a practice of daily life in Taiwan, not a political injunction.¹⁷ Leo Ching points out that while early anti-Japanese sentiments embraced China as the ancestral homeland (*zu guo*), this was based on desperation and fantasy, not on political or cultural identification.¹⁸ Under colonial rule, Taiwan's elite class formed a relationship of reciprocal dependency with the ruling government. Of particular note were the "Chinese native landowner class" and the "emerging literati". People in Taiwan began to perceive Japanese culture as their own by the end of the 1920s.¹⁹ The KMT government sought to alter this situation after relocating to Taiwan in 1949. But it served only to temporarily suppress Japanese culture in Taiwan, not extinguish it altogether.

Taiwan's younger generation underscores this affinity for Japan. Taiwan's elderly may have been indoctrinated by Japanese education under colonial rule but Taiwan's young people flock to Japanese culture due to commercialism and consumerism. Sony, Wacoal, Shiseido, Family Mart, Toyota, Yamaha, SOGO department, and so on, pervade Taiwanese daily life. Young and old in Taiwan also regard

the Japanese lifestyle, as depicted in Japanese TV dramas, as ideal. Japanese TV programmes started in Taiwan in 1992 and became an instant hit with Taiwan's youth. Audience ratings for Japanese programmes have exceeded those from Hong Kong. In 1996, Tokyo Broadcasting System Television sold the rights for over 1,000 hours of Japanese TV programmes to Taiwan.²⁰ Many streets and popular shopping districts in Taiwan exhibit a pseudo-Japanese sense of style. Shop signboards are full of Japanese names like "Yamanote Line Black Bubble Tea",²¹ or "Harajuku Plaza",²² and numerous shops display Japanese "kawaii" (cute) style goods. Taiwanese tourism reflects this Japanese mania as well: Japan remains the site for Taiwanese tourists to visit. In 2012, 1.56 million Taiwanese visited Japan, second only to Koreans.²³ Today, many in Taiwan and Japan regard the two countries as a "Community of Common Destiny".²⁴ The relationship between Japan and Taiwan, Lam notes, is "underpinned by a shared history, common values, economic ties, strategic alignment, and social networks between their political and business elite. It is also buttressed by mutual warmth, admiration, at the societal level".²⁵

Still, heated debates about Taiwanese identity continue. Public polls, however, fall short of demonstrating the complexity of this issue. Data from the internet provides an alternative way

of understanding national identity in Taiwan.

Cyber Discourse on the Islands

As Castells points out, online discourse takes place in a medium that allows, for the first time, the communication of many to many, in a chosen time, on a global scale.²⁶ Cyber discourse serves as a major example. BBSes originally started as bulletin boards to be used not only as an information source but also as interactive forums for public discussions and debates on a broad range of topics. BBSes enable participants to keep pace with current events and news in real time. Giese points out, "Offline events and major discussions (on BBSes) are picked up at roughly the same time".²⁷ Accordingly, BBS discussions and debates are highly interactive. Owing to the absence of temporal and spatial limitations, writers on BBSes from all over the world are able to post their ideas onto this open space. Users on social media like Facebook and Twitter have been increasing in the past decade in both China and Taiwan, but BBSes play a significant role in the daily discourse for netizens.

According to Lu, 3 billion users are registered on BBSes in China.²⁸ (One netizen is allowed to register at multiple BBS sites.) Similarly, Lu notes that PTT

is the most popular BBS in Taiwan, with more than 1.5 million registered users. The PTT BBS is a terminal-based system in Taiwan. It was founded by students from the Department of Information Engineering at National Taiwan University and is currently administered by the Electronic BBS Research Society. PTT now claims to be the largest BBS in the world. Some users on PTT are from China.²⁹ PTT has over 20,000 boards with a multitude of topics, and more than 40,000 posts are created daily.³⁰

Narratives on the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute expose the spectrum of Taiwan's national identity.

I collected articles on the islands dispute posted from December 2009 to September 2012 on the Cross-Strait Board. I found that netizens posted most of their articles during two specific periods: the first, in September 2010, with 32 posts when a Japanese Coast Guard vessel collided with a Chinese fishing boat and the Chinese captain was arrested on 7 September. The second period of greatest activity occurred in 2012, with 104 posts when the Japanese government declared its nationalisation of the islands. For this paper, I selected texts by netizens who posted more than 10 times during these two periods.

Sovereignty, Legitimacy and Taiwan's National Identity

On 29 September 2012, Chronodl sent a post titled, "Diaoyutai Belongs to Japan".³¹ Chronodl forwarded an article referring to historical records dating back to 1896 that confirmed Japan's occupation/ownership of the Islands. Chronodl added:

Those who assert Chinese or Taiwanese sovereignty over the Diaoyutai Islands are provoking nationalism, thus obscuring the point of focus, and ignoring the history of the Japanese contribution to the Diaoyu Islands... The Diaoyu Islands are Japan's territory, named Senkaku.

Highlander quickly responded with a new title: "Diaoyutai Belongs to Taiwan":³²

Diaoyutai never belonged to Japan. A defeated country should not talk such nonsense.

Chronodl retorted immediately:

It is not important who won or lost. Is this the only thing China can boast of?

The debate continued. But it ended eventually with Highlander referring to Japan's constant violation of international law by invading neighbouring countries. Japan, to Highlander, is a deceitful country. "Before 1971", Highlander wrote,

[T]he Japanese government recognised the legitimacy of the ROC, but denied it afterwards. The property of the ROC, which was legally registered in Japan,

was adamantly retained by Japan after diplomatic ties were cut off. Apparently, they dare to flout anything deemed to be legal. I cannot see any justifications for what they are now cheekily bringing up.³³

TERRIST and ilyj2012 argued about Taiwan's national identity: that is, if Taiwan unify with China or stay independent. In a post titled "Senkaku and Okinawa", TERRIST cited a statement by China's government in 1953 that Diaoyutai belongs to Japan. TERRIST denounces the Chinese government's insistent absurdities:³⁴

There is no so-called "indivisible territory of China".³⁵ Everything except the PRC and Communist control is changeable. Why do Chinese nationalists and people supporting unification with China in Taiwan still expect the Chinese government to take back the Senkaku Islands? Isn't it ridiculous?!

A mainland Chinese, ilyj2012, responded as follows:³⁶

Taiwan should strengthen its power, especially military power, if it desires China to forfeit unification.... The author [referring to TERRIST] is supposed to be pro-independence. Try harder! Still long, long way to go for you!

TERRIST chided ilyj2012 for being such a mainlander:³⁷

Taiwan has been independent. China has not ruled Taiwan for one day... The only way for China to give up unification of Taiwan is to accept the fact... Otherwise, please fight for unification like a man! Try harder! Still long, long way to go for you!

ilyj2012 taunted back:³⁸

Really? Taiwan has been independent? Could you show me your Republic of *Taiwan ID please?*

ilyj2012 continued:³⁹

Your [Taiwan's] constitution even rejects the acknowledgement of Taiwan as an independent country. What should *we* [China] do?

Ultimately, ilyj2012 disapproved of Taiwan's affinity for Japan:⁴⁰

I feel some attitudes from the Taiwanese extremely odd. When the Japanese occupied Taiwan's Diaoyutai Islands, most Taiwanese stated Diaoyutai was Japan's originally. But when it came to the anti-Japanese demonstrations in China, the Taiwanese expressed strong hatred toward those protesters and called for their comeuppance through grinding teeth. The protest seemed radical, but at least they took a position against Japan. You Taiwanese provide commentary on nothing yet antagonise those who stand for something. Honestly, I don't even know if you are Japanese or Taiwanese. It's really confusing.

The state needs an external enemy, along with "internal shamings", so citizens will be willing to sacrifice for the state.

In contrast, one netizen from Taiwan, OceanTaiwan, suggested a Taiwanese-Japanese-US coalition against China:⁴¹

I have little Chinese-ness in my mind. I am a Taiwanese but Japanese to core. I am also very fond of using good quality

products made in Japan and wish for a good allegiance between Taiwan and Japan. The thing is, Taiwan lacks might. The best strategy is to formulate a federal far-east alliance under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan.

Those in Taiwan who identified with Japan scoffed at the Chinese government's "cowardly" attitude towards Japan. Note this post from Dachiu:⁴²

Japan's Coast Guard has successfully kept Taiwanese and Chinese fishing vessels at a distance to 12 nautical miles, while the police hold the Diaoyutai Islands. Taiwan and China, however; react in a cowardly manner without chasing the Japanese fishing vessels away. It is obvious, no matter how Taiwan and China may rally against Japan, Diaoyutai is now undeniably under the holy reign of the grand Japanese empire. China was so beaten flat by Japan that that the Chinese bristle not but fizzle. They just let people sabotage their own properties. All barks but no bites and with gangs swanking propaganda around- now that is what we call a Grand Country, China.

Usage of language like "under the holy reign of the grand Japanese empire" strongly indicates the author's Japanese identity.

Conclusion

Narratives on the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute expose the spectrum of Taiwan's national identity. While Taiwan has long been struggling to legitimise its claim of representing China or to become an independent state, the Taiwanese people still welcome their former colonial master, Japan. These Taiwanese would rather discard their Chinese identity than suffer from what they perceive as an illegitimate, tyrannical regime in Beijing.

Shih points out that national identity is invented.⁴³ A state needs to constantly search for an object upon which it can exercise sovereignty to construct or reinforce its national identity. The state needs an external enemy, along with "internal shamings", so citizens will be willing to sacrifice for the state. Taiwan's inability to agree on its own name reveals this problem of national identity. Accordingly, the people of Taiwan cannot reach a consensus on whether China or Japan is the external enemy in the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute, and what Taiwan means to each.

Endnotes

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- 2 Jin-yuan Lin and Jia-yin Shi, “Diaoyutai shi Taiwan de, Ranhou ne? (Daiyutai belongs to Taiwan, and then?)”, *China Times Daily*, 10 January 2013; Chao-yang Pan, “Taiwan wu Lianhe Meiri fan Zhong (Taiwan should not unite the US and Japan against China)”, at <http://www.cdnews.com.tw> [last visited 1 February 2013].
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- 10 After Taiwan’s former president Lee Teng-hui said “The Senkaku Islands were Japanese territory in the past and are still so at present”, he came under fire and some commentators pointed out his Japanese identity relates to his view on the islands dispute. (cf, Tong-rong Tsai, “Ruguo Diaoyutai Kaizhan Taiwan de Sange Xuanze (Taiwan Has Three Options Once the War Launches on Diaoyutai)”.
- 11 Chuang Jing-Yi and Mei-Chih Li, “Ethnic Identification and Attitudes towards the Japanese in Taiwan”, *Journal of Indigenous Psychological Research*, Vol. 20 (December 2003), pp. 105-135.

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The Postcolonial Paradox of Eastern Agency

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Abstract

Much of the postcolonial/non-Eurocentric literature that has emerged in recent years has concluded that the key antidote to Eurocentrism lies with the need to factor Eastern agency into our theoretical and empirical understandings/explanations of world politics/economics. While I certainly endorse this proposition, we need, however, to be aware that Eastern agency is already a factor in much, though not all, of Eurocentric international theory. Hence we confront the “postcolonial paradox of Eastern agency”- that while the perceived postcolonial/non-Eurocentric antidote to Eurocentrism/Orientalism is to “bring Eastern agency in” nevertheless it turns out that it was there in some form or another within international theory all along. This article reveals the different forms that Eastern agency takes within different variants of Eurocentric international theory while simultaneously opening up this concept to its multiple variants, thereby taking us beyond Edward Said’s monolithic conception of Orientalism that he bequeathed to postcolonialism.

Key Words

Eurocentrism, agency, postcolonial paradox, Orientalism.

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Introduction

The development of postcolonial/non-Eurocentric challenges to Western international theory has gained rapid pace within IR studies since the late 1990s. These developments have revealed the Eurocentric foundations of international/IPE theory,¹ while also developing empirical accounts and explanations of the rise and development of the international system/world economy.² One of the posited antidotes to Eurocentrism that has emerged from this growing literature is the need to factor in the role of Eastern agency into our empirical accounts and theories of world politics/economics. This derives from the unreflexively held postcolonial axiom, derived from Edward Said,³ that Eurocentrism/Orientalism reifies the West by granting it exclusive agency in the world while denying the existence of Eastern agency pretty much outright. Moreover, it is assumed that Eurocentrism dictates that imperialism is the only means by which the inferior races can and must be brought into civilised modernity. However, on much

closer inspection it turns out, I shall argue, that Eurocentric international theory offers a wide spectrum of positions in these matters, ranging from awarding Eastern peoples/societies very low levels of agency to moderate and even high or very high levels, all of which are framed within different normative conceptions of imperialism and anti-imperialism. Accordingly, this means that we need to be much more careful when treating Eastern agency as the antidote to Eurocentrism. This is not to say that Eastern agency is unimportant, for I believe that it is a crucial part of the antidote. But it is to say that we need to be much more precise when conceptualising its place within non-Eurocentric theory. Hence the *paradox of Eastern agency*: that the perceived postcolonial/non-Eurocentric antidote to Eurocentrism/Orientalism is to “bring Eastern agency in” when it turns out that it was there in some form or another within international theory all along.

This more nuanced reading of Eurocentrism emerges when we unpack Said’s highly reductive and monolithic

conception of Orientalism. A key part of this paper’s mandate, therefore, is to unpack the black box of Eurocentrism/Orientalism in order to reveal its key constituent discourses. This article’s argument is developed in three sections. Section one sketches as briefly as possible the various dimensions and component parts of Orientalism. The second section then sketches the various positions with regards to Eastern agency in the racist-imperialist and racist anti-imperialist literature while the third does the same for the imperialist and anti-imperialist Eurocentric institutionalist literature.

Unpacking and Re-visioning Orientalism

To counter what I view as Said’s double-reductive move I begin by breaking down his concept of Orientalism into two component parts- scientific racism and Eurocentric institutionalism- and then sub-dividing these categories into their imperialist and anti-imperialist components (see Table 1).

Table 1: The four variants of generic Eurocentrism/Orientalism in international theory

	Pro-imperialist	Anti-imperialist
Eurocentric Institutionalism	(A) Paternalist	(B) Anti-paternalist
Scientific Racism	(C) Offensive	(D) Defensive

Much of the postcolonial/non-Eurocentric literature that has emerged in recent years has concluded that the key antidote to Eurocentrism lies with the need to factor Eastern agency into our theoretical and empirical understandings/explanations of world politics/economics.

In essence, Eurocentric institutionalism locates difference to the degree of rationality found within a society's institutions and culture. The West is proclaimed superior because it has supposedly rational institutions, while the East's inferiority is presented as a function of its alleged irrational institutions. Thus while the West has for the last three centuries allegedly enjoyed *civilised* democracy/liberalism/individualism/science, conversely, the East is said to have endured or suffered *barbaric* Oriental despotism, or simply the *savage* state of nature alongside authoritarianism/collectivism/mysticism. By contrast, scientific racism places a strong degree of emphasis on genetics and biology as elements underpinning difference while often emphasising the role of climate and physical environment. For some, the causal pendulum of race behaviour swings towards the climatic/

environmental pole, whereas for others it swings more towards the genetic pole. This multivalent archipelago of discourses was far more heterogeneous than Eurocentric institutionalism and was fractured into all sorts of sub-discourses, including Social Darwinism, Eugenics, Weismann's germ plasm theory, Mendelianism and, not least, Lamarckianism, some of which were complementary while others conflicted.

A crucial complicating factor of note here is that some variants of scientific racism, specifically Lamarckianism, factored social behaviour/practice into the mix alongside environment and climate when analysing race behaviour. This is important to note in the context of the argument of this article because social practice is also a fundamental property of Eurocentric institutionalism. Not surprisingly, this feature sometimes means that Lamarckian international thinkers and theorists have produced analyses and political visions that are very similar to those offered by various Eurocentric institutionalists. J.A. Hobson's paternalist Eurocentric vision of imperialism, for example, bears many striking similarities with the Lamarckian vision advanced by Paul Reinsch, as I will show later. More generally, this means that at times the borderline between scientific racism and Eurocentric institutionalism is blurred or fuzzy.

Table 2 differentiates my reading from that of Said's. I have included all the key dimensions, the sum of which is that the relationship between scientific racism/Eurocentric institutionalism

and the various dimensions concerning imperialism, Eastern agency and Western triumphalism are much more contingent in my reading than what is found in Said's.

Table 2: Alternative conceptions of Orientalism/Eurocentrism

	Said's reductive conception of Orientalism	"Non-reductive" conception of Eurocentric institutionalism & scientific racism
Relationship of Orientalism and scientific racism	Inherent Racism, especially social Darwinism and Eugenics, is merely the highest expression of imperialist-Orientalism	Contingent Racism and Eurocentric institutionalism are analytically differentiated even if at times they share various overlaps
The centrality of the "standard of civilisation"	Yes	Yes
<i>Agency is the monopoly of the West</i>	Inherent <i>The West has hyper-agency, the East has none</i>	Contingent <i>The West always has pioneering agency, while the East ranges from high to low levels of agency; but where these are high they are deemed to be regressive or barbaric</i>
Propensity for imperialism	Inherent	Contingent Can be imperialist and anti-imperialist
Sensibility: Propensity for Western triumphalism	Inherent	Contingent Racism is often highly defensive and reflects Western anxiety. Some racist thought and much of Eurocentric institutionalism exhibits Western self-confidence, if not triumphalism

The focus in this article will be revealing the ontological place of Eastern agency found within the four key metanarratives

that usually go under the generic term of Orientalism. I extract these from the international theory literature in the

West since 1760. Because post-1945 international theory takes only various Eurocentric institutional guises, I shall begin by providing a highly condensed discussion of pre-1945 scientific racism.

Eastern Agency within Anti-imperialist Scientific Racist International Theory, 1850-1945

Here we encounter a spectrum of positions with respect to the place that Eastern agency occupies within anti-imperialist racist thought. There are three broad positions situated along a continuum. At the far left-hand side lies those racists who denied Eastern races agency altogether. Here we encounter the likes of David Starr Jordan (in his pre-1919 works) and James Blair. They argue that the non-white races are incapable of auto-generating and are therefore mired in regressive backwardness and stasis. In this vision the civilising mission is deemed pointless given that these races are incapable of being uplifted; to wit Blair's claim that "history shows no instance of a tropical people who have demonstrated a capacity for maintaining an enduring form of Republican government".⁴ Or as Jordan put it, "the race problem of the tropics are perennial and insoluble, for free institutions cannot exist where free men cannot live. The territorial (imperialist) expansion now

contemplated (by the US government) would not extend our institutions, because the proposed colonies are incapable of self-government".⁵ And Jordan presents a series of arguments that amount to the conclusion that empire is not worth the candle because it will serve ultimately to harm the colonial power and do nothing to help the inferior races abroad.

The West is proclaimed superior because it has supposedly rational institutions, while the East's inferiority is presented as a function of its alleged irrational institutions.

Moving rightwards to the mid-point of our continuum we encounter the likes of Herbert Spencer and William Graham Sumner who awarded the Eastern races a higher, albeit "moderate", amount of agency. Spencer asserted that all races are capable of auto-generation even if some-namely the black races- would take a very long time, possibly centuries, before they would break through to modernity. As Spencer put it:

The ultimate development of the ideal man is logically certain- as certain as any conclusion in which we place the most implicit faith; for instance that all men will die.... Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilization being artificial, it is a part of nature [and is therefore open to all races].⁶

Spencer in effect grants the Eastern races what I call “derivative agency”, insofar as he believes that they will auto-generate into civilised modernity but only by following the “natural” path that had been pioneered by the trail-blazing Europeans.

Where Eastern agency is denied outright, lies a range of racists who embraced differing configurations of social Darwinism, Eugenics and Lamarckianism.

Spencer and Sumner also insisted that imperialism was dangerous both for coloniser- and colonised-societies. Spencer revelled in pointing out the hypocrisy of those left-wing racist-imperialists who criticised his own laissez-faire political economy as callous while in the next breath

you may hear them, with utter disregard of bloodshed and death, contend that it is in the interests of humanity at large that the inferior races should be exterminated and their places occupied by the superior races.... Not worthy of much respect then, as it seems to me, is this generous consideration of the inferior at home which is accompanied by the unscrupulous sacrifice of the inferior abroad.⁷

Moreover, while imperialism would hinder the non-white races equally it would lead to the “rebarbarisation of

(white) civilisation”, thereby causing a regression of Western civilisation into the more backward and coercive “militant society”.⁸

Finally, a third major strand of anti-imperialist racism can be found in the genre that is represented by the likes of Charles Henry Pearson and Lothrop Stoddard.⁹ Here the Eastern races—specifically the yellow races of Japan and China as well as the Islamic brown races which are also singled out by Stoddard—are granted very high levels of agency. While they view these races as capable of modernising this goes hand-in-hand with the negative trope of what I call Eastern “predatory agency” for they view the rapidly developing yellow and brown races as posing a significant threat to white civilisation in particular and to world order more generally. Both writers were extremely concerned by the Yellow/Brown Peril which batters the walls of the Western citadel. Their posited solution for the West is to retreat from empire- for the most part- and to batten down the hatches of the Western citadel as these predatory races lay siege to civilisation and white racial supremacy. Colonising the yellow and brown races led only to negative blowback for the West, while Pearson, and many other racists for that matter, viewed the colonisation of the tropics as pointless owing to the degenerative impact of the sun’s actinic rays on the white race.

Eastern Agency within Imperialist Scientific Racist International Theory, 1850- 1945

Here again we encounter a continuum or spectrum of positions ranging from very low levels of Eastern agency to moderate and sometimes high levels. With regards to the latter position we encounter the likes of Alfred Mahan and Halford Mackinder. In Mackinder's 1904 article and Mahan's 1897 book we encounter the trope of "predatory" Eastern agency.¹⁰ Both these authors convene the notion of the Yellow Peril, viewing the Chinese and Japanese as future threats to white racial supremacy. Unlike Stoddard and especially Pearson, however, their political response was to advance the cause of white racial imperialism as the means to counter and contain such a potential threat.

At the other extreme, where Eastern agency is denied outright, lies a range of racists who embraced differing configurations of social Darwinism, Eugenics and Lamarckianism. The likes of Theodore Roosevelt, Benjamin Kidd and Winwood Reade believed, like many Social Darwinists, that the agency-less non-white races were destined simply to die out upon contact with the white races since they were incapable of adapting to civilised life conditions.¹¹ I call this the "*indirect* racial exterminist" brand of racist-imperialism. Others argued for

a "*direct* racial exterminism" through which the white races would renew their racial vitality by conquering the non-white races and actively destroying them- either through breeding them out of existence¹² or by wiping them out with the gun.¹³ And others too believed that the absence of Eastern agency meant that the white race was destined to spread and dominate the world.¹⁴

While Marx approved of imperialism as the only means by which the Eastern societies could be released from their self-imposed stagnation, he was insistent that imperialism was lamentable in a moral sense.

Finally, the mid-point position can be found in the likes of Paul Reinsch, Alleyne Ireland and Henry Sidgwick.¹⁵ They paralleled the paternalist Eurocentrics, arguing in effect that the non-white races were imbued with "conditional agency", such that they could develop but only on condition that the white race colonises them first and delivers the required rational institutions via the civilising mission. But while their political stances were very similar to those of the paternalist Eurocentrics the difference hinged on the particular metanarrative that underpinned their analyses. Thus, for example, while the theories of Hobson and Reinsch were

very similar, nevertheless the latter's advocacy of an empathic imperialism rested on the belief that Eastern progress is a function of the passing on of rational modes of behaviour that are delivered by the West through the civilising mission, which are then absorbed and passed on within the Eastern races through hereditary characteristics to subsequent generations. Hobson, however, believed that the passing on of rational institutions from the West enables Eastern peoples to undo the blockages not in their minds but in their irrational societal and political institutions. To understand this I now turn to consider the Eurocentric institutionalist literature, and because it has dominated since 1945 I shall spend rather more time considering it.

Eastern Agency within Imperialist Eurocentric Institutionalist International Theory

Imperialist Eurocentrism embodies a strong dose of paternalism, which awards Western societies a *pioneering agency* such that they can *auto-generate* or auto-develop through what I call the "Eurocentric logic of immanence" into modernity, while conversely Eastern societies are granted *conditional agency* and are unable to auto-generate or self-develop. That is, Europe's *exceptional* institutional and cultural genius means that development into modernity was

immanent from the outset (ie., from ancient Greece onwards) and that the story of Europe's breakthrough into capitalist modernity was foretold or preordained- it was but an historical *fait accompli* or rite of passage. Conversely, within this discourse Eastern peoples are deemed to have a *latent* rationality such that full rationality was blocked from reaching the surface on account of the existence of their irrational institutions. Accordingly, their societies were blocked from developing and they were destined to languish in stagnation at worst (as in savage anarchic societies) or at best they would be caught within a kind of high-level agrarian equilibrium trap (as in some barbaric societies).

But there is a solution at hand. For in this paternalist imaginary it is incumbent upon the West to engage in an imperial civilising mission in order to deliver the necessary rational institutions to the Eastern societies so as to bring to the surface their latent reason, thereby kick-starting their progressive development into modernity- otherwise known as the "white man's burden". Thus once the necessary institutions have been delivered so Eastern peoples and societies are deemed sufficiently capable and rational to develop autonomously thereafter. In this discourse Eastern peoples are awarded "conditional agency" in that they *can* develop but only *on condition* that the West intervenes first through the civilising mission. This form of Eastern agency is higher than that awarded by

those racists who denied the Eastern peoples any agency whatsoever, though obviously far lower to the levels of agency that are awarded to the Europeans.

One point of note is that there was a range of positions regarding the precise *modus operandi* of the civilising mission. Indeed, their conceptions of imperialism-as-a-civilising mission can be arranged along a continuum. At the far left-hand side of the continuum we encounter the likes of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, both of whom argued that imperialism should take a harsh, coercive form and that this was the only way that rational institutions could be delivered so as to kick-start Eastern development.¹⁶ Nevertheless, while Marx approved of imperialism as the only means by which the Eastern societies could be released from their self-imposed stagnation, he was insistent that imperialism was lamentable in a moral sense. As he put it forcefully in the first volume of *Capital*, and not without a considerable degree of sarcasm:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.¹⁷

At the other extreme situated at the far right-hand point of the continuum we encounter a series of thinkers who argued for a much more “empathic” brand of

imperialism; and one that was often tied in with what might be called “international government”. This was first mooted by J.A. Hobson in the second part of his famous text, *Imperialism: A Study*.¹⁸ Hobson believed that the solution to the exploitative form of empire, or what he called “insane imperialism”, could be remedied not simply by income redistribution within the coloniser society but through what he called “sane imperialism” wherein national imperialisms would be supervised by an international government to ensure that the rights of the natives within the colonies would be upheld and that these peoples would be treated fairly and with dignity. This became the blue-print for inter-war paternalist Eurocentrism, which also embraced, in effect, the trope of *conditional* Eastern agency.¹⁹

Finally there is a range of thinkers who wrote before 1914 who are situated at the mid-point of the continuum. Surprisingly, some of them are conventionally associated with the cause of non-interventionism and anti-imperialism: Richard Cobden, John Bright and Norman Angell.²⁰ Perhaps it is here where my reading will find resistance, possibly by various historians of Cobden. Thus it is important to note my conclusion: that Cobden’s writings were politically schizophrenic. For there is no doubting the point that he spent much time criticising empire and all manner of quotes could be marshalled in this respect. But he also advanced a clear paternalist-Eurocentric analysis that is found on

no less than 443 of the 991 pages in his posthumously published two-volume set, *Political Writings*. And it seems curious to say the least that some historians who have spent many years of their lives studying Cobden have seemingly failed to come across these crucial writings. Intersecting these two radically different interpretations of Cobden is the issue of the Crimean War, where the conventional interpretation suggests that Cobden's stance was symptomatic of his non-interventionist credentials *par excellence*. But there is a clear paternalist-Eurocentric sensibility that led him to this conclusion. Turkey was not worth "saving" as its barbaric institutions- particularly its Oriental despotic state and its regressive Islamic religion- had laid waste to this "marvellous" country and its people.²¹ And from there Cobden delivers his paternalist-imperial message, declaring that

we have no hesitation in avowing it as our deliberate conviction that not merely Great Britain, but the entire civilized (i.e., Western) world, will have reason to congratulate itself, the moment when (Turkey) again falls beneath the sceptre of any other European power whatever. Ages must elapse before its favoured region will become... the seat and centre of commerce, civilization, and true religion; but the first step towards this consummation must be to convert Constantinople again into that which every lover of humanity and peace longs to behold it- the capital of a Christian (civilised) people.²²

Thus Cobden positively endorsed a Russian colonial take-over of Turkey on

the grounds that this Western civilising mission would yield considerable benefits not just to Turkey but also to Europe in general and to Britain in particular.²³ And, in typical Eurocentric style, he concludes that Turkish (Eastern) society was "unchanging and stationary" whereas Russian (European) society was "progressing".²⁴ Interestingly, John Bright, another so-called non-interventionist Cobdenite, counselled similarly:

We are building up our Eastern Policy on a false foundation- namely on the perpetual maintenance of the most immoral and filthy of all despotisms over one of the fairest portions of the earth which it has desolated, and over a population it has degraded but has not been able to destroy.²⁵

Smith and Kant both believed that all societies and peoples would traverse the different stages of development of their own accord, thereby implicitly negating the need for a civilising mission that for paternalist Eurocentrics is deemed to be a vital pre-requisite for Eastern development.

In the post-1945 era many IR theories embrace paternalist Eurocentrism. The classical pluralist wing of the English School, for example, argued that the expansion of European international society in the 18th and 19th centuries

and running down to the 1960s was a progressive movement which helped solve the problem of deviant Eastern backwardness.²⁶ While neorealist hegemonic stability theory and Robert Keohane's neoliberal institutionalist perspective also rely on the formula of pioneering Western agency/conditional Eastern agency,²⁷ this Eurocentric idiom has returned with a vengeance in the post-Cold War era mainly, though not exclusively, in the guise of liberal international theory. Indeed large swathes of liberal-inspired international theory have gone back to the future of the paternalist-Eurocentrism of the period between c.1830 and 1945. The 1945-1989 era, dominated by the process of decolonisation and the "bad name" that Hitler had given the cause of racism, saw *subliminal* Eurocentrism oust scientific racism, whereby terms such as empire, civilisation, barbarism, savagery and white racial supremacy were dropped in favour of their whitewashed equivalences- hegemony, "modernity versus tradition" and "core versus periphery". But after 1989 the E-word came back- "empire"- as did the C-word- "civilisation". And with the Soviet Union gone by 1991 the way was open for the Messianic reassertion of Western civilisational pride across the world and the "new imperialism" whereby the Rest would gloriously be remade in the image of the West;²⁸ all of which was encased within the explicit or manifest Eurocentrism that had existed before 1945. Moreover, much of this was

repeated within a large literature that I call "Western realism".²⁹

Eastern Agency in Anti-Imperialist/Anti-paternalist Eurocentric Institutionalism

Once again we encounter a range of positions in the wide anti-imperialist Eurocentric literature. In the liberal schema we encounter Immanuel Kant and Adam Smith who award higher levels of agency to Eastern societies than did their paternalist Eurocentric cousins. They argue that Eastern peoples have a *moderate* level of agency insofar as they are deemed to be capable of auto-generation. This plays into their stages model of development. Smith and Kant both believed that *all* societies and peoples would traverse the different stages of development *of their own accord*, thereby implicitly negating the need for a civilising mission that for paternalist Eurocentrics is deemed to be a vital prerequisite for Eastern development. In this way Smith awarded the East what can be called *derivative* agency, which is clearly more robust than the *conditional* agency awarded by the paternalist Eurocentrics. Important here is Smith's assumption that modern commercialism is congruent with (universal) human nature such that modern capitalism is immanent within the make-up of *all* societies, given his famous definition of human nature as "the propensity to truck, barter and exchange one thing

for another”.³⁰ That is, all peoples would converge eventually on this stage of development since it was simply part of mankind’s universal human nature.

But the Eurocentric giveaway lies in the point that for Smith and Kant all societies would converge upon a commercial society though they would only do so by following the “natural” path that had been trailblazed by the Europeans who are girded with “pioneering” agency. In these respects Smith and Kant overlap with the racist perspective of Spencer and Sumner that was discussed earlier. A further point of overlap with Spencerean racism lies in Smith and Kant’s anti-imperialist arguments wherein intervention through imperialism would serve only to disturb in a negative fashion the developmental trajectory of both the colonised and coloniser countries. And they also abhorred the immorality and arrogance of Western imperialism, as did Spencer and Sumner.³¹ Nevertheless, they rejected the racist arguments that Spencer deployed.

Another anti-paternalist theory that critiques Western imperialism is found in numerous classical Marxist works (bar Marx and Engels).³² In this genre we encounter the idiom of an all powerful Leviathanesque-West that crushes the passive and inert East through imperialism, both in its formal and informal guises. Many readers might reason that a critique of the West would surely be congruent with an anti-Eurocentric approach. But I argue

that it is perfectly possible to produce a critique of the West while maintaining a Eurocentric stance. In fact, in one crucial respect the classical Marxist approach is yet more Eurocentric than Smith and Kant’s approach as well as the paternalist Eurocentric approach of the likes of Marx and Engels, Hobson and Angell. For this genre awards the *lowest* levels of Eastern agency found in the majority of the Eurocentric and scientific racist genres already discussed. Moreover, it is precisely this outright denial of Eastern agency that is reproduced in much of modern neo-Marxist work, found most clearly in the world-systems theory of Immanuel Wallerstein and others.³³

Finally, the anti-imperialist theory of the “clash of civilisations”, advanced by Samuel Huntington and William Lind, awards very high levels of agency to the Eastern peoples.³⁴ This approach very much takes us back to the future of pre-1945 racist cultural-realism that was advanced by Stoddard, Pearson and others, though it is now dressed up in Eurocentric institutional clothing. Once again, Eastern agency is in effect viewed as “predatory” insofar as various Eastern peoples- mainly the Muslims and the Chinese- pose a threat to Western hegemony and supremacy. And once again, the posited solution is to avoid Western imperialist universalism and batten down the hatches of the Western citadel in order to maintain a pure Western identity within a multicultural world.

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Justifying Transcultural International Studies

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Abstract

This essay endeavours to justify a transcultural approach to international studies by showing that contemporary Western approaches to the theory of knowledge (epistemology) demand it. Both (sophisticated) falsificationism and pragmatic realism (or pragmatism) require that scientific truth-claims be redeemed discursively in the community of scientific experts. Owing to special features of social science, the claims to be redeemed include claims pertaining to meaning and intention. Because in international studies these claims rely on culturally sensitive interpretations, the discipline itself must assume a multicultural character in its institutions and practises, particularly in its practises of inquiry.

Key Words

Transcultural studies, epistemology, falsificationism, pragmatism, inquiry.

Introduction

In this essay I propose an epistemological justification for construing international studies as a transcultural enterprise. Most international studies scholars would welcome a transcultural conception of our discipline. After all, nations and cultures regularly intersect with and permeate one another. It's logical that a discipline concerned with global affairs would construe its mission as both international and transcultural. However, an epistemological justification suggests more than the dissemination and discussion of transcultural topics. It suggests- even requires- that the discipline itself become transcultural in its institutions and practises, particularly its practises of inquiry. To do otherwise would be to foster a discipline that engages in the production not of knowledge, but of rationalisation and regime apology.

If grounded in the Western epistemological tradition, my justification will have its greatest force. I will show that the Western tradition itself compels us to create a discipline not bound to that tradition. Accordingly, I

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proceed by reviewing the central debate in modern Western epistemology. The most widely held contemporary positions in this debate present theory choice as a collective practise, conducted discursively by a community of inquirers. This outcome poses special problems for social sciences and particularly for those, like international studies, that traverse cultural bounds. I conclude by suggesting ways we might begin to address these problems.

Theories of Theory Choice

A justification accompanies any theoretical innovation. The proponent of any new theory must persuade others of its intrinsic merits and superiority over pre-existing competitors. Explicitly or implicitly, such a justification necessarily appeals to some meta-theory- a theory of theory choice- on the basis of which we adjudicate claims to the rightness of competing generalisations. So, on what theory of theory choice shall we rely?

The Normative Basis of Theory Choice

Before we can address this question, another question immediately arises. Do we require a theory of theory choice at a higher level of generality? That is, do we need a theory of choice to adjudicate competing theories of theory choice? If we do, we'll require a

higher-level theory to adjudicate those theories and so on, forever. Fortunately, we can sidestep this infinite regress. In selecting a theory of theory choice, we are selecting a normative principle for guiding our conduct in the business of selecting empirical theories. Thus, we ask how we *should* adjudicate competing theories about what *is*. We should select this normative guidance in a principled way. That is, we should select guidance broadly consistent with the principles that guide us in other areas of life, our theory of the good. In so doing, we avoid the infinite regress.

Both (sophisticated) falsificationism and pragmatic realism (or pragmatism) require that scientific truth-claims be redeemed discursively in the community of scientific experts.

Broad consensus surrounds the more desirable characteristics of theories. Most, regardless of any meta-theoretical allegiance, value such properties as clarity, consistency, parsimony and fruitfulness for both practise and theory. Yet, because we often encounter trade-offs between these values, none can stand as the sole criterion of theory choice. We require more powerful guidance, a principle of a higher order, a maxim that can help us select among competing theories even in the presence of first-order trade-offs.

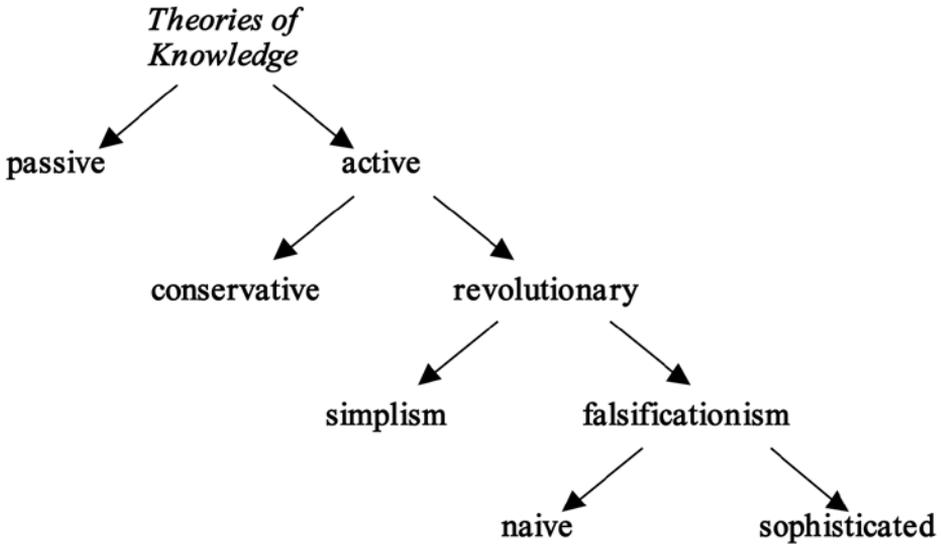
A theory's predictive capacity is by itself an inadequate indicator of its merit. We are not solely interested in accounting for observed variations in dependent variables. We also seek understanding of the underlying causal processes that produce these observations. Prediction certainly counts as valuable activity. However, the exclusive interest in prediction often betrays an interest in control. One learns to predict the values of dependent variables from the values of the independent in order to control or engineer outcomes. That is, one changes the values of such-and-such independent variables by so many units in order to change the value of some dependent variable by so many other units. When pursued in the natural sciences, this interest in control is benign. But, when pursued in the human sciences, the interest in control becomes an interest in *social* control. We should question whose ends this control would serve.

Contemporary thinkers urge us instead to further "human emancipation" (Habermas) or "human flourishing" (Putnam).¹ I take these as closely related notions. One cannot be truly emancipated if one is not flourishing and one cannot flourish if not free. Together, they seem far more defensible normatively than whatever theory of the good might be invoked to justify anyone's interest in social control. They also have a heritage that spans the entire history of inquiry. Francis Bacon, who inaugurated modern empirical science,

acted from the impulse to further human emancipation and flourishing. Bacon sought, through his inquiries, to predict the outcomes of natural processes and, from these predictions, to engineer solutions that further human flourishing by emancipating people from such natural ravages as famine, flood and pestilence. One wonders what interest is served when methods for controlling nature are applied uncritically to humans and human societies.

It's logical that a discipline concerned with global affairs would construe its mission as both international and transcultural.

In any event, I digress from my discussion of theories of theory choice. But I do so with purpose. I declare my affinity to the principle of human flourishing (or emancipation) as an underlying normative guide for choosing a theory of theory choice. This normative principle is consistent with the central Western norm of reciprocity, articulated in Christ's golden rule and Kant's categorical imperative. Because I wish to show that Western meta-theory requires a transcultural conception of international studies, it is useful, even necessary, that I adopt a normative principle for theory choice consistent with the Western tradition. Now I am ready to begin.

Figure 1: Lakatos' epistemological typology

Lakatos' Taxonomy

In recounting the debates that culminate in his own position, Lakatos,² drawing upon distinctions first advanced by Popper,³ provided a taxonomy of epistemological frameworks. This scaffolding serves as a convenient platform upon which to construct an articulation of modern (post-Bacon) options with respect to theory adjudication. Lakatos presented a verbal account, which Figure 1 represents graphically as a series of distinctions.

The first branching distinguishes passivist from activist theories of knowledge. Passivists (i.e., classical empiricists) viewed knowledge as

the imprint of nature on a perfectly inert mind, the *tabula rasa*. Activists understood that empirical observation required the active application of our expectations, concepts and theories. But passivists considered mental activity only as a source of distortion.

Conservative Activism

Lakatos distinguished conservative from revolutionary activists on the basis of their attitudes towards conceptual structures. Conservatives believed that we apply basic human expectations to create conceptual structures that make sense of the world. We thereby make the world our world. However,

once we acquire these conceptual structures, they virtually acquire us. Our theoretical commitments so constrain our expectations, conservative activists argued, that we misperceive experiences at odds with them. Revolutionary activists, however, granted us the capacity to break out of the conceptual prisons we erect. Most revolutionary activists would agree that our expectations can and often do cloud our perceptual judgments. Nevertheless, they credited us with the ability, albeit limited, to suspend or transcend our conceptual frames and to reformulate them when we deem necessary.

We require more powerful guidance, a principle of a higher order, a maxim that can help us select among competing theories even in the presence of first-order trade-offs.

Lakatos' depiction of conservative activism amply fits verificationism. Verificationists treated theories, once verified empirically, as valid for all time and no longer subject to test. They deemed any verified theory a secure foundation for subsequent inquiry. Consequently, verificationists expected knowledge to grow in a unilinear, ever-progressing fashion, as successive generations of scholars erect new theories atop the edifice of theories their

intellectual forebears had bequeathed to them.

If the spectacular supersession of Newtonian mechanics sounded verificationism's death knell, Karl Popper delivered the decisive blow to conservative activism.⁴ Popper cited Hume's problem- the fallibility of inductive inference- to demonstrate this proposition:

Proposition 1: All theories are equally unverifiable

Suppose our theory is that "all swans are white." No matter how many theory-confirming white swans we muster, we can never verify our theory. The next swan may well be non-white. No inductive inference is ever secure.

Popper disallowed recourse to probability. We cannot say that a theory is probably valid no matter how many verifying instances (and no matter how few falsifying instances) we muster. Given n , a finite number of confirming observations, in an infinite universe the probability that the next instance will confirm the theory is mathematically undefined, but infinitesimally close to zero: $n/\infty \approx 0$.

We cannot say that our theory about swans being white is probably verified, regardless the number of white swans in our experience. Not only are all theories equally unverifiable, but:

Proposition 2: All theories are equally improbable

Verificationism encounters other troubles. Consider the “paradox of the ravens”. If an observation of a black raven counts as a confirming instance of the theory that “all ravens are black”, then so does an observation of any non-black non-raven, such as a white tennis shoe or a yellow banana. Because the statement “all ravens are black” is logically equivalent (by the contrapositive) to the statement “all non-black things are non-ravens”, any non-black non-raven counts, as much as any black raven, as a confirmation of the theory that “all ravens are black”.

Verificationists expected knowledge to grow in a unilinear, ever-progressing fashion, as successive generations of scholars erect new theories atop the edifice of theories their intellectual forebears had bequeathed to them.

Another difficulty for verificationism stems from its theory of meaning: “the meaning of a sentence is its method of verification”. With this theory of meaning verificationists sought to demarcate meaningful statements- those that could be verified- from metaphysical

statements, which verificationists took to be meaningless. They sought to deny cognitive significance from any proposition that fails to contribute to predicting our sensory stimulations.⁵ They thereby dismissed as meaningless all metaphysical considerations. But the verificationist theory of meaning itself fails in just this way and so, on its own terms, lacks meaning.

Although verificationism predates them, the most recent advocates of verification were the logical positivists of the early 20th century. Many international studies scholars today call themselves positivists, but few, if any, are verificationists. Generally, these latter-day “positivists” are actually falsificationists (discussed below) of one variety or other. This is an unfortunate source of continuing confusion.

Revolutionary Activism

A school of French conventionalism bridged conservative activism (verificationism) and revolutionary activism. For conventionalists, theoretical natural science provided no picture of nature, but only a logical construction. On this perspective, observations cannot falsify theories. Scientists rely on theories in order to observe or, more precisely, measure an observation scientifically.⁶ So long as observation theories were no more than systems of statements adopted by convention, scientists may

freely modify them whenever recalcitrant observations threatened the theory under test. Conventionalists would effectively insulate favoured theories from empirical disconfirmation.

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With falsificationism, Popper offered a remedy. Whenever scientists proposed a theory, they would state the conditions under which they would give it up. That is, if the theory were true, then it would have such-and-such empirical consequences. If these expected consequences failed to appear, *modus tollens* dictated the theory's rejection. If, however, the consequences did appear, the theory could not be accepted. To do so would be to affirm the consequent, a logical fallacy. A theory, for which the predicted empirical consequences were confirmed, could be accepted only provisionally, as some clever scientist may later refute the theory using better data, a more sophisticated test or superior acuity. Popper thereby devised a meta-theory founded on deductive inference. His falsificationism did not share the fallibility of verificationism's inductive

foundation. Just as importantly, Popper's falsificationism, contra conventionalism, explicitly banished theoretical commitment beyond the bounds of good scientific practise.

Yet Popper's logical thesis did not describe actual scientific practise. Kuhn,⁷ supported by much historical evidence, characterised normal scientific practise as "puzzle-solving" activity. Scientists in normal periods investigate the ramifications of their most well-corroborated theories. When this activity produces anomalies- results consistently at odds with the paradigm theory- a crisis threatens the complacency of the puzzle-solvers. Even then, because they are committed to it, they tend to defend the paradigm theory against any rivals who propose an incommensurable formulation that putatively resolves the anomaly. The incommensurability of the new paradigm- its poor fit with the terms of the old paradigm- inhibits its adoption among adherents to the old. Scientific revolutions typically succeed less by the conversion of the current generation of scientists to the new paradigm and more by their replacement with a new generational cohort. Popper thought he had identified immutable rational standards that underpinned all scientific choice and discovery. But Kuhn's review of actual scientific practises indicated that no such standards existed.

Kuhn essentially described theory choice as an irrational process, more

akin to gang warfare than reasoned deliberation. This is unacceptable to many because it undermines the argumentative force of scientific results. If scientific choices are irrational, why should policymakers, for instance, place any weight on scientist's arguments? Lakatos endeavoured to save science from irrationalism by elaborating falsificationism in light of Kuhn's critique. He pitched his "methodology of scientific research programmes" as a more sophisticated understanding of the meta-theory Popper had proposed. In actuality, Lakatos proposed a new formulation that amounted to a major retrenchment. Lakatos abandoned theory as the main unit of epistemological significance. Theories cannot serve in that capacity, as any theorist may simply add a *ceteris paribus* condition to salvage a favoured theory by incorporating an exception to the conditions of the experiment that putatively falsified the theory.

Lakatos made the "research programme", or series of theories, as the unit of epistemological significance. Adherents to a research programme posited a "hard core" of fundamental propositions from which a "negative heuristic" diverts attention to a "protective belt" of "refutable variants". They apply *modus tollens* to these variants and never to the hard core. A "positive heuristic" provides hints and suggestions on how to develop this protective belt. Lakatos required that each step

in the belt's development be content-increasing, demonstrating a "consistently progressive theoretical problemshift", Now and then, the increase in content should be retrospectively corroborated, indicating the research programme's "intermittently progressive empirical shift".

Kuhn essentially described theory choice as an irrational process, more akin to gang warfare than reasoned deliberation.

In enclosing falsificationism within this conceptual envelope, Lakatos deprived it of an important feature- a usable standard of theory choice. Popper had provided such a standard. He would reject a theory if it was falsified, but only provisionally, so long as refutation efforts failed. Lakatos rejected the instant rationality implicit in this "naïve" understanding of falsificationism. He recognised that budding programmes require lenient treatment, as an early refutation may prevent such a programme from discovering its most defensible formulations. Conversely, Lakatos recognised that a more mature programme might only appear to have been refuted: a cleverer inquirer with better measures, designs or tests may later vindicate the programme by refuting the refutation. So, for Lakatos,

judgments regarding the validity of research programmes can be made only in long hindsight.

Feyerabend⁸ noted that postponing such judgments entirely deprived falsificationism of its claim to rationality. Because any defender of a programme subjected to refutation may simply deny the ripeness of a challenge to the progressiveness of the research programme.⁹ “[I]f you are permitted to wait”, Feyerabend asked, “why not wait a little longer?” For instance, consider Vasquez’ depiction of (international studies) realism as a degenerating research programme. Realists can respond that however poorly realism may explain recent political history (e.g., the end of the Cold War), we should suspend judgment on its merits as a research programme pending a forthcoming retrospective corroboration. A realist proclamation of corroboration, and thus also a progressive empirical shift, would follow the next appearance of world political events consonant with a realist understanding.

Thus, the standards that Lakatos advanced ultimately failed to address the substance of Kuhn’s criticism of falsificationism, which had motivated Lakatos to devise them in the first place. Lakatos, contended Feyerabend,¹⁰ presented the apparatus of sophisticated falsificationism as merely a “verbal ornament, as a memorial to a happier time when it was still thought possible

to run a complex and often catastrophic business like science by following a few simple and ‘rational’ rules”. The effort to identify immutable rational standards had once again failed because advocates of the dominant theory can always ask critics to wait:

Proposition 3: All theories are equally unfalsifiable

Relativism

Because he considered Western rationality a willing tool of Western imperialism¹¹ Feyerabend found cause to celebrate the “methodological anarchism” that the failure of falsificationism implied. Whether he adopted it on his own or whether his critics drove him to it, Feyerabend championed a scientific relativism that would endear him to postmodernists, many of whom also find in rationality oppression.

Ironically, the irrationality of postmodernism can nourish the oppression it rhetorically abhors. Rational argumentation, after all, serves as the sole check on brute power in setting public policies. As we abandon rational standards of theory choice, political force prevails as reason recedes. Theoretical formulations with the most powerful advocates win the tenured positions, the research funding and thereby the capacity to reproduce.

Historically, reason has undeniably been deployed in the service of oppressive, imperialistic and authoritarian ends. But one should blame those who have so deployed it and those who had allowed it to be so deployed. Blaming reason itself seems wholly misplaced. Worse, given the alternative, blaming reason seems downright dangerous.

For postmodernists and other relativists, however, no proposition can lay claim to truth, only truth relative to someone's conceptual framework erected from her subjective experiences.

As a second irony, their relativism classes postmodernists, with verificationists, as conservative activists. Verificationists thought all verified knowledge secure. Once verified or proven true by observation, we need never revisit any formulation. Verificationists thought their knowledge, because verified, always consisted of true propositions. For postmodernists and other relativists, however, no proposition can lay claim to truth, only truth relative to someone's conceptual framework erected from her subjective experiences. Neither, then, is open to criticism: verificationists because they believe themselves already in possession of the truth and relativists because they have no notion of truth.

Putnam argued that Feyerabend's relativism, like all relativism concerning truth, is self-refuting. If one claims that truth is relative, Putnam argued, he would counter that "truth may be relative for you, but it isn't relative for me". This does demonstrate the subjectivist folly of claiming truth to be relative. Once two conversants have such an exchange, nothing can follow. But I think the point can be made more directly, if less subtly. The moment that one asserts that "truth is relative", one makes a truth claim. But, if truth were relative, why would one bother to make such a truth claim? The very act of issuing a truth claim effectively refutes the notion that truth is relative. For truth-relativists, intellectual discourse becomes pointless.

Truth-relativism sometimes attracts adherents among those who would welcome a more transcultural international studies. At first blush, relativism seems an appropriate way to express the notion that thinkers with differing cultural backgrounds may and often do come to differing conclusions, even from the same body of evidence. But we do not need to follow truth-relativists into cloud-cuckoo-land in order to make this point. We can acknowledge there is a singular truth to any matter, but at the same time allow that there may be a plurality of conceptions used to describe it. That is, we can accept conceptual relativism as we reject truth-relativism. Across

cultures and even across individuals within cultures, experiences vary. As a consequence, concepts and their contents also vary. In conversation, we mutually adjust our conceptual structures. We each make the contributions of the other comprehensible within conceptual framework we have acquired through our (differing, yet overlapping) life experiences.

Each interpretation is embedded within a cultural milieu composed of features that themselves arise from an earlier milieu and that represent the latest way-station along a culture's historical trajectory.

However irresponsible, irrational and self-refuting it may be, Feyerabend's truth-relativism flowed from falsificationism's inability to articulate rational standards of theory choice. Compared to sophisticated falsificationists, who maintained foundational standards they all but acknowledged to be non-existent, Feyerabend was at least consistent. But a return to conservative activism- this time in a relativist guise- need not have been the response to falsificationism's failure. One might instead have stayed within revolutionary activism, where an alternative was already available.

Simplism/Pragmatism

To the side of this debate over falsification resides another school of revolutionary activism. Lakatos lumped two approaches together, naming them "Duhem-Quine simplism". Both Duhem and Quine are considered "holists". In his 19th century formulation, Duhem held that, in any experiment, the individual research hypothesis is never singly under test. Also tested are all the ancillary propositions that comprise the experimental setting- the observation theories on which it relies, its background assumptions, the measures it employs, etc. In Quine's 20th century formulation, however, hypothesis tests always concern the entirety of human knowledge. Each time we test a hypothesis, for Quine, all our knowledge is at stake. Fitting any new experience into our knowledge requires some adjustment to the web of our beliefs. Ordinarily we need to affect at most only small adjustments at the web's periphery. Sometimes, but only rarely, the integration of a new set of experiences requires adjustments closer to the web's core, necessitating additional adjustments and reformulations elsewhere in the web. These would be akin to what Kuhn termed "scientific revolutions", in which a new paradigm displaces the old. In any event, for Quine, we make these adjustments in order to maximise continually the coherence, or goodness-of-fit, of the whole of our

knowledge. Quine's views on such matters, since extended by Putnam,¹² are today more widely known as "pragmatic realism" or simply "pragmatism".

For the rationalisation of international studies as a discipline, a top to bottom overhaul aimed at producing rational knowledge about how the world works, considering the perspectives and traditions of all- the colonised as well as the coloniser.

We are left at this juncture with three approaches: relativism, sophisticated methodological falsificationism and pragmatism. I have already dismissed relativism as irrational and self-refuting, so the choice is between falsificationism and pragmatism. Although I refuse to follow him into irrationalism, I find Feyerabend's critique of Lakatos decisive. I also find a rational criterion for theory choice in the pragmatic recommendation that we maximise the global coherence of our knowledge. Fortunately, we do not need here to decide between falsificationism and pragmatism. For the purposes of this essay, we need only note that the two contemporary and rational approaches to theory choice- falsificationism and pragmatism- make theory choice a matter not of individual

contemplation, but of collective deliberation.

Practical Considerations for International Studies

The collective and deliberative nature of contemporary theory choice presents difficulties for social science generally, and most particularly for those social sciences, like international studies, that transcend cultural bounds. The difficulty arises in the social sciences because they differ fundamentally from the natural sciences. I find it useful to convey this difference by referring to Aristotle's *aitia*, or (loosely speaking) the causes, reasons or explanations of objects, events or processes. Aristotle's main presentation of *aitia* appears in his *Physics*.¹³

Aristotle understood any empirical entity, depicted as X in Figure 2, to be the joint product of four distinct *aitia*:

- *Efficient cause* refers to the Humean concept of cause. Efficient cause is "the primary source of the change", or "what makes of what is made and what changes of what is changed". If X were a sculpture, for instance, the efficient cause would be the sculptor's chiseling.
- *Material cause* we might consider the effects of composition on the (efficient) causal power of X. Material cause refers to "that out of which a thing comes to be and which

persists..., e.g., the bronze of the statue, the silver of the bowl” For a sculpture, then, the material cause would be its medium, e.g., the marble or granite.

- *Formal cause* refers to the shape, form, or concept of X. It is, for Aristotle, “the form or the archetype, i.e. the definition of the essence and... the parts [*genus* and *differentia*] in the definition”. The formal cause of a sculpture, then, is the idea of the sculpture in the mind of the sculptor.
- *Final cause* refers to the contribution of the ends of purposeful agents in producing X, or, for Aristotle, “that for the sake of which a thing is done”. The final cause of a sculpture would be the intended effect of the sculpture on its beholders.

I have added a diagonal in Figure 2 to demarcate the natural sciences and the social sciences. Natural scientists concern themselves with efficient and material causes of objects (and events and processes) found in nature. They do not treat formal and final causes. Social scientists, on the other hand, concern themselves with all four causes of the artifacts they study. In a sense, natural scientists have it easy. They need only investigate efficient and material causes. Final causes do not concern them because the entities they study are not teleological: they do not act in ways designed purposefully to produce desired

outcomes. Neither do formal causes concern them. Communities of natural scientific inquirers can impose meanings by convention. They need not worry about meanings from the perspectives of the objects of their investigations, because these objects are oblivious to those meanings.

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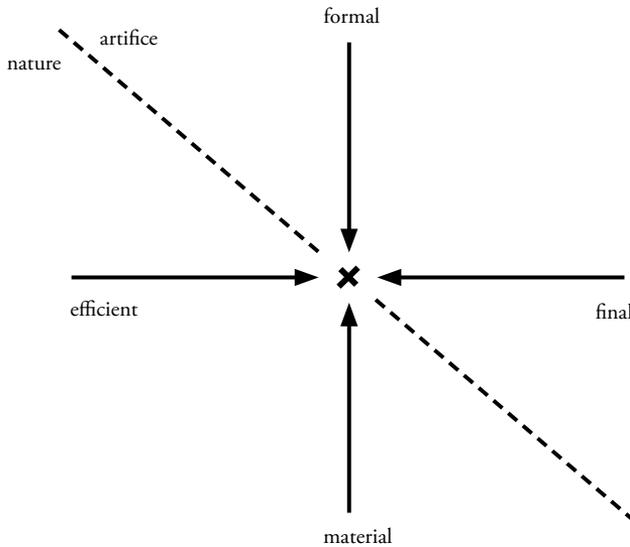
Social scientists very much concern themselves with intentions and meanings, with final and formal cause. But intentions and meanings receive interpretation only from within a cultural context. Each interpretation is embedded within a cultural milieu composed of features that themselves arise from an earlier milieu and that represent the latest way-station along a culture’s historical trajectory. Consequently, the venues within which the truth claims of transcultural social sciences, e.g., international studies, are tested and redeemed must encourage the full participation of scholars across those cultures. More than this, we must produce diversity at all stages of knowledge production in our recruitment of students, in our support

for research projects, in our development of data and texts, and in every aspect of our discipline. To do otherwise would be to short change the enterprise.

I am arguing, then, for the rationalisation of international studies as a discipline, a top to bottom overhaul

aimed at producing rational knowledge about how the world works, considering the perspectives and traditions of all- the colonised as well as the coloniser. Only in this way can we build a discipline that can help us all live better, more fulfilling and more peaceable lives. The alternative is more regime apology.

Figure 2: Aristotelian *Aitia*



Conclusion

Knowledge is our sole bulwark against the unreasonable demands of tyrants. For knowledge to have persuasive force, it must be rational. There exists no mechanical or formulaic rational

standard for choosing between theories. Whether we adopt the falsificationist or the pragmatic standard, we necessarily submit claims of scientific truth to the community of experts for discursive redemption (or rejection). In the social sciences, because meanings vary cross-culturally and because intentions are

subject to interpretation, discursive redemption can be rational only to the extent that the community of experts remains open to the variety of cultural perspectives that comprise the global community.

This applies particularly to international studies. This discipline's subject matter transcends cultures. Scholars often investigate activities in which disparate cultural traditions interact with one another. Others find themselves in position to advise political practitioners on issues of foreign policy. Under these conditions, we cannot afford to allow representatives of a relatively small subset of the world's cultures to control judgments regarding the validity of social theories of world politics.

Imagine the echo chamber that such a state of affairs might produce. A history of capital exploitation and colonial domination produces a dominant international relations theory. Its advocates control the offices and resources of the discipline. Their views predominate amid the councils of state leaders. They insist that their theoretical formulations, to the exclusion of all others, capture the real nature of world politics. They marginalise advocates of alternative formulations by characterising them "idealist" dreamers who do not share the dominant group's "realism". State leaders produce foreign policies and take actions that presuppose the truth of the dominant group's formulations.

They thereby create conditions that render those formulations self-fulfilling prophecies.

We could construct an international studies that is oriented toward achieving consensual analyses of human communities and their problems and formulating consensual collective actions for overcoming them.

This nightmare scenario does not deviate much from the state of the discipline until relatively recently. Since the end of the Cold War, the discipline has moved discernibly in the right direction. With the improvements in telecommunication and transportation technologies that have accompanied globalisation, international studies has recently become much more international and transcultural. And a sizeable segment of the discipline does not engage in political rationalisation and regime apology. We do far better than we did only 40-45 years ago, when faculty from my own graduate department were devising techniques in support of efforts to prop up a cadre of thugs that dominated a small country in Southeast Asia.¹⁴ But still, much room for improvement remains.

We could construct an international studies that is oriented toward

achieving consensual analyses of human communities and their problems and formulating consensual collective actions for overcoming them. Our research products should increasingly include voices from the ranks of the colonised, even if we diminish (but surely not eliminate) voices of the colonisers. More generally, our deliberative associations and journals should find ways to open themselves to perspectives that have

heretofore been closed out. Instead of dismissing new and alien ideas out-of-hand, scholars should go out of their way to engage them. Reward structures could be established to incent transcultural engagement. In the final analysis, a discipline that self-consciously promotes transcultural engagement would promote inter-cultural *modus vivendi* and dampen frustrations that culminate too often in political violence.

Endnotes

- 1 Hilary Putnam, "Beyond the Fact/Value Dichotomy", in *Realism with A Human Face*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, pp. 135-141.
- 2 Imre Lakatos, "Falsificationism and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes", in Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 91-196.
- 3 Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, New York, Harper and Row, 1959. For Popper's response to Kuhn, see Karl Popper, "Normal Science and Its Dangers", in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, pp. 51-58.
- 4 Ibid.
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- 8 Paul Feyerabend, "Consolations for the Specialist", in Lakatos and Musgrave (eds.), *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, pp. 197-230.
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The Idea of the “Road” in International Relations Theory

Josuke IKEDA*

Abstract

A pressing question in international relations (IR) theory today is how to overcome its Western-centric character. Recent articulations of a non- or post-Western IR theory offer a significant step forward; nonetheless, a Western-made critical method still prevents scholars from going beyond the West in a geographical and intellectual sense. This paper makes a modest proposal to compare inter-civilisational ideas, rather than theoretically de-centring IR in the West. Here, the conception of a “road” may provide a useful underpinning as a type of infrastructure, a normative concept and a cultural praxis. The “road” as a system may also provide a framework for integrating all three functions.

Key Words

International relations theory, West-centricity, civilisations, road, road system.

Introduction

Many today observe that international relations (IR) theory seems at a crossroad. One could interpret this observation in

one of two ways: (i) a “crossroad” indicates a sense of intellectual indirection, a situation where IR theorists must make a choice as to where to go and what to believe in, or (ii) a “crossroad” suggests a contact point where different people from different places meet, then depart again into different directions. The latter could provoke a merger or a clash, or it incites nothing. Pretty much similar to “crossroad” in our ordinary sense, something may or may not happen at the intersection. What can be derived from these two understandings may be the quite boring fact that merely standing at a crossroad is neither special nor inherently dynamic.

Whatever the take, there has been little consideration of the conception of the road itself and its possible role in IR. One could dismiss the relevance of roads for IR, apart from some geopolitical concerns. But as a social metaphor, the concept has been underdeveloped despite its relevance and usefulness. In this paper, I explore the concept of the road as an important element to wider interactions

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among ideas, under the rubric of the Global History of Ideas (GHI). The GHI seeks to overcome the “West-centricity of world politics” by shifting (ontologically) from a Westphalian to a post-Westphalian setting among civilisations, as well as (epistemologically) from an interaction among polities to one of ideas. In this context, the road may function as a “road system”, indicating both the physical and social processes of developing ideas on which different social realities may be constructed. The road as a metaphor for inter-civilisational interaction is not new, as demonstrated by countless numbers of travel memoirs. However, through the combination of another idea of travel, it has provided a richer backdrop for an inquiry into the inter-civilisational interaction. This paper is the revisit of the “road” from intercivilisational journey of ideas.

The “Westfailure” problem reflects identity politics in the discipline and, in this context, identity is almost equivalent to nationality.

The paper aims to clarify the road metaphor, introduce the GHI and examine its potential to direct us to a post-Western IR. I begin with the background to this paper. Following, I explore the concept of the road and

highlight its geographical, normative and praxeological meanings. These correspond to the road’s three immediate functions, namely the road as an infrastructural system, normative principle and a process of learning and translation. I conclude with using the GHI as a possible research design, one that is based on the conception of the road and the “road system”.

The “Westfailure” Problem and Its Aftermath

Many consider IR a “Westfailure”.¹ Developed primarily in the West, IR remains relatively ignorant of or mistreats the non-West. Issues of identity, culture and civilisation are at stake. Many take a “non-Western” approach by presenting a diversity of IR scholarship,² followed by a “post-Western” IR that questions foundational tenets in IR theorising.³ To some, the “Westfailure” problem reflects identity politics in the discipline and, in this context, identity is almost equivalent to nationality. Thus stories of trial⁴ and error⁵ of various “national schools” have been appearing in the name of non-Western IR. Post-Western IR, however, problematises the matter of identity and nationality altogether. Accordingly, there are always *at least* two stories to tell: one may be a nationalised, non-Western IR; another, a post-Western IR that simultaneously opposes the master narrative of Western IR and the

nationalised ones of non-Western IR. Pluralism plays an important part in post-Western IR,⁶ accompanied by a method to “provincialise”⁷ or compare⁸ so as to prevent any totalising projects. To be sure, bringing the non-West (back) into IR is not new. This time, however, non-/post-Western IR seems to be enjoying some success. At least they have broadened the theoretical vista to include different cultural traditions, considered why no international theory exists outside the West and suggested possible directions for theorising about the world.

These movements suffer a major drawback, nevertheless. They enact in the name of non-/post-Western IR what already counts as Western intellectual activity. At least two aspects of this can be observed. Regardless of which movement one endorses, it is *critical* in nature. Indeed, all academic exercises hold to this tenet. No thought process could qualify as academic without criticality. Criticality is an activity to stop and reflect, to ask if the current situation is acceptable and reject received knowledge as given. Historically speaking, criticality comes from the European Enlightenment,⁹ which sought to “struggle against the absolutist state”.¹⁰ Here, what one may fight is the totality of IR, its theorising of a unified picture of the world or its universal approach and methodology. Against this background, calls for plurality or “democratisation”¹¹

make sense. The second aspect of Western intellectual activity can be found in insertions of *political* moments. There is an intimacy between the rise of criticality and political activism. Modern critical thinking started as chats on plays, music and literature- in short, culture- which eventually nurtured a “public sphere”. Being critical came to stand for being political. Criticality thus serves as “the continuation of politics by other means”.¹²

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A problem arises with criticality and politics in tandem. Eagleton labels it an “irony of criticism”: while showing “resistance to absolutism... the critical gesture is typically conservative and corrective”.¹³ In this sense, non-/post-Western IR suffers from a similar conservatism by standing on a Western intellectual tradition and ethos. The word “corrective” also suggests attempts to reform the discipline; therefore, the project becomes “reformist” as incremental change is again the tenet

of Enlightenment criticality.¹⁴ Put differently, such contradictions evoke a language game. Considering the whole intellectual space as a game set by the West, all attempts to oppose the game may have meaning only through using particular language, such as “criticism” or “politics”, already defined by the West. Accordingly, the “reformers” almost never reach the point of exiting the game or reconstituting it.

Process sociology attempts to tell a story of the spread of particular ideas; it emphasises the proscribing and prescribing effects of ideas on human action, and the foundational changes that come with social settings.

A major challenge remains: how do we build an alternative game or field free of the culture of criticality and the political? This does not mean only proposing a post-“international” (Western) IR; it must also entail a post-theoretical theorising. Here, a different question arises. On the one hand, one cannot discard theory simply because it may be critical and political. On the other hand, attempts at a post-“international” theory may fall into the same pitfalls if we do not take the nexus of the critical and the political into consideration. For

this reason, we may need to momentarily leave theory and seek a post-theoretical direction.¹⁵

The Global History of Ideas and the Problem of Process

Elsewhere, I have proposed a historical turn for a post-Western international approach, namely towards a “Global History of Ideas (GHI)”.¹⁶ Simply put, the GHI can be a project to shift from a critical theoretical inquiry of international life to a comparative historical analysis of civilisational lives. Such a shift reflects some major assumptions, in particular on the importance of history, comparisons and civilisations. Some important intellectual predecessors include Oswald Spengler, Arnold Toynbee, Nakamura Hajime and William McNeill. In the study of IR, the GHI could join some existing studies as a part of their inquiries.¹⁷

The GHI focuses specifically on ideas. Here ideas are almost equivalent to what Arthur O. Lovejoy once called “principles” or “meta-ideas”:¹⁸ that is, ways and conceptions of human thinking which may be the foundation of higher levels of ideas, or “philosophy” in a general sense. Following Lovejoy and Nakamura, the GHI supports an assumption that even different cultures may share similar types of thinking on particular questions of life. Thus the

project is invariably oriented towards intercultural or inter-civilisational studies. Also, “ideas” in GHI cover a wide range of human activities or simply the essence of human being, eventually making it interdisciplinary.¹⁹ In a neighbouring field, a similar project of “comparative political philosophy” has been developing,²⁰ and indeed there are excellent works that have direct relevance on order and peace in international society.²¹ What differentiates the GHI, however, from these other attempts is (i) its rejection of an exclusive focus on political ideas (as comparative political theorists do) and (ii) its extension to international ideas beyond those typically highlighted by English School theorists.²² The GHI thus covers more than political philosophy and cuts across cultures and civilisations. A tentative list of possible topics may include:

- On the human being, defined both individually and collectively;
- On the general environment surrounding humans;
- On the human “life-cycle”, both individually and collectively;
- On human dynamics, both individually and collectively;
- On the transformation of our general environment.

One problem so far with the GHI is its (still) unclear methodology. This does not mean that the GHI and its

predecessors did and do not have any methods of inquiry, but it does identify the situation in which relevant projects have been carried out with only partial confidence in terms of their frameworks and concepts. The difficulty lies in tracing how ideas can, and have, constructed reality, and vice versa. It is a problem of process, and some studies seek to clarify this point. One influential idea for some IR scholars comes from institutionalist “isomorphism”.²³ Another is “process sociology”, inspired by the works of Norbert Elias. Process sociology attempts to tell a story of the spread of particular ideas; it emphasises the proscribing and prescribing effects of ideas on human action, and the foundational changes that come with social settings. One major weakness with these approaches is they presuppose a particular idea will spread throughout the globe. This “expansionist” tendency faces “mimicry” when similar ideas emerge from other cultures in a relatively overlapping period yet the latter do not spread to the whole world. Some studies have pointed to a parallel development in common ideas.²⁴ Andrew Linklater’s latest exploration into the idea and the history of a “harm convention”²⁵ approximates the plurality of similar ideas-in this case, harm or equivalent- even though it still lacks a wider explanation of process. The problem of process is primarily one of explicating mutual interactions between ideas and social reality.

The road and GHI

The concept of a “road” is useful here. Both physically and socially, the road embodies and facilitates a process of mutual exchange of ideas, people and social realities. The road assumes that it involves a person or persons who play “the game”, and that both human agents and the road physically exist. The road also symbolises another aspect of social life: i.e., a moral function, implying the normative route to follow. And the road enables a process of travelling. Considering the plurality of cultures/civilisations and its continuous interaction, the road serves as:

Infrastructure

The road provides a vital part of human infrastructure. More a social construct than a mere physical existence, the road presupposes its recognition, as well as habitual use, of the road as a road. In this sense, the road signifies certain degree of human communication. As noted below, the road does not always symbolise friendship. Indeed, quite the contrary, hostile groups can use the same road to conquer others. However, roads portend positive interactions; therefore, they deserve to be considered as sites of minimum sociality.

An interesting commonality in roads is that empires had been the chief agent to develop a sophisticated system of roads,

connecting towns and ports, capitals and eventually outside territories. In addition, merchants developed road systems that were no less important. These routes often went beyond territorial borders, forming a road system closer to a “network” that was based on the flow of their persons and their commodities. Roads have also served religious purposes. Muslims and Buddhists transmitted devotion, learning, and translation through roads. From this, we see the road as a norm;

A Norm

The road sets an imaginary route to ethical destinations. Daoism(道) refers to “the way” as a road. It has both moral and practical dimensions, guiding people to proper living. Aristotle exhibits a similar tendency by recognising the essence of his ethos as a “via media”- interestingly, the Greek word “*mesotes*”, or Golden Mean in English, does not always have the nuance of the road, while it holds the meaning after translation into Latin, which is the “middle of the road”. A similar understanding can be found in the Confucian doctrine of the “mean”(中庸); the middle-ness of a road also appears in Buddhism by *Nāgārjuna* (नागार्जुन). This quick comparison tells us that the idea of the road as a norm suggests a path to a moral ideal.

The road as a practiced norm creates a specific site for learning. In ancient Greece, all roads led to the Academy

of Plato and Aristotle; in Islam, to the mosque; in Hindustan, the ashram; in medieval Europe, the abbey; and in China and other Asian cultures, to temples and shrines. These were sites of religion but they also worked as educational institutions to disseminate knowledge among people. Here, we see a linkage between the normative concept of the road, its institutions and the activities (especially intellectual) that it fostered. This leads us to the third category of the road as a process.

A Process

This third aspect focuses on what people do on the road, not just what it is (an infrastructure) or what it conveys (a norm). This “praxeological” aspect of the road entails two questions: what one does generally, and how one differs among cultures, in particular.

Crudely speaking, travel has long represented the road’s praxeological aspect. Without travel, there can be no interaction. Travel memoirs have been a major resource to know how ancient, pre-modern and modern interactions are like—one could invoke Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta repeatedly.²⁶ It is also worth remembering that travel has had a variety of meanings. Almost in tandem with travel have been “explorations” and “missions”, whose purposes were more than just travelling, even including

economic exploitations and religious and political suppressions.

The encounter of ideas is one major phenomenon of the road-as-process. After all, the road is for all kinds of human interaction and communication, yet in particular, as already mentioned, learning has been one of its core activities. Suzerain states in East Asia dispatched monks and scholars to learn the latest developments in Buddhist thought, while Ibn Battuta travelled around the Islamic world partly to learn law, politics and other elements of his society. Christian scholars studying in the abbeys ushered in the “13th century revolution”,²⁷ whereby the West encountered Islamic interpretations of Ancient Greek thought.

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Language is vital in the learning process, which highlights the role of translation. If we accept language and reality as mutually constitutive, different ideas about translation can give us greater insight into each. For instance, the Japanese philosopher, Nakamura

Hajime, argues about the impossibility of translation as the duplication of original thought. Instead, he focuses on surfacing and heightening the gap between the original and translated ideas, as it often entails a process of rejecting contingent elements while sharing and clarifying the common components of ideas.²⁸ Another instance closer to IR comes in treating translation as “cultural” rather than linguistic in establishing cosmopolitanism.²⁹ We are now shifting from a “whether-or-not” translation is possible to “how”, and the kind of change or result that may follow. The idea of the road may provide some clues to the social and praxeological settings to understanding the exchange of ideas among cultures.

A Possible Research Design

How, then, could the idea of the road help the GHI? One possible function would be to provide a geographical and contextual framework for the creation, development, (re)interpretation, modification and abolition of particular ideas. In particular, the concept of the road would help GHI through its geographical, normative and praxeological functions.

Geographically, the road may help the GHI develop the notion of a “road system”. It would consist of roads as both hubs and spokes, linking a number of cities and cultures, comparable to

the contemporary “Asian highway”. Different/similar ideas may flow along different road systems that would merge and diverge at various points. For instance, major ideas on Buddhism had spread along three routes; (i) to Mongolia via Tibet; (ii) to China, Korea and Japan through the Silk Road; and (iii) to Southeast Asia through the Indian Ocean. Each road system corresponded to a different set of ideas about Buddhism: Tibetan, Mahāyāna and Theravada Buddhism, respectively. What this small example demonstrates is the possibility of categorising ideas based on how they came and went.

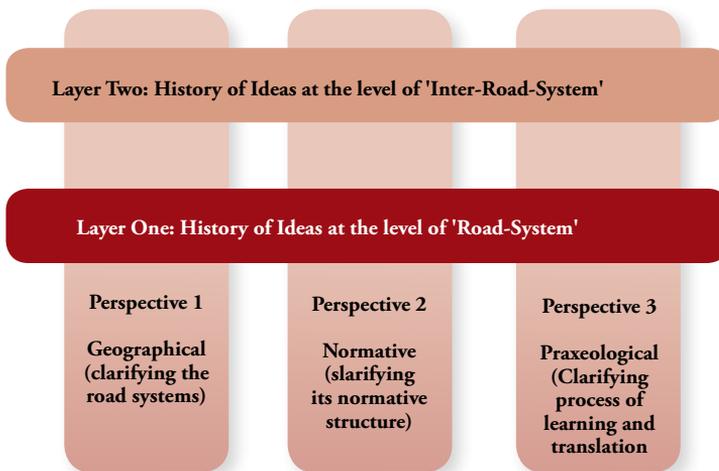
What makes IR Western is not only its Westphalian setting but also its persistent focus on politics and the political.

Based on the road system framework we may add second and third aspects to the concept of the road. Again, using Buddhism as an example, each flow of ideas carried different normative principles. While Theravada Buddhism stressed individual religious development and thereby required strict rules, Mahāyāna Buddhism held a “macro” approach that emphasised collective salvation. Tibetan Buddhism paved another path, creating its own version of *tantra*, or way of mediation. Finally,

the different road systems with their variety of normative principles furthered different processes for learning and translation. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, written texts enabled monks to learn; while in Tibet, oral transmission served this purpose. Furthermore, in each case, groups of monks played a vital role in establishing particular venues- namely, temples- for learning, exchanging and translating ideas. Each road system was

also connected to others, thereby forming a larger, inter-civilisational network of roads. Thus what can be envisioned is a greater map of roads that entails its own ideational developments while, at the same time, interrelate dynamics on ideas at the level of multiple road-systems. To summarise, the possible structure of a GHI based on the conception of the road and the road systems would look like the following:

Table 1: Possible structure of GHI based on the road system



Conclusion

Could a paradigm shift occur in IR theory? This paper may give some clues to an answer. One involves an analytical framework for culture or, more precisely, civilisation. Introducing civilisation into restructuring IR theory always carries a particular danger: it evokes accusations of “the Empire Strikes Back”, whereby a statist/colonialist reading of culture re-emerges especially towards those outside the “West”. Still, there is room to innovate ideas that may overcome “Westfailure”. Another possible answer to the above question entails re-considerations of the post-political. What makes IR Western

is not only its Westphalian setting but also its persistent focus on politics and the political. IR theory may be rightly political for international relations, but we also need some deliberation on the “non-political”. It is almost impossible to separate the political from the critical, but one still must ask: what comes after the post-political? This paper proposes that an historical survey may at least serve as an alternative mode of inquiry. Clearly, this remains a big assumption. It requires a turn towards history from theory, together with an insertion of comparative analysis. After all, we cannot see what lies ahead on the road- only that there is one.

Endnotes

- 1 As argued elsewhere, the term “Westfailure” is not the author’s original. It was coined by the late professor Susan Strange, who attributed the Westphalian world’s problems to its simultaneous development under conditions of excessive capitalism. I chose the same term for a different reason. The word “Westfailure” accurately points out how IR as a discipline has treated its Other improperly. For its original use, see Susan Strange, “The Westfailure System”, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1999), pp. 345-354.
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- 3 Giorgio Shani, “Provincializing’ Critical Theory: Islam, Sikhism, and International Relations Theory”, *Cambridge Review of International Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (September 2007), pp. 417-433; Giorgio Shani, “Towards a Post-Western IR: The Umma, Khalsa Panth, and Critical International Relations Theory”, *International Studies Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (December 2008), pp. 722-734; Rosa Vasilaki, “Provincialising IR? Deadlocks and Prospects in Post-Western IR Theory”, *Millennium*, Vol. 41, No.1 (2012), pp. 3-22.
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- 5 Kosuke Shimizu, “Nishida Kitaro and Japan’s Interwar Foreign Policy: War Involvement and Culturalist Political Discourse”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2011), pp. 157-183; Ching Chang Chen, “The Im/Possibility of Building Indigenous Theories in a Hegemonic Discipline: The Case of Japanese International Relations”, *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (July-September 2012), pp. 463-492. These provide critical insights on the “Japanese School”, while Young Chul Cho’s latest article “Colonialism and Imperialism in the Quest for a Universalist Korean-style International Relations Theory”, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, (2013), gives a Korean illustration.
- 6 Vasilaki, “Provincialising IR?”, pp. 6-8.

- 7 See articles by Shani and Vasilaki, for example.
- 8 Chen, “The Im/Possibility of Building Indigenous Theories in a Hegemonic Discipline”, pp. 476-478.
- 9 Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1979, especially chapter 3 of Volume I.
- 10 Terry Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, London, Verso, 1984/2005, p. 9.
- 11 Ching Chang Chen, “The Absence of Non-Western IR Theory in Asia Reconsidered”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2011), p. 3.
- 12 Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*, London, Penguin Books, 2003/2004, p. 29.
- 13 Eagleton, *The Function of Criticism*, p. 12.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 It is obvious that throughout world history riots, rebellions and making complaints are seen ubiquitously. The problem here is, however, that sometimes we may not be certain if those activities were linked with the particular idea of “politics”. Some movements (such as riots against heavy taxation) might have been “utilitarian”, placated once people’s immanent purposes (avoiding heavy tax) were met. In such situations, a populist movement can be considered reactionary, rather than purposive, in other words not calling for political transformation.
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- 21 Here, Adda Bozeman’s book is a striking example. Adda Bozeman, *Politics and Culture in International History*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1960.
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Romancing Westphalia: Westphalian IR and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

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Abstract

*We need to re-envision international relations (IR). By framing world politics as a world-of-worlds comprised of multiple, interactive and overlapping regional worlds, we can curb the hegemony of the West through Westphalian IR and stem, if not transform, the “cartographic anxieties” that still beset postcolonial states. Both of these provoke state violence externally and internally. This paper examines an East Asian regional world inflected by the 14th-century Chinese epic, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Noting its conflicts as well as compatibilities with Westphalian IR, I conclude with the implications of this thought experiment for IR and for world politics in general.*

Key Words

Regional worlds, hegemony, conflict and compatibility, Westphalian IR, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

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Introduction

State violence in Asia invariably resurrects the West’s old saw about “Oriental despotism”.¹ Basically, it accuses “Oriental” peoples of not knowing how to govern themselves. They resort to acts of violence and suppression whenever dissent arises, Eurocentric claim, in contrast to the enlightened, democratic processes of the West. It’s the same old story of the future vs the past, modernity vs tradition, liberal-democracy vs authoritarianism. To Fukuyama, this realisation signals “the end of history”.² *They* (“the Orient”) must learn to be more like *us* (“the West”). Accordingly, more education, more supervision and, if necessary, more sanctions must follow. The West still rules.

Besides its inherent imperialism, this Eurocentric critique sees only half the picture. It fails to acknowledge a context to the problem: that is, the *international* sources of state violence. Gourevitch first raised this awareness in the late 1970s but from an elite-structural, not a subaltern-postcolonial, perspective.³ Palumbo-Liu

describes this analytical lack as “white absence”.⁴ It accounts for why the mainstream media in 1992, for example, focused only on the conflict between Koreans and blacks in the riots following the first Rodney King trial.⁵ That is, “white absence” excuses from scrutiny the white power structure in which both minority groups must fight for survival *and* justice. Similarly, as C. Chen points out in his paper, we must understand the current dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands within the context of Westphalia’s imposed inter-state system, defined and marked by territorial sovereignty. No such dispute had occurred in the region for millennia before this historical imposition. Indeed, Westphalia’s forced entry into world politics has left huge swathes of the globe dealing with “cartographic anxieties” that rationalise state violence both externally and internally, as Ahmed notes about Assam. Emasculated by Westphalia as the degenerate, “sick” Oriental Other,⁶ state elites feel compelled to proclaim to the Westphalian Self: “We are man enough to be just like you! We, too, can censor, jail, barricade and shoot”.⁷ (Eurocentrics fail to appreciate the comprehensiveness

of postcolonial mimicry). Indeed, state elites and Eurocentrics alike benefit from internalised imperialism. They can seem actively taking charge and solving problems without doing anything to transform the situation. Meanwhile, ordinary citizens suffer. And Westphalia’s impact on world politics remains hidden, overlooked and untreated.⁸

Generations of leaders/thinkers in Asia have tried alternatives. Strategies have ranged from state rejection (Qing China) to assimilation (imperial Japan) to hybridity (Nehru’s India). Ultimately, each succumbed to larger, contextual forces.⁹ Strategies directed internationally have fared no better. The 1955 Bandung Conference sought to neutralise Cold

By framing world politics as a world-of-worlds comprised of multiple, interactive and overlapping regional worlds, we can curb the hegemony of the West through Westphalian IR and stem, if not transform, the “cartographic anxieties” that still beset postcolonial states.

War rivalries between the US and the Soviet Union with Afro-Asian-Caribbean solidarity. In the 1970s, third world states proposed a New International Economic Order (NIEO), reinforced by oil price hikes from the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), to create a more equitable world economy for all. Each effort has dissipated despite its early promise. Seven years after Bandung, India and China warred over borders drawn by former colonisers.¹⁰

Today, the World Social Forum (WSF) champions global change for the Global South. Founded in 2001 and committed to the proposition that “another world is possible”, the WSF seeks to counter the neoliberal, globalising interests of the World Economic Forum (WEF). The latter represents the globe’s corporate, cultural and political elites, gathering annually in the posh, Swiss resort of Davos; whereas, the WSF convenes at various locations in the Global South and welcomes the subaltern, the exploited and the oppressed.¹¹ But is this *enough*?¹²

We need to re-envision IR.¹³ As history attests, neither domestic nor international reform *alone* can shift Westphalia’s hegemony. Instead, we need to align the “outside” with the “inside” by anchoring both in a “regional world”. Acharya defines a regional world as a “broader, inclusive, open, and interactive dynamic of regions and regionalisms. It is not just about how regions self-organize their economic, political and cultural space, but also about how they relate to each other and shape global order”.¹⁴ Put differently, a regional world represents a way of life and living through time-honoured traditions shared by neighbours. This would globalise IR for an already globalised world-of-worlds.¹⁵ Not only would we finally see and hear from the “multiple worlds”¹⁶ that make world politics but doing so would also “provincialise”¹⁷ Westphalian IR as, simply, another regional world. From

this basis, we may stem, if not transform, Westphalia’s “cartographic anxieties”.

As history attests, neither domestic nor international reform alone can shift Westphalia’s hegemony.

Let’s try a thought experiment. I draw a regional world for East Asia based on the 14th-century Chinese epic, *Sanguo yanyi* (*Romance of the Three Kingdoms*; hereafter, *Romance*).¹⁸ The epic remains popular today throughout the region, ranging from the vast Chinese mainland to Korea-Japan in the northeast and Hong Kong-Taiwan-Singapore-Vietnam in the southeast. The epic tells of the competition between three states—Shu, Wu and Wei— for supremacy “under heaven” (*tianxia*). The epic covers the chaos that followed the Han Dynasty’s decline (c. 169 AD) to the re-establishment of world-order under the Jin Dynasty (c. 280 AD). Besides books,¹⁹ films²⁰ and TV dramas,²¹ the novel stays current through new social media such as *manga*,²² *anime*,²³ computer games²⁴ and internet discussions.²⁵ As B. Chen notes in his paper, the President of Taiwan cast future relations with China in terms of the novel’s opening line: “Long divided, the world will unite; long united, it will fall apart” (“*tianxia da shi, fen jiou bi he, he jiou bi fen*”). These words, along with

the epic's other phrases, episodes and characters, echo throughout the region.²⁶

I begin with Wendt's "three cultures of anarchy" in Westphalian IR: Hobbesian enmity, Lockean rivalry and Kantian friendship.²⁷ I juxtapose these with comparable identities in *Romance*: self-aggrandising enmity, negotiated rivalries and eternal brotherhood. I include three other identities that also signify the epic: strategic genius, political trickster and ubiquitous narrator. (More could be added but these are the main ones.) Here, I draw on the latest (2010) televised version of *Romance*, titled *Three Kingdoms (Sanguo)*.²⁸ I do so rather than draw directly from the novel to underscore its currency in the popular imagination today within China and throughout the region. (The series also mirrors the novel closely).²⁹ I conclude with the implications of a *Romance*-inflected regional world for globalising IR.

Enemy, Rival, Friend

To Wendt, only three ideal-type cultures apply in (Westphalian) world politics. Hobbesian enmity, also noted as Machiavellian, evokes realist IR with the familiar characterisation of world politics as an unrelenting "warre of all against all". Lockean or Grotian rivalry accords with liberal IR with its recognition of the capacity of norms and institutions, such as sovereignty,

to curb Hobbesian tendencies. And Kantian friendship prefigures the rise of constructivist IR with its belief in the possibility of (collective) norms subsuming (individual) self-interest; accordingly, states could resolve disputes without resort to violence knowing that cooperation benefits all. "External norms", Wendt writes on Kantian friendship, "have become a voice in our heads telling us that we *want* to follow them".³⁰

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Wendt bases these cultures on individual (Western) psychology. Hobbesian/Machiavellian enmity, for instance, asserts a self-interested, competitive and murderous individual in the State of Nature now coded for world politics: "Self mirrors Other, becomes *its* enemy, in order to survive.... This gives enemy-images a homeostatic quality that sustains the logic of Hobbesian anarchies".³¹ Lockean/Grotian rivalry reflects the possessive individual who seeks, primarily, to protect property:³² "[The] neoliberal or rationalist explanation holds [that] states comply

with sovereignty norms because they think it will advance some exogenously given interest, like security or trade”.³³ And Kantian friendship internalises the “Lockean culture”: “Most states comply with its norms because they accept them as legitimate... identify with them and want to comply. States are status quo not just at the level of behavior, but of interests as well, and as such [are] now more fully self-regulating actors”.³⁴ Wendt implies a progression here: states advance from Hobbesian enmity to Lockean rivalry to (hopefully) Kantian friendship.

Self-aggrandising Enmity, Negotiated Rivalries, Eternal Brotherhood

Romance offers a distinctive contrast. Not only does the epic interpret enmity, rivalry and friendship differently but it also extends the roster of cultures to genius, trickster and narrator. Let’s see how:

Self-aggrandising enmity

Cao Cao (155-220 AD) represents the key antagonist in *Romance*. A low-level official from a family associated with eunuchs,³⁵ Cao rises to become chancellor of the Han Dynasty in its dying years. To deflect charges of unseemly ambition, Cao never proclaims

himself emperor- despite acting like one and holding the actual Emperor hostage. *Romance* depicts Cao as ruthless, conniving and self-serving. For instance, Cao kills his kindly godfather, who had given him safe haven, for fear the old man would inadvertently reveal the secret. But the epic also notes Cao’s utmost competence, savvy and- contrary to the times- emotional honesty. “I’d rather owe the world”, Cao famously declares, “than have the world owe me” (“*ning yuan wo fu tianxiaren, bu yuan tianxiaren fu wo*”). Cao embodies a kind of self-aggrandising power: his approach to his enemies reflects agency, not Hobbes’ situational inevitability, Machiavelli’s amoral calculations, or Wendt’s existential mirroring. Cao decides on friend or foe depending on person and circumstance. At times, Cao allies with his main rival, Liu Bei (161-223 AD). Cao also honours talent. He imprisons and then releases Guan Yu precisely due to the warrior’s famed ability with a halberd and his unswerving dedication to Liu, his “elder brother” (*da ge*). When Guan Yu dies, Cao mourns grievously.

Negotiated rivalries

The novel itself testifies to rivalry in world politics. All the characters and plots revolve around this central premise. For this reason, social scientists in the West take the “three kingdoms” as a metaphor for a multi-polar world

politics.³⁶ But the plots and schemes in *Romance* do not simply reflect rule-bound self-interest or possessiveness, as Wendt suggests for Lockean/Grotian rivalry. Rather, decisions to ally or fight often reflect contending psychologies such as greed, ambition, fear, lust, jealousy, vanity and brotherly love—often in the same individual. Still other times, alliances reflect norms of honour, duty and righteousness. One episode shows Zhuge Liang, master strategist for Liu Bei, on a mission to persuade Sun Quan, Prince of Wu, to ally with Liu against Cao. A long hallway of Sun’s ministers, generals and advisors greet the master strategist when he arrives at the palace. Each poses a question to Zhuge, as he walks down the hallway, as to why an alliance should ensue. Zhuge defeats each questioner by exposing a defect in his logic. Zhuge’s final and winning argument, however, hinges on righteousness: “Are we not honourable men?”³⁷ The longstanding appeal of *Romance* rests not only on calculations of self-interest—certainly, these matter—but the epic also underscores a larger sense of what it means to go to war, sacrifice one’s life, persevere despite repeated failures and make the most of triumph which is, ultimately, momentary. The novel asks: What is it all *for*?

Eternal brotherhood

The epic celebrates, above all else, brotherly love. It finds iconic expression in the relationship between Liu Bei (“first brother”), Guan Yu (“second brother”) and Zhang Fei (“third brother”), ordered according to age. Each supports, comforts and protects the other, always. Even when Cao captures Guan Yu, hoping to recruit him, the latter returns to Liu’s side at his first opportunity despite countless hazards along the way. The three men’s oath of loyalty

Westphalian IR has no narrative of genius in world politics. At most, it forwards the notion of (Western) hegemonic stability to justify the Eurocentric claim of “West knows best”.

is legendary: “We ask not to be born in the same year, same month, same day (*bu qiou tong nian, tong yue, tong ri sheng*) but hope to die in the same year, same month, and same day” (“*dan yuan tong nian, tong yue, tong ri si*”). Cao commands in lonely isolation, in contrast, perhaps accounting for his frequent migraines. Advisors and ministers abound but they perform primarily as lackeys. Cao does not inspire the kind of brotherly love that Liu enjoys. For example, Liu values the brilliance of Pang Tong, a subsidiary character, despite the latter’s ugly face and body. Here, the epic makes a subtle point: all the plotting and scheming, warring and fighting may thrill but it pales next to the succour and devotion

of one's brothers-in-arms. Even conjugal love cannot compare. "Wives are like clothes" ("*qizi ru yishang*"), Liu jokes, "whereas brothers are like the palm of one's hand" ("*xiongdi ru shouzhang*"). This norm of brotherly love and loyalty in *Romance* contrasts starkly with Wendt's notion of Kantian friendship. It may induce "a single 'cognitive region' [such as]... 'we-feeling,' 'solidarity,' 'plural subject,' 'common in-group identity,' 'thinking like a team,' 'loyalty,' and so on",³⁸ but the state-as-person remains "pre-social".³⁹ Like Hobbes' individual in the State of Nature, Wendt's state-as-person sprouts mushroom-like after a rain.⁴⁰ There is little sense of identity *through* social relations, as demonstrated by the oath of eternal brotherhood between Liu, Guan and Zhang.

Romancing Westphalia broadens, while deepening, IR and world politics. It expands our repertoire of identities, norms and practises in world politics today drawn from the rich histories and cultures of our pre-Westphalian past.

Genius

Along with Cao Cao and Liu Bei, the third key figure of *Romance* is

Zhuge Liang. Always elegantly attired in silk robes and waving a fan made of crane feathers (even in battle), Zhuge is Liu's master strategist and, later, his prime minister. In addition to military strategy, Zhuge is renowned for his overall genius as a scholar, thinker and inventor. Two examples suffice. In the critical Battle of Red Cliff (*chi bi*), along the southern bank of the Yangzi River, Liu finds himself outnumbered by Cao's forces in men and ammunition. Defeat seems imminent but Zhuge finds an extraordinary solution. He has several small, straw boats made to send out in the thick fog of night towards the enemy's fleet. Thinking Liu is attempting a sneak attack, Cao's admirals order thousands of arrows shot at the boats. Zhuge's men later retrieve the boats- and the arrows- to use against the enemy next day. A second example comes from an episode titled "Empty City Scheme" ("*kong cheng ji*"). Sima Yi, now Great Commander under Cao's son, advances towards Zhuge who is camped within a small city. Zhuge is caught by surprise, without adequate forces, yet he cannot run. He knows Sima's army can easily capture him and his people. Instead, Zhuge leaves the city gate slightly ajar. He orders some men to casually sweep leaves outside. Zhuge stations himself atop the city gate, plucking the *guqin*, a zither-like instrument. The master strategist plays calmly, melodiously. *He must have lots of men armed to the teeth to play so well,*

Sima guesses with his forces just beyond the city gate. He retreats and Zhuge is saved for another day. Westphalian IR has no narrative of genius in world politics. At most, it forwards the notion of (Western) hegemonic stability to justify the Eurocentric claim of “West knows best”.

Trickster

Sima Yi exemplifies the trickster: he who can wait a lifetime before making his move. Initially appointed to tutor Cao’s son, Sima lays low until his 70s, even feigning a coma, before seizing power. When he does, Sima takes off his cloth boot and sticks his bare foot on the neck of his now kneeling captive, regent to the boy emperor. The late Cao Cao, Sima explains to the hapless regent, had once joked that the shiniest part of a man’s body is his foot because it is always covered. Now, Sima thrusts his foot further upon the regent’s neck, I show you *mine*. Sima’s grandson eventually rises to become the founding Emperor of the Jin Dynasty, thereby reuniting China and ending the warring states period. Again, Westphalian IR has no explicit counterpart to the trickster. What comes closest are stereotypes of the Other as “duplicitous” or “deviant” but with only negative outcomes such as “rogue” or “failed states”.

Narrator

We cannot discount the role of the ubiquitous narrator in *Romance*. Not only does it relate all the events and characters that transpire over a century, but the narrator also provides a philosophy to understand them. Its opening line, for instance, conveys the dialectics of time and power: “Long divided, the world will unite; long united, it will fall apart”. The narrator draws on this outlook throughout the epic to account for the various alliances and their unravelling epitomised by the three kingdoms. Westphalian IR’s closest version of an omniscient presence comes from Waltz’s identification of world politics as a “self-help system” that structures world politics so that there can be “order without an orderer”.⁴¹

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Romancing Westphalia broadens, while deepening, IR and world politics. It expands our repertoire of identities, norms and practises in world politics today drawn from the rich histories and cultures of our pre-Westphalian past. From this basis, the postcolonial state may begin to recover from its

“cartographic anxieties” induced by Westphalian hegemony. Still, it is the interaction between *Romance* and Westphalia that makes the difference. Either on its own merely reproduces a mono-cultural hegemony. Indeed, both the conflicts and the compatibilities between Westphalia and *Romance* contribute positively to a globalising IR.

Conflicts and Compatibilities

Romancing Westphalia surfaces some counter-normative surprises (see Table 1). Let’s see how:

Compatibilities

Westphalia and *Romance* match best in their treatments of friendship. Despite divergences in social ontology, whereby Kantian friendship is “pre-social” and eternal brotherhood in *Romance* emerges from sociality, both value and propagate norms of cooperation, if not love. This bond may solidify and stabilise relations between East Asia and the West but it also causes a problem: it skews power and politics in favour of hypermasculinity/patriarchy. To truly globalise IR and give the feminised its due in world politics,⁴² we need feminist interventions to realise *human*, not just gender, priorities. Here, a second, albeit modest, compatibility between Westphalia and *Romance* helps. Lockean/Grotian rivalry proceeds from rules about possessing and protecting

property; nonetheless, it does not deny or reject multiple and mobile negotiations, as suggested in *Romance*. An integrated understanding of rivalry could enhance cooperation by, for example, dynamising sovereignty. It need not fixate on the physical, the immovable and the contemporary only. Instead, sovereignty could take on, when needed, an older understanding of borders as relational, mobile and longstanding.⁴³ China has proposed to Japan, for instance, the idea of “dually managing” the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands to resolve the dispute.⁴⁴

Conflict

Westphalia and *Romance* conflict most, not surprisingly, in the category of “enemy”. Westphalia defines “enemy” as situationally compelled (Hobbes/Machiavelli) and stagnantly Self-mirroring (Wendt); whereas, in *Romance*, enemy-making depends on self-aggrandisement. This apparent conflict would seem to repel Westphalia from *Romance* were not for the two compatibilities identified above, friendship and rivalry. These introduce some elasticity in the relationship; accordingly, Westphalia’s difference from *Romance* on “enemy” could *sophisticate* understandings of inter-state competition as agential, rather than induced, and variable, not homeostatic. With this range, murderous competition need not dominate.

New Agendas

The categories of genius, trickster and narrator in *Romance* bring new identities and agendas to world politics. Zhuge's "genius" shows the value of challenging conventions and jumping paradigms: it contests hegemony. Sima's "trickster" reminds us to never presume and always consider the possibility of transformation. The *sanguo* "narrator" underscores the dialectics of time and power: politics is a process best evaluated over the long duration. The final outcomes rarely conform to initial expectations.

Conclusion

Nodes of compatibility and conflict weave through Westphalia and *Romance*. These show how two regional worlds, represented by their respective epics of world politics, could converge despite their differences. *Romance* also introduces new identities and agendas that inveigh upon us to seek emancipation, discard complacency and watch out for developments in the long-run. Equally significant, *Romancing* Westphalia highlights multiplicity in world politics. Not only do regional worlds vary

tremendously and colourfully- *Romance* and Westphalian IR are but two, limited examples- but regional worlds also overlap and interact, as shown above, thereby producing ever more variations. IR and world politics both need to take these developments into greater account.

Recent developments in IR suggest such conceptual bridgings are taking place. Even without the benefit of *Romance*, Lacassagne finds the promise of relationality, *habitus* and social interdependencies enriching IR. It can recognise that "[t]he civilizing process is not unilinear, there can be de-civilising processes... major outbursts of violence, or a return to a state in which the external constraints take precedence over self-restraint".⁴⁵ As Duffy notes in his paper, the seeds of self-transformation already exist within Western social science.

My thought experiment now ends. It suggests the gap between "the West" and "the Rest" can close in theory as well as in practise. No longer can Eurocentrics claim supremacy in civilisation disguised as enlightened governance. Nor can postcolonials bemoan a "cartographic anxiety" that renders them victimised yet reactionary, oppressed but violent. We, as Zhuge Liang shows, are capable of far greater creativity.

Table 1: Westphalia and *Romance* Compared

	Westphalian IR	<i>Romance</i>	Implications for globalising IR & world politics
Enemy	Hobbesian/Machiavellian Homeostatic, self-mirroring murderous competition	Cao-ist Variable, agential self-aggrandisement	<i>Sophisticate</i> competition
Rival	Lockean/Grotian Rule-bound possessiveness	Sanguo-ist Multiple, mobile negotiations	<i>Dynamise</i> sovereignty
Friend	Kantian Internalised cooperation	Liu-ist Eternal brotherhood	<i>Feminise</i> interventions
Genius	(Hegemonic state)	Zhuge-ist Paradigm-jumping strategising	<i>Contest</i> hegemony
Trickster	(Deviant duplicity, failed states)	Sima-ist Unknown factor	<i>Consider</i> transformative possibilities
Narrator	(Order without an Orderer: Self-help anarchy)	Sanguo-ist Dialectics of power	<i>Evaluate</i> power as a process over the long term

Endnotes

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- 5 These riots occurred in South-Central Los Angeles where African-Americans dominated as residents but Korean-Americans owned and operated many local stores. The first Rodney King trial exempted four white police officers of police brutality and racial animus despite a videotape showing them beating an unarmed black man, Rodney King, while prostrate on the ground. A second trial later reversed this sentence. For a full recounting of the incident, the trials, and the riots, see, New York Times, *The Los Angeles Riots and Rodney King*, New York, New York Times Company, 2013.
- 6 Eurocentrics labelled both Ottoman Turkey and Qing China as “sick men” in the 19th century. A cartoon from 1898 shows Turkey, as the “sick man of Europe”, consoling China, the “sick man of Asia”, at <http://www.granger.com/results.asp?image=0014135&screenwidth=1274> [last visited 15 December 2013].
- 7 Nandy demonstrates how Indian elites internalised the British coloniser’s hypermasculinised, “undeveloped heart” to show their worth in British eyes and rule over domestic Others. Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: The Psychology of Colonialism*, Delhi, Oxford, 1988.
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- 9 Qing China suffered defeat and unequal treaties; imperial Japan, atomic devastation; and Nehru’s India, Cold War power politics.
- 10 For a new take on the 1962 India-China border war, see, L.H.M. Ling, *Rethinking Borders and Security, India and China: New Connections for Ancient Geographies*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, forthcoming.
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- 15 For more on “world-of-worlds”, see L.H.M. Ling, *The Dao of World Politics: Towards a Post-Westphalian, Worldist International Relations*, London, Routledge, 2014.
- 16 On “multiple worlds”, see, L.H.M. Ling, *Postcolonial International Relations: Conquest and Desire between Asia and the West*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; Anna M. Agathangelou and L.H.M. Ling, *Transforming World Politics: From Empire to Multiple Worlds*, London, Routledge, 2009; Ling, *The Dao of World Politics*.
- 17 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.
- 18 For a competent yet brief synopsis of the epic, see, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_of_the_Three_Kingdoms [last visited 15 December 2013]. Other Chinese epics like *Shuihu zhuan* (*Water Margins*), *Xiyou ji* (*Journey to the West*) and *Honglou Meng* (*Dream of the Red Chamber*) have had a similar cultural impact on the region but only *Romance* deals explicitly with world politics.
- 19 Lai Sing Lam, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Mao’s Global Order of Tripolarity*, Oxford, Peter Lang AG, 2011.
- 20 The film, *Chi bi* (*Red Cliff*, 2008), for example, was based on an episode of *Romance*. Directed by John Woo, the film had an international cast but was performed in Mandarin. The 2010 TV series, *Three Kingdoms*, enjoyed high ratings in Taiwan. See, <http://news.sina.com.tw/article/20120712/7312574.html>; <http://dailynews.sina.com/bg/ent/tv/sinacn/file/20120802/02003629939.html>; <http://big5.chinanews.com:89/yl/2012/07-25/4058001.shtml> [last visited 8 December 2013].
- 21 Chinese Central Television (CCTV) has aired two productions: one, “*Sanguo Yanyi*”, in 1994; a second, “*Sanguo*”, in 2010.
- 22 See, in Japanese: <http://mangafox.me/manga/sangokushi/> [last visited 8 December 2013]; in Vietnamese: [http://www.sachbaovn.vn/doc-truc-tuyen/sach/tam-quoc-dien-nghia-tap-1-\(truyen-tranh\)-MUQwQTQ2MkI](http://www.sachbaovn.vn/doc-truc-tuyen/sach/tam-quoc-dien-nghia-tap-1-(truyen-tranh)-MUQwQTQ2MkI) [last visited 9 December 2013].
- 23 See, in Japanese: *Kōtetsu Sangokushi* (2007).

- 24 See, in Korean: <http://samleague.no3games.com/nmain.php>; <http://cafe.naver.com/scsamguk>; <https://itunes.apple.com/kr/app/id431552463>; <http://cafe.naver.com/samtactic> [last visited 10 December 2013]; in Japanese: *Sangokushi Taisen* (2005, 2006); in Vietnamese: <http://3d.3qc.vn/teaser/xich-bich.htm>, <http://luyengame.com/games/tamquocchi.html> [last visited 9 December 2013].
- 25 See, “*Xin sanguo yanyi: zhong, e, mei*” (New Romance of the Three Kingdoms: China, Russia, US), *tianya shequ* (one of the biggest bulletin boards in China), 30 September 2010.
- 26 South Korea’s President, Park Geun Hye, notes her love of the epic in her autobiography, at <http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/18138421-the-exercise-of-my-despair> [last visited 10 December 2013]. In Vietnam, daily discourse includes these phrases from the epic: e.g., “*Vợ chồng như quần áo, anh em như tay chân*” (wives are like clothing; brothers are like the palm of one’s hand); “*Nhắc Tào Tháo, Tào Tháo đến*” (speak of the devil [Cao Cao] and he appears); “*Ba ông thợ may bằng một Gia Cát Lượng*” (three stinky leather tanners can triumph over one Zhuge Liang [genius]). Many temples in Vietnam also worship Guan Yu, a key character in *Romance*. He symbolises the principled warrior/nobleman.
- 27 Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 247.
- 28 To access the 2010 TV series with English subtitles, see, <http://the-scholars.com/viewtopic.php?f=5&t=21148> [last visited 27 July 2011]. A version dubbed in Turkish is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rD3hZkPTLfl> [last visited 12 December 2013].
- 29 Slight differences appear. For example, the 2010 series does not include the novel’s chapter, “Seven Times Caught, Seven Times Released” (*qi qing qi zong*). On this, see Chapter 6 of Ling, *The Dao of World Politics*.
- 30 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 288, original emphasis.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 263, original emphasis.
- 32 For more on this Westphalian ontology of fear and property, see Agathangelou and Ling, *Transforming World Politics*.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 287.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 289.
- 35 Cao’s father was the foster son of a favoured eunuch in the Han Dynasty court.
- 36 Lai, *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Mao’s Global Order of Tripolarity*; “*Xin sanguo yanyi: zhong, e, mei*” (New Romance of the Three Kingdoms: China, Russia, US). See also, Emerson M.S. Niou and Peter C. Ordershook, “Preventive War and the Balance of Power: A Game-Theoretic Approach”, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (September 1987), pp. 387-419.

- 37 This is a paraphrase of the dialogue in the drama series. Zhuge Liang charges his inquisitor with sentiments that brink on the seditious (literally, to have “no ruler, no father” or “*wujun wufu*”) and disloyal (literally, “without patriotism, without filial piety” or “*wu zhong wu xiao*”).
- 38 Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, p. 305.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p. 198.
- 40 Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, Chapter 8, at <http://www.constitution.org/th/decive08.htm> [last visited on 27 May 2013].
- 41 Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1979.
- 42 These include any identity not deemed “masculine”: e.g., women, the underclass, the informal economy and the non-Western Other; Marianne Marchand and Anne Sisson Runyan, *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites, and Resistances*, London, Routledge, 2000 and 2011.
- 43 L.H.M. Ling, “Borders of Our Minds: Territories, Boundaries, and Power in the Confucian Tradition”, in Margaret Moore and Allen Buchanan (eds.), *States, Nations, and Borders: The Ethics of Making Boundaries*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 86-100.
- 44 Luo Tian-bing, “*Dong Liwen: Zhong qitu yu ri gongguan diaoyudao haiyu*” (Dong Liwen: China Seeks with Japan Joint Management of the Diaoyu Islands Sea Area), *Ziyou shibao* (*Liberty Times*), 24 April 2013, at <http://www.libertytimes.com.tw/2013/new/apr/24/today-fo1-2.htm> [last visited 14 December 2013].
- 45 Aurélie Lacassagne, “Cultures of Anarchy as Figurations: Reflections on Wendt, Elias and the English School”, *Human Figurations: Long-Term Perspectives on the Human Condition*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (July 2012), at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/h/humfig/11217607.0001.207/--cultures-of-anarchy-as-figurations-reflections-on-wendt?rgn=main;view=fulltext> [last visited on 14 December 2013].

On China

By Henry Kissinger

New York: The Penguin Press, 2012, 586 pages,
ISBN: 9781594202711.

Every book on China is a potential bestseller these days. Literature on the topic is abundant, growing as we speak and not easy to follow. Themes on the political, economic and social development of China have been monopolising policy and academic debates. Henry Kissinger's *On China* is as interesting as it can be, and contributes to this trend. Not only because he personally orchestrated the most dramatic diplomatic initiative of the Cold War in which the US succeeded in establishing a working strategic relationship with Maoist China, but also because of China's meteoric rise to superpower status within a generation.

Kissinger was not only the first official American emissary to Communist China, he can truly claim to be the chief architect of one of the pillars of the post-war international system. He advised and directed the White House's China policy for four decades, and on almost 50 visits to China consulted with every one of its leaders. To the degree that Washington and Beijing now understand each other,

it is in good measure because Kissinger has been striving to find "strategic concepts" that could be made to alleviate conflict, mutual grievance and fear.

Prior to the publication of this book the definitive resource on China was Jonathan Spence's *The Search of Modern China* (New York, Norton, 1990). It is still indispensable to a modern understanding of China. Kissinger's book, according to Spence, tries to "make sense of China's diplomacy and foreign policies across two and a half millennia, and to bring China's past full circle in order to illuminate the present... it is part reminiscence, part reflection, part history, and part intuitive exploration".¹

Kissinger's portrait of China goes well beyond the stereotype of the proud, ancient civilisation humiliated by the West and now rising again. Because it has been for millennia the central country of Asia and has the largest population and resource base, China's situation is fundamentally different from that of the West's numerous great powers. With the

building of the Great Wall, China became the world's largest gated community, protecting itself from neighbours that it could not eliminate. Traditional China's greatest accomplishment was not its vastness but rather its constant re-emergence from periods of disunity and conquest. Kissinger points out that China's diplomacy mirrors the game of *wei qi*, also known as *go*, in which players try to encircle one another, rather than the Western strategic game of chess in which the goal is to eliminate the adversary.

There are 18 chapters plus an epilogue. The first three chapters are devoted to China's history. The book deftly traces the rhythms and patterns in Chinese history (its cycles of turning inward in isolationist defensiveness and outward to the broader world) and underlines the fact that China's exceptionalism is cultural: China does not proselytise or claim that its institutions "are relevant outside China," yet it tends to grade "all other states as various levels of tributaries based on their approximation to Chinese cultural and political forms".

According to Kissinger there are four key elements to understanding the Chinese mind: Confucianism ("a single, universal, generally applicable truth as the standard of individual conduct and social cohesion"); Sun Tzu (outsmarting:

good; direct conflict: bad); an ancient board game called *wei qi* (or *go*, which stresses "the protracted campaign"); and China's "century of humiliation" in the 1800s.

Early China was plagued by internecine conflict that threatened the empire's sustainability. Confucius (551-479 BC), an itinerant philosopher largely ignored in his lifetime, provided the "glue" that has both kept the empire together since, while uniting its people, and providing much of Asia's "state religion". Expertise in Confucian thought became the key to advancement after the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) adopted Confucius' thinking. In doing so, the state assumed a moral obligation to provide virtue and harmony, and its people took on an obligation to obey the state as well as honour their ancestors and emphasise learning.

Between 1405-1433, China's Admiral Zheng sent out a fleet of large, technically advanced ships to Africa, the Middle East, India and other closer locales. The purpose of the voyages is unclear to historians, and the next Emperor ordered the fleet destroyed, along with Zheng's records of those voyages. The withdrawal from contact with Western nations limited access to new ideas and led to China being physically and economically dominated by others

from the mid-1800s until the 1990s—its “Century of Humiliation.” (China’s share of the world’s GDP was about 25% in 1500, grew to approximately 30% in 1820, and fell to about 4% in 1950).

Chapter four is about Mao’s Continuous Revolution. This chapter is superb and superbly written. If you study American China relations, the question that is always asked is whether or not America lost China in 1949. Kissinger correctly reminds Americans that China might never have been theirs to lose, and so they have been asking the wrong question all along. Mao always believed that the Confucian order of harmony had resulted in a weak China. He therefore believed that progress could only come from brutal confrontations both within and with outside adversaries for China to advance.

After a chapter on the Korean War, chapter six is an excellent analysis of China’s strategy of confronting the Soviet Union and creating the Sino-Soviet split, and the United States with the Taiwan Strait Crisis. The chapter is riveting, and immensely contributes to our understanding of history.

Following a chapter on the great domestic turmoil in the 1960s and the Cultural Revolution, the author takes us through the Road to Reconciliation in chapter eight, and, in chapter nine, the

first encounters with Nixon, himself and the Chinese leadership. It is a fascinating portrayal of a head-to-head meeting where Kissinger recounts in minute-by-minute detail the secret mission in 1971 that prepared the way for President Nixon’s historic visit and the personal interactions with Premier Zhou Enlai and Mao. What is interesting is Kissinger’s confession that the Nixon-Kissinger visits 1971-72 turned out to have been the easy part. “That China and the United States would find a way to come together was inevitable given the necessities of the time”, he writes. “It would have happened sooner or later whatever the leadership in either country”. Both nations were exhausted from war (Vietnam, clashes on the Soviet border) and domestic strife (anti-war protests in Nixon’s case, the Cultural Revolution in Mao’s).

Kissinger was and still is overwhelmed by Mao’s stature. He describes him as “the philosopher king”. All Mao’s decisions are based on meticulous planning; informed by the millennia of China’s culture; and with long term considerations. “Mao enunciated the doctrine of ‘continuous revolution’, but when the Chinese national interest required it, he could be patient and take the long view”, he writes. “The manipulation of ‘contradictions’ was his proclaimed strategy, yet it was in the service of an ultimate goal

drawn from the Confucian concept of *da tong*, or the Great Harmony". Also, Kissinger's portraying of Mao's successors is indicative of an appreciative intimacy. He remembers Zhou Enlai as conducting "conversations with the effortless grace and superior intelligence of the Confucian sage". He adds that the elegant Zhou—who would be "criticized for having concentrated on softening some of Mao's practices rather than resisting them—faced the classic quandary of the "adviser to the prince", who must balance "the benefits of the ability to alter events against the possibility of exclusion, should he bring his objections to any one policy to a head".

Of Deng Xiaoping, Kissinger reminds us that he and his family suffered greatly during the Cultural Revolution - he was exiled to perform manual labour, and his son was "tormented by Red Guards and pushed off the top of a building at Beijing University" and denied admission to a hospital for his broken back. Upon his return to government, Deng worked to replace the Revolution's emphasis on ideological purity with the values of "order, professionalism and efficiency", and Kissinger credits him with fashioning the modernisations that would transform "Mao's drab China of agricultural communes" into a bustling economic giant. Overall, the author describes Chinese leaders

as practitioners of power politics that enabled China, "despite its insistent Communist propaganda, to conduct itself as essentially a geopolitical 'free agent' of the cold war," making a tactical partnership with the United States in order to contain the Soviet Union. In chapters 11 and 12 we see the end of the Mao Era. Zhou Enlai falls and Deng's first return to power begins.

When at the end of the book Kissinger discusses present trends and challenges he deals with the essential question of the future of Sino-American relations: With no common enemy to bind them, what will keep the peace and cooperation between them? China has become an industrial powerhouse with global ambitions and continues to grow. The radical shift in the balance of power turned the two nations into mutually dependent economic giants, but it left them without an overarching strategic design that could sustain a working partnership. While both governments officially emphasise cooperation, Kissinger is not yet ready to rule out a return to strategic competition and conflict.

Kissinger addresses this question by looking to the "Crowe Memorandum" of 1907.² Crowe argued that it was in Germany's interest to "build as powerful a navy as she can afford" and that this

would itself lead to “objective” conflict with the British Empire, no matter what German diplomats said or did. There is today a “Crowe school of thought” in the United States, Kissinger observes, which sees China’s rise “as incompatible with America’s position in the Pacific” and therefore best met with preemptively hostile policies. He perceives growing anxieties in both societies and fears they are exacerbated by Americans who claim that democracy in China is a prerequisite for a trusting relationship. He warns that a new resulting Cold War would arrest progress in both nations and cause them to “analyse themselves into self-fulfilling prophecies” when in reality their main competition is more likely to be economic than military. Rather than preparing for a showdown with China, Kissinger suggests building a Pacific Community along the lines of the Atlantic Community to promote security through inclusivity and mutual respect. For Kissinger, “relations between China and the United States need not and should not become a zero-sum game”.

Finally, what about human rights and China’s poor record? As a true student and practitioner of *realpolitik* he

argues that if America’s drive to spread democratic values is made the main condition for a functioning strategic interaction between Washington and Beijing, “deadlock is inevitable”. For Kissinger, “foreign policy must define means as well as objectives, and if the means employed grow beyond the tolerance of the international framework or of a relationship considered essential for national security, a choice must be made”. He is not explicit but we know what he advocates and it is unnerving.

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Endnotes

- 1 Jonathan D. Spence, “Kissinger and China”, *New York Review of Books*, 9 June 2011.
- 2 On the Crowe Memorandum see, J.S. Dunn, *The Crowe Memorandum: Sir Eyre Crowe and Foreign Office Perceptions of Germany: 1918-1925*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf

By Miriam Cooke

Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 2014, 214 pages, ISBN: 9780520280106.

Tribal Modern: Branding New Nations in the Arab Gulf is a comprehensive volume specifically dedicated to understanding and evaluating the contemporary identity-building and nation-branding practices in the Arab Gulf countries. As the title of the book reveals, in this work, renowned Duke University Professor Miriam Cooke essentially tries to address the question of how peoples of the Arab Gulf negotiate the complexities of the modern world with their tribal values. While answering this question, Professor Cooke rules out binary assumptions, e.g. the “modern vs. traditional” duality, and argues that the tribal and the modern must be thought of together. In her understanding the tribal is not the traditional and certainly not the primitive. Instead, the tribal—as it appears in the Arab Gulf today— is integral to the modern and constitutes a crucial element in the Arab Gulf’s modernity.

Miriam Cooke reminds us about the return of the tribal where it signals racial privilege, social status and exclusive entitlement to a share in national profits.

By examining the trends and social dynamics in the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait, Cooke traces the emergence of national brands that combine the spectacle of tribal and modern identities.

To explain the convergence of the tribal and the modern Cooke heavily focuses on the Qur’anic notion of the *barzakh* which actually has two different meanings:¹ The first one designates the metaphysical space between life and the hereafter and the second one describes the physical space between sweet and salty waters. The latter signifies an undiluted convergence. Although an original metaphor to explain the relation between the tribal and the modern, the emphasis on and the use of *barzakh* goes too far in Cooke’s work so that the notion nearly turns out to be an empty-signifier. Most observers of the Arab Gulf are well aware that the drastic transformation the region is undergoing reveals the tensions shaped by the modern vs. traditional dichotomy. Cooke snubs this binary opposition and claims to find a way out by employing the concept of *barzakh*;

however, this approach does not really convince the reader.

Cooke also notes that the seemingly oppositional tropes between the tribal and the modern are negotiated and played out in the “heritage engineering” projects which are currently mushrooming elsewhere in the Arab Gulf monarchies. Here, rightly, Cooke refers to *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), the monumental work that famous British historian Eric Hobsbawm edited with Terence Ranger. Cooke argues that Arab Gulf states are pursuing what Hobsbawm calls the “invention of tradition”² to provide themselves with symbolic capital that helps to convert the wealth generated from hydrocarbon resources into nationally legible cultural capital, and they project socio-national cohesion with an emphasis on tribal purity.

Miriam Cooke stresses that an obsession with authenticity and constant reference to cultural and tribal purity, or *asala*, is very much related to the challenges posed by globalisation and modernity, as nations attempt to rebuild their cultural identities. Therefore, she notes that the Arab Gulf states, “whose citizens are the first generation to grow up with a national, rather than a regional identity, are involved in a future articulation of a largely unrecorded past that lies buried under the surface

of identical newly global cities”. In this sense, many of these heritage projects are state-sponsored and help construct a new patriotism.

While examining the Arab Gulf societies and their lineages, Cooke also refers to 14-15th century Arab thinker Ibn Khaldun’s now classical distinction between the pastoral nomadic, otherwise known as “*badawa*”, and the sedentary urban, known as “*hadara*”. The “*badawa*” symbolises nomadism, loyalty and tribalism and “*hadara*”, on the other hand, is a symbol of modernity, urbanisation and individualism. These two terms, she argues, still figure importantly in the way Gulf Arabs define themselves and their lineages. In this way, Cooke points to a psychological barrier between the two forms of tribal existence.

It is indeed correct that today tribal roots are more important than ever for the *Khaleejis*. However, Cooke argues that modern regimes held tribal lineage in affective tension with the national identity, as the discrepancy between national borders and tribal territories pose serious challenges for racialised nation building.

Cooke also touches upon other topics related to performing the national identity, like increasing popularity of Nabati/Bedouin poetry, falconing, camel races and tribal dress. In addition to

the above-mentioned topics, she brings gender issues into the picture, too.

An important shortcoming which Cooke's book suffers is the lack of analytical and methodological subtlety. Having produced influential pieces on gender and Middle East studies and being very much familiar with the Gulf region, throughout her book Cook displays an abundance of useful material on contemporary social dynamics of the Arab Gulf. However, overusing the concept of *barzakh* weakens the theoretical strength of the book.

Overall, Professor Cooke's book is a timely and interesting contribution to the fields of nation-branding and Arab Gulf studies. However, more systematic work on nationalism and identity building in this region remains much needed. Let's hope Cooke's volume paves the way for further research.

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Endnotes

- 1 The *barzakh* mentioned in the Holy Qur'an three times. In Surat Al-Mu'minun (23:100), Surat Al-Furqan (25:53) and Surat Ar-Rahman (55:19-22).
- 2 Hobsbawm defines "invented traditions" as follows: " 'Invented tradition' is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.... However, insofar as there is such reference to a historic past, the peculiarity of 'invented' traditions is that the continuity with it is largely fictitious. In short, they are responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition." See, Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 1.

A Threat Against Europe? Security, Migration and Integration

By J.P. Burgess and S. Gutwirth (eds.)

Brussels: Brussels University Press, 2011, 224 pages, ISBN: 9054879297.

A Threat Against Europe? Security, Migration and Integration provides a theoretical and empirical understanding of security, border control and the management of migration practices within Europe using up-to-date research. It discusses how the concepts of security, migration and integration relate to the European setting while expanding the understanding of security.

The subject of the book is highly relevant to current discussions and developments on migration that are shaping policy and politics within Europe and the European Union (EU). Threat perception and the understanding of security have fundamentally changed meaning all around the world after the terrorist attack of 9/11, followed by London and Madrid bombings. As the editors of this book point out, it is essential to provide a wide-ranging revision and broadening of the notion of security in order to understand the interconnectedness of security, migration and integration.

The control and management of migration have become important

topics for most of the states that are experiencing migration, either as a transit or destination country, gradually moving towards to the top of political agendas around the globe. Realising that limiting the international movement of people is difficult, if not impossible, the US and European states are becoming innovative in terms of developing policies, methods and institutions for border management, control and surveillance. In addition, a range of legal or juridical control mechanisms are used. The perceived understanding of insecurity and threat as a result of migratory movements brings Europe to the dilemma of either promoting its moral values of protection fundamental rights or advancing security measures.

Looking at various aspects of this dilemma, the contributors to this volume cover comprehensive range of topics including trends in European immigration policies, the strategies used by European states to reduce “unwanted” migration, defining the legal and “digital” borders of Europe, the understanding of citizenship within

the context of Europe, the link between the international fight against terrorism and individual rights, the development and ethnics of European border practices with the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR), the impact of the development-security-environment-nexus (DESNEX), the legal authority of immigration laws and policing the Schengen area.

Taking migration and the movements of people as its main subject, this volume looks at the concept of security from a different perspective than its traditional understanding. It analyses security from three different points of view. It firstly argues that insecurity can happen at the country of origin where economic, health, nutritional and military insecurity can motivate migrants to move. Secondly, in a country of transit or during their journey migrants can expose themselves to insecurity through people smugglers or traffickers, or at risky border crossings. Finally, in the country of destination insecurity can result from irregularity, marginalisation, discrimination, exploitation or xenophobia.

Looking at both at theoretical background and empirical findings, this well-structured and well-researched book also provides the reader with technical operational details as well as the judicial aspects of migration management and

border control. This combination of theory and practice, as well as legal and technical studies, are difficult to find in a single volume. Thus, its scope and depth is an important asset of this book.

Through its 11 chapters this book tries to look at both sides in that it focuses on migrants in terms of their perception of insecurity as well as on the receiver side of migration in the destination countries. In the European destination countries, the understanding of the threat perception is shaped by the movement of people that resonates though the development of policies to respond to society's profound feeling of insecurity. The policies and mechanisms at the EU and member state level are instruments to respond to these challenges. The chapters on EU's border agency FRONTEX, the EUROSUR and databases for digital surveillance show the EU's need for better coordination and management of migration. They also demonstrate the struggle to keep a balanced approach in terms of respect of fundamental rights, an individual's right to privacy and the legal protection under the rule of law.

With its comprehensive coverage of concepts of migration, security and integration this volume, with its theoretical and empirical studies, delivers the editors' goal. It definitely undertakes the revision and broadening the notion of

security through a mapping and analysis of the link between these concepts and is a valuable addition to literature on these topics. It is a must read for researchers and practitioners working on these areas and a great addition to libraries either

with a general scope or specialised on these topics.

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Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century

By Ebru Canan-Sokollu

Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013, 347 pages, ISBN: 9780739148716.

Debating Security in Turkey: Challenges and Changes in the Twenty-First Century, edited by Ebru Canan-Sokollu, is an analysis of security challenges and prospects facing Turkey at the beginning of the 21st century. It is an edited book composed of four parts inclusive of chapters written by different authors, each one of whom focus on different loci of Turkish domestic and international politics.

The first part, “Approaches to Security and Challenges in the Twenty-First Century”, includes three chapters which cover mostly the theoretical perspectives of the term “security”, its changing meaning, and what has been its effects. On a theoretical basis, security is analysed

under the context of the shift in Turkey’s security policies after the Cold War and then during the JDP government. As Snyder argues in the first chapter, in Turkey geo-political changes have been enormous and have directly affected the security policies adopted. Consequently Turkey has found itself with the need to develop a “regional” reference to tackle the challenges that it is facing as it is on the frontline between the West and radical Islamic forces. Moreover Diez tries to challenge the “Regional Security Complex Theory”, which sees Turkey as an “insulator”. Diez argues that Turkey should be seen as “a meeting ground of security dynamics that result in domestic political struggles about the legitimate order”. Additionally Öner covers the

theoretical debate about the relationship between the nature of “security” and “challenge” in the case of Turkey by arguing that we have seen a shift from a Hobbesian view of security towards a Kantian foreign policy. In other words, Turkey has moved away from military security towards “soft power” security.

The second part, “Turkey and Internal Security Challenges in the Twenty-First Century”, focuses on the main security challenges. Akça and Balta-Paker investigates the role of the Turkish military in politics. Before the JDP came to power, Turkey’s security was guided by a Kemalist ideology that emphasised the militarisation of domestic politics. When the JDP came in power these ideologies started to be left behind and the civilian government gained more power. The second challenge, the Islamisation of the politics, has become more obvious during the JDP’s time in power. According to Özoğuz- Bolgi, this may not be a real threat to the security of Turkey. Due to international and domestic pressures, that JDP have understood that should change their Islamic worldview and have started to consider itself as a centre-right party.

While speaking about security policies, the most important sources are external threats. In the third part, “Turkey and External Security Challenges in the

Twenty-First Century”, Turkey’s external threats are analysed based on four main regions: the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Caucasus and the Caspian. In the Mediterranean the most important issue remains Cyprus. Sözen argues that Turkey’s shift towards soft power has had effects on the Cyprus conflict and peace negotiations. After offering some possible solutions of the issue, Sözen concludes that the real solution of the issue depends on military-civilian relations. Furthermore, on Turkey’s relations with Israel and the Palestinians, Tocci argues these have changed due to the deterioration of relations with Israel. In order to have a balanced policy in Middle East, Tocci suggests that Turkey should promote reconciliation on the basis of international law. In the following chapter, Gözkaman analyses the Kurdish and Turkmen question through Turkish-Iraqi relations. Even though he’s not very optimistic, Gözkaman argues that multilateral efforts are needed to improve relations with Iraq and to solve the Kurdish issue. The two following chapters look at Turkey’s role in the Caucasus and the Caspian. Gültekin-Punsmann analyses the relations with Russia and considers this political and economic relation as a source of stability in the region, while Eriş emphasises the role of Turkey in the energy security as an oil supplier between Caspian basin and EU.

The fourth part, “The Euro-Atlantic Partnership in the Twenty-First Century”, focuses on Turkey’s relations with Euro-Atlantic states. In terms of relations with the USA, İşeri argues that the Obama Administration has been trying to meliorate its relations with the Muslim world. Consequently Turkey is seen as a key ally. While analysing the security policies of Turkey in the Western Balkans, Balcer concludes that the stability of the region depends on Turkey’s accession to the EU. Accordingly if Turkey does not become a member the Euroscepticism in the Balkans will increase. At the same time, the EU plays a major role in relations between Turkey and Greece. Unfortunately, as Ker-Lindsay argues, relations between both states seem to be highly dependent on the EU. The final two chapters discuss environment policies and the perception of Turkish elites on security policies. In the last chapter of this part, the author İzci argues that unfortunately environmental policies have not been taken seriously by the government. And

Üstün and Şenyuva, while analysing Turkish elite perceptions on security, conclude that the elite still see the use of both hard and soft power tools as important.

This book analyses Turkey’s security policies and their changes based on internal and external effects. To the reader it presents a clear picture of the challenges that Turkey is facing during these critical periods. Even though the book has a lack of primary sources, its well-structured content may be considered an important asset in Turkish security literature. Moreover this book is a contribution to regional security studies, such as on Middle East, the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Caspian. It may be beneficial for students of international relations and political science who may be interested in the Turkish foreign policy and its challenges and evolution through time.

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Iranian Mythology and Islamic Revolution: The Shah and the Ayatollah

By Fereydoun Hoveyda

Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2003, 136 pages, ISBN: 9780275978587.

People usually sanctify the person, thing or place that they believe have supreme importance for the area they live, as well as variously interpreting the uncertain phenomenon that they couldn't explain. They transfer these from generation to generation by enhancing the social phenomenon encountered every day. Legends are the main elements that affiliates people with other people, their habitat and their spirituality. Legends commonly exist in traditional societies such as Iran. Also, in traditional societies there is a strong belief in the existence of an extraordinary power that controls humanity. Natural disasters are believed to be punishment for bad behaviours of the societies. In the same way, good happenings or successes are awarded for good behaviour. For instance, a great number of Iranians in 1979 believed that the face of Khomeini was reflected in the full moon, as well as many of people believing that he was the metempsychosis of the awaited 12th Imam.

Fereydoun Hoveyda, an Iranian with a specialisation in mythological histories, explains in his book that mythology is important for Iranian society and the leaders. *The Shah and the Ayatollah* has four chapters. First, the author describes the places that Muhammed Rıza Shah and Khomeini lived, in order to show how location had an impact upon the characters of these people and explains their similarities and difference. He believes that the differences between the two characters, who were to be competitors in the future, had been set out from the beginning of their lives. Khomeini was nominated as a *badghadam* (birth of ill omen) due to his father's death just after Khomeini was born; on the other hand Rıza Shah was nominated as *khoshghadam* (birth of good omen) due to his father's promotion. Indeed, his father became the commander of the Cossack brigade one year after his birth and then minister of the war cabinet. According to the author, while Khomeini was growing up in poverty with his fundamentalist

aunt, Shah was living in luxury. While Khomeini was educated by anti-modern clerics who had fled from the Pahlavi authoritarian regime, Shah was educated in Swiss modern school with the children of the elite. All these differences provide the basis of their competition.

Secondly, the author builds up the theoretical frame of the book. For this reason, he explains legends in Iranian mythology and assimilates Muhammed Rıza Shah and Khomeini with them. He emphasises two legends written in *Shahnameh* by Ferdowsi, which have a particular importance for Iranian mythology. The first one is the legend of Jamshid and Feridun. The myth was that the Zoroastrian God Ahura Mazda got angry with the guiltiness and cupidity of the people and took the sunlight from the earth. As a result the Zoroastrian devil Ahriman ruled over the world. But the saviour Jamshid brought peace to humanity by dethroning Ahriman. Then Ahura Mazda was pleased with this situation and gives sunlight again. Eventually, Jamshid was kept by solemnity and power which lead to a negligence of the loyalty against Ahura Mazda. This would lead him to take the sunlight from the earth again. Zahak dethroned Jamshid with the help of Ahriman and caused tyranny to return. People were oppressed by the tyrant Zahak and prayed to Ahura Mazda for a

saviour. Then Feridun came and brought peace to society again. With this legend, the author correlates Muhammed Rıza Shah and Khomeini. Although the income obtained from oil brought peace to the society, Shah was arrogant and ruled harshly. The people started to wait for Feridun again. Then Khomeini arrived, like coming from the paradise by his plane, and brought peace to the society again.

The second legend concerns Rostam and Sohrab. Sohrab was born and his father Rostam didn't know about the existence of his son. Sohrab grew up and became a powerful soldier. Then he decided to look for his father. He met him at a battle field and was killed by his father during single combat. The author states that according to a Greek legend Oedipus, the son kills his father, but this is impossible in the Iranian tradition so the father kills his son. It is believed that the son can never stand against his father. With this legend, the author looks at how the two people managed to get the support of the people. While referendum results were over 95% in the Rıza Shah period, the referendum results were also over 95% in the Khomeini period. He wonders what made people, who had previously defended the modernist attitude, to in a short period of time turn to traditional attitudes. The author argues that the answer comes from the father

character in Iranian society. Previously, the character of the father was Riza Shah and it was said that “The king of Iran is a teacher, a master, a father, in short he is everything”. But in the course of time, he loses his power as a result of his weakness against his opposition. Khomeini then became a new father who was nominated as a saviour, and said that “Iranians are children in need of custodian”. After all these examples, the author concludes that the character of the father is encountered in wide range of Iranian phenomenon from father of a family, to tribal sheikh, and from the landlord to clergy or Shah

there was always a system of hierarchy which means that the father has the right to speak and cannot be opposed.

In conclusion, the author explains Iranian society by analysing the figures of saviour and the father successfully. It has to be mentioned that there are still many people in Iran who believe that Khomeini hasn't died, and that one day he will come back.

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Style and Format

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Articles in Edited Books

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Official Papers

Parliamentary Papers: Select Committee on Manufacturers (Parl. Papers, 1833, VI), 0.456. Subsequent references as:

SC on ... (PP, 1839, VII), 00.2347.

Hansard (Commons), 4th ser. XXXVI, 641-2, 22 Aug. 1895.

Theses

For titles of published and unpublished theses use italics:

John E. Smith, *Title of Thesis*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Name of the University, Year, Chapter #, p. #

Internet References

Center for Strategic Research of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "A Global Spring- Why NATO needs to go Global", at <http://www.sam.gov.tr/perceptions/volume13/autumn/DustinDehEz.pdf> [last visited 21 October 09]

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Numbers under 10 should be spelled out.

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