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* 'Asia Pacific region' as used here includes East Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Oceania, and the Russian Far East.

The Sea Otter Islands: Geopolitics and Environment in the East Asian Fur Trade

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Abstract

The origins of the sea otter trade can be traced to inter-Asian fur markets that developed centuries prior to the well-chronicled journeys of Vitus Bering and James Cook in the North Pacific. Japanese merchants and Ainu hunters traded for otter pelts as part of a larger system of exchanges in the Western Pacific. Russian entry to the trade by the early eighteenth century intensified territorial disputes in the Kuril Islands. A series of Russo-Japanese showdowns in the region helped forge an international borderland that lasted well into the nineteenth century. A comparison of the environmental effects of the Western Pacific sea otter trade prior to 1800 with other areas where otters were hunted and traded reveals limited degradation of otter herds in the Kurils.

What can a sea otter swimming in the frigid seas of northeastern Asia teach us about international relations in the Pacific? Quite a bit, even though studies of the global trade for sea otter pelts usually ignore the history of the Asian sea otter. As a whole, the species suffers under a EuroAmerican bias.The second North Pacific expedition of Danish explorer Vitus Bering—sent forth at the behest of the Russian crown and which ultimately returned with hundreds of valuable sea otter pelts—is often emphasized by scholars as having pioneered the trade. The maritime activities of British, American and Spanish merchants in the Eastern Pacific Basin at Nootka Sound, the Hawaiian Islands, and California during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries are also thoroughly documented. Much less is written about Japanese merchants, native Ainu peoples, and Russian fur traders in the Western Pacific who helped make possible the pursuit of sea otters elsewhere.

This discussion offers an examination of the inter-Asian origins of the sea otter trade. Beyond accounting for the beginnings of Chinese commercial interest in the species, East Asian fur exchanges from roughly 1500 to 1800 provide scholars an opportunity to evaluate the effects of sea otter hunting and trading in a larger geopolitical context. For a variety of reasons, the trade involving Hokkaido and the Kuril Islands was not as significant a stimulus for the first extensive non-native activity there as the otter trade was for portions of the Eastern Pacific. Nevertheless, it did play a role in shaping the regional contest over the Russo-Japanese frontier by the eighteenth century. Russian merchants attempted to exploit the region's sea otter and other animal resources but met with limited success because of prior Japanese claims. I suggest that the lack of any dominant player in the sea otter trade of the Western Pacific contributed to the existence of a fundamentally international territorial zone until Japan's control of the Kurils was recognized in the late nineteenth century. The environmental effect of the Western Pacific trade by 1800 both reflects and differs from developments elsewhere. Hunting

pressures reduced local otter herds in the eighteenth century yet not to the extent of other places and times (such as the depletion of sea otters in the Pacific Northwest during the early nineteenth century). In the Kurils, political dynamics and conservation efforts account for a stabilization of sea otter numbers by the mid-nineteenth century, which provided for a later influx of American hunters to the islands.

More broadly, events associated with the East Asian fur trade are essential to the appearance of a Pacific World by the eighteenth century. The first modern markets for sea otter pelts, the establishment of Russo-Chinese trading relations, and Russian activity in the Western Pacific all set the stage for the expansion of European contacts with much of the eastern littoral of the Pacific Basin. Prior to the 1700s, as David Igler contends, the concept of an Eastern Pacific "would have made little sense." Spain's Manila Galleons set off on trans-oceanic excursions in the sixteenth century, and Europeans formed other post-Columbian ties with Asia and the Southern Pacific. Yet, Igler continues, the "integration of the entire Pacific Basin and the emergence of something approximating a 'Pacific world' relied on developments in the ocean's eastern and northern portions".[1]

We need to slide his argument to the west and back in time. By emphasizing the Asian trade and Russian continental extension by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, I hope to advance a view of this process which could be described as "West meets East." That is, many of the events in the Eastern Pacific central to the integration of the Pacific Basin were driven by ones in the Western Pacific. This understanding not only promotes a broader context for Russian colonization in North America but also argues that the international flurry of ships which transformed the world's largest body of water by 1800 would have taken longer to do so without a particular set of global circumstances. In short, eighteenth century Pacific history cannot be understood without the Western Pacific. Central to my analysis is the creature known formally as *Enhydra lutris*. The high exchange rates established in Asian markets for its fur played an integral role in forging the Pacific World. The sea otter emerges as a being that unwillingly shaped—even defined—the notion of an Eastern Pacific Basin in addition to the larger historic and geographic construct of which the Eastern Pacific is a part. Building a deeper appreciation of its past with humans in all areas of its natural distribution is therefore a worthy endeavor.

China and Fur

For much of its imperial history, China lacked forests capable of supporting sizable populations of large furbearing animals. The clearing of northern woodlands for farms left relatively little space for such species to dwell. Knowledge of fur as a rare luxury item can be traced to the Tang Dynasty (roughly 600-1000 AD), a mixed blood Chinese and Central Asian ruling house. Fur "seems to have been associated with 'exotic' peoples from Central Asia" at this time.[2] According to Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, it may have faded in cultural importance during less heterogeneous dynasties. Nevertheless, current research places the possible introduction of sea otter fur to Chinese consumers in the mid-Ming

(1450-1550). Referencing Japanese scholarship, Chikashi Taka-hashi cites 1483 as the earliest recorded year for the export of sea otter to China from Japan.[3]

The rich fur of *Enhydra lutris*—which, instead of a thick layer of protective blubber, protects the animal from the cold temperatures of the Pacific—saw both luxury and utilitarian application among Chinese. Generally, fur was used to line coats for warmth, particularly in colder northern China, and it also found use in the more temperate portions of the country. Late-eighteenth century British sea otter trader John Mears observed that even in Canton, "the cold will often render a fur dress necessary."[4] Clothes with fur lining were carefully preserved items and often stayed in families for a number of years. Garments designed with sea otter pelt were preferred in the northern China, although many in southern China used otter for trim and caps.[5] Yuri Lisyanski, a Russian naval officer at Canton in the early 1800s, observed that in addi-tion to those who lined their coats with otter furs, "others are satisfied with a fur collar and lapels."[6] The sea otter's pelage is so dense, with as many as 150,000 hairs for every square centimeter, that no matter its use it was valued higher than any other animal by Chinese merchants (with perhaps the exception of the Russian sable).

Asian Commercial Networks in the Western Pacific

The first sea otter pelts for Chinese buyers were acquired in the Kuril Islands by Ainu hunters and traders who brought them to posts on Hokkaido (formerly Ezo) in northern Japan, an island discovered by Japanese explorers as early as the first millennium. Japanese merchants then transported the items to Nagasaki for eventual export to China through Korea.[7] The Ainu of Hokkaido and the Kurils are originally a hunting and gathering people native to the islands and coastal ranges of the area. They exhibit more body hair than other East Asians—earning them exotic descriptions such as "shaggy bears" by early Russian explorers.[8] Although at one time their Cauca-sian features led to speculation about their origin, the Asian heritage of the Ainu has been well established. Recent anthro-pological and historical study emphasizes the importance of long-distance Ainu trade activity that helped to link Kamchat-ka, Sakhalin Island, and the Kurils with Hokkaido and Japan. Permanent settlers migrated to southern Hokkaido as early as the Kamakura era (12th-14th centuries) and laid the ground-work for an active barter exchange between the Japanese and northern natives. As Kaoru Tezuka describes:

> Products were brought to and from Hokkaido in ships travel-ing across the Tsugaru Strait or along coastal waters. These included items not produced in Hokkaido, such as rice, salt, tobacco, cloth, *koji* ferment, and metal which the Ainu very much wanted. The Japanese were particularly eager to receive eagle feathers, which they used to fletch their arrows, and marine products.[9]

It is important to note—although it remains speculative at this point—that because Chinese goods obtained by Ainu (and other groups) from the Amur River via Sakhalin were involved in these networks, it is entirely conceivable that sea otter fur first reached China centuries before Japan fully

realized its potential as an export item. While more research is needed to shed light on that possibility, records from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries support the fact that the Ainu were successful at sea otter trading from south-ern Kamchatka through the Kuril Islands. Fur was part of an active exchange system that moved Japanese and Ainu goods throughout the sea otter's northwestern-most range, ultimately connecting the Ainu not only with Hokkaido and Japan but with the Russian Empire as well.[10] The implications of such facts for historians of the Pacific deserve more scru-tiny. Scholars who emphasize the significance of non-native explorers and traders in the Eastern Pacific as catalysts for the incorporation of the region into the modern world economy may benefit by widening their lenses to consider native ship-ping that preceded Vitus Bering's and James Cook's oceanic ventures.[11] The maritime realities of Ainu life played some role in fostering a wider international awareness of the Pacific Basin and its natural resources.

Hokkaido and the Kuril Trade

The sea otter trade at Hokkaido provided pelts for both Japanese and Chinese luxury markets. Brett Walker writes, "[T]he Kakizaki family acquired some goods transported through the Kurils. In the 1560s, for example, 'pure white sea otter pelts' were traded in eastern Ezo. Later, in 1594, Kak-izaki Yoshihiro reportedly offered three sea otter pelts as gifts to Hideyoshi, supreme military commander of Japan, after his meeting at Hizen in southwestern Japan."[12] Portuguese reports from the 1600s note the existence of inter-Asian trade involving the Kurils and sea otters. By the early eighteenth century, furs from the islands were believed to have special healing properties, and the Chinese held that they were the "cushion of the emperor," according to one Japanese official.[13]

Sea otter fur was one of the most expensive items traded at Hokkaido. Takahashi provides a comparison of prices for fish oil, cloths of tree fiber, and mammal skins. The otter ranks at over 500 times the cost of seal in eastern Hokkaido for the year 1786.[14] No doubt this disparity is partly due to the fact that Kuril skins were rarer at the time as a result of increased competition from Russian merchants, (discussed below). Nevertheless, the Japanese long recognized the sea otter as a valuable commodity from their northern frontier. According to John Stephan, early seventeenth century reports labeled the Kuril Islands *Rakkoshima*, or the "sea-otter isles."[15] Animals hunted and exported by the Ainu were vital sources of symbolic power for early modern Japanese elites. Of these, hawks were perhaps most important to the economy of Hok-kaido, trapped on the island by both Japanese specialists and Ainu. Similar to furs, hawks and falconry conferred a sense of wealth and prestige to lords as exotic things from "barbarian" lands.[16] Some estimates from the mid-seventeenth century calculated profits from the hawk industry at or above all taxes collected from trade ships at Hokkaido.[17]

Around 1750, Japan established a trading outpost north of Hokkaido at Kunashir Island. This was apparently the destination for a group of Japanese merchants who ventured to trade with Kuril Ainu but were blown off course. Jean Baptiste-Barthelemy de Lesseps, who traveled to Kamchatka

in 1787 with the French explorer Jean-Francois de Galaup comte de la Perouse, noted a curious encounter with nine Japanese who were shipwrecked in the Aleutian Islands and were ultimately saved by a group of Russians engaged in sea otter trading. De Lesseps did not entirely believe their story but his record is unclear about whether they were after otter skins at all, either in the Kurils or the Aleutians. He asked one of the sailors "some questions respecting the nature of the merchandise they had saved from their wreck" and was told that it consisted mostly of "cups, plates, boxes, and other commodities," some of which was sold at Kamchatka.[18] Nevertheless, even with the move to Kunashir, events such as this were uncommon, as most of Japan's trade with the north prior to 1800 took place at Hokkaido and involved the Ainu.

Whatever Japanese traders sought in return—furs, hawks, fish—the Ainu were dramatically affected by trade connections. Commercial contacts "rapidly transformed the productive rhythms of Ainu life" as natural resources were increasingly viewed for their market value and less as sources of sustenance.[19] Leaders adopted Japanese goods as indicators of social and economic standing. Sake was integrated into the Ainu metaphysical universe, offered in ritual to ancestors and deities.[20] Such shifts resulted in increased dependence on Japanese trade and local environmental depletion. The overhunting of deer for skins was particularly destructive to Ainu communities on Hokkaido, a major cause of famines there in the late eighteenth century. As Walker notes, deer pelts "likely made up the majority of animal skins traded in Ezo."[21]

Russian Entry into the Trade

Russian extension eastward to the Pacific by the early 1700s presented distinct economic and political challenges for the Japanese state. Due in part to the robust Kuril trade, some in Japan believed that the Kamchatka peninsula was within their rightful national claim. However, the appearance of foreign "red-haired devils" in these northern reaches contested such notions and threatened to disturb the area's lucrative fur exchanges. A Japanese official in 1785 noted:

> The Kuril Islands belong to Japan. Sea-otter fur is the best product of Ezochi. It has been sent to Nagasaki to be sold to Chinese ships since the old days. However, in recent years, the Russians have come to collect sea-otter furs and sell them to Beijing as a Russian product. This is a shame and a serious problem for Japan.[22]

This was written by Mogami Tokunai, a member of a mission dispatched by the shogunate to explore the Kurils for potential colonization and Russian trade opportunities. Apparent in his report is that the economic concerns of the frontier, which for some the sea otter trade symbolized, were beginning the give way to national security concerns by the late eighteenth century.[23] Japan's increasing fears of Russian encroachment can be traced to events on the Eurasian continent. As Cossacks and entrepreneurs (or *promyshlenniki*) began to expand east across the Ural Mountains during the 1580s and 1590s, their efforts at trapping—sable, in particular—and collecting tribute contributed greatly to the Russian economy. Detrimental effects on the indigenous human populations of Siberia

were also part of this movement. By the mid-seventeenth century, the Sea of Okhotsk was within the tsar's reach. Russians ultimately penetrated south of Okhotsk to the Amur River, raiding villages of natives who in turn petitioned China for assistance. It was there along China's northeastern border that the Treaty of Nerchinsk was signed in 1689. Russia agreed to recognize the Amur as the official border with China and was granted trading rights in return. After 1728, most Russo-Chinese exchanges were limited to the border town of Kyakhta.[24]

Prior to Nerchinsk, furs collected by Russians were largely sent to European markets. Following the treaty, China became a major destination for the promyshlenniki, particularly considering the lucrative market established in Asia for sea otter, something they were then in position to exploit. The supply of Siberian furs ran low by the early eighteenth century, yet explorers advanced toward otter habitat in the Western Pacific, helping make the Kyakhta trade a very productive one. In the early years of trade at Nerchinsk and Kyakhta, squirrel and ermine sold best to Chinese merchants, and Russians benefited from a number of products other than tea, such as silk, gold, and supplies for Siberian outposts.[25] While Eva-Maria Stolberg suggests an overall decline in Russo-Chinese exchanges beginning in the early 1700s, her evaluation is questionable.[26] Citing extensive Russian sources, James R. Gibson offers that various factors account for an ascending trade at Kyakhta during the eighteenth century. Among them are a 1754 removal of internal Siberian customs duties and the establishment of a bank for Kyakhta merchants.[27] According to Gibson, "From 1755 to 1760, Kyakhta's total customs duties of 1,376,000 rubles contributed just over 7 percent of Russia's gross income from all foreign trade. ...[I]n the last half of the 1700s, the China trade represented about one-half (by value) of Russia's foreign trade and from three-fifths to two-thirds of its Asian trade."[28]

Hauling pelts from the Pacific coast across eastern Siberia and toward the Manchu border cut into Russian profits from the sea otter, as did British and American competition in the Eastern Pacific by the end of the 1700s. Nevertheless, the species provided one element in the burgeoning commercial activity at Kyakhta. Peter Simon Pallas was a visitor to the trading outpost in 1772 and wrote that "to the Chinese Kamchatka sea otters, both large (dams) and medium (juveniles), are the most important and pleasing commodity."[29] Other than the dwindling sable, sea otter was the most valuable fur item that Russians exported to China in these years. According to Pallas, it sold from 90 to 140 rubles per pelt, with various species of fox going for approximately 20 to 60 rubles.

The earliest advance of Russians toward the sea otter populations of the Kamchatka peninsula and the Kurils was prompted by the exploration of Cossack Vladimir Atlasov, whose report was received by the expansionist tsar Peter the Great in 1701. Atlasov told of milder winters, constant volcanic activity, and native Kamchadals who dressed in skins, ate fish and were, according to him, foul-smelling savages. However, other details piqued Peter's interest in further exploration of Kamchatka and areas to the south. These included native possession of trade items from a "magnificent people" beyond the peninsula and a representative of these

Figure 1: **The Muller Map of 1754** (Courtesy, James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota)

people named Dembei, a Japanese castaway held captive at Kamchatka. By the 1720s, daring individuals encouraged by the tsar traveled down much of the Kuril chain, encountered the Ainu, and demanded tribute.[30] These early forays in the Western Pacific ultimately laid the groundwork for Bering's expeditions east toward the Americas. Yet establishing trading relationships *south* of Kamchatka and laying claim to territories there were Russian motivations as well.

Maps from the 1700s illustrate a primacy of the Western Pacific for Russians during much of the century, as well as the difficulty of obtaining information about lands beyond the western littoral. Gerhard Friedrich Muller was a historian with the Russian Academy of Sciences who traveled in Siberia with Bering's Second Kamchatka Expedition. Based on this experience, he began his own independent cartographic work in the 1740s and was called upon to refute an inaccurate map of Russia's North Pacific discoveries that was published in France in 1752. Muller's 1754 map (Figure 1) is a generally accurate picture of Siberia and Kamchatka, with the Kurils, Japan, and Sakhalain Island in less clear focus, but shows a large "turtle head" protrusion from the North American

continent extending west across the ocean, a non-existent but surmised feature drawn in dotted lines.[31] Much more proper Russian mapping of the Pacific began to appear by the late eighteenth century. The expedition of Joseph Billings and Gavriil A. Sarychev (1785-1792) produced correct and highly detailed depictions of the Aleutian Islands and the nearby Alaskan mainland.[32] A juxtaposition of the Muller map with one from Billings/Sarychev (Figure 2) graphically demonstrates that the Eastern Pacific firmly entered the Russian intellectual landscape only after the Western Pacific did. Much of the former remained shrouded in mystery into the late-eighteenth century while the latter was a relatively well-understood frontier. Furthermore, the timing of the maps demonstrates that the Eastern Pacific came into greater focus because of the numerous fur traders and explorers who ventured across the ocean for decades after Bering.

Russian Hunting in the Western Pacific

Procurement of sea otter on Kamchatka and among the Kurils suffers from a lack of historical attention and some misjudgment. Russian hunters often referred to them as

Figure 2: **The Billings/Sarychev Map** (Courtesy, James Ford Bell Library, University of Minnesota)

"Kamchatka beaver," thus at least one influential scholar may have inadvertently underestimated the commercial importance of populations in these locations.[33] Nevertheless, primary and secondary accounts (in English) contribute a number of facts. The first Russian expedition to the northern Kurils in 1711 found no sea otters on Shumshu Island, but for an island beyond, the Russians noted that natives "do hunt sea otter in January" and trade for pelts with people farther south.[34] S.P. Krasheninnikov was a student who accompanied the Second Kamchatka Expedition and whose 1755 work provided the first detailed account of the peninsula. He described local hunting methods for "sea beaver" and noted that Kuril inhabitants did not always prefer such skins for trade:

> They [Kamchatka natives and Cossacks] have three different ways of catching them: first, by nets placed among the sea cabbage, whither the beavers retire in the night time, or in storms. Secondly, they chance them in their boats, when the weather is calm, and kill them in the same manner they do sea lions or sea cats. The third method is upon the ice, which in the spring is driven on the coast by the east wind;…The Kuriles did not esteem the skins of beavers more than those of seals or sea lions before they saw the value that the Russians put upon them; and even now they will willingly exchange a dress made of beavers' for a good one made of dogs' skins, which they think are warmer, and a better defense against the water.[35]

In a later work Krasheninnikov wrote that natives from Kamchatka to Urup Island paid annual tribute in sable, fox, and sea otter.[36] According to Lydia T. Black, Emel'ian Basov, one of the first to attempt a voyage to the Aleutians in 1743, took sea otters from the Kurils around the same time.[37] Stephan writes that "[o]ne merchant collected 118,000 roubles for a single year's (1774) sea otter catch" from the Kurils.[38] It is unclear if the take of Bering's surviving crew from the Commander Islands in 1742 intensified the activities of Siberian entrepreneurs to seek after Kuril otter populations as much as it initiated the hunt in the Aleutians. One reason for this is a distinct Russian emphasis by that time on collecting furs and settling in the northern islands so as to not upset Japanese claims farther to the south. What is known is that local natural resources were central to Russian investment in the Kurils in the eighteenth century, and a number of major effects are evident. For one, extracting furs by force and other abuses committed by promyshlenniki caused northern Ainu and some Kamchadals to flee south along the Kuril chain and occasionally resist violently.[39] Also, Urup Island, or "Sea Otter Island for its abundance of the species, ultimately became the focus of a major colonization attempt late in the century. Those who promoted permanent settlement in the Kurils also argued for the needs of developing an agricultural base to provision Siberian outposts and for facilitating trade with Japan. A series of Japanese rebuffs of trade and Russian inability to deal with them effectively meant that other economic and political dynamics commanded Russian attention in the islands by the late eighteenth century.[40]

Russo-Japanese Struggle for the Kuril Trade

While sailors had visited Urup for decades prior to 1794, the attempt to establish a colony on the island dates from this time. In that year the governor of Irkutsk recommended settlement of Urup and launched an effort by creating the Northern Company (later the Russian-American Company)

controlled by Grigorii Shelikov .[41] In addition to Shelikov, the Kuril colony involved another individual well-known in the history of the Russian-American Company: Aleksandr Baranov, Shelikov's manager in Alaska. Forty men and women led by Vasilii Zvezdochetov were placed under the authority of Baranov and dispatched to Urup. As Stephan summarizes:

> Zvezdochetov's party landed on the south-east (Pacific) coast of Urup in the summer of 1795 and christened the colony 'Slavorossiia'. Harsh natural conditions soon undermined the whole project and nearly annihilated its members. Volcanic pumice yielded little barley or oats. Exposure and starvation decimated laboriously imported livestock. Tsar Paul's granting the Russian-American Company a twenty-year commercial monopoly in the Kurils in 1799 came as faint consolation to dwindling survivors. By that time only thirteen colonists were alive. Of these some abandoned Urup for the comparative comfort of Kamchatka. Upon Zvezdochetov's death in 1805, the colony ceased to exist.[42]

Despite the failure to colonize the islands, Russians actively pursued furs throughout the Kurils and inched closer to Japan, while Japanese traders remained centered on Hokkaido. By the last decade of the 1700s, this movement of "red barbarians" was interpreted as a clear threat from a foreign power. In fact, speeding the demise of the colony at Urup was Japan's response of fortifying the adjacent island of Iturup. Under Kondo Juzo, the shogunate oversaw a large-scale effort to protect the Kurils against Russian encroachment. Japanese activities at Iturup were relatively successful in comparison to their non-native counterpart. Impoverished Ainu communities were provided for and subject to a vigorous assimilation program.[43] Ainu trade with colonists on Urup was shut down, cutting off important sources of Russian sustenance and further solidifying native dependence on Japan.[44] Roads, dock works, and a small fort were constructed. By 1801, an envoy visited Urup and claimed the island as Japanese territory. However, the trade blockade and massive migration of Urup Ainu to Iturup were more effective than direct diplomatic pressure. Japan solved its dilemma with Sea Otter Island relatively peacefully. Yet soon after, an outbreak of violence in the Western Pacific threatened to bring Russia and Japan into open hostilities and marred relations between the two nations for years to come.

Nikolai Rezanov, son-in-law of Shelikov and granted the Russian-American Company royal monopoly in 1799 following Shelikov's death, was sent by tsar Alexander I on another attempt to open trading relations with Japan. Reaching the Japanese coast by October of 1804, Rezanov spent more than six months in isolation at Nagasaki, the location offered to Russia for limited trade during a previous attempt.[45] Finally, word came from the shogun rejecting the new request. In anger, and apparently ill from "rheumatism and chest pains aggravated by the chill and humidity of the North Pacific," Rezanov plotted revenge while on an inspection tour of Russian America. He convinced two young lieutenants, Nikolai Khvostov and Gavril Davydov, to attack Japanese outposts in the area of Sakhalin Island (recently occupied in the south by Japan) and the southern Kurils. In October of 1806, Kvostov and Davydov took hostages, burned structures, and stole temple objects at Sakhalin, leaving behind, as Walter A.

McDougall writes, "a proclamation condemning the Japanese refusal to trade and threatening to lay waste all northern Japan."[46] In the spring of the following year they assaulted Iturup and returned to plunder Sakhalin. Japanese warriors responded by capturing Captain Vasilii Mikhailovich Golovnin, dispatched by the Russian Navy in 1811 on a geographic survey of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Kuril Islands. Golovnin landed at Kunashir for provisions—he was warned of Kvostov and Davydov's activities yet was apparently unaware of military preparations by locals. Russians counter-responded by capturing a high-level merchant on Kunashir. By 1813, negotiations ended the stand off. Prisoners were exchanged and the governor of Irkutsk formally apologized for the attacks against Japanese settlements.[47]

While a war was avoided, the series of events at the turn-of-the-century set a tone that affected the region geopolitically for much of the 1800s. The Kuril Islands remained a Russo-Japanese frontier to the extent that neither power could consolidate its hold on them. A defacto border between Urup and Iturup Islands was offered partial recognition in Alexander I's 1821 *ukase*, a declaration attempting to assert Russian authority over much of the North Pacific. In 1855, the Treaty of Shimoda agreed to the boundary in the Kurils and placed Sakhalin under joint possession of Russia and Japan. Finally, the Treaty of St. Petersburg, signed in May of 1875 and in effect until World War II, offered the entire Kuril chain to Japan in exchange for Russian control of Sakhalin.[48]

A number of national and international issues were involved in shaping this Western Pacific zone in the nineteenth century. Yet the inter-Asian fur trade played an important part in influencing the area's political development leading up to that time. Geographically, Russian explorers and traders had a relatively easier task incorporating the Kamchatka peninsula, the northern Kuris, and the natural resources of those locations into their empire's orbit. So long as Japan established prior commercial relationships to the south along their own territorial fringes—of which the sea otter was an important though not as central component—then the advance of promyshlenniki was frustrated in ways unlike it was in the Aleutian Islands. Russians could exchange goods with and demand pelts from natives. However, the deepening reliance of Ainu middlemen on the Japan trade by the 1700s made it difficult for Russia to establish anything resembling fur trade dominance throughout the Kurils. Moreover, Japanese actively defended their border against encroachment. The desire to keep foreign elements out of their nation helped ensure that island territories north of Hokkaido stayed within Japan's domain, however loosely.

Ultimately the sea otter trade of the Western Pacific helped forge an *international* portion of the Pacific Basin similar to other areas where the species was pursued. Both competitors desired rich otter furs for Asian markets, and the Ainu did the vast majority of the hunting. Yet for a number of reasons (Japanese interest in other products from the Kurils and Sakhalin, the timing of Russian arrival on the Pacific, and Russian interest in economic relations with Japan, just to name a few), neither party can be said to have dominated the trade and thus make a stronger claim to certain Pacific

lands. The uniqueness of the Western Pacific lies partly in the fact that the early modern state to first access the sea otter, Japan, did not actively seek after furs and make an effort to inhabit territory in response to the trade. This confirms the historical position that Europeans and Americans attempting to purchase Chinese goods were the ones who vigorously sought after the animals. What Asian peoples did do was establish the commercial basis by which Russia, Britain, and the United States were able to reap the economic and geopolitical benefits of sea otter fur. Future research will hopefully build on this article and compare locations such as the Kuril Islands with other places and times of the sea otter trade to more accurately gauge the legacy of these inter-Asian origins.

Environmental Effect of the Trade

Prior to 1850, the sea otter fared better in the Kurils than it did elsewhere in the Pacific. As researchers S.I. Kornev and S.M. Korneva summarize, "In the eighteenth century, hunting pressure was not high enough to result in population declines."[49] Support for this conclusion can be seen in the struggle to control the Kuril trade. Russian exploitation was not intense enough to significantly reduce sea otter numbers in part because of the tensions with the Ainu and Japan. Attention given to North American furs and colonial ventures by the latter half of the 1700s also meant that Kuril otters were not over-exploited. Nevertheless, this situation applies mostly to the central and southern Kurils, as hunting and tribute payments on Kamchatka and the northern islands during the eighteenth century did deplete populations of fur bearing mammals.[50] Tempered Japanese enthusiasm for the sea otter as a market item also explains the relative abundance of the animals by the mid-nineteenth century. Japan's involvement on Iturup apparently did little to reduce the island's herds. Englishman H.J. Snow, who hunted sea otters in the Kurils during the 1870s and 80s, noted the 1869 construction of a colonial office at Iturup but questioned whether it had anything to do with interest in sea otter skins. He wrote, "Having visited the island of Yetorup [Iturup] in 1873, and conversed with both Ainu and Japanese there on the subject, I know that at that time little or no attention was given to hunting the otter, nor had there been for many years previously." Snow believed that "[t]he long rest from molestation" accounted for both the large numbers of sea otters that he found at the island and their tameness toward humans.[51]

The Russian-American Company returned to Urup Island in 1828. Company historian P.A. Tikhmenev, whose two-volume work was published in the 1860s, noted that sea otters were sighted at Urup and fifty men were sent there to build structures and procure skins. "Hunting on Urup Island brought the company more than 800,000 paper rubles worth of furs during 1828 and 1829," according to Tikhmenev.[52] Experienced Aleut laborers were brought in and were working elsewhere in the Kurils by the 1830s. However, it was around this time that RAC officials introduced conservation efforts meant to buttress declining stocks of sea otters and fur seals throughout their Pacific holdings. To preserve the otter trade for the future, larger hunting parties concentrated in particular areas which were then were abandoned for a period of

two to three years. This rotation system, in addition to other environmental methods implemented by the RAC, had the effect of stabilizing yearly catches after becoming official company policy in the 1830s.[53] Therefore, even with the return to Urup, Kuril sea otters never experienced the long-term exploitation by Russians as seen in the Aleutian Islands. The timing of rejuvenated hunting enterprises in the Kurils served as a check against environmental depletion.[54]

Ultimately, American hunters ventured to the Kurils after 1850 and harvested the islands' marine mammals beyond what the RAC, Japan, or the Ainu ever achieved. By the mid-nineteenth century, a process of Americanizing the remaining sea otter trade throughout the Pacific was under way. This included numerous visits to the proverbial birthplace of the Pacific fur trade, and independent American outfits paid tribute to the Asian sea otter in a manner that, at that time, they knew best. I discuss these developments elsewhere.[55]

In the end, the Western Pacific sea otter trade set in motion the Russian incorporation of territories across the northern Pacific. By helping solidify trade routes in the outer reaches of Siberia and introducing local merchants to the value of the sea otter, it established the commercial foundations by which the Russian Empire extended its reach over an ocean. Promyshlenniki were checked in this advance in a manner roughly similar to their experiences in the Western Pacific, but it was not before they assisted in laying claim to a broad expanse across modern-day Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. Hence, human greed for the fur of the sea otter set in motion the linkage of oceanic regions and ultimately played a role in the non-native discovery and development of a sizable portion of western North America. These more recognizable historical occurrences in the Eastern Pacific were preceded by centuries of events surrounding the "Sea Otter Islands" that deserve greater recognition from historians of the American fur trade.

ENDNOTES

1. David Igler, "Diseased Goods: Global Exchanges in the Eastern Pacific Basin, 1770-1850," *American Historical* Review 109:3 (June 2004): 695.

2. Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World That Trade Created: Society, Culture, and the World Economy, 1400-Present* 2nd. Ed. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2006), 119.

3. Chikashi Takahashi, "Inter-Asian Competition in the Fur Market in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in A.J.H. Latham and Heita Kawakatsu, eds., *Intra-Asian Trade and the World Market* (London: Routledge, 2006), 40. It is probable that sea otter skins reached China via Japan prior to this date, partly because the Japanese had reached the sea otter's habitat centuries before 1483, as noted below. For the historic existence of sea otters at Hokkaido, see Kaoru Hattori, Ichiro Kawabe, Ayako W. Mizuno, and Noriyuki Ohtaishi, "History and Status of Sea Otters, *Enhydra lutirs* Along the Coast of Hokkaido, Japan," *Mammal Study* 30 (2005): 41-51.

4. Quoted in James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The Maritime Fur Trade of the Northwest Coast, 1785-1841* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 54.

5. Gibson, 54.

6. Urey Lisiansky, *A Voyage Round the World, in the Years 1803, 5, & 6...* (London: John Booth et. al., 1814), 285

7. Takahashi, 41-43.

8. Walter A. McDougall, *Let The Sea Make A Noise…:A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 97.

9. Kaoru Tezuka, "Long Distance Trade Networks and Shipping in the Ezo Region," *Arctic Anthropology* 35:1 (1998): 352.

10. Tezuka, 355-357.

11. In addition to Igler's work cited above, see John D. Carlson, "The 'Otter Man' Empires: The Pacific Fur Trade, Incorporation and the Zone of Ignorance," *Journal of World Systems Research* 3:3 (Fall 2002): 390-442.

12. Brett Walker, *Conquest of Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 157.

13. Walker, 157.

14. Takahashi, 41.

15. John Stephan, *The Kuril Islands: Russo-Japanese Frontier in the Pacific* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 7.

16. See Walker, 100-109 for the political dynamics of the hawk industry in Japan.

17. Walker, 105.

18. Jean Baptiste-Barthelemy de Lesseps, *Travels in Kamtschatka* (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1970), 208-217. Walker exaggerates in claiming that these individuals intended to trade sea otter pelts at Kunashir (158).

19. Walker, 97-98.

20. Walker, 126.

21. Walker, 121.

22. Quoted in Takahashi, 42.

23. See Stephan, 66-68, for the Japanese shift from economic to political anxieties regarding the Russo-Japanese frontier.

24. Stephen Haycox, *Alaska: An American Colony* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 40-43; McDougall, 46-54.

25. Eva-Maria Stolberg, "Interracial Outposts in Siberia: Nerchinsk, Kiakhta, and the Russo-Chinese Trade in the Seventeenth/Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of Early Modern History* 4:3-4 (2000), 327-328.

26. Stolberg, 334-336.

27. James R. Gibson, "Sitka-Kyakhta versus Sitka-Canton: Russian America and the China Market," *Pacifica* 2 (November 1990): 44.

28. Gibson, 44-45.

29. Quoted in Gibson, 43. Increasing competition from the Anglo-American sea otter trade at Canton by the end of the eighteenth century, which effectively lowered the prices that Russians could receive at Kyakhta, meant that Chinese merchants returned to their earlier preference for trade in smaller Siberian furs such as squirrel. British Captain John Dundas Cochrane, during his journey through the region in the 1820s, noted this preference with curiosity (John Dundas Cochrane, *Narrative of a Pedestrian Journey Through Russia and Siberian Tartary* Vol. II [New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1970], 169.)

30. McDougall, 57-58.

31. Carol Urness, "Russian Mapping of the North Pacific to 1792," in Stephen Haycox, James Barnett, and Caedmon Liburd, eds., *Enlightenment and Exploration in the North Pacific 1741-1805* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 133-136. The Muller map is on page 117 of this volume.

32. Urness, 139-142.

33. When discussing Russian tribute collecting (*yasak*) in the northern Kurils in the early eighteenth century, George Alexander Lensen mentions "beaver" as the principal fur sought after by Japanese and Russians alike, yet farther to the south for a later period he distinguishes sea otters. See his *The Russian Push Toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959), 32, 65, 69. Merchants were indeed interested in a variety of furs, but the fact that the northern Kuril Islands are part of the

historic range of *Enhyrda lutris* supports the likelihood that Lensen erred in some way.

34. Basil Dmytryshyn, E.A.P. Crownhart-Vaughan, and Thomas Vaughan, Eds. and Trans., *Russian Penetration of the North Pacific Ocean, 1700-1799: A Documentary Record* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1988), 45.

35. S.P. Krasheninnikov, *The History of Kamtschatka And the Kurilski Islands, with the Countries Adjacent*, Trans. James Grieve, M.D. (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962), 131-132.

36. Walker, 162.

37. Lydia T. Black, *Russians in Alaska, 1732-1867* (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Press, 2004), 24. Black notes a mid-1700s prohibition of merchant travel to the Kuril Islands which "affect[ed] the development of the Aleutian trade" (65). Yet as Stephan notes, such directives from the Department of Siberian Affairs (lifted in the 1760s) were not intended for the northern Kurils and were not always heeded by locals (49).

38. Stephan, 63(n).

39. Stephan, 48-50; Walker, 162-163. In this sense, while Russians did proselytize among and attempt a more humane assimilation of the inhabitants of Shumshu Island, the treatment of native peoples in the Western Pacific at this time differed little from what the Aleut often experienced during the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, local Japanese were also guilty of exploitation and harsh treatment of Ainu.

40. Stephan, 61-64; McDougall, 98-102.

41. For Shelikov's earlier attempts at the Kuril trade in partnership with a rival company, see Vasilii Nikolaevich Berkh, *A Chronological History of the Discovery of the Aleutian Islands* Trans. Dmitri Krenov, Ed. Richard A. Pierce (Kingston, Ont: The Limestone Press, 1974), 77-78.

42. Stephan, 64.

43. Stephan, 70-71.

44. Walker, 176.

45. Officially, Nagasaki was the only open port open to foreign trade during the roughly two and a half centuries of Japan's closed door policy.

46. McDougall, 131-134.

47. Stephan, 79.

48. Stephan, 80-95.

49. S.I. Kornev and S.M. Korneva, "Historical Trends in Sea Otter Populations of the Kuril Islands and South Kamchatka," in Daniela Maldini, Donald Calkins, Shannon Atkinson, and Rosa Meehan, eds., *Alaska Sea Otter Research Workshop: Addressing the Decline of the Southwestern Alaska Sea Otter Population* (Fairbanks, AK: Alaska Sea Grant College Program, University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2004): 21.

50. See Stephan, 98-99.

51. H.J. Snow, *In Forbidden Seas: Recollections of Sea-Otter Hunting in the Kurils* (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 291.

52. P.A. Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company* Trans. and Ed. Richard A. Pierce and Alton Donnelly (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 173.

53. See Katherine L. Arndt, "Preserving the Future Hunt: The Russian-American Company and Marine Mammal Conservation Policies," *Fort Ross – Salt Point Newsletter*, Fall 2007, 4-6; Black, 199.

54. As evidence of the success of Russian conservation efforts, Tikhmenev noted that a "long closed season in the Urup Island area, where in the early 1840s the sea otters disappeared completely... remedied the situation and the hunting at this island is now quite good" (357).

55. See Richard Ravalli, "The Near Extinction and Reemergence of the Pacific Sea Otter, 1850-1938," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100:4 (Fall 2009): 181-191.

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Shadows of Modernity: Hybrid Identities of *Buraku* Outcastes in Japan

By Nicholas Mucks, M.A.P.S.

Abstract

The emergence of modern Japan was a complex process in which burakumin and other minorities were affected differently than the majority culture. Burakumin face discrimination because they traditionally had occupations considered polluted and were outcaste by society. Compared to the institutional discrimination during the Tokugawa period and the social discrimination of the Meiji era, prejudice toward burakumin today is comparatively invisible. As a subculture facing discrimination, the Meiji era moral suasion depicting what was 'Japanese' helped to create a burakumin hybrid identity acclimating to the dramatic changes in social and cultural norms of the time. Similar to the way identity, community, and environmental spaces redefined the characteristics of burakumin historically, these same spaces continue to be deconstructed and reinvented today as new temporal spaces from globalization and technology broaden the opportunities for burakumin in Japanese society.

Introduction

At various locations throughout Japan in the spring of 1875, over 26,000 peasants rioted to demand that the minority group called *burakumin* be relegated back to a social status of being outcaste (Hane 1982, 144; Devos and Wagatsuma 1973, 37). Mob outbreaks such as this occurred sporadically after the Meiji government abolished Japan's official class system with the Emancipation Edict of 1871 (37). The policy promoting social mobility, however, had little to do with civil rights. It was motivated to regulate all landholdings, including the tax-free farmlands occupied by *burakumin,* and bring them under centralized governmental control. (Devos and Wagatsuma 35; Jansen 2000, 459).

The plight of the *burakumin* today is an example of how civil rights can be dramatically affected by social policy. Etymologically, *burakumin* stands for "hamlet people", but there is no biological way of differentiating *burakumin* from majority Japanese; the prejudice that exists is due to the sociocultural factors of ancestry and place of birth (Sugimoto 2003, 189). The *burakumin* face discrimination because they traditionally had occupations considered polluted (e.g. butchers, executioners) and were outcaste by Tokugawa society. Compared to this institutional discrimination during the Tokugawa period and the social discrimination of the Meiji era (despite legal equality), overt prejudice toward *burakumin* today is comparatively invisible (Onishi 2009, 1-3; Neary 1998, 50-78; Sugimoto 190). Due to the nature of this discrimination, official estimates range from 1.2 to 3 million *burakumin* in over 6000 buraku districts throughout the country; this makes them the largest minority group in Japan (BLL 2005, 1; Nishimura 2010, 122). Buraku communities continue to be segregated, and *koseki* (family registries) are routinely used to discover whether a person comes from a buraku neighborhood in order to discriminate against them (Sugimoto 191; Neary 52).

The purpose of this project is to isolate the roles that urbanization, modernity, and globalization are playing in pulling *burakumin* out of the shadows and into the foreground of contemporary Japanese society. This discussion will examine the ways in which coexistence is emanating from within, not outside of, the spaces of identity, community and the environment dominated by majority Japanese. What role do legacy social structures play in continuing to affect *burakumin* because they have been classified as a strategic 'Other' by majority society? Why are they limited access to social resources? How can we use current scholarship to discover ways to deconstruct previously imposed notions of cultural defilement and inferiority?

In order to analyze the role that *burakumin* are playing in bringing broader attention to their sociocultural conditions in Japan, three concerns will receive attention. First, I want to find the tension between majority and minority identities by investigating the mechanisms used to cultivate a national homogenized Japanese identity. This tension is a key factor determining the interdependent reflexive identity established by *burakumin* when choosing their level of assimilation into or exclusion from this national identity based on how much they identify with being *burakumin*. Second, I want to uncover the interplay between various communities in Japan, including urban buraku neighborhoods known as dōwa projects and the many civil rights organizations pushing for change, and the cessation of the Special Measures Law affirmative action legislation in 2003. Finally, I plan to analyze how globalization and information access can bring attention to these issues, such as when historic maps of Tokyo published on Google Earth created a public outcry from many *burakumin*.

Origins

A hybrid culture results from the confluence of previously separate cultural processes synthesizing to create new norms, traditions and practices.[1] The emergence of modern Japan was a complex example of this process, in which *burakumin* and other minorities were affected differently than the majority culture. As a subculture facing discrimination this discrimination created a hybrid identity for *burakumin* acclimating to dramatic changes in social and cultural norms. In order to understand how an ethnically identical Japanese group has become hybridized, it is important to assess the historical influences that were the building blocks of contemporary Japanese society and culture.

Due to the unique dichotomy between Shinto and Buddhism, repugnancy towards death as impure has a long tradition in Japan. The association of killing animals and eating meat with impiety in Buddhism and the correlation of death as defiling and impure in Shinto together stimulated a public opinion that occupations dealing with death were also impious and impure (Jansen 122; Pharr 2004, 134). During the Nara period (710-784 CE), people who worked in occupations considered polluted were called *eta* (extreme filth) or *hinin* (non-human). These people became "specialists in impurity" (Pharr 2004, 134). They had a wide range of vocations that were related to death, considered unclean, or low-ranking; these included butchers, tanners, leather workers, bow-mak-

ers, shrine laborers, beggars, dyers, and producers of bamboo goods (Hane 139-143; Sugimoto 2003, 189). The concentration of *burakumin* in the Kansai region, where the capitals Nara and Kyoto existed, reflects the important role certain *burakumin* played in purification ceremonies for deceased emperors as funeral attendants during this time (Ohnuki-Tierney 1989, 78).

In the Medieval period (1185-1603 CE), *hinin* were a heterogeneous group with sociocultural flexibility who were considered nonresidents exempt from taxes and other obligations (Pharr 2004, 134; Ohnuki-Tierney 84-87). They could traverse regional boundaries controlled by different lords as artists, craftsmen, and religious workers, allowing them more mobility than many other strata within society (Ohnuki-Tierney 87). Occupational specialization during this period had two particular effects on the perception of polluted occupations. First, it separated responsibilities into more finite occupations, thus people who cleaned shrines, cared for the dead, or worked with animal hides became more distinguishable from other artistic and religious occupations and were more easily associated with impurity than before (Ohnuki-Tierney 78-84). Second, increased specialization helped to change the perception of people with these occupations as being polluted themselves (Pharr 134). In other words, it became more difficult for people to leave occupations considered polluted, effectively creating the stratification necessary for the institutionalization of *burakumin* as outcastes in the Tokugawa period.

The central government of the Tokugawa period (1603-1867) institutionalized a semi-feudal caste system consisting of samurai, peasant, artisan, and merchant classes (Neary 55). This policy reinforced the existence of the outcaste *senmin* (humble people), which consisted of *eta* and *hinin*, at the bottom of this hierarchy who filled a societal need for undertakers, *kawata* (leather producers), tatami floor makers, executioners, or certain types of entertainers such as prostitutes (Hane 141; Jansen 123; Neary 54; Nimalka et al. 2007). Due to these rigid class boundaries, it is suggested within existing scholarship that the demand for leather armor created jobs that only *burakumin* could fill, thus creating the vehicle for the populations of *buraku* communities to grow into prominent segregated populations inside increasingly urban environments (Neary 53). The inability of *burakumin* to leave their outcaste status led to perceptions of their impurity becoming coupled less with occupation and more to neighborhood and family ties (Neary 55). The outcaste community was institutionalized by the time of the Meiji restoration; when the government officially abolished the class system, discrimination continued because it was socially ingrained (Hane 144).

Literature Review

In stark contrast to the 1986 proclamation by Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro that "Japan has one ethnicity, one state, and one language", the ideology of Japan being a mono-ethnic nation is less supported by scholarship as more research is conducted on the buraku problem, both domestically and internationally (Lie 2001, 1). Although an abundance of scholarship about the identity, civil rights, nationalism, and modernity of Japan has existed for decades,

the concept of minorities as a hybrid culture among a dominant majority is relatively recent in this literature. Within this context, elucidation of several constructed spaces becomes apparent: individual identities, social or group dynamics, and environmental characteristics. A literature review about the multi-ethnicity of Japan is a medium to both highlight interdependence of these spaces and to de-construct them.

Identity is a malleable construction sensitive to the external influences of social values and political atmosphere. A large proportion of scholarship about the individual identity of *burakumin* focuses on how these influences affect a *burakumin*'s accepted identity as being either separate from or part of the majority; this was most prevalent in the Meiji and pre-war policies that still have influence today. This scholarship also supports the idea that *burakumin* and other minorities were used as scapegoats in literature, imagery, advertising, or other mediums to construct a belief that *burakumin* were inferior. After the edicts in 1871, poor peasants in a way had an identity crisis fearing that they would become outcastes themselves. *Burakumin* became scapegoats to vent frustrations about the financial hardships caused from rampant modernization during this time (Devos and Wagatsuma 35). Statements today are not too dissimilar from those that occurred during the peasant riots 130 years ago. Alastair McLauchlan's interviews with several *burakumin* from Osaka in 2001 illustrate the continued identity struggle that many *burakumin* face. One person stated, "Why can't they understand that we are all humans, mainstream and *burakumin*… yet how pitiful to be judged solely on the place we were born in" (McLauchlan 2003).

Aggregated, identity diffuses into a group. It is the construction of this imagined community that most dramatically affects *burakumin* today. Family, community, institutions, and civil rights groups reinforce or attempt to deny the discrimination of *burakumin* in marriage, occupation and education. Supporting the idea that, similar to the United States and Europe, Japan is a multicultural society, contemporary scholarship focuses on civil rights issues within Japan as having parallels to those in other countries (Neary 77; Lie 1; IMADR). Within this scholarship *burakumin* are part of the larger context of analyzing social discrimination throughout the world.

Environmental space is a tangible construction built to embrace the organic community. For *burakumin,* the environmental space is absolutely integral to their current situation because it is not only the protocol for prejudice when using *koseki* (family registries) to discover where someone is from but it is also where the strongest communities of *burakumin* exist (Tomonaga 2007). Scholarship about this space focuses most poignantly on the renovation of *buraku* neighborhoods known as dōwa projects and how the Special Measures Law affects the improvement of the identity and community spaces of *burakumin*. This next section will investigate the causes of a unique *burakumin* identity within majority society.

Identity Constructions – 'Japaneseness'

The construction of identity is a colossal topic within the social sciences. Investigating the mechanisms used to cultivate a national homogenized Japanese identity and

the interdependent reflexive identities established by *bura-kumin* can shed light on the tension between the majority and minority identities. The idea of 'Japaneseness' and the factors of pre-war Japan involved in creating these 'racialized' relations, such as *minzokuron* or *nihonjinron*, further exacerbated the exclusion of certain populations on the basis of characteristics presumed to be inherently Japanese (Sugimoto 2003, 31; Weiner 1998, 1-8). The term *minzokuron* refers to race, ethnicity, or people – *min* meaning 'people', *zoku* meaning 'country', and *ron* meaning 'theory'. This concept became integral to nation-building during the Meiji period and later heavily influenced Japanese literature. *Nihonjinron* (theories about Japanese identity or culture) characterized traits such as ways of thinking, social behavior, or language structure considered uniquely Japanese (Sugimoto 2003, 13-18; Weiner 1998, 2-5).

There was a belief that Japanese people had particularly strong in-group connections, racial uniformity, and harmony with nature as compared to Western societies (Sugimoto 184-185). Further definitions of 'Japaneseness' were broken down into nationality, ethnic lineage, language competency, birthplace, current residence, and level of cultural literacy (187). The Japanese construction of "Otherness" is also strongly tied to the notions of *uchi* and *soto*, or inside and outside. While majority Japanese identity was considered *uchi*, *burakumin*, other minorities, and Westerners were considered *soto* (Neary 1998, 50-78; Ohnuki-Tierney 1989; Creighton 1998, 212-214). The soto explanations of the newfound social mobility and unity of *burakumin* during the Meiji period were as people ethnically different such as being Korean, Christian heretics, or having "one rib-bone lacking" or "distorted sexual organs" (Lie 2007, 122). These were all used to depict an 'Other' by classifying what was or was not Japanese thought and behavior.

Michael Weiner suggests that the imagined community of the nation was conceived domestically during the Meiji period through the use of *nihonjinron* in media to characterize ethnic homogeneity and stimulate a new sense of national purpose and identity in the populace (Weiner 1-8). The moral suasion campaigns during the Meiji period were motivated to compete with the much wealthier Western powers and sought to redefine the character and everyday life of Japanese people (Garon 1997, 8). Although the *burakumin* were only a tiny piece within this broader context, theories of social-Darwinism modeled after Western imperialism proliferated, promoting a consanguineous majority identity that ostracized and looked down upon them as separate, similar to the way blacks were treated in the United States and Europe at the time (Weiner 3-6). The tendency for *burakumin* to be less educated, in poorer health, and with less material development made them inferior in the discourse of what was perceived to be a modern and progressive majority identity (Weiner 11, Lie 2007, 125). While the Japanese academic and intellectual communities pursued ways to identify characteristics uniquely Japanese, political leaders eventually used this perceived hierarchy over groups considered less advanced to justify exclusion of *burakumin*, absorption of the Ainu in Hokkaido, and domination over Korea and Taiwan (Weiner 9-13). In short, state-inspired nationalism offered a definition of a homog-

enous Japanese identity in relation to the West and to other citizens domestically, which marginalized those who were not part of that identity.

Community amidst Discrimination

For *burakumin* today, the most ardent discrimination occurs in marriage, occupation, and education, yet some of these challenges can be allayed with the support of family, the community, and civil rights groups. Having transitioned from the institutional discrimination of the Tokugawa period, where *burakumin* were outcaste as people with occupations considered polluted, and the social discrimination of the Meiji era, where *burakumin* were legally equal yet experienced prejudice based on where they lived, prejudice today is comparatively invisible and *burakumin* are not being wholly outcast (Onishi 2009, 1-3; Neary 1998, 50-78). A study in 2006 discovered that three factors continue to plague *burakumin*: 1) discovery of new buraku lists; 2) propaganda and discrimination on the Internet; and 3) cases of property purchase avoidance and reorganization of school districts to exclude *buraku* communities (Tomonaga 2007). According to the Osaka Human Rights Museum, discrimination is supported by "modern social values such as blood or family lineage, which simultaneously reinforce prejudice and disdain of the public against *buraku*" (Osaka Liberty).

Intermarriage rates are also comparatively low between *burakumin* and non-*burakumin*, despite their being generally physically indistinguishable. Research by sociologist Charlie Morgan suggests that there are three social factors affecting marriage rates between *burakumin* and non-*burakumin*: marriage candidate preference; third parties, such as extended family members; and marriage market constraints (Morgan 40-42, 51). He found that *burakumin* problems parallel those of African Americans in that they experience high levels of residential segregation. It is the social spaces where people meet that in fact has the most influence on intermarriage because, following intermarriage patterns of African Americans, *burakumin* meet less in the traditional spaces of universities and workplaces due to segregation but have a higher tendency to meet in local neighborhoods (Morgan 51). This may or may not be true because people often hide their buraku status. Many people who marry a non-*burakumin* hide their background from their children and family because many potential partners receive strong opposition from family members considering it "unrespectable" (BLL 2005, 1; Nishimura 2010, 134). Another study discovered that many majority parents even prefer their children not to play with *burakumin* because they are fearful that the children's attitudes might instigate intermarriage once they are of age (McLauchlan 2003).

Pierre Bourdieu's "epistemic reflexivity" is the concept of self-reference in sociology where an individual examines and 'bends back on' or refers to the mainstream identity, thus instigating their identity construction.[2] The challenges that people face with their *burakumin* identities are helped by family and community, which eventually become the foundation for building a reflexive identity. Explaining this reflexive identity construction, Christopher Bondy frames it within the *burakumin* paradigm, "a key factor in identity formation and

social interaction comes through the reactions of those from outside [buraku] districts" (Matsushita 2002; Bondy 2002). Represented in the 1987 book *Why the Dōwa are Scary* (*Dōwa wa kowai-kou*), Muichi Maekawa (*burakumin*) and Keiichi Fujita (researcher) showed that many majority Japanese are afraid of *burakumin* and the neighborhoods because of ignorance – holding a belief that *burakumin* are dangerous – and from a few publicized cases of *burakumin* who extort money using perceptions of fear (Nishimura 122).

A study at Osaka Education University interviewed eighteen Japanese youths (18-25 years old) from various occupations and classified buraku identities on a range from strong to complete abandonment/assimilation (Matsushita 2002; Bondy 2002). One of the most interesting discoveries was the correlation of a person's identification as *burakumin* to the reaction from people outside *dōwa* projects, the influence of family support or structure, and the strength of *burakumin* social networks (Matsushita 2002; Bondy 2002). Since the discrimination from outside these neighborhoods tends to be high, only those people with stronger support structures develop a powerful identification to being *burakumin*; other people without these structures in place (e.g. from poorer neighborhoods with less resources) have a tendency to abandon, be conflicted, or maintain multiple identities allowing them to interact with non-*burakumin* (Matsushita 2002; Bondy 2002). All case studies demonstrated this, and one 24-year-old female with a strong identification stated, "I was always told [in school] that those of us from buraku districts had to be responsible; to have pride in who we were, and I came to believe it" (Matsushita 2002).

Despite infighting for authority over *burakumin* issues, many civil rights groups have increased awareness for the buraku problem at the international level. The Buraku Liberation League (BLL) has over 200,000 members in thirty-nine prefectures (Sugimoto 192; Neary 66). The aim of the BLL is to: 1) develop legal solutions to better the lives of *burakumin*; 2) pressure the government to improve environmental conditions beyond urban renewal; and 3) prohibit discrimination by individuals or groups (Neary 70). The BLL is known for being militant and has been effective at creating community awareness by targeting newspapers, magazines, and other media, including authors and journalists, then publicly shaming them or forcing them to give a public apology (Sugimoto 193; Yabuuchi 2004, 285).[3] The Japan Communist Party (JCP) was also influential in improving the *burakumin* paradigm within society. However, due to conflicts with the BLL over educating youth in public schools, the "Yata Incident" in 1969 culminated in several JCP-affiliated teachers getting injured (Pharr 2004, 85-86).[4] Another group named *Zenkairen* (National Buraku Liberation Alliance) separated from the BLL in 1979 and similarly often came at odds with the BLL's aggressive tactics. Despite continued problems in the treatment of *burakumin* today, the *Zenkairen* disbanded in 2004 due to a belief that the *burakumin* issue had been resolved (USJP.org 2005).

Urbanization & Legislation

In 1951, the National Committee for Buraku Liberation (which became the BLL in 1955) pressured the Kyoto government officials to mark on city maps where there were inadequate water supplies, sewage systems, garbage disposal, and fire hydrants, as well as areas that suffered high rates of public health problems. They discovered that all such areas were within the eighteen buraku neighborhoods (Devos and Wagatsuma 76; Neary 61). Similar to "Jim Crow" in the U.S. South, buraku communities were segregated with poor infrastructures and had a lower educated populace with higher welfare dependency rates (Lie 2007, 124). Due to the geographic nature of buraku discrimination, it is an integral characteristic of the *burakumin* liberation movement, and affirmative action legislation pushed by the BLL has been essential to improving the lives of citizens living in *dōwa* projects (Neary 50-78).

Passed in 1969, the SML provided funding for *dōwa* projects classified as needing substantial funding, including policies for new housing, hospitals, small enterprises, agriculture, employment, libraries, or other community services (Neary 64; Paine and Ingersoll 2009). Ending after 33 years in 2002 (with one five-year extension), the SML supplied over 12 trillion yen and dramatically changed the lives of many *burakumin* (Paine and Ingersoll 2009). The Director of the Buraku Liberation and Human Rights Research Institute, Kenzo Tomonaga, projects that the most beneficial future for such legislation is the prohibition of discrimination, effective compensation for victims, and measures at the national level to mitigate discrimination because *dōwa* projects do not disappear despite the changing communities (Tomonaga 2007).

However, much like other affirmative action campaigns internationally, the SML was not without problems. The act was vague regarding who would receive funding, and due to the fact that it is difficult to differentiate a buraku person from a non-buraku impoverished Japanese living in a *dōwa* project, ensuring that SML funding actually went to improving the lives of *burakumin* was not guaranteed (Neary 64). Also, many prominent scholars state that the SML only allocated funding to specific *dōwa* projects, leaving many with little or no help (Reber 1999, 355). The reliance of many *burakumin* on government aid and its perceived unfairness by many non-*burakumin* additionally caused friction between the BLL, local communities, and the government (Reber 355).

Temporal Constructions

Identity, society, and the environment all have a temporal nature due in part to, among many other reasons, globalization improving information access (Tehranian 2006, 79). Today, *burakumin* can deconstruct discriminatory spaces by negotiating new networks, such as online groups or social media, where they can share their identities with less discrimination (INDI 2003). However, this technology can also bring new challenges. A recent example was the release of an historic maps layer of Tokyo published in 2009 on Google Earth which had clearly marked labels of where *eta* villages used to be located (Alabaster).[5] By transposing a contemporary layer of Tokyo today on top, users could easily distinguish the loca-

tion of buraku communities and use it to discriminate against them. There was an outcry by the BLL and other *burakumin* rights groups to have the labels removed because it was believed this new technology could be used to infringe on their rights. The BLL succeeded in getting the references removed and sent a letter stating that Google should "be aware of and responsible for providing a service that can easily be used as a tool for discrimination" (Alabaster; Lewis 2009).

For many minorities in Japan, the bureaucratic limitations of being considered non-Japanese and, more importantly, the inner conflict many face who must hide their cultural background by being "in the closet" is becoming less of a social obstacle today (Lie 2001, 80-82). The most profound example is previous chief cabinet secretary Hiromu Nonaka. Being public about his buraku lineage, he was politically successful in spite of slander from other politicians, such as Taro Aso, who were openly prejudiced against *burakumin* (Onishi 2009, 1). Regardless of discrimination, or more likely because of it, there are many other popular communities that *burakumin* participate with in contemporary society. As Japan urbanized in the 1960s, more people discovered leisure and entertainment. (Lie 2001, 54-58). Members of minority groups including *burakumin*, Koreans, Chinese, Ainu, and Brazilians found solace in the safe havens of sumo wrestling, baseball, enka, television, literature or manga through the 20th century (Lie 2001, 53-82). Kenji Nakagami was *burakumin*, for example, whose work titled "The Cape" won Japan's prestigious Akutagawa Prize for literature in 1976.[6]

Although the Internet is another venue for discrimination to occur, there are many emerging groups to combat this prejudice. As discrimination on the Internet (cyber-discrimination) becomes increasingly common, groups such as the International Network against Discrimination on the Internet (INDI) have responded by contacting the authors, or the Internet Service Providers (ISPs) if necessary, to remove offending content (INDI 2003). While cyber discrimination exists, digital diasporas of *burakumin* using the Internet to create a sense of community have also become a tool for *burakumin* to "come out of the closet" without having to suffer potential social consequences (Nimalka et al. 2007).

The *burakumin* rights movement has also become internationalized by being framed in the context of global civil rights issues that affect every society. The International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR) was founded in 1988 by *burakumin*, and it has since grown into a network of citizens, committees and partners across the globe (IMADR).[7] IMADR is currently working internationally with other NGOs to defend against human rights violations in Sri Lanka, on literacy campaigns with the UN, and to help create policies that protect migrant workers. Working with other international organizations will make the buraku rights movement stronger.

Summary and Conclusions

The relationship between identity, community, and the environment is causal for the *burakumin*. In Japan, as in other countries, the relationship between minority groups and the majority is always changing and shaping, pressing and pull-

ing; it is in perpetual flux, and this dynamism propels social movements and community construction (Tehranian 2006, 79). Some scholars argue that Japan's socioeconomic conditions are not conducive to a fully liberated civil rights movement because the government provides no legal protection to victims of discrimination. There are also sociological challenges, such as the common belief that the best remedy for the buraku problem is to ignore it (Reber 1999, 355).

While recognizing that challenges continue to exist, as the paradigm for *burakumin* shifts, this research implies that the various constructions are all temporal in nature. Whether it is identity, community, or the environment, change is inevitable. This may include a deterioration of the sense of community as *burakumin* assimilate and disappear into majority society, where the buraku problem will disappear over time or become increasingly silenced because fewer people will be distinguishable as *burakumin* and more non-*burakumin* will inhabit buraku neighborhoods (Tomonaga 2007). A more hopeful outcome is that buraku heritage will be remembered as something uniquely Japanese within the international context of global civil rights movements. Perhaps the future will consist of a cultural renaissance honoring *burakumin* for their important place in Japanese identity and history. Increased media attention, public awareness, and scholarship may also disassociate the perceptions of *burakumin* from being impure and will advocate for equal treatment in society. Abolishing the *koseki* family registries altogether would allow *burakumin* more freedom, reducing the potential of being discriminated against because of where they or their families are from. Identity, community, and environmental spaces redefined the characteristics of *burakumin* discrimination during the Tokugawa and Meiji periods, and these same spaces continue to be deconstructed and reinvented today. As new temporal spaces resulting from globalization and technology are discovered, *burakumin* will have new opportunities to renegotiate the definitions of space in Japanese society.

ENDNOTES

1. For an in-depth explanation of cultural hybridization, please see: Canclini, Nestor. 2005. Introduction: Hybrid Cultures in Globalized Times. In *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*. second ed. xxiii-xlvi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

2. For additional information about 'reflexivity' in the social sciences, please see Maton, Karl. Reflexivity, relationism & research: Pierre Bourdieu and the epistemic conditions of social scientific knowledge. *Space & Culture: International Journal of Social Spaces* 6, (1) (Feb 2003): 52-65.

3. The denunciation tactics of the BLL are widely criticized and often instigate violence between the BLL, the police, and the public (Nishimura 2010, 125). There are many cases of the BLL's extremely aggressive actions; in one case a school principle allegedly committed suicide because he was stuck between the pressure of the BLL and the board of education for having students sing the de facto national anthem *Kimigayo*, which was considered representative of the state's pre-war involvement in education (*Japan Echo* 1999, April 2010).

4. The BLL and JCP had different ideologies about the education of youth: the BLL believed that affirmative action and assimilation would improve the academic achievement of *burakumin* student, and the JCP did not. The "Yata Incident" evolved because school teachers supporting an Osaka Teacher's Union JCP candidate refused to discuss teaching materials that the BLL considered discriminatory. The

events culminated in detainment of these teachers by the BLL for more than a day, forcing them to publically denounce their actions. This was considered a major victory for the BLL because the Osaka High Court supported this behavior as a legal right of protest. See Pharr, Susan. 2004. "*Burakumin* protest: The incident at Yoka high school," 133-146.

5. The digital maps came from the University of California Berkeley collection overseen by David Rumsey, a collector of over 100, 000 historical maps. Rumsey worked with Google to build the new layers and was also ultimately the person to remove the references to eta. Many critics say that this is another example of Google capitalizing on other people's information yet not recognizing the implications of making uncensored information available, such as the way Google Maps street view could be used to invade people's privacy (Alabaster; Lewis 2009). See the Japanese historical map collection of University of California, Berkeley at http://www.davidrumsey.com/japan/

6. *The Cape and Other Stories from the Japanese Ghetto* by Kenji Nakagami (Translated by Eve Zimmerman) draws a dramatic portrayal of what life is like for people living in a buraku community.

7. IMADR is a non-profit organization devoted to eliminating discrimination and racism by empowering discriminated groups to represent themselves, promoting transnational solidarity among these groups, and advocating legislation to eliminate discrimination and racism internationally. IMADR has consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council. www.imadr.org/

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East Timor and the Power of International Commitments in the American Decision Making Process

By Christopher R. Cook, Ph.D.

Abstract

This article looks at American foreign policy towards East Timor in 1999 using internal documents from the White House, Defense and State Departments, as well as interviews with decision makers alongside the extant literature. It examines policy decisions while shedding theoretical light on different types of humanitarian intervention. I argue that Washington had various policy options for the Timorese situation ranging from military intervention to indifference. So why did the White House ultimately choose the path of logistical aid to the Australian INTERFET mission instead of a more muscular response? The best explanation lies in bringing liberal institutionalism back into a constructivist framework. International institutional membership and identity shape state preferences, not only in decisions to intervene but in determining the size and scope of the mission. In the case of East Timor, the Clinton Administration developed policies based on cues received from global institutions. One can imagine easily that if Australia had not been eager to intervene, or that Indonesia had not given approval for an international force, the U.S. might not have been involved at all.

Introduction

In March of 1999 the Clinton Administration with its NATO allies used military force to stop a possible genocide of the Kosovar Albanians. Clinton's actions were seen as a fulfillment of his Clinton Doctrine where he called on Americans to think about the security consequences of letting humanitarian conflicts fester and spread. He argued that where "our values and our interests are at stake, and where we can make a difference, we must be prepared to do so."[1] In an ironic coincidence of history Washington was faced with a comparable humanitarian tragedy in South East Asia during the same year. This crisis also carried the potential threat of genocide and generated refugees. Yet, the U.S. did not commit troops. The case of East Timor is an illustration of one of the most perplexing puzzles in international relations—trying to explain why states intervene militarily in some humanitarian crises but choose to do nothing in others. Kosovo received unqualified military support, even though the province was seen as legitimately part of Yugoslavia. Yet in East Timor, President Clinton was content to tell the people of East Timor that they were going to receive limited American support through logistical aid to the Australians.[2] There would be no American military to stop the terror of pro-Indonesian militias. Where was the Clinton Doctrine?

This article is a theoretical examination of U.S. policy towards East Timor in 1999. I try to answer two interrelated questions: First, why did the U.S. become involved in this particular crisis at all? With several ongoing U.N. missions the Clinton Administration could have easily chosen to ignore East Timor as the U.S. had done in 1976. Secondly, and just

as importantly, what shapes the *level* of American response? How can international relations theory help us understand the decision to logistically support Australia and the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) but not send troops? To answer these questions one must move beyond the rhetoric of the Clinton Doctrine. I will carefully look at internal memos from the National Security Council (NSC), Defense and State Departments combined with elite interviews of key Clinton decision makers. I will then test them against a structured focused comparison of two competing hypotheses of foreign policy. The first hypothesis I have chosen is realism, still considered the dominant paradigm of foreign policy scholarship. Secondly, I develop a hypothesis of institutional agenda setting, based on constructivism and neo-liberal institutionalism.[3] These hypotheses will hopefully shed theoretical light on how the Administration framed American policy in Timor and how it understood the possible policy options to end the suffering.

I ultimately argue that when it comes to understanding policy in East Timor the Clinton Doctrine or realism cannot fully explain American actions. Instead an understanding of liberal institutionalism and the commitments (and norms) for our duties and membership in the United Nations play a crucial role not only in how the U.S. understands the crisis but how it will respond to it. I argue that the intensity or the international will to do something at the global institutional level will not only predict whether an intervention will occur but what *kind* of intervention. The weaker the international will, the weaker the international commitments the Executive Branch face for action. This understanding of international agenda setting helps explain why East Timor is a case of American "limited intervention" of logistical aid but no substantive military support.

Competing Theories of Foreign Policy and Testable Hypotheses

Realism is often seen as the dominant paradigm of global relations; but it does not have much to say about humanitarian intervention and even less about peace operations. Foreign policy, to realists, is about the promotion and protection of the national interest as defined by the distribution of power in the world. Intervention in strictly humanitarian crises—is by definition outside national security.[4] Thus, I argue that one should find that at the core of every peacekeeping operation is an internal, sober analysis of national interest.[5] Policymakers must perceive that something will be gained from participating in these kinds of international ventures. A successful mission might maintain or change the distribution of power but always to the benefit of the intervening nation.[6] A realist discussion of East Timor must include the fact that Indonesia is a pivotal state to American security. Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill and Paul Kennedy called the nation a fulcrum for the region and one that the U.S must engage with. Events in Jakarta could "trigger political and economic instability" that could affect the entire South East Asian community."[7] Another consistent goal of Clinton's foreign policy was his pursuit of neo-liberal economic reforms. Washington looked to protect American corporate penetration into Indonesia's expanding markets.[8]

The U.S. had always maintained cordial ties with President Suharto and the Clinton Administration was no different. The White House allowed Indonesia to bypass Congressional restrictions on aid. More importantly, Jakarta continued to receive weaponry. Between 1993 and 1998 the Administration allowed the Indonesian Special Forces (the ones most responsible for East Timorese atrocities) to receive military training.[9] David Sanger reports that one senior Administration officials stated that Suharto was, "our kind of guy."[10] One should not forget that Timorese leaders like Jose Ramos-Horta criticized Clinton's plans to sell F-16 fighter jets to the Suharto regime, arguing that "it's like selling weapons to Saddam Hussein."[11]

What kind of hypothesis could we derive with a realist theory when it comes to understanding East Timor? Simply put, Washington will privilege Indonesian stability over the self determination and human rights of East Timor. If this hypothesis is true we will find the Clinton Administration making choices to intervene or not based on explicit arguments of East Timor's importance to American national interests and Indonesia—a strategic ally in Asia. These findings will be strengthened if we locate evidence that top Clinton decision makers made consistent and repeated references to the geostrategic and financial stakes Timor posed to the Indonesian government in their comments to the media, minutes from official meetings, memoirs, government papers, reports, and personal interviews.

The Institutional Norms and Humanitarian Intervention[12]

While some in the East Timorese grass roots community saw the hand of realism trump a discussion of human rights, the domestic critics of President Clinton claimed his policies were anything but *real politick*. Michael Mandelbaum argued in a famous article that Clinton's liberal foreign policy was unnecessary social work. He even later suggested that the 1999 Kosovo crisis was a "perfect failure" of Wilsonian liberalism, ripe with unintended consequences. He asked, was the "Clinton Doctrine" a blueprint for a "Mother Theresa" interventionist policy?[13] The Doctrine suggests that policymakers should value democracy, self determination, and the stopping of gross human rights abuses. While events were unfolding in East Timor, President Clinton declared in Kosovo, "we don't want our children to grow up in a… world where innocent civilians can be hauled off to the slaughter, where children can die en masse, where young boys of military age can be burned alive, where young girls can be raped en masse just to intimidate their families.[14] John Ikenberry would argue this is more than just empty rhetoric but a coherent and rational foreign policy, "a pragmatic, evolving, and sophisticated understanding of how to create a stable and relatively peaceful world order... It is a strategy based on the very realistic view that the political character of other states has an enormous impact on the ability of the United States to ensure its security and economic interests."[15]

However, if the Clinton Administration was serious about following a Wilsonian path in East Timor how does it explain the decision to not contemplate aggressively the use of American troops? Richard Armitage stated in August of 1999: "These problems in Timor have been on the horizon for months… It would be a tragedy to find out [that the White House] had not privately been developing various force packages for contingencies." [16] If some in the United States argued the White House intervened too much, others claimed not enough was done for the people of Timor-Leste. This was a position exemplified by Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-CT), who thought the administration was too slow to send American troops, and then sent too few on too limited a mission in Timor-Leste. "When we are presented with a humanitarian crisis… we cannot sit back like some immense couch potato."[17]

So how does a Wilsonian liberal (like Clinton) explain the policy path chosen? Part of the answer lies in the Clinton Doctrine which carries an important caveat: direct intervention would occur when our values *and* our interests are at stake. We are forced to ask how strategically important human rights were in East Timor vis-à-vis Indonesian stability. Thus present in the Clinton Doctrine is the interplay between interests and values, as well as questions about when and how to intervene. The answers to these questions are modified by international institutions. A possible explanation of policy lies in a constructivist variant of institutional liberalism. If realism posits that interventions are rooted in self interest, liberal institutionalism and constructivism contend that peace operations lie in the development of identity, rules and norms of state behavior within a society of states. International organizations become the center for understanding interventions because they are the transmission belt between the competing norms of humanitarian intervention and national interest of states.

The Clinton Doctrine was partially based on the growing international acceptance in humanitarian intervention to save people. This norm has pushed the boundaries of national interest but has it fundamentally changed national interest? John Duffield argues that it cannot be imposed on states but "inculcated via such processes as persuasion and socialization."[18] Part of that inculcation comes from membership in international organizations. However, this transmission is a two way street. The U.N. Security Council is simultaneously a collective actor, and a forum in which member states pursue rational interests. States are pushing back on institutional norms and are capable of picking which to champion and which to rearrange into new patterns of politics."[19] This should come as no surprise because institutions like the U.N. are in essence political. Statesmen have learned to use the U.N. to further their own goals. [20] International organizations are a battleground of competing norms, practices, and rules. Not all norms are equal; they vary in strength and intensity, and nothing yet trumps national security. Humanitarian intervention, while growing in legitimacy, is not an automatic outcome of U.N. policy but transmits the idea to the foreign policy agenda of states.

Finnemore and Sikkink argue that norms of intervention exist but they cannot predict when the U.S. would intervene or how much.[21] But our second hypothesis provides us a framework to examine East Timorese policy. Even if the crisis does not reach an American national interest, policy rests on an international consensus that an intervention is necessary.

If no such consensus exists the U.N. may adopt no policy at all, evidenced by the tragic case of Rwanda in 1994. However, we may frequently find a muddled consensus that weighs the ideas of state sovereignty and power calculations alongside the norm to end suffering. These missions are often lacking in clear objectives and are frequently undermanned and under-funded. Thus our second hypothesis states that the U.S. will intervene in East Timor based on the agenda of international institutions like the United Nations. Furthermore, the findings will be strengthened if we see evidence that top decision-makers were explicitly concerned about international organizations from their comments to the media, minutes from official meetings, memoirs, government papers, reports, and personal interviews.

The Historical Context of East Timor Policy

The starting point for any discussion of U.S. policy in East Timor should begin in 1976. At the time American policy in East Asia was driven by a simple and powerful goal—the containment of communism. The fear of the "dominoes falling" in the region was accelerated by the communist victories in South Vietnam and Cambodia in 1975. As one of the most populated nations in the world, and strategically placed in the shipping lanes, Indonesia was seen as the crucial linchpin to this policy. Richard Nixon called the country "the greatest prize in the Southeast Asian area."[22] Jakarta was also an expanding market for American goods and rich in natural resources. To American policymakers, corporations, and realist theorists the stability of South East Asia rested on Indonesia.

That stability was challenged when Portugal's *Estado Novo* regime collapsed in 1974. At that time East Timor was a Portuguese colony that shared the eastern half of the island Timor (the other half being Indonesian) in the Indonesian-Malay archipelago of the East Indies just to the north of Australia. The new Portuguese government allowed East Timor to follow an electoral path leading to independence. However, that path faltered when the left leaning Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (*Fretilin)* seized power and unilaterally (and some say prematurely) declared East Timorese independence on November 28, 1975. A week later the Indonesians invaded their much smaller neighbor citing the need for decolonization and the fear of communism in the archipelago. By the following July East Timor was annexed. The invasion came at a high price for the Timorese people. The residents of the capital city of Dili fled into the mountains as the civil and social infrastructure of the new nation were demolished. The people that did not die by human hands soon died of famine. Some estimates claim that over the next several years about 100,000 people or a third of population died.[23]

The U.N. Security Council condemned the invasion (with the U.S. and Japan abstaining) and called for Indonesia to immediately withdraw from the colony without further delay. Resolution 389 (1976) on April 22, 1976 called upon member states to respect the territorial integrity of East Timor, as well as enforce the inalienable right of its people to self-determination. But part of the U.N.'s ineffectiveness was the refusal of the United States to sanction a strategic ally. Recently declassi-

fied documents reveal that the Washington gave tacit consent for Indonesian actions.[24] Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the U.S. Representative to the United Nations, famously claimed in his memoirs, "The U.S. Department of State desired that the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook [against Indonesia]. This task was given to me, and I carried it forward with no inconsiderable success."[25] The U.S. continued to ship weapons and train Indonesian officers. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) deemed East Timor an internal Indonesian matter. When Portugal and the European Union tried to raise the issue of human rights after the 1991 Santa Cruz massacres the Indonesian foreign minister threatened the entire ASEAN-EU economic relations over such "an extraneous issue."[26] In essence, the people of East Timor were sacrificed for geo-political realities of the Cold War. Indonesia continued its occupation and during the next 24 years the Army was implicated in numerous human rights abuses.

But Indonesian politics dramatically shifted during the late 1990s. The 1997 Asian economic crisis forced President Suharto from office. In June of 1999 Indonesia held its first free multiparty election in 44 years. The ruling pro-Suharto party was defeated. The domestic turmoil had a positive impact on the status of East Timor. In the wake of the financial crisis and the need for foreign capital, Indonesia agreed to U.N. mediated talks concerning the status of East Timor in 1998. Jakarta offered to rescind its territorial claim if an offer of special autonomy within Indonesia was rejected by a vote of the Timorese people. The details of that consultation vote were worked out in a May 5, 1999 agreement between the U.N., Indonesia and the former colonial power Portugal. The U.N. Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) was established in Resolution 1246 (1999) to conduct this referendum in June.[27] The agreement made Indonesia responsible for maintaining peace and security, free of intimidation and violence. The agreement also called for an orderly transfer of authority in East Timor to the authority of the U.N. if the vote was for independence.

American Policy toward East Timor: Phase I

In the first phase the White House watched the negotiations between Indonesia, Portugal, the U.N. and how it would impact American interests.[28] "Under the Agreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Portuguese Republic on the Question of East Timor" Indonesia committed to hold a special referendum on the status of East Timor. A popular consultation would decide whether East Timor remained part of Indonesia as an autonomous region or if it would be allowed to follow a path towards independence. The State Department noted that Portugal was willing to put up a sizable sum of money for such a vote but the U.N. would need support from its larger member states. It did not help that Indonesia objected to the presence of foreign troops to implement the referendum. The Clinton Administration wanted to help but as one official noted, U.S. policy was to avoid owning the issue at the Security Council. Washington ended up working informally behind the scenes to help forge a viable resolution.[29] The popular consultation was to be

part of a proposed UNAMET mission that in turn needed an appropriate mandate, presented a realistic exit strategy, and came in under budget.[30] The goal was a mission that had the minimum requirements of U.N. participation while being able to advance U.S. interests.[31]

But the Administration was also cognizant that the situation inside East Timor was going to deteriorate. There was an increase of intimidation from pro-Indonesian militias. The U.S. tried to convince Indonesia to restore security and calm before the consultation vote. A March 1999 memo noted the opposition the Indonesians had to letting Timor peacefully go. Humanitarian organizations were hindered from providing needed medical assistance due to security concerns.[32] But one of the pertinent questions policymakers asked during the policy meetings concerned the protection of both Timorese and U.N. personnel if there was a campaign of murder and intimidation. Should U.N. personnel conducting the referendum be armed? There was difficulty in establishing an exit strategy because no one knew how the vote would turn out. But it was clear in the spring of 1999 that there were going to be limits to American intervention.

The U.S. also decided to create a volunteer "friends of East Timor" group to supplement that U.N. and take a lead in establishing a trust fund, and soliciting voluntary funds for peacekeeping and developmental assistance in creating government and economic institutions. This model of international cooperation had some success in Haiti. But even in April problems were apparent. Should the friends group solicit troops, not police, even though Indonesia would not consent? One official noted that East Timor looked like a "giant mess." Just as in Haiti, some U.N. members were concerned about sovereignty implications of the U.N. influencing internal matters inside Indonesia. For example, would international action in East Timor create a precedent for establishing popular consultations in Chechnya or Tibet?[33]

In preparation for the U.N. vote to establish the referendum mission (UNAMET), the Deputies Committee of the National Security Council prepared an in depth analysis (PDD-25) of East Timor policy.[34] According to Washington the two major sticking issues facing the U.N. mission were a need for a clearer mandate. Was this going to be a Chapter VI or Chapter VII enforcement?[35] Secondly, there was no substantial exit strategy considering the uncertainty of how the vote would turn out. A Defense Department Memo on May 26 noted that if there was an increase of violence the U.N. resolution was probably the wrong mandate.[36] They warned that current U.S. policy was not thinking of long-term strategy.

However, with these flaws in mind the Deputies still decided to officially vote for the establishment of UNAMET. Policymakers understood that the resolution had clear shortfalls but "the consequences of inaction to regional stability were weighed and considered unacceptable."[37] The PDD-25 stressed the unique nature of Timor since this was not an international conflict but an internal one. The State Department notified Congress that the U.S. was going to authorize UNAMET. The letter addressed to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and its Chairman Senator Helms clearly laid out the thinking behind the White House vote at the U.N.:

> The U.S. has important security, political, financial and economic commercial interests in Indonesia. Indonesia's size and location, population of more than 200 million, fourth largest country in the world, and natural resources, notably oil and gas, give it broad strategic value. Indonesian political stability is key to maintaining movement towards restoring Asian financial stability. A stable and prosperous Indonesia is critical to Southeast Asia and regional stability. Indonesia is undergoing a wrenching transition from the authoritarianism of the Suharto era to a more democratic society. It is in our interests to see the Indonesian government complete this transition and to undertake the economic structural reforms that will help restore economic growth and further Indonesia's integration in the global economy. We view the holding of a fair and credible consultation in East Timor and assessed resolution of this long-standing problem as an essential step in the political transformation of Indonesia. Indonesian stability is a vital concern. [38]

The letter went on to state: "The exit strategy was defined by the results of consultation. If autonomy were accepted the U.N. mission would end. If independence were accepted there would be another [unspecified] peacekeeping component to the process."[39]

As the voting day drew closer, the pro-Indonesian militia stepped up their violence. Indonesia was slow in accepting the legitimacy of the U.N. Resolution and showed little willingness or capability to control the militias.[40] Indonesian officials at both the national and local level accused the U.N. of favoring the pro-independence side. Policymakers worried that Jakarta was in fact aiding and abetting the militia in an attempt to ensure the consultation would produce a vote for autonomy rather than independence. There was growing evidence that Indonesian security forces often stood by, or in some cases, actively participated in attacks on pro-independence and UNAMET offices.[41] Rallies and parades held for both sides of the referendum often ended up in rock throwing, stabbings and shootings. By July 20 the U.N. Secretary General reported that while UNAMET was fully deployed, violence continued to interfere with preparations for the popular consultation. In response the U.N. Secretary General delayed the consultation vote from August 8 until August 30. A Deputies Committee document on August 30 suggested that the U.N. and U.S. should try to influence the Indonesian government and military to halt the militia violence.

But the intimidation campaign was failing. The UNAMET-led registration period that opened July 16 and ended August 6 exceeded expectations. Madeline Albright could boast that: "Already, more than 400,000 East Timorese have registered to vote, showing tremendous courage under difficult, emotionally-charged circumstances." However, she warned:

> "The United States is deeply concerned by the acts of violence and intimidation which have already marred the pre-campaign period. It is critical, both to ensure a fair vote and to preserve the credibility of Indonesia's own transition, that Jakarta meet its obligation to provide a secure environment and promote the disarmament of all paramilitary forces in East Timor."

She then hinted at the length of the mission: "Security concerns will not end when the votes are counted. The Government of Indonesia has repeatedly assured the United States and other nations that it will fulfill its responsibility to pro-

vide security immediately after August 30—regardless of the outcome."[42] While that was the public face the Intelligence community informed the White House that mass violence would probably break out if Timor voted for independence.[43]

In this first phase the U.S. worked behind the scenes at the U.N. to help create and shape the UNAMET mission to implement the consultation. But violence remained a distinct possibility. In early August the Administration warned Congress that East Timor was guaranteed to vote for independence and violence was sure to follow.[44] But there was no serious discussion that the U.S. would use its own troops. Washington saw UNAMET as part of the agenda of the U.N. and not the pressing issue of American foreign policy.

Phase II: The Vote and the Immediate Aftermath

On August 30, 1999 the consultation vote was held and seemed to go off without a hitch. But East Timor remained explosive and the Deputies Committee met the next day to discuss further U.S. diplomatic actions to influence the Indonesian government and military to control the inevitable militia violence when the results were announced. The Deputies also considered a range of other options including trying to get a larger multinational force and expanding U.N. operations in East Timor. However, due to the lack of international interest the U.S. decided to press the U.N. for an expanded civilian police mandate to handle the situation.[45]

The results were released on September 3 and independence was chosen by 78.5% of the population. Madeline Albright stated: "The United States congratulates the people of East Timor. In making known your strong desire for independence in this election, you have faced dangers and hardships over recent weeks."[46] But the celebration was short lived as the Indonesian Army backed militias began their organized wave of terror, including reports of death lists being used. As one U.S. diplomat put it: "There was kind of a hope and a prayer approach [to Timor] that the U.N. would monitor and hopefully that would be enough to dissuade the Indonesians from violence, of course it was not enough and then we had to react quickly once that became a front page crisis."[47] Two U.N. staff members were killed as violence broke out in Dili. The official view of the Administration is best expressed in a *CNN* interview with Secretary Albright on September 8:

> MS. KOPPEL: … Is the U.S. prepared to contribute troops?
>
> SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Well, what we are doing is really looking at the situation very carefully, considering our options. We obviously want to be supportive. We are as concerned about this as much as anybody is. But the main point here is that the Indonesian Government is the primary party that is responsible for restoring order there and allowing that really remarkable vote for independence to be counted and to have its effect. So the main point that I hope comes out of our meetings here and as our message itself is that the Indonesian Government has a window here in order to be able to deal with this before the international community steps in, in some form or another.[48]

The reaction from Washington to the growing East Timor crisis was quick, but tempered by several factors. First, there

was the realization that the only way to control the spreading violence was to send in U.N. backed peacekeepers and not the police and poll watchers that were there. Second, Washington realized that the only way peacekeepers could arrive was with the consent of Indonesia whose role in the violence was questionable. Third, the U.S. was not going to send a peacekeeping force, partly because of the extensive American participation in the Balkans. Troops would have to come from somewhere else. One NSC official stated: "I can remember the Deputies meeting where [James Steinberg, Deputy National Security Advisor] expressed grave concerns about the risks involved. There were alternatives in East Timor but there were not good alternatives."[49] One State Department official stated,

> "Once violence starts it has the characteristic of going in its own direction. We contemplated a variety of scenarios… In East Timor, you were never sure just what was going to happen. I think had that vote not been 79% for independence, if it was 53%-54%, there would not have been any multi-national force. One of the scenarios discussed had the Indonesian military staying and fighting and then you are talking about a multi-national force that is no less than 20-30,000. That is why the political legitimacy of the referendum was crucial to the intervention."[50]

In a joint Congressional hearing on the subject the Administration told Congress that the U.S. had suspended military to military relations with Indonesia and was actively working on gaining the consent from Jakarta to send peacekeeping troops to the island.[51] Secretary of Defense William Cohen noted: "The Indonesian military must do the right thing and aid in ending violence." He threatened that if not the U.S. had already begun a review of economic and bilateral assistance that could be cut. Cohen added, "I made it clear that the U.S. will not consider restoring normal military to military contacts until the TNI [the Army of Indonesia] reforms its way. The military must show restraint and respects for human rights throughout Indonesia."[52]

Within the U.N. the Clinton Administration also made a subtle and important change in American policy towards Indonesia. One NSC official stated, "We supported an open debate in the Security Council which was attended by over 50 representatives from nations across the globe (except pariah states like Cuba, Iran, and the Sudan)—all of whom criticized the Indonesians.[53] Another Defense Department official noted: "If Indonesia screwed up with East Timor not only would they have been subjected to 'sanctions' but also a sense of illegitimacy."

A U.N. aide reported: "If Indonesia accepts the help of foreign forces the matter will probably be handled very quickly" by the Security Council. "That's what we're all waiting for —the green light."[54] On September 11 the Security Council met in formal session to consider the issue. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Richard Holbrooke stated, "There are continuous meetings going on in New York, Washington, Canberra and all over the world on how to proceed… The United States is not waiting… [and] has been actively engaged around the clock." But Holbrooke made clear that the Security Council would not authorize the intervention of foreign forces in

East Timor without the express consent of the Indonesian government. Holbrooke added, "Indonesia would have to make clear that it accepts foreign military help because so far Indonesia is of the opinion, and has made it very plain… that Indonesia alone is responsible for peace and security in East Timor." On the floor of the U.N.:

> The government of Indonesia must understand that unless it reverses course immediately, it faces the point of no return. No one wants to see Indonesia become isolated in the world community - but its future is now in its own hands. There are clear indications that General Wiranto's troops have backed, encouraged, directed and in some cases participated in the atrocities on the ground. How can the people of East Timor, the U.N. and the international community now be expected to entrust their security to these very same soldiers, under the same military leadership? It is imperative that the international community speaks with one voice, and our message must be clear: Indonesia's government must allow an international security presence. [55]

One U.N. official conceded that an ongoing high-level Security Council mission in Jakarta was "trying to convince Indonesia to go along with 'accepting foreign troops." The official added that he does, "not know of any country that has considering intervening in East Timor without the consent of Indonesia. Many governments have mentioned the possibility of sending troops but that was based on the Security Council giving the green light. I can assure you the Security Council will *not* give the green light if there is no permission on the part of the Indonesian Government."[56] Indonesia weakened from the political turmoil of the Suharto transition and mired in a sluggish economy was sensitive to what the impact of global isolation would have on their drive towards economic recovery and democratization.[57]

How Indonesia dealt with East Timor was critical in terms of their relationship with other international organizations notably the World Bank and the IMF. On September 12 President Habibie signaled that Indonesia would accept peacekeepers in Timor. U.S. pressure proved critical in securing approval of the mission. "American support, diplomatic support, was very important," Australian Prime Minister John Howard stated. The Americans put a lot of diplomatic pressure on Jakarta to agree to an international force.[58] Through the U.N. debate Habibie realized he was isolated and agreed to the consultation vote and eventually a MNF. The U.S. found a way to support Timor, while showing Habibie it was the best course of action through the U.N.."

In Phase II Washington's response to the violence was to double down its diplomatic efforts to convince the Indonesians to work with the United Nations and allow a multinational force into East Timor. The Administration did not ignore the crisis as some would contend. But conversely, even with a widespread belief that something should be done, Washington had no desire to play the role of a Mother Theresa. Instead the policy chosen is a reflection that Washington could achieve its twin goals of Indonesian stability and East Timorese self determination through diplomatic channels and international institutions.

Phase III: Australia, ASEAN and INTERFET

Debate within the U.N. over what to do in East Timor reflected the lessons of peacekeeping learned throughout the nineties. As one Defense Department official stated: "One cannot leave [peacekeeping] to the U.N… the U.N. does not have the capacity to take care of themselves and they must leave fighting to nation states and other organizations."[59] In early September, with Indonesian approval Australian Prime Minister John Howard and U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan agreed that Australia should lead a multinational force into East Timor to provide security. As former N.S.C. officer Eric Schwartz points out: "Australia's willingness to intervene was the result of a range of factors. The extensive media coverage and the magnitude of human rights abuses played an important role in encouraging government action. Canberra also believed intervention was legally justified due to the unique nature of the crisis. For one, the international community never recognized the Indonesian annexation. (Ironically, the Australians did.) Second it was the Indonesians themselves that volunteered having a consultation vote in the first place. Even if they were unwilling to live up to their end of the bargain in providing security they had no recourse to renege on their deal. But Schwartz also notes that the Australian public "were appalled by reports of widespread abuses in East Timor, and made clear that they would support robust Australian government action." Schwartz added that as "unimaginable as it may seem to Americans, the Australian public even supported a proposal for a tax increase that the government officials thought necessary to finance the intervention."[60] In Phase III of American policy the question becomes what is the best way to help the Australians. A key component of N.S.C. meetings on the crisis was the need to stand by Australia, a friend.[61]

But before we turn to United States aid to the Australian led INTERFET, it is important to briefly discuss the role of the ASEAN community in the East Timorese crisis. According to the Administration's internal documents it was hoped that other regional nations and organizations could step forward to assist. But in Jakarta there was a fear that western nations (including Australia) would in the words of the Indonesian Ambassador to Australia, "… [use] humanitarian pretexts to justify unilateral armed intervention into the internal affairs of a developing country."[62] This view was also shared by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir who claimed Australia wanted Indonesia to look bad.[63] An Indonesian military and civilian spokesman said Australia, New Zealand, Portugal and the U.S. should not participate in the force as they were "not neutral."[64] But what would be considered neutral nations? A member of Human Rights Watch stated: "It would be wonderful if ASEAN played a bigger role… particularly as there is a very strong anti-Western backlash in Jakarta."[65]

But ASEAN struggled with responding to East Timor crisis, and they were called "paralyzed, missing in action, inefficient, and clueless."[66] For years ASEAN maintained that East Timor was an internal Indonesian matter not open for discussion. They also worried about the ramifications of East Timor independence on other Indonesian secessionist movements, Aceh and West Papua to the stability of the

region. However, the narrative of ASEAN inaction might be an unfair assessment. Alex Mango points out that ASEAN has no culture of moral intervention. The organization was built on a policy of strict non-interference.[67] Furthermore, former ASEAN Secretary General Rodolfo Severino claims: "Members differed greatly in their capacities for and attitudes towards peacekeeping operations in general. ASEAN was not, and is not organized for joint military or police action."[68] Severino also points out the unique role Indonesia has to the organization, "[they] brought… weight, strength and direction, something indeed that made ASEAN possible… Indonesia's international influence, prestige and activism, magnified by its new international posture, [was] placed in ASEAN's service."[69] While some ASEAN nations felt sympathy towards the Timorese people, alienating Indonesia could have threatened the very heart of the organization itself. One can see the deference accorded to Jakarta by examining the ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting held in Singapore in July 23-24, 1999. Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore wanted to mention the Timorese issue and were prepared to accept East Timorese independence. But in the final Ministerial Statement there was no mention of the upcoming referendum and its possible ramifications for the region.[70]

However, a real diplomatic breakthrough occurred at the September 12-13 Auckland APEC (the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum) leaders' meeting, an ASEAN summit was convened to discuss the deteriorating situation. The Indonesian representative called for greater and more visible ASEAN participation in the international force.[71] Jakarta had initially rejected an Australian led force and would have preferred an all ASEAN mission. Fellow ASEAN members, considering their limited capacities discreetly and respectfully pressured Indonesia that a U.N. backed peacekeeping force was needed.[72] Thailand, now argued, that inaction on East Timor would threaten regional stability.[73] Once Jakarta gave approval for foreign troops this allowed individual members of ASEAN to freely participate in INTERFET. Alan Dupont suggests that the ASEAN response "proved more robust and substantial than many outside the region expected."[74]

But it is important to note that ASEAN did not officially participate as an organization although its individual members did. This allowed the fiction that ASEAN was not going to interfere with its members internal affairs but allowed Asian participation. As the Thailand Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan stated, "There are some issues that individual ASEAN members will have to decide [about INTERFET participation] individually because it's outside ASEAN's mandate." However, it does not mean that we cannot coordinate among ourselves to solve the problem."[75]

The United States played a minimal role in having ASEAN pressure Indonesia. The ASEAN community handed the situation in their own way. Ambassador Severino notes, "I do not recall any U. S. pressure" in the process.[76] This conforms to the internal documents that I have reviewed. In light of the sensitivities Jakarta had to the issues of sovereignty and western intervention, nonintervention was probably the prudent course of action. But Washington was eager to get broader regional support from ASEAN members. The United

States lobbied the ASEAN nations to contribute troops. Secretary of Defense William Cohen stated, "My hope is that more of a contribution can be made on the part of ASEAN countries to show that there is a significant ASEAN presence." In a trip to Bangkok, Secretary Cohen pledged financial and logistical help. The United States eventually offered to bear the cost and transport of Thai peacekeepers to Dili. Cohen reasoned that the sooner peacekeepers arrived in Timor to end the violence, "the better off all concerned will be."[77]

Given the response time to other humanitarian tragedies troop deployment in East Timor was relatively swift. Within two weeks of the consultation U.N. Security Council Resolution 1264 authorized a non-U.N. multilateral force to restore peace and security in East Timor under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter. A mission designed to protect and support UNAMET and facilitate humanitarian assistance operations and institute an investigation of apparent abuses of international law. Resolution 1264 stated that this force would remain deployed in East Timor until replaced by a follow up U.N. operation.[78] With Australian guidance and leadership the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) became that multilateral force. In a show of respect and regional understanding the Australians chose Thailand Major General Songkitti Chakrabhat as the deputy to the INTERFET mission. In a show of ASEAN unity when Thailand signed on to INTERFET the Thai foreign minister met with Jakarta. The Thailand Armed forces Commander in Chief met with his Indonesian counterparts.[79] This allowed Indonesia to become more comfortable with the mission.

On September 20-21, the Australians and New Zealanders became the first of 22 nations to begin deployment around Dili through the airfield and ports. ASEAN members the Philippines and Thailand responded with sizeable contingents and they were ultimately joined by Malaysia and Singapore. INTERFET planned to build out carefully from Dili and move towards the east into a number of provincial towns and cities.[80] The Australians operated with robust rules of engagement and were willing to use deadly force if needed. Major General Songkitti Chakrabhat was asked whether Thai troops would be able to engage the Indonesian militia. In a telling statement he responded: "Our men will not hesitate. Besides, it is the Indonesian government which has invited us to take part in the peacekeeping force."[81] INTERFET would eventually reach 10,000 personnel, half of which were Australians.

What did INTERFET find when it arrived in East Timor? The East Timorese population had been uprooted and displaced with extensive infrastructure damage. About 230,000 were living in refugee camps in Indonesian West Timor and thousands were hiding in the mountains. The Timorese in the camps faced acts of violence by militia and regular Indonesian troops. According to Assistant Secretary of State Julia V. Taft during a Congressional hearing, "The mission was shocked at the level of widespread physical destruction of homes, commercial facilities, and public buildings in Dili… However, subsequent U.N. assessment missions have found widespread damage throughout East Timor." Taft pointed out the city of Manatuto, "which was previously home to 16,000 people, is completely destroyed and depopulated; estimates

are that 60%-70% of the houses in the western region of East Timor are destroyed; the port of Suay was reported to be 95% destroyed. Much of the damage was by fire, consistent with a "slash and burn" approach to the area."[82] Taft went on to explain that U.N. agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and INTERFET were working together under very difficult circumstances in Dili to provide for immediate needs.

But the Australians needed help. According to U.S. internal memos they considered American contributions to UNTAET and INTERFET essential because: 1) of the high quality of U.S. personnel; and 2) participation would appropriately reflect the regional role of America.[83] According to Schwartz and unclassified documents, the United States reached its maximum presence in East Timor on November 11, 1999 when 235 troops were on the ground in Timor. The U.S. reached its maximum presence in Australia on November 27 with 353 men. American ships, which included a marine expeditionary unit with just over 3,000 men, sat off the Timor coast in October and served as an important demonstration of U.S. "interest and resolve," as well as alliance solidarity. The United States provided INTERFET with strategic and tactical fixed wing airlift, tactical helicopter airlift, intelligence, communications support, a civil-military operations center, a logistics planning cell, and other support."[84]

The State Department, in concert with other donors, international organizations, and NGOs provided substantial resources to address the humanitarian needs in the future for self government; and establish conditions for sustainable economic growth.[85] Prime Minister Howard admits that the American "package of assistance proved quite valuable in the end".[86] However, some other Australians seem to have a different memory. INTERFET commander Major General Peter Cosgrove stated, "The U.S. is a great friend, but [they] did not provide strategic lift of any weight to us. We did it."[87]

By late October the U.N. established Security Resolution 1272 (1999), the U.N. Mission Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) to administer the territory now that it would no longer part of Indonesia but before it was ready for independence.[88] UNTAET would focus on nation building. Australia would continue to play a security role in case of renewed violence. Eric Schwartz points out, "U.S. officials resisted the Australian desire to put into the Resolution a target date for East Timorese independence—and the U.S. position was, in fact, probably the right one. But, in defense of the Australians, they were committed to ensuring the success of the follow-on U.N. force, and thus were probably unconcerned that a target date signaled any lack of resolve."[89] On the first of November the last Indonesian Army units left East Timor. Most of the militia fled to West Timor with them. A month later Nobel Laureate Jose Ramos Horta returned to Dili after 24 years in exile. In early December the UNTAET installed a 15 member national consultative council to allow the East Timorese to participate in the transitional authority decision-making process.

But one thing is clear from interviews and the internal documents; the Clinton Administration was not going to use American troops in the conflict. Howard expressed his disappointment given Australia's long history of supporting U.S. policies. He argued that many people in Australia would feel let down."[90] As one Defense Department official stated: "A U.S. intervention would have humiliated the Indonesian Army." While the U.S. provided essential help the nation did not reach the definition of the Clinton Doctrine. There was a strong reluctance to committing resources. According to the Australians, "Clinton had to be talked into a logistical effort in East Timor when he was in [New Zealand] for [an] APEC." In fact, the U.S. refusal to provide a troop commitment was a blow for Prime Minister Howard.[91]

Theoretical Conclusions for American Policy in East Timor

In this article we have explored primary documents and interviews with key Clinton Administration officials to determine why the United States chose the policy path that it did in East Timor. How does realism explain policy in East Timor? As we have noted realism privileges Indonesian stability as the fulcrum to East Asian security. The stability of the largest Muslim nation, with the fourth largest population of the world sitting on top of a host of natural resources, is an American strategic interest. The United States was in no position to alienate the Indonesians especially as they were transitioning to a democracy. President Clinton stated as much, "…Indonesia's future is important to us, not only because of its resources and its sea lanes, but for its potential as a leader in the region and the world… the U.S. has an interest in a stable, democratic, prosperous Indonesia."[92] Clinton's rhetoric is backed up by the internal documents of the Administration as they struggled to find a solution. Eric Schwartz argues that on one hand, "Indonesian intransigence on the issue could lead to international isolation and in conjunction with the collapse of the Indonesian economy, threaten its transition to democracy." But does this explanation alone satisfy our realist hypothesis?

Realism can also generate alternative hypotheses. For example, critics of the Administration argued that the United States could afford to let East Timor remain part of Indonesia. Pointing to the same instability in Jakarta that the White House saw, they argued that East Timorese independence would add legitimacy to other secessionist movements in the archipelago that would lead to instability. Leon T. Hadar argued that in such a situation East Timor would be a "slippery slope" and that Washington would have to become the "stabilizer of last resort" on the Indonesian archipelago.[93] Hadar would eventually applaud the regionalizing approach (INTERFET) that was chosen to deal with the crisis.

However, it is important to point out that realism is not necessarily defined as the pragmatism of elite policy makers. The questions the theory drives us to ask are, does this particular conflict become the fulcrum for Indonesia if Indonesia is the fulcrum for the region? Does an independent East Timor change the power calculus for East Asia? In hindsight the perceptions of the Administration were correct in its assessment of Indonesian stability. However, in the spring and summer of 1999 the future of Indonesia, sans U.S. participation in UNAMET and INTERFET, was indeterminate. Secondly, and just as importantly, realism struggles to predict what kind of intervention should take place. To avoid Indonesian

instability what policy course would realism dictate? If East Timor was important to American security then why did the U.S. choose (in essence) to follow a diplomatic wait and see response to the violence until the Indonesian approval for an Australian led multinational force? The Indonesians could have said "no" to the presence of a multinational force. If the U.S. could have turned away from the crisis as they did in 1976, why bother working with the U.N. and the Australians on INTERFET? Realism is not ruled out as an explanation but a better answer to explaining American policy lies in the power of the international community and the institutional commitments of being in the U.N.

When it comes to liberalism the Wilsonian variant also struggles in explaining East Timor policy. A cursory examination of global events in 1999 would show Slobodan Milosevic receiving the American "stick" of bombs while President Habibie and Indonesia promised an endless array of carrots. When one measures the forceful response to free the Kosovar Albanians with the rhetoric of human rights the East Timorese policy of inaction becomes jarring. A better explanation for policy, that can both address why the U.S. became involved; and secondly predict the level of intervention lies in the power of norms and the international commitments to global institutions. These International institutions are forums where values, interests and issues of state sovereignty are mediated. When it comes to a strict analysis of the "Clinton Doctrine" East Timor fails to meet the American bar for national interest. There would be no troops. However, there was still a discussion of norms: human rights and self determination. In that discussion lies the path towards limited intervention.

East Timor ended up on the American agenda because interactions between the U.S. and the U.N. They both influence each other. However, without the U.N. and the Australians, it is doubtful that the U.S. would have intervened militarily because East Timor was not a strategic interest. But when East Timor was placed on the U.N. agenda, it became a topic of the National Security Council because of our institutional commitments. But even then there was no strong international will in the United Nations to militarily force the Indonesians to do anything. Based on this information we can then begin to predict the shape of American participation chosen. The U.S. would choose a "limited role" in the conflict. This is exactly what we find: the global community, with help from the U.S., crafted a consultation referendum with weak security and vague plans about what to do if violence broke out. When the Indonesians did consent to an international force the U.S. gladly helped play a logistical role. But the evidence is clear there was never going to be American boots directly on the ground.

Secondly, this hypothesis can also hint at the importance of international norms in ending with the crisis. The United States was able to use effectively the institution of the U.N. to expand the debate with Indonesia about human rights and interdependence and how in this situation these norms trumped the norm of sovereignty. In the previous section Schwartz noted that the new Indonesian government faced sanctions from the international community and possible global isolation if it did not restore order.[94] Through the aus-

pices of the U.N., Indonesian President Habibie realized he was isolated and agreed to the consultation vote and eventually a multinational force.[95] Membership in the community of nations structured Indonesia's choices.

Conclusions

Ten years after the East Timorese consultation vote and the chain of events that led to its independence, questions remain about American involvement. For Senator Joseph Lieberman Washington might not have done enough. However, to other critics of the Administration, Clinton tried to do too much. Support for INTERFET risked a slippery slope of involvement that threatened our special relationship with a crucial ally. Analysis of East Timor is further complicated by the rhetoric of the Clinton Doctrine that focused on the promotion of human rights and self determination, a doctrine that was applied to Kosovo but seemingly not to East Timor.

Using East Timor as a case study, this discussion is an attempt to understand two aspects of American policy. First, through the use of primary documents, key interviews, and the extant literature we have been able to map out how Washington handled the crisis and how they approached negotiation with the U.N. Secondly, this article also examines the wider theoretical motivations to not only participate in peacekeeping missions but grapple with understanding of what types of missions are undertaken. So let us return to the original questions: why did the U.S. become involved? Why did the U.S. choose to pursue a path of limited intervention? Not every American humanitarian mission is the same: Rwanda and Darfur are marked by inaction; Bosnia and Kosovo are marked by the use of force.

The U.S. had various policy options for the Timorese situation ranging from military intervention to indifference. However, the best explanation for the policy path chosen lies in bringing liberal institutionalism back into a constructivist framework. Institutional identity shapes state preferences, not only in decisions to intervene but in shaping the size and scope of the mission. In the case of East Timor the Clinton Administration were making policy based on cues they received from the global community not a strict definition of national security. (Admittedly the U.N. was also receiving cues from the U.S.) One could easily imagine that if Australia was not eager to intervene, or that Indonesia never gave the approval for an international force, the U.N. mission would have been considerably weaker. The norms argument I have outlined here is a robust look at American peacekeeping.

Of course East Timor is but one case study. In order to explore the power of international norms and institutional membership one needs to look at other kinds of interventions across time periods and locations. Furthermore, if our units of analysis fall in the time period of the Clinton White House we may in fact be revealing the peculiar policies of this Administration and not a wider theoretical understanding of American policy. However, I contend that the norms argument has relevancy across administrations. The Clinton White House is really not the first to argue that where "our values and our interests are at stake, and where we can make a difference, we must be prepared to do so." In fact, a cursory

analysis of American policy in the current crisis in Darfur reveals no strategic interests at stake in the western section of the Sudan. Washington's inaction must also be weighed with the realization that there is a lack of will in the global diplomatic community as well. For effective international response to humanitarian crises, we find that membership in a willing and motivated international organization can overcome the problems of indecisive collective action.

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Syed Hussein Alatas: His Life and Critiques of the Malaysian New Economic Policy

By Choon-Yin Sam, Ph.D.

Abstract

This paper pays tribute to Syed Hussein Alatas. Alatas was well known for his writings on the sociology of corruption. This paper focuses on the less well known aspect of his work - his critiques of the New Economic Policy (NEP) of Malaysia. Alatas was critical of the Malay political leaders on their perceived underachievement of the Malay population, which had led the former to adopt the preferential policy. This article draws some implications of this discourse in the assessment of the NEP.

Introduction

Born in 1929 in Bogor, Indonesia, Syed Hussein Alatas obtained his early education in Johor, Malaysia. His studies were interrupted by World War II during which he was in Sukabumi, West Java. Alatas spent most of the time during the war in houses of Eurasians to read. He witnessed Indonesia's independence on 17 August 1945 and soon after returned to Malaya to complete his studies. He chose to do his undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Amsterdam because of the opportunity to learn another language (besides English) and expose to the literature other than those from the Anglo Saxon countries. He spent more than 10 years in Holland. After completing his PhD at the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences in 1964, Alatas returned to Malaysia as a lecturer to teach at the Department of Malay Studies at the University of Malaya.

The primary objective of the paper is to assess the consequences of the New Economic Policy (NEP) with particular reference to Syed Hussein Alatas's criticism on the preferential policy. Alatas was often credited for his path breaking study on the sociology of corruption. This paper focuses on the relatively less well known aspect of Alatas's works—his critique of the Malay political leaders and their justification behind the NEP. Alatas was supportive of the intent to eradicate rural Malay poverty. However, the plan to hand over successful businesses from the state to a selected few was criticized on the basis that this would create a new Malay capitalist class, creating discontentment among the Malays and non-Malays alike.

Alatas has been described as a "towering thinker" by Malaysia's opposition leader Lim Kit Siang,[1] and an "intellectual giant" who "defies any classification or specialization" and was "arguably the most influential intellectual of our time in Southeast Asia".[2] Dzulkifli Adbul Razak, from the Universiti Sains Malaysia, called Alatas "a Malaysian icon" to be remembered "as the foremost scholar to deconstruct Western ideologies…that continue to impact the policies of postcolonial administration".[3] To those who knew him in person such

as Lim Teck Ghee and Chandra Muzaffar, Alatas was a progressive Muslim who insisted on the principles of excellence, justice and fair play. Alatas was an unusual academic in the sense that he was also active in politics. Alatas was a member of the National Consultative Council (NCC) of Malaysia from 1969 to 1971. In 1971, he became a member of the Malaysian Parliament as a Senator for the Penang state. He was also a founding member and President of the then Malaysian opposition party, Parti Gerakan Rakyat (Gerakan), which was set up in 1968. The choice of Alatas to head the non-sectarian political party was based on the premise that he was "committed to a broad cultural interpretation of Malaysia" (Khor and Khoo, 2008: 44). He left the party in 1972 after disagreeing with the party's decision to join the ruling collation Alliance.

In 1967, Alatas was Professor and Head of the Malay Studies Department at the National University of Singapore (NUS), a position he held until 1988 when he left to become the Vice Chancellor of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. He retired from this post in 1991, and joined the National University of Malaya in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology. In 1999, Alatas was conferred the title 'Datuk' for his academic achievement and public service contributions. Alatas died of a heart attack after a fall in his home in Damansara Heights on 23 January 2007. Following his death, a memoriam to acknowledge his intellectual contributions was organized and attended by social science scholars from Malaysia and beyond, NGO activists and leading political dissenters and long haul opposition dissenters. Their diversity, as Kessler (2008: 128-29) pointed out, suggested "the breadth and depth of Syed Hussein Alatas's impact in Malaysia and beyond, not just within the 'Malay world' and Southeast Asia generally, but throughout what used to be called the Third World, and further afield, wherever 'postcolonialist' critiques of the 'postcolonial political and cultural status quo' are taken seriously".

Alatas wrote 14 books, 25 journal articles and more than 20 book chapters and conference papers in both Malay and English. Despite wearing many hats, Alatas was a humble man who described himself as a 'superfluous man'[4] and a 'useless sociologist'.[5] Countering the Eurocentric approach to the study of Southeast Asia was the lifelong passion for Alatas. *The Myth of the Lazy Native* was one of his most well known works, and it remained an important critical local scholarship on the discourse of western orientation.[6] The book's contents merit comments here as they lay out the foundation to the proposal put forward by Alatas in countering the arguments for NEP.

Alatas's Critique

In *The Myth of the Lazy Native*, Alatas dispelled the image of the lazy native in Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia as a perception propagated by the western orientalists to justify their continued exploitation of the national wealth and control of the local population. The colonial power promoted what he called the 'ideology of colonial capitalism'. It entailed the image of indolent native during the 19th century when the domination of the colonies reached a high peak to justify "the western rule in its alleged aim of modernizing and civilizing

the societies which had succumbed to western powers" (Alatas, 1977a: 7) and as a measure to acquire "extensive control of the area" (Alatas, 1977a: 70). Such judgments on the Asian natives imposed by the colonial scholars led to the thinking that "Europeans were the most civilized, followed by the foreign Asians, and then the natives" (Alatas, 1977a: 19). Alatas argued that the Malays were not idlers. They were active in farming, industry, trade, commerce, war and government and "only after the arrival of the Portuguese did the Malay merchant class declines" (Alatas, 1977a: 80). The Malays did not avoid permanent routine work *per se* but the "exploitative type in other people's mines and plantations" (Alatas, 1977a: 79). Alatas did not deny the existence of indolence Malays who were mostly from the upper class, including the passive or docile type of native rulers and chiefs waiting for land and benefits from the colonial rulers (Alatas, 1977a: 204-205). Alatas was against picking on the natives and generalizing them as lazy when there were also idlers in the other races.

The Myth of the Lazy Native reveals a contrasting impression of the Malay community between Alatas and the ruling government. United Malays National Organization (UMNO)—the major Malay political organization—had earlier released *Revolusi Mental* to provide its views on the attitude and way of thought of the Malay society, and suggested the way forward towards greater progress (Senu Abdul Rahman, 2004/1971).[7] Alatas accused the book of degrading the Malays and pushing the blame to the Malays should the government's plans to help the Malay community failed to meet their objectives. To him, the condition for a state to demonstrate self-sacrifice and cooperation is to create new institutions that promote genuine growth across the Malay community in particular and the Malaysian community in general. *Revolusi Mental* lent support to the colonial capitalism ideology that Alatas had debunked. As he wrote in *The Myth*:

> "The Malay society, according to the book (*Revolusi Mental*), is generally characterized by the following attitudes: the Malays are not honest to themselves, and they do not see their own faults. Hence, the causes of their backwardness are suggested to be colonialism, exploitation by other communities, the capitalist system, religion and a number of other causes" (Alatas, 1977a: 147).

> "The Revolusi Mental is a confirmation of the ideology of colonial capitalism as far as the Malays are concerned" (Alatas, 1977a: 150).

Alatas was also critical of Mahathir Mohamad's stand on the Malay issue. Before becoming the Prime Minister, Mahathir wrote *The Malay Dilemma*, which cited two reasons for the relatively weak social economic status of the Malays. First, there was the hereditary factor where the habit of family in breeding was prevalent among the Malays in the rural areas. He argued that the practice hindered the reproduction of better strains and characteristics of the future generation of Malays to compete more effectively with the immigrants. The second element was geographical where the lives in the rural areas being less taxing and demanding had led to the development of "weak racial characteristics", incapable of competing with the industrious and determined immigrants (read Chinese). Mahathir (1970: 75) declared that the motive

of preferential treatment was "not to put Malays in a superior position, but to bring them up to the level of the non-Malays".

Alatas and Mahathir shared a common goal—to eradicate Malay poverty. But Alatas was critical of Mahathir's argument that the Malays were genetically incompetent. Consistent with the earlier exposition, Alatas saw Malays as dynamic persons who were able to cope with modernity and succeed in trade as demonstrated in their peaceful economic relations with India and China from as early as the 11th century. Alatas also warned of the danger of over generalizing. Referring to Mahathir's use of the survival of the fittest hypothesis to argue for protectionism for the Malays, Alatas questioned whether the Malays were really not fit to compete at the level playing field. Many Malays, noted Alatas, had undergone serious struggle. "Malay fishing and rice farming were not as easy as Mahathir suggested. The Malay village community had to struggle much harder against diseases in the pre independence days", such as the need to "fight continuously against weeds, insects and pests" as well as indebtedness (Alatas, 1977a: 178-79). Zawawi Ibrahim (2005), who conducted field studies in the state of Trengganu, argued that the 'lazy natives' argument was a myth. His studies suggested that the Malays' decision not to work as labors in the plantation society was a 'rational exercise of choice' to take on other opportunities such as jobs in the industrial sector.

That being said, *The Myth* had not escaped critical reviews. Cruikshank (1978) accused Alatas of intellectual speculation that the Malays would have the ability to establish a trading empire without colonialism. Cruikshank also questioned the comparison of Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines for they were hardly similar with each other culturally and politically. To Carey (1982), Alatas's arguments were seriously undermined by insufficient attention to details as Alatas had a strong tendency of over generalizing his arguments. *The Myth*, as Carey (1982) argued, was also peppered with historical inaccuracies (Alatas was accused of inflating the power held by the Dutch).[8]

Alatas was convinced that the developing societies like Malaysia had to create their own pool of intellectuals and not rely on western ideologies to fill the intellectual vacuum. Alatas (1969, 1977b) raised the concern about the demonstration effect where ideas and social science traditions of the Europe and Americans were blindly adopted without the adopters in the region fully understanding their relevance to the local context. In a workshop organized by the National University of Singapore, Alatas spoke enthusiastically about 'combative scholarship' whereby he called for every scholar to be combative, to disagree with ideas, and not accept ideas from elsewhere blindly or in a wholesale manner. Relating this to the fight and struggle for independent, Alatas saw it as important to be also independent in thinking. In Alatas's words, "There is no point in shouting for independence if you are not also independent in your thinking. So this independent thinking is a continuation of why you need independence".[9] *Revolusi mental* and *The Malay Dilemma* were seen as biased analyses of Malays backwardness, without a thorough understanding of the mechanisms of capitalism.

Alatas was critical of the NEP as evidenced in an occasional paper published in 1972 by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. Alatas (1972) criticized the NEP because the planners at that time did not take into consideration the type of businesses the Malays were involved. The government's initiative to venture into businesses, expand the Malay business sector and hand over the business to a selected few Malay private entrepreneurs automatically hindered the growth of the Malay business because the state could potentially crowd out the Malays attempt to venture on their own. Alatas referred to the agriculture sector which the Malays had a comparative advantage, and one that had attracted the interest of the state as well, particularly in Razak's administration. Handling a successful previously managed by the government to a group of private Malay entrepreneurs was akin to the Orientalist view, considering the natives as lazy and incapable to growing businesses on their own. In a later publication, Alatas reiterated his position and wrote the following:

> "Transferring it to a group of Malay capitalists, a business which is thriving, and which they did not create, it is the height of absurdity which has never entered the imagination of even the most fanatical capitalists in the entire history of mankind. Why should a small handful of greedy and unenterprising Malays get the benefit of the transfer as opposed to the Malay community represented by the workers of the enterprise and governments interest in its. For the Malay community it is better for government to reap the profit rather than a handful of Malays who shall not use the profit for public welfare as the government would but rather to stuff themselves with beer, to let each child have a car, to parade the golf-course, to frequent night-clubs, to grow fat at the expense of the majority" (Alatas, 1974: 9).

As Vice Chancellor of the University of Malaya, Alatas preferred the merit based system where academicians were appointed based on their credentials and not the ethnic group they were associated with. Similarly, as a member of the Gerakan Party, he had laid the foundation for multi-racial Malaysia, suggesting, for example, the use of Malay as the National Language (*Bahasa Malaysia*) rather than *Bahasa Melayu*. He supported the party's call towards overcoming communalism and towards making the national identity a set of values acceptable to all communities.

Alatas encouraged the local Malays in Malaysia to gain success in their own right. Alatas urged the government to provide the Malays with credit facilities to take off, noting that the more enterprising Malays would do well with the loans (Alatas, 1972: 9). "If the group of Malays to whom the government shall hand over the business is enterprising and seasoned in the trade, they should have no difficulty to start their own enterprise, partially with credit facilities made available and unfair obstacles broken down by the government legislation" (Alatas, 1972: 9). It can be argued that Alatas's recommendation resembled that of the ruling party in the sense that it creates ethnic division and stereotypes the Malaysians based on race. In trying to favor the economic interest of one group against another, the measure could easily arouse rather than defuse racial antagonisms and generate ethnic consciousness and animosity. But Alatas's sugges-

tion differed from the NEP in an important aspect. UMNO planned to develop successful businesses and handed them over to a selected few Malays. Alatas proposed a genuine attempt to develop the entrepreneur spirit of the Malay population and for the state to provide opportunities for all Malays to escape poverty.

An Assessment of the New Economic Policy of Malaysia

The NEP was unveiled in the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975 (published in 1971) as a means to improve the socio-economic status of the Malay community through strong and deliberate government assistance. Income discrepancy between the Chinese and Malays, according to the some Malay political leaders, had created discontentment among the Malays, leading to the bloody May 13, 1969 riots.[10] The riot was a significant event as it laid the justification for strong government interference to correct ethnic-based economic imbalances. The event led to the suspension of the parliament with the executive power handed over to the National Operations Council (NOC). NOC was led by Tun Abdul Razak, the Malaysian second Prime Minister. Alatas was a member of the National Consultative Council (NCC), which the NOC had established to draw up economic and social proposals to promote lasting peace in Malaysia. Khor and Khoo (2008: 63) wrote the following on Alatas's contribution at the NCC.

> "In the NOC, Syed Hussein was his element. He contributed many good ideas. First, he suggested that Malay be known as the National language (Bahasa Malaysia) rather than as Bahasa Melayu. Gerakan's liberal interpretation of national culture was also very influential. Instead of making any one ethnic group the basis of national identity, a set of values acceptable to all communities should be the basis of future development. This was the Rukun Negara literally National Tenets. They included belief in God, Loyalty to King and Country; The Supremacy of the Constitution and Rule of Law, together with Good Manners and Behavior".

The above quotation clearly suggests Alatas's preference for a merit-based Malaysian society where any assistance afforded by the government has to be independent of race and religion. This was, however, not realized as the 'New Economic Policy' (NEP) was put in place to improve the economic status of the Malays through massive economic redistributive programs.[11] The NEP was institutionalized with the promulgation of the Petroleum Development Act in 1974 and the Industrial Coordination Act (ICA) in April 1975. The former was formalized the federal government control over Malaysia's oil resource instead of the states. The funds were subsequently crucial for the federal government to finance the various development projects that had benefited the Malay community. The ICA, on the other hand, required non-Malay businesses with capital and reserve funds of more than MYR250,000 and more than 25 employees to comply with the NEP requirements before their business licenses could be approved or renewed. These initiatives were later supported by the establishment of unit trusts schemes namely the Bumiputra Investment Fund (Yayasan Peraburan Bumiputra founded in 1979), the Amanah Saham Nasional Berhad (ASNB,

founded in 1979) and the Permodalan Nasional Berhad (PNB, founded in 1979) to increase the share of equity ownership held by the Malay community.

The NEP was formally over in 1990 but it was extended with the introduction of the National Development Policy (NDP) in 1991. Non-Malays continue to find it difficult, if not constitutionally impossible, to challenge the preferential treatment offered to the Bumiputras. While political leaders, including Mahathir Mohamad, Abdullah Badawi, Musa Hitam and Najib Razak, have occasionally called upon the Bumiputras to get rid of their crutches, attempts to relax the ruling have often met with resistance from the Malay community. It is interesting that even the oppositions have found it difficult to remove the Malay special rights in the bid not to lose the support of the Malays. Following the 8 March 2008 general election in which the oppositions won five Malaysian states, the opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim quickly assured Malays that their racial and religious rights would be protected in the five Malaysian states. This came after questions were raised by Malays on whether the Anwar-led Alliance was allowing the weakening of the Malay position after winning handsomely in the March election.[12]

The entry of Mahathir in 1981 as Malaysia's fourth Prime Minister hastened the development of Malay capital. Mahathir was concerned that after 10 years of the NEP, little progress was made. Mahathir has long regarded protectionism measures in favor of the Malays as the necessary form of government intervention. Mahathir faulted the liberal policies advocated by Tungku Abdul Rahman for allowing non Malays to hold key cabinet positions and do business without restrictions (Heng, 1997). Mahathir (1970: 15) blamed the Tungku-led government for the May 1969 riots. The government's "ridiculous assumption" that the "Chinese were only interested in business and acquisition of wealth and that the Malays wished only to become government servants" led to policies that "undermined whatever superficial understanding there was between Malays and non-Malays". He defended constitutional provision of Malay land reserve, government scholarships for Malay students and quotes for employment of Malays in the civil service. Mahathir reasoned that because of the hereditary and the government's misperception about the Malays it would take years for them to compete on a level playing field (Mahathir, 1970: 31). The NEP gave Mahathir the legitimacy to put his ideas into practice (Gomez, 2009).

The recession in 1985-86 recast the NEP with the government's greater acceptance of policies shaped by market forces. The weakening of the government's budget compelled the Mahathir-led UMNO to reduce subsidizing losses incurred by the NEP mandated state owned enterprises, prompting the government to announce the liberalization of the Industrial Co-ordination Act, and the establishment of the National Development Policy in June 1991 (to uphold the NEP's objectives.) To address the economic downturn, the Malaysian government introduced policies to attract foreign investment. In June 1985, the government allowed foreigners to retain up to 80% of equity ownership in firms exporting 80% of more of production. Mahathir later allowed 100% foreign equity

ownership for firms exporting 50% or more of their production or sold at least 50% of their product in the country's free trade zones.

The interest of the Malays was, however, never neglected. The government facilitated the creation of Malays-foreigners joint ventures with the intention of securing foreign funds, managerial expertise and know-how and foreign markets for the Malays controlled firms. The cooperation between the Malays led Antah Biwater and British Biwater Limited in the water supply projects was a case in point where government support for the deal was evident even though the former had no experience in the field of engineering (Gomez and Jomo, 1997). The Look East Policy further expanded the Malays entry into the corporate sector, leading to the development of Japan-Malay joint ventures such as the Mitsubishi-Proton, Daihatsu-Perodua and Nippon Steel-Perwaja collaborations. In addition, Malaysia undertook massive privatization exercise. Besides the usual economic arguments for privatization, the Malaysian case was preoccupied with the desire to restructure the Malaysian society in favor of the Malays.[13] The notion of raising the proportion of Malays as shareholders of listed companies was cited as one of the objectives of privatization, and this gave the planners the legitimacy to do what they thought was necessary to fulfill the NEP objectives through the privatization exercise. To achieve this, UMNO owned holding companies and the government held the controlling share of many privatized SOEs. For example, the Ministry of Finance continues to hold majority ownership of key privatized companies including Telekom Malaysia and Tenaga Berhad even after more than two decades of divestment (privatization plans were first announced in 1983) (see Jomo, 2003 and Tan, 2008).[14]

The 2008 election results showed that the Barisan Nasional (BN), led by Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister and UMNO President Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, could no longer ride on Malay votes on the understanding that the Malays would continue to support BN by maintaining the special positions of Malays. Besides losing five states to the oppositions, the ruling alliance failed to secure a two-third majority in parliament, a first since the General Election in 1969.[15] Many factors could have explained the elections results. For example, the government's continued failure to combat corruption and cronyism that benefited some factions of the Malay community but not the majority might have created discontentment among the Malay population. The sacking of Anwar Ibrahim had also considerably weakened Malay support for UMNO. Anwar's charismatic leadership appealed to the moderate Malays who switched support to the multiethnic KeAdilan party.

In the context of this paper, the preferential policy of the ruling party adversely affected the non-Malays and some factions of the Malays who perceived that they were neglected. For example, while the Malays have acquired a greater proportion of the corporate sector wealth due to the preservation of Malay special rights, the lion's share of the economic cake has been in the hands of the Malay elites who in the guise of the special rights had obtained contracts and privatization deals through their connection with those in power.[16] The re-

moval of state erected cushions that had grown in the seven-
ties did offer some healthy competition for the majority of the
Malays. But initiatives such as privatization enhanced the op-
portunities enjoyed by the few Malay business elite. To realize
Mahathir's vision of turning Malaysia into a developed na-
tion, the former Prime Minister even expanded the business
elite group to non-Malays, pampering them with protection
and business deals from the government. The latter was in
tandem with the perception of the political leaders concern-
ing the underachievement of the Malay majority to lead the
country's development agenda, requiring the state and the
few business elites to take on the responsibility instead. That
politicians do not necessarily behave as benevolent despots
is not a revolutionary idea. The NEP has set the roles of the
game and offered the politicians the legitimacy and tool to
pursue their own interest and react to incentives.

Racial tensions remain a real concern *on the ground* and
it reflects a serious consequence of the preferential policy.
What Alatas and perhaps some Malay political leaders failed
to realize was that as the size of the Malay middle class rises,
members of the different ethnic groups competed more fero-
ciously to capture a large slice of the economic pie. With the
NEP, the state's scarce resources began to move towards the
Malay ethnic group, and the development of the 'Malayness',
'Indianness' and 'Chineseness' also began to occur among
the ethnic groups.[17] The Chinese and Indian communities'
discontents built up over the years because of the socio-eco-
nomic neglect and discrimination in various aspects of their
public life. The Kampung Medan violence in March 2001 and
Hindraf march on 25 November 2007, triggered by the demo-
lition of a 70-year old Hindu temple in Kampung Jawa, Shah
Alam reminded the Malaysians of the fragility of racial rela-
tions in their country. The march reflected the discontentment
of Malaysian Indians who have been largely neglected by
the government in its course of addressing Malay grievances
through the NEP. The role of stories told from one generation
to another of *us* versus *them*, and the concern of unfairness in
their lives continued to jeopardize the social relations within
the Malaysian society. More violence took place between the
Indians and Malays in August 2009 after Pakatan-Rakyat led
Selangor state proposed to move a 15-year old Indian temple
to Section 23 in Shah Alam. Malay residents in Section 23
protested the move, claiming that the site was too close to the
homes of Muslims. The Malay protestors, numbering about
50, brought along the severed head of a cow—regarded as a
sacred animal by Hindus—and stomped on it. A candlelight
vigil held over the incident led to the arrest of Hindraf mem-
bers, including its leader P. Uthayakumar. The Selangor state
government decided to shelve plans to relocate the temple
after a public dialogue organized on 5 September 2009 to
settle the issues turned ugly. The NEP objective to eliminate
poverty in Malaysia did not appear to cut across ethnicity for
the Indians.

Similarly, the rural Chinese working class, which made
up of one-third of the rural population in Malaysia faced
acute problems of overcrowding, poor sanitation and in-
frastructure. Land resettlement programs administered by
FELDA and FELCRA were targeted "primarily at Malay rice

farmers and rubber and oil palm smallholders" (Heng, 1997:
277). Yazmin Azman (2008) told the story of her Chinese
friend who, despite having represented Malaysia in various
sporting events and brought glory to her country, was unable
to secure a government scholarship. An excellent student,
the fact that she was not a Bumiputra had deprived her from
studying in an elite university abroad. "So she stood by and
watched while those who slept through their government-
funded education and scraped through the examinations
secured scholarships because they happened to be of the
right race. Where is the fairness in that?" (Yazmin Azman,
2008: 195). As evidenced in the non-bloody but numerous
ethnic tensions in the country, such stories of unfairness drove
behavior of the people, influenced how they think and caused
massive swings in mood and social conditions.

Any initiative to change has to come from the ruling
BN. A gradual, and not abrupt, change is necessary in the
Malaysian context because treatments based on ethnic dif-
ferences have been embedded in the hearts and minds of
the various groups. Analyses of the 8 March 2008 election
suggested that up to 2008, UMNO had failed to keep pace
with some of the fundamental socio-economic transforma-
tions within the Malay community and the tensions between
the Malays and non-Malays, which saw UMNO facing a deep
'crisis of authority' (O'Shannassy, 2009). A long time observer
of Malaysian politics, Clive Kessler (2009) argued that it is
absolutely necessary for BN to "return to the more inclusive
spirit and foundational attitudes of the Merdeka Generation
and its leaders". However, he warned that changes have to be
made "gradually but with incremental momentum" towards
becoming a "unitary post communal party of Malaysian citi-
zens, regardless of ethnicity". Tellingly, the vision is similar to
that of the Gerakan Party, a party which Syed Hussein Alatas
helped to found.

Seen in this light, PM Najib Razak's recent initiative is
an important step towards a more communitarian society in
Malaysia. PM Najib had openly acknowledged the problem
associated with the pro-Malays policies. This represents an
important gesture from the newly appointed Prime Minister.
For one thing, he has called for the government to help poor
Malaysians based on merit; "In our fight for the poor, we
must look at all the races. And when we help the Malays, let it
be the worthy ones".[18] A Malay himself, Najib acknowledged
that while the economic pie must expand, "there is no point
in having a larger share of a shrinking pie".[19] Among the bold
moves announced in June/July 2009 were (1) introduction of
a new category of scholarships which would be based solely
on merits and not on racial background, and (2) scrapping of
the requirement for listed companies to allocate 30% of their
equity to Malays and other Bumiputras. The latter was an
extension of Mahathir's decision in the mid 1980s to sus-
pend the 30% bumiputra share ownership requirement on
certain foreign investment that was never reinstated. Najib's
decision was partly in response to the global financial crisis
of 2008/2010 - to increase the attractiveness of Malaysia to
foreign investors. It is also possible to link the decision to the
dismal performance of the Barisan Nasional in the 8 March
2008 election. The perception was that the pro-Malay poli-

cies that appeared to have benefited politically connected Malays had driven both Malays and non-Malays to vote for the opposition in the election. Immediate analyses of Najib's announcement ranged from those who welcomed the move as one that "will put Malaysia on a better footing for sustained growth" to those who would like to see how the details would work out, warning that the move risked a backlash from Najib's Malay supporters.[20]

However, Najib did not really scrap the objectives stated in the NEP in the entirety. For instance, the government remains committed to reach the target of 30% Malay share of corporate wealth by 2020 although the means to do so might have altered. As part of the effort to liberalize the Malaysian corporate sector, PM Najib has announced the setting up of a private equity fund to buy private companies and hand them over to the Malay managers. Two issues are worth considering.

Firstly, it represented a continuation in the belief that there were not enough capable Bumiputras both in terms of skill and capital to venture by themselves, and hence the necessity for the government to move into business. Historically, as Alatas and others have painstakingly demonstrated, the 'natives' were economically active and capable to succeeding in business ventures and acquire wealth and economic status for themselves without supporting them with an all encompassing crutch. To Alatas, a positive way forward is to create a level playing field for all Malaysians either in terms of access to higher education in public universities, acquisition of government contracts, and for Muslims in Malaysia and elsewhere to renew their interest in science and technology to compete in the global arena.[21] These would lead to the increasing representation of able Bumiputras who have the 'thinking capacity' to succeed not only in the private sector but the public sector as well.

Secondly, the NEP-linked policies have been criticized for promoting improper practices, resulting in large losses to the less politically-connected Malays in particular and Malaysians in general. For example, when the Asian crisis hit in 1997/98, some of these firms were nationalized at a huge cost to the Malaysian society in general. This being the case for the Malaysian Airlines System where the government bought back shares of the company from Tajuddin Ramli at RM8/unit at the time when the market rate was only RM3/unit. The re-nationalization of Bakun Dam and national sewerage projects, and the government's decision to regain control of the North-South Highway toll operator and telecommunications firm, Celcom, were other examples of mistakes that have proven to be costly.[22] Essentially, the provision of Bumiputra business privilege created an opaque environment and opened the door for corruption.[23] The Malays desperately want UMNO to clean up its act, to curb corrupt and rowdy acts among its party members. As Alatas has argued, the government could play a more constructive role by identifying the type of business in which the Malays have a comparative advantage, and support their participation in the private sector. Lessons should be learned to avoid creating opportunities for politically connected corporate leaders to make huge profits but often create discontent for the ordinary people.

Conclusion

The paper begins by profiling the academic contributions of Syed Hussein Alatas who was widely known as one of the intellectual giants in Southeast Asian Studies. This is followed with the discussion on his concerns about the NEP of Malaysia. It is indicative that there were some supports for Alatas's thesis—that efforts to breed Malay capitalists would generate negative externalities and inequality within the Malaysian society. For one thing, the NEP had led to discontentment among the Malays and non-Malays, leading to emigration and capital flight, which could have been retained domestically. Recognizing that an open declaration of the pro-Malay policies is political suicidal, Malay political leaders moved back and forth in terms of their support for the non-Malays. Because it is also not easy to reverse the preferential treatment for the Malays, ethnic tension in the Malaysian society has remained to this day. Alatas did not live long enough to witness recent events that provide some indications of a transition towards a more merit based system, which is increasingly recognized as necessary to maintain Malaysia's global competitiveness in the years to come. For this, Malaysians are indebted to S.H. Alatas for his practical and intellectual contributions in laying out the foundation for multi-racial politics in Malaysia.

ENDNOTES

1. "Alatas the towering thinker", *The Star*, 28 January 2007.

2. Azhar Ibrahim Alwee (2007: 26).

3. "Revisiting 'lazy native' myth", *New Straits Times*, 29 July 2007.

4. Illeto (2007). The description served to remind Alatas of the need to better use his 'superfluous time' to start 'developing research on many new things' (ibid: 44).

5. While Alatas has received international acclaimed, he lamented the fact that he had not been asked to participate in "educational planning, planning against corruption or anything connected with planning and development" for the Malaysian government. See "Peer recognition..Zo:A-Al", *New Straits Times*, 18 September 2005 and "In memoriam: Syed Hussein Alatas, myth breaker", downloadable in http://www.bakrimusa.com/archives/in-memoriam-prof-syed-hussein-alatas-myth-breaker (accessed: 15 March 2010).

6. Published before Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), Alatas's book was widely praised. In Said's later book, *Culture and Imperialism*, Said wrote the following:

   "Alatas's book, as startlingly original in its way as Guhas's, also details how European colonialism created an object, in this case the lazy native, who performed a crucial function in the calculations and advocacies of what Alatas called colonial capitalism" (Said, 1993: 296).

7. The book consisted of essays written by UMNO Youth Leaders, including the former Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. In the book's Forward, then Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak wrote:

   "We are aware that one of the reasons the Malays are unable to participate fully in economic and social development efforts in their backward way of thinking, caused by a lack of knowledge and the shackles of an outmoded way of life. In consequence where progress is concerned, the Malays lag several steps behind the other communities." (Senu Abdul Rahman, 2004/1971: vii).

8. See Garf (2010). Garf did a thorough reading of the reviews of *The Myth*, and concluded that from 1983 onwards, almost all of the reviews from Western based scholars as well as those from other parts of the world had referred to the book as an 'authoritative work'.

9. In November 2004, Professors Rey Illeto and Goh Beng Lan from the Southeast Asian Studies Program at the National University of Singapore organized a workshop to bring together eight senior scholars from the Southeast Asian region. At the age of over 80 years, Alatas was the oldest among the group. The statement was quoted from Alatas's speech made at the gathering. See Illeto (2007).

10. Others such as Cheah (2002: 106) attributed the most important cause of the riots to "Malay dissatisfaction over non-Malays threats and challenges to Malay rights and Malay political supremacy". For example, problems concerning the use of Chinese language in notices, announcements and form aggravated the ethnic tensions after Malay became the sole official language in the country in 1967. A recent study by Kua (2007) argued the riots were a coup d'état by the then emergent Malay state capitalists led by Tun Razak to overthrow Malaysian first Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. In Tungku's words "You know Harun was one of them—Harun, Mahathir, Ghazali Shafie - who were all working with Razak to oust me, to take over my place…." (quoted in Kua, 2007: 3). Police attempts to stop the fighting were unsuccessful. The riots led to about 200 deaths according to official figures although a much higher number of fatalities were recorded by international correspondents.

11. The goals of the NEP were to be achieved through four policies, (1) promoting of large scale regional development programs, (2) generating of job opportunities proportionate to the population of ethnic groups, (3) increasing the share of Bumiputra in stockholding to 30.1% by 1990 from 1.9% in 1970 and (4) raising the Bumiputra community's involvement in Malaysia's industrial and commercial activities to 30%. To empower the Malays, the Constitution was amended to make it a seditious criminal offence to challenge the terms of the NEP, the special status of the Malays and the standing of the Sultans who represented the epitome of Malay culture and community. The government declared that the NEP would bring benefits to all ethnic groups as restructuring would be achieved primarily through economic growth. For a good discussion of the politics of the NEP, see Milne (1976).

12. "Malay rights would not be eroded: Anwar", *The Straits Times*, 19 November 2008.

13. Mahathir (1984: 5) emphasized that the privatization initiative would "not negate the objectives of the NEP" in the sense that the Bumiputras would "get their share, both in terms of equity and in employment".

14. On this basis, some factions of the society have claimed that the Bumiputra equity target of 30% for the Bumiputra has been reached. The Gerakan Party leader Lim Keng Yaik had urged the replacement of the NEP on this very basis. 'Our own rough estimate shows corporate share ownership by Bumiputras far exceeds the 30% target in plantation agriculture (45%) and mining (50%, while it is more than double the target in the banking and finance sector' (*Malaysian Business*, October 16, 1986; quoted in Heng, 1997: 285).

15. The number of seats won by UMNO dwindled from 109 in the 2004 Election to 79 while the MCA and MIC saw their seats falling from 31 to 15 and 9 to 3, respectively. On the contrary, the opposition alliance, comprising KeAdilan, PAS and DAP, won a resounding victory with the number of seats acquired increasing from a mere 20 to 82. UMNO subsequently loss confidence in Badawi's leadership and paved the way for Najib Razak to take over. Najib became Malaysia's sixth Prime Minister on 2 April 2009. For analyzes of the elections, see Maznah Mohamad (2008), Singh (2009) and Woo (2009).

16. Ong (2000: 60) coined the term 'graduated sovereignty' to depict the differential treatment of the population based on ethno-racial differences. Her ethnographic work in Malaysia led her to conclude that the true gainers of the NEP were the privileged Malays—'the lucky but not always talented, few who had been favored by the affirmative action policies and by the patronage of powerful politicians' whereas the younger female Malays who worked in factories and aboriginal population have been deprived of similar treatment from the state. Gomez (2009) analyses of the top 100

companies quoted on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange in 2000 concluded that the wealth had largely concentrated in the hands of the government, rather than the Malays per se. No Bumiputra individual emerged with a controlling interest in the top 10 companies measured in terms of market capitalization.

17. It can be argued that ethnic relations during the colonial period were relatively harmonious with each racial group keeping to itself and maintaining a separate, parallel existence. Most members of the different ethnic groups were not competing for the economical roles and therefore there was less direct conflict with each other.

18. "Policy to aid poor must be merit-based: Najib", *The Straits Times*, 23 March 2009.

19. "Najib's Affirmative Action II", *The Wall Street Journal Asia*, 2 July 2009.

20. "Najib's bold political gamble", *The Straits Times*, 1 July 2009; "Will UMNO buy Najib's vision?" The Straits Times, 3 July 2009.

21. The latter proposition was made at the International Islamic Political Economy Conference in Malaysia in 1996,"Renew interest in science and technology, says Syed Hussein", *New Straits Times*, 11 December 1996.

22. See Wain (2009), especially Part II. Woo (2009) argued that Malaysia is caught in the middle income trap because of the continuation of NEP-linked policies in its economic growth strategy.

23. As an indicator, corruption in Malaysia has not improved as it draws nearer to 2020. Malaysia slipped from 39th place in 2005 to 43rd position in 2007 and 44th position in 2008 based on the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

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Betel Nut Culture in Contemporary Taiwan

By Annie Liu, M.A.P.S.

Abstract

In the past century, Taiwan underwent multiple major hegemonic changes. As the country entered a rapid economic boom in the 1970s, it made a mark on the global scene and interactions with different cultures greatly increased. The combination of globalization, industrialization, urbanization, and rapid political changes within the past century created an identity crisis for the Taiwanese. In what later became an assertion of ethnic and national identity, a revived interest in the betel nut chewing culture has led to an emergence of betel nut girls, who are scantily clad women who sell betel nuts in roadside stalls. This paper explores the history of the usage of betel nuts in Taiwan and considers consumption of betel nuts as a social, economic, and ethical barrier, as well as their contribution to the formation of personal and national identity. Health, gender, and ethical issues that have risen due to the increased consumption of betel nuts and arrival of the betel nut girls are also addressed.

Betel Nut Culture in Contemporary Taiwan

As Taiwan entered a rapid economic boom in the 1970s and made a mark on the global scene, interactions with different cultures greatly increased. The effects of globalization – such as a growing global media and the increased exposure to foreign ideas, norms, and beliefs – forced the Taiwanese to reflect upon and transform their own culture. While many Taiwanese looked outside their country to find new cultural symbols of modernity, there were also many people who became hostile toward these cultural invasions and in response, created a heightened sense of ethnic awareness.

Around the same time, Taiwan was undergoing political liberalization as the Nationalist Martial Law lifted in the 1980s and political power shifted from the Nationalist Party to the Democratic Progressive Political Party. Furthermore, the combination of globalization, industrialization, urbanization, and rapid hegemonic political changes within the past century created an identity crisis for the Taiwanese. In roughly a century, Taiwan changed from being part of the imperial Chinese empire, to a Japanese colony, a military dictatorship, and finally a democratic republic. These rapid changes forced the Taiwanese to constantly redefine their personal and national identity.

Consequently, these changes caused a revival in native Taiwanese culture, one of which manifested an interest in the betel nut chewing culture in the late 1980s and since then, a new cultural phenomenon called "betel nut girls" (*binlangxishi*) has emerged. Betel nut girls are beautiful women dressed in very seductive clothing who sell betel nuts in bright neon-lit glass stalls by roadsides. However, the revival of the betel nut culture in Taiwan and the arrival of betel nut girls, sparked many controversial debates on issues regarding health, social order, moral decline, female exploitation, and culture. Some of the topics that this paper will explore are the roles that globalization, urbanization, and politics play in the revival in the consumption of betel nuts and the invention of the betel nut girl. I will also consider consumption of betel nuts as a social, economical, and ethical barrier, as well as its contribution to the formation of personal and national identity.

What is the Betel Nut?

The seed of the *Areca catechu* palm tree is called the "areca nut," and is commonly known as the betel nut. The Areca palm is grown in tropical areas, such as Central Asia, South Asia, India and parts of East Africa and is often used as a stimulant to keep people awake and warm, and for the feeling of well-being it provides. In Taiwan, a package of six betel nuts typically sells for roughly $1.25 to $2.00 USD and is stuffed with a chalky lime paste and wrapped with a betel nut leaf.[1] Vendors sometimes incorporate various ingredients into their lime paste, such as food coloring, licorice, or menthol, to distinguish their betel nuts among competitors. After chewing betel nuts, people tend to experience an increase in the production of saliva, as well as an increase in heart rate and breathing.

Since the late 1990s, betel nuts became the second largest selling crop in Taiwan after rice. The betel nut industry in Taiwan is worth about $1 billion USD and grows about 140,000 tons per year.[2] A reason that led to the success of the betel nut industry in Taiwan is the lack of regulations under the Nationalists administration since 1949, which helped turn betel nuts into a cash crop. For a long time, there were no laws or taxes placed on farming or selling betel nut, thus earning its nickname as "green gold."[3] As the betel nuts are sold fresh and must be processed within 48 hours of picking, there are no barriers between the wholesalers and the vendors.[4] So far, aside from the betel nut girls, the wholesale marketing of betel nuts is practically free from corporate influence and governmental regulation.[5] In addition, due to the lax regulation on betel nut farming, more people began to exploit the lands to create more betel nut farms and as a result, it has brought attention to a number of environmental issues, such as soil erosion and flooding.[6]

In 1992, the International Agency for Research on Cancer declared the betel nut as a carcinogen that can cause cancer in the oral cavity, pharynx, throat, and esophagus.[7] Due to the increased consumption of betel nuts in Taiwan, it has become the prime cancer for men between 22 and 44 years old, creating 5,000 new cases of oral cancer and causing 2,300 deaths per year. Furthermore, most oral cancer patients die at around 54 years old, causing many families to lose their primary income earners.[8] According to the Bureau of Health Promotion in the Department of Health in Taiwan, 88% of those who have oral or nasopharyngeal cancer are betel nut chewers.[9] Despite the government's efforts to educate the public about the dangers of chewing betel nuts, it has been argued that the existence of the betel nut girls thwart the efforts of the government and health department to curb cancer and instead led to increases in government spending on healthcare to take care of those who suffer consequences caused by consuming betel nuts.[10]

Betel Nuts in Chinese History

According to Christian Anderson's *Betel Nut Chewing Culture: the Social and Symbolic Life of an Indigenous Commodity in Taiwan and Hainan*, the consumption of betel nuts in Taiwan began as early as 4,000 years ago. Since the Han Dynasty and throughout the Qing Dynasty in China, betel nuts were often used by nobles, kings and elites. Many Taiwanese aboriginal peoples, such as the Paiwan, Amis, Rukai, Yami, and Pingpu used betel nuts in rituals, shamanism, and even medicine.[11] In some Taiwanese aboriginal cultures, a woman would offer a gift of betel nuts to the man she adores to signify her desire to have a baby with him.[12] After the Han Chinese immigrated to Taiwan in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), many of them adopted the aboriginal betel nut culture and began to use them in medicine and as part of their gift-giving rituals at weddings or more generally when visiting friends. For the Han Taiwanese, the betel nuts carried the connotation of friendship or communication, and not accepting a gift of betel nuts would appear to be rude.[13] By the early Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) in Taiwan, the betel nuts became a very popular and high-priced commodity, resulting in the Qing government levying taxes on betel nuts.[14]

However, after the end of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Japan's colonization of Taiwan, the connotation associated with the betel nuts changed significantly. During this rapid political change, the Japanese outlawed all Taiwanese from consuming betel nuts by claiming that it was uncivilized and unsanitary. However they did not enforce the law upon the aboriginal people, which eventually led to the consumption of betel nuts turning into an ethnic and social barrier between the aboriginals and the Han Taiwanese.[15] Since only the aboriginal people were left consuming the betel nuts, a new connotation was created to associate those who consumed betel nuts as uncivilized.

After World War II, the Japanese elite was replaced by the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), who fled Mainland China and took over Taiwan after the defeat of the Civil War with the Chinese Communist Party (1947-1949). The Nationalists continued to use the negative connotation associated with betel nuts to distinguish themselves and the aboriginals. Since then, the primary group that chewed betel nuts – namely the aboriginal people – were classified as the lowest socio-economic group in the Taiwanese society.[16] Choosing not to consume betel nuts, among other factors, enabled the new ruling elite to establish and maintain a sense of superiority over the native Taiwanese aboriginals.

From the 1970s on, the connotation behind the consumption of betel nuts evolved from serving primarily as an ethnic barrier to representing those among the lower-social-economic labor class. As Taiwan began to experience an economic and industrial boom in the 1970s, the expansion of highways created many new jobs. To deal with this new need for more laborers, many aboriginal people were hired to work as truck drivers and construction workers alongside the Taiwanese. During this time interactions between the aboriginals and the Taiwanese increased and the aboriginals introduced the benefits of chewing betel nuts to the Taiwanese.[17] They found that chewing betel nuts helped keep them awake and gave them warmth as they worked long hours. This habit also became very widespread among those in the military who chewed it to help them keep up with their military routines.

Another lingering social stigma from the Japanese occupation in Taiwan is the social stigma against women who chewed betel nuts.[18] Women who chewed betel nuts were considered vulgar and unsophisticated, and as a result, other than indigenous women, the Han Taiwanese women typically do not consume betel nuts. According to the Bureau of Health Promotion, 1.5 to 1.7 million Taiwanese chewed betel nuts in 2009, which is approximately 7% of the entire population.[19] 16.8% of all men in Taiwan chew betel nuts, while only 1.2% of those who purchase betel nuts were women.[20] It is unclear exactly how many women in Taiwan chew betel nuts because the statistics only account for those who purchase the nuts and not whether the women themselves chew the nuts they purchase or if the nuts were purchased for someone else.

The Search of an Identity

In response to the economic boom in the 1970s and the political liberalization and lifting of the Nationalists Martial Law (1948-1987), the tourism industry in Taiwan began to prosper and the Taiwanese people's interactions with the outside world increased greatly. A cosmopolitan atmosphere soon developed and brought with it many different cultures and foods from all over the world. Strangely, the greater freedom in exotic food selections did not lead to the decline of Taiwanese native cuisines, but instead revived local food traditions. David Wu, the author of the article "McDonald's in Taiwan: Hamburgers, Betel Nuts and National Identity," argues that McDonalds, which represented symbols of Western and Americana cultural imperialism, and the consumption of betel nuts, became two poles of ethnic consciousness and cultural identity.[21] Furthermore, Wu explains that the two cultural food traditions peacefully coexist in Taiwan. As a result of this greater freedom of choice not bounded by class or ethnicity, the increasing popularity of eating betel nuts became a sign of heightened ethnic awareness and contributed to the search of "authenticity" with everything considered Taiwanese.[22]

In the 1990s, the consumption of betel nuts played an important role in the Taiwanese people's construction of a national identity as the political relationship between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan deteriorated due to the 1995-1996 missile crisis after President Lee Teng-hui's visit to the United States and rumors of a pro-independent Taiwan arose. In 2000 political power suddenly shifted from the Nationalists Party to Democratic Progressive Party in Taiwan, ending more than half a century continuous rule by the Nationalists. Under President Chen Shui-bian's administration, he rejected One-China policy, which was a precondition for reconciliation talks with China. As a response to the souring relationship, the Taiwanese government created an Indigenous Cultural Renaissance to promote a "Taiwan-centric" culture, which is commonly referred to as "Taiwanization." The "emergence of a local identity coincided with things Taiwanese," in order to distinguish culturally the Taiwanese from the Mainland Chinese.[23] Consequently, the choice

to consume betel nuts became an expression and symbol of one's political identity. According to Wu, "Betel-nut chewing is associated with the symbolic revival of a 'Taiwanese' rural lifestyle among people who are searching for ways to construct a new national identity." Consequently, betel nuts came to represent cultural autonomy and served as a tool for asserting the freedom to choose one's own ethnic identity.[24]

Figure 1: **Betel nut girl Ada preparing betel nuts for sale in her stall. Ada has been featured in a number of photo exhibitions, interviews, and documentaries.** *Photo credit: Tobie Openshaw.*

The Marketing of Betel Nuts

The revival of the betel nut chewing culture unintentionally sparked a cultural phenomenon known as "betel nut girls" that has swept over Taiwan. Even though betel nuts are sold in various parts of the world, betel nut girls can only be found in Taiwan, which makes betel nut girls a unique attraction for tourists. The betel nut girl is a combination of a waitress, a tour guide, local attraction, and a hostess. They are beautiful women, who dress in costumes or in provocatively skimpy attire while selling betel nuts to long-distance truckers, laborers, farmers, people of the lower economic class, and tourists.

"Betel nut girls" are known as *binlangxishi* in Chinese, where *binlang* means "betel nut" and *Xishi* is the name of a legendary beautiful woman in the China's Spring and Autumn Period. In Chinese history, Xishi is known for leading the kingdom to destruction due to her mesmerizing beauty. There is no exact date of when the first betel nut girls appeared in Taiwan, but the phenomenon is often attributed to a pair of sisters who called themselves the "Betel Nut Sisters"

on a television show in the 1960s. Betel nut girls became more widespread in the 1980s and the 1990s as more vendors appeared and created more competition in the industry. The betel nut girls prepare nuts for sale and go up to cars to take orders for betel nuts, drinks, and cigarettes. They often chat with their customers and give tourists information about the area, thus partly serving as a tour guide. Furthermore, these women are dressed in outfits to flirt with men as a technique to attract more customers. They work in shops or stalls that are decorated with brightly colored neon lights behind a large glass, which resembles an aquarium tank filled with exotic fish. The vendors are often located near highways where they hope to catch long-distance drivers. Some of the less elaborate stalls are portable and the vendors sometimes try to sell the betel nuts literally on highway ramps during rush hour where traffic is congested. As a result, these girls often cause a distraction to drivers and create car accidents.[25]

Aside from the commodification of betel nuts, the girls themselves and the experience of purchasing betel nuts from them has also turned into a commodity. Even though most men from higher social classes claim that they do not chew betel nuts, they sometimes still make purchases. However, like many tourists, the men from higher social classes might not actually chew the nuts but purchase them solely for the experience and opportunity to interact with the betel nut girls.[26]

Like the provocative and skimpy clothing a betel nut girl wears, the structure of the stalls also plays a vital role in attracting customers. The flashy lights give off an unreal or even fantasy-like feeling to those who see the stall and attracts them to come closer.[27] Since the girls work right behind the giant glass windows, everything they do can be seen by the outside world. Therefore it appears as if these girls are very vulnerable, and watching them, or the experience of interacting with these girls, is just as important as purchasing and chewing the nuts. However, although the glass is transparent to express their vulnerability, it is also solid and thus protects the girls. This means that men can see the girls and fantasize about them, but no physical contact is permitted unless allowed by the girls.

The women who work as betel nut girls come from very diverse backgrounds and it is impossible to group them in a single category. There are teenage school dropouts or women who are in their 40s with children and families, or even women who are single mothers. There are many betel nut girls that ran away from home at a young age or were not very well educated. Sometimes, the girls are sent from rural areas to work in the city by parents who want their daughters to earn and send money home.[28] The majority of betel nut girls are the sole income earners in their households, which could be just themselves alone or may include their entire family.[29]

Many women choose this job because it allows them to make money while doing relatively simple work without a lot of responsibility. Compared to working in a factory, a betel nut girl can earn more doing work that is suitable to their level of education.[30] The girls also work long periods, with shifts ranging from 8 to 12 hours. In fact, if sales are good and they get bonuses from their boss, they can even make more

Figure 2: **Betel nut girl Hsiao Chin stands by the roadside trying attract passing drivers to purchase betel nuts in Taoyuan, Taiwan.** *Photo credit: Tobie Openshaw.*

money than college students working in certain entry-level office jobs. In February 2010, the Global Post reported that their interviewee, a betel nut girl nicknamed as "Steam Bun," made an equivalent of $1,500 to $1,900 USD in a good month, which was comparable to twice the amount of a typical Taiwan college graduate's starting salary.[31]

The Discourse on Betel Nut Girls

Some people argue that the betel nut girls are "victims of a society only too willing to market young female sexuality" and it is the Taiwanese society and economy that pushes these girls into this industry to work as betel nut girls.[32] The existence of betel nut girls devalues women and projects a bad image of Taiwan, which tries to present itself as a relatively conservative society to the rest of the world.[33] Furthermore, the betel nut girls set a bad example for young women because their existence sends a message that even if a girl is not educated and want to be independent from their families, they can use their body and looks to sell betel nuts to profit from men.

Activists argue that this line of work teaches women to self-devalue or to degrade themselves and may possibly lead these girls on a path toward prostitution.[34] While it is rare, there are betel nut girls who want to make extra money and allow themselves to be fondled by men or even offer "extra" sexual services.[35] It is these rare cases that get magnified in society and media, giving the industry a bad reputation and leaving a negative impression. As a result, a movement that focuses on the sexual exploitation of women in Taiwan emerged in the 1990s. The Garden of Hope Foundation, a church-related NGO, has taken a stance to help betel nut girls to leave this line of work. Consequently, the Taiwanese government began to take action against the betel nut girls in 2002 by imposing the "Three No's Policy," which requires the girls to cover their bellies, breasts, and buttocks or face hefty fines, as well as increasing fines for spitting betel nuts in public areas.[36]

On the other hand, feminists such as Josephine Ho, a professor and the coordinator of the Center for the Studies of

Sexualities at National Central University, and Christian Wu, a scholar and artist that focuses on betel nut girls, argue that selling betel nuts in this fashion is just another line of work. Although not a socially accepted or normal occupation, these women sell nuts and not their bodies. Furthermore, laws that require betel nut girls to wear more clothing violate women's civil liberties and freedom to wear what they choose and as a result makes it harder for betel nut girls to make a living.[37]

Those who support the betel nut girls argue that they are not engaged in unethical behavior, but can be compared to models who sell automobiles, dancers, or even singers and entertainers who strip down to their underwear on stage, such as Jolin Tsai (a famous singer in Taiwan) or Karen Mok (a singer in Hong Kong), or generally models who use their bodies to sell products.[38] Furthermore, the existence of the betel nut girls is a form of self-empowerment for women and society's sexual liberation from patriarchal Confucian gender roles because it tells women that it is socially acceptable for women to work outside of the household. Tobie Openshaw, a well-known South African photographer and a documentary film maker who spent nearly a decade doing fieldwork on betel nut girls, said in a 2009 interview with *National Geographic Canada* that he sees the girls as "an expression of urban art, combining design and performance."[39] It is also interesting to note that Openshaw's photos and Wu's paintings have appeared in world wide art exhibits and galleries, including San Francisco Museum of Modern Arts, and garnered attention from people all over the world.[40] From these exhibits, it appears that those from overseas view the betel nut girls as unique and special to Taiwan, whereas educated people from Taiwan tend to view betel nut girls as shameful. Overall, it seems that those who support the betel nut girls look at this situation in terms of economics and civil liberties, whereas those in opposition argue in terms of health, environmental, moral, ethical, and social decline.

The problems regarding moral, ethical and social decline lies not within the betel nut girls themselves, but within the society and the media, because the portrayal of betel nut girls in the media fuels the consumer demand for sex appeal and

Figure 3: **A betel nut girl working inside a portable transparent and encased stall in Taoyuan.** *Photo credit: Tobie Openshaw.*

enhances the devaluing of women in Taiwanese culture. Instead, the government and the media should devote more effort on educating people to give more respect to women. It is also society's problem for not properly addressing and treating the betel nuts as an addictive drug that may cause severe health problems. In fact, chewing betel nuts is more socially acceptable in Taiwan than smoking or other forms of drugs, and is now considered as normal as chewing gum. The image of chewing betel nuts is similar to the portrayal of smoking cigarettes in the American film industry, where smoking was once considered sexually attractive. Therefore, Taiwan's Ministry of Health and Education should consider working with the entertainment industry to reform both the image and associated discourse surrounding betel nuts. The benefit to this approach will be that when people think about betel nuts, they will consider the product as a drug with harmful side effects, instead of thinking of a betel nut girl's sex appeal.

Conclusion

Despite the popularity of betel nuts in the past three decades, this betel nut culture cannot escape the slippery slope of popular culture. Things that are considered popular today may not be popular tomorrow. Reflecting upon the history of the betel nut in Taiwan, it appears that the significance behind chewing betel nuts has fluctuated multiple times during political and economic changes, thus changing society's norms and attitudes toward the betel nuts. Furthermore, its cultural connotation has moved from being considered appropriate for high-class or elites to represent those of the lower socio-economic classes. These changes show that culture is highly dynamic and constantly changing. In only the past century, the connotation of betel nuts in Taiwan has shifted from representing friendship and communication among the aboriginal peoples, to unsanitary and uncivilized by the Japanese, to low socio-economic classes and ethnic barriers by the Nationalists, and finally to sexually attractive and entertaining since the introduction of betel nut girls. The meaning and significance regarding betel nuts continues to change today as health, environmental, gender, and ethical concerns remain central to the practice.

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Annie Liu recently received her B.A. in Asian Studies and M.A. in Asia Pacific Studies from the University of San Francisco. Starting this July she will be working as a Student Ambassador for the USA Pavilion at the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, China. After the Expo she will embark on a two-month adventure travelling throughout East Asia, which will include enjoying the festivities of the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou, China.

A Note from the Publisher

With this issue of *Asia Pacific: Perspectives*, this online journal ends its ninth year of publication. In that time the readership has increased just as the journal's quality has risen. Consequently too, the number of submissions from all over the world and from a variety of disciplines has gone up accordingly.

The work of processing the submissions, assigning them to reviewers, liaising with the authors so they incorporate edits and other suggestions from reviewers, and the final proofing and distribution of each issue requires the cooperation of a number of people, primarily the Editors, but also the Editorial Consultants, and members of the Editorial Board.

We have been very fortunate to have had, from the beginning, the dedication of the full-time faculty of the University of San Francisco College of Arts and Sciences, and others, in the pursuit of establishing and operating the journal. In its first years the Center's founding executive director Dr. Barbara K. Bundy established the current editorial structure and Profs. Stephen J, Roddy and Shalendra Sharma were appointed as the journal's first editors; they provided the energy and momentum required to get the publication off the ground and on to the web. In May 2003 Prof. Joaquin Gonzalez succeeded Shalendra Sharma as co-editor, and in May 2004 Dr. John Nelson took over from Stephen Roddy. From that time onwards Profs. Gonzalez and Nelson have performed sterling service, producing between them nine issues including the current one.

Under these able editors, ably assisted by the combined resources of the journal's Editorial Consultants (Dr. Barbara K. Bundy, Prof. Hartmut Fischer, and Dr. Patrick L. Hatcher, and its Editorial Board (Prof. Uldis Kruze, Prof. Man-lui Lau, Mark Mir, Prof. Noriko Nagata, Prof. Stephen J. Roddy, Prof. Kyoko Suda, Dr. Xiaoxin Wu, and Prof. Bruce Wydick) *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* has begun to establish itself as a venue for quality scholarship on a variety of subjects in a wide range of disciplines.

With thanks to all the above editorial personnel and with grateful acknowledgement of their important service (and also their willingness to serve so long and with an open ended commitment) we are taking advantage of this happy juncture to reconfigure the journal's editorial apparatus and to recruit a newly constituted, expanded, and internationalized working editorial board with a three-year term of service. Our revised board, with both old and new members, will reflect many of our continuing interests as well as a new consideration for topics involving energy and sustainability, public diplomacy, the environment, and the intersections of policy, practice, and academia.

It is our fervent hope that the readers of *Asia Pacific: Perspectives* will continue to find value in our efforts and will patronize the journal as it moves into this exciting new phase.

USF Center for the Pacific Rim

Ken Kopp
Associate and Administrative Director