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Reassessing Cambodia's Patronage System(s) and the End of Competitive Authoritarianism: Electoral Clientelism in the Shadow of Coercion

Neil Loughlin

ABSTRACT

The dominant literature on Cambodian politics over the past two decades suggested that a mixture of elite and mass clientelism had enabled the hegemonic Cambodian People's Party (CPP) to rule via competitive but authoritarian elections, while lessening its previous reliance on repression and violence. Such explanations did not predict the upswing in contestation in the country in 2013 and thereafter. Neither do they account for the crackdown that followed. Following literature that draws attention to the tensions in building and maintaining political coalitions under authoritarianism, and demonstrating the difficulties in maintaining competitive authoritarianism over time, this article draws attention to structural, institutional, and distributional impediments to the CPP leadership in building and maintaining effective reciprocal relations with electoral clients while simultaneously balancing the interests of the military and other elites at the core of the regime. To make its argument, the article compares weaknesses in the CPP's electoral clientelism with the effectiveness of patronage within the security forces, seen through the lens of Cambodia's experience of land dispossession. It shows that an extractive and exclusive political economy privileged the interests of regime insiders over potential mass electoral clients precisely during the same period the CPP was supposed to be securing its hold on power via mass electoral clientelism. This further explains why the regime fell back on repression over reform in response to the upswing in contestation manifest from 2013, and why, despite the failings of its mass patronage project, repression has nevertheless been successful as a strategy for regime survival during a period of heightened popular contestation.

Keywords: Cambodia, clientelism, patronage, competitive authoritarianism, political parties, Cambodian People's Party, Hun Sen, coercion, land grab

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Introduction

On July 27, 2013, despite widespread irregularities and an electoral landscape heavily in its favour, the incumbent Cambodian People's Party (CPP)¹ nearly lost the highly contested national election. This was the fifth since electoral competition was reintroduced by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1993. The CPP claimed 49 percent of the votes compared to 44 percent for the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), a united opposition which had formed from the merger of the Sam Rainsy Party and the Human Rights Party (HRP) in 2012. The result in 2013 came as a surprise to many observers of Cambodian politics, and to the CPP itself.²

The resurgence of an opposition able to challenge the CPP during the national election in 2013 and capable of mobilizing people on the street in its aftermath, then significantly growing its vote in rural areas in commune elections in 2017, demonstrated the limits of the dominant explanations of Cambodia's politics. These put a premium on electoral clientelism for regime durability and claimed that the CPP had turned away from relying on fear and repression as it had done between 1993 and 1998,³ to a system of rule based on mass patronage politics delivering stable competitive electoral authoritarianism.

This article contends that the success of mass-party patronage and electoral clientelism delivering competitive election victories has been overemphasized in the literature on Cambodia.⁴ It presents a new analysis of challenges to building and sustaining competitive authoritarianism and suggests renewed attention should be paid to the coercion underpinning CPP political dominance throughout this period. In doing so, it contributes to emerging literature identifying the difficulties of sustaining competitive authoritarianism over time,⁵ and to our understanding of the relationship between elite and

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¹ Electoral Reform Alliance, Joint Report on the Conduct of the 2013 Election, (Phnom Penh: 2013).

² Caroline Hughes, "Understanding the Elections in Cambodia 2013," *Aglos: Journal of Area-Based Global Studies* (2015): 1–20.

³ Steve Heder and Judy Ledgerwood, *Politics, Propaganda and Violence in Cambodia During the UNTAC Era* (Boston: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

⁴ Kheang Un, "Cambodia: Moving Away from Democracy?" *International Political Science Review* 32, no. 5 (2011): 546–562;

Sebastian Strangio, *Hun Sen's Cambodia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014); Lee Morgenbesser, *Behind the Facade: Elections Under Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016).

⁵ See for example, Christopher Carothers, "The Surprising Instability of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 4 (2018): 129–135.

mass patronage and coercion in systems of electoral authoritarianism, via a close exploration of its manifestations and conflicts in Cambodia.

This article highlights the underlying and persistent tensions in Cambodia's clientelist politics and patronage relations since elections were reintroduced in 1993. In so doing, it also shows the difficulties the CPP experienced in building and sustaining a mass-based party able to command popular support.

Scholarship has shown that broad-based and highly institutionalized parties capable of winning commanding electoral majorities arise only under very specific conditions and historical circumstances.⁶ This article reconceptualizes the CPP to emphasize the particular obstacles—structural, institutional, and distributional—to building a mass-based clientelist party. It presents a critical re-examination of the CPP's history and its development of elite and military patronage systems from the 1980s and 1990s, and into the 2000s: the supposed zenith of the party's electoral clientelism. The analysis instead points to a coercive core working in often contradictory ways to building genuine voter-clients over the same period. This approach emphasizes the CPP's lack of foundations as a socially embedded, legitimate organization capable of delivering mass patronage to secure reliable electoral clientelism,⁷ particularly as compared to “paradigmatic” cases of dominant parties delivering electoral hegemony under competitive electoral authoritarianism, such as Malaysia.⁸

The CPP's weak social embedding contrasts with its strong organizational capacity, channelling state power in the form of coercion and facilitating the extraction of resources to its core members, particularly in the security forces. Repetitive elections did not institutionalize mass patronage networks capable of delivering more convincing competitive authoritarian elections over time.⁹ Rather, they served to further entrench and embed a coercive core within the regime, ill-organized to build genuine reciprocity, but which has become increasingly cohesive and proficient enough to manage the threats from below to the party and the networks of economic interests that have cemented its position in power.

To make its case, this article presents a critical examination of the politics of land dispossession in Cambodia. This relates to the appropriation by the state of large tracts of land previously occupied by farmers and urban dwellers leased to private business interests over the past three decades. This practice

⁶ Dan Slater, *Ordering Power: Contentious Politics and Authoritarian Leviathans in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁷ Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

⁸ William Case, “Electoral Authoritarianism in Malaysia: Trajectory Shift,” *The Pacific Review* 22, no. 3, (2009): 311.

⁹ For discussion of institutionalisation of competitive electoral authoritarianism see: Michael Bernhard, Amanda E. Edgell, and Staffan I. Lindberg, “Institutionalising Electoral Uncertainty and Authoritarian Regime Survival,” *European Journal of Political Research* 59, no. 2 (2019): 19.

has been shown to be vital to the way in which the CPP strengthened its grip on Cambodia via the entrenchment of party-military-business alliances in the 1990s and 2000s.¹⁰ More recently, it has been suggested that the profits from predatory economic practices were used to boost the CPP electorally in the 2000s. What now seems to be the more enduring legacy is that the land dispossession that went hand in glove with the building of elite political alliances has also been key to its popular undoing electorally. Unlike in some countries where the military controls significant business interests on their own terms,¹¹ what has emerged in Cambodia is a remarkably stable alliance between state officials, military enforcers, and civilian capitalist entrepreneurs for the mutual exploitation of Cambodia's resources. This now forms the basis of the country's crony capitalist economic system.

This article draws on fieldwork carried out between January and October 2017, supplemented by additional research trips from July to September 2018 and in November and December 2018. It is based on more than 50 semi-structured interviews conducted over this period, including 15 respondents directly cited in this article.¹² People were interviewed for their expertise in the subject matter through their work or lived experience. Interviewees ranged in age from university students to retired former diplomats and were drawn from a variety of socio-economic groups and backgrounds, including farmers, civil servants, high-ranking military officials, and economic tycoons. Interviews were conducted in Phnom Penh, Battambang, Siem Reap, and Preah Vihear. In addition to interviews, the article relies on reports released by the Cambodian government and its press units, and those of think tanks, international governmental organizations, civil society, and other sources including online and print media.

This article is structured as follows. The first section revisits existing explanations for CPP political survival in light of the 2013 election. It then reconsiders the architecture of the CPP in the context of its history as a repressive state apparatus imposed from above and with limited social embedding. It moves on to present evidence of its electoral illegitimacy before 2013 and after. In the second section, the focus on land shows that this organization has privileged the rapacious rewarding of its officials in the state and its military, which was its *modus operandi* from the 1980s and remains the case today. The paper concludes that this predation provides an important window into understanding Cambodia's current authoritarian path.

¹⁰ Caroline Hughes, *The Political Economy of Cambodia's Transition, 1991–2001* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

¹¹ Marcus Mietzner and Lisa Misol, "Military Businesses in Post-Suharto Indonesia: Decline, Reform and Persistence," in *The Politics of Military Reform*, eds. Jürgen Rüland, Maria-Gabriela Manea, Hans Born (Berlin: Springer, 2013).

¹² All interviews were carried out in accordance with SOAS' Research Ethics Policy available at: <https://www.soas.ac.uk/research/ethics/file143594.pdf>.

Existing Explanations of Cambodia's Politics

Scholarship on Cambodia emphasizing elite patronage and electoral clientelism has been broadly captured under the banner of neopatrimonialism. Patronage is generally used to refer to both the exclusive allocation of resources to elite clients through often predatory practices such as land grabbing, analyzed in the second half of this article, and rewards and resources given to the general public in exchange for support of a political party at election time.¹³ This second stream follows Hicken's definition of clientelism, a combination of particularistic targeting and contingency-based reciprocal exchange through which the "chief criterion for receiving the targeted benefit is political support, typically voting."¹⁴ Elite predation and clientelist distribution were seen as successfully complementary strategies for CPP's political survival. Conversely, this article emphasizes the tensions inherent in such a system under competitive authoritarianism.

Electoral patronage has been presented as both a modern phenomenon, and as reinforcing "traditional" rule in the modern context in analyses of Cambodia's politics. In these latter accounts, patron-clientelism is presented as a proxy for neo-traditionalism. As a leading proponent of this view, Morgenbesser presents modern-day Cambodian politics as a continuation of the pre-colonial Southeast Asian state, in which power was personalized and society organized vertically from the king, through the nobility, downwards to the peasantry. Nowadays, "the division of power remains largely unchanged," even if the actors populating its upper and middle levels are different.¹⁵ Elections become a means of reinforcing supposed historical roots of political power, and modern incarnations of traditional redistributive mechanisms tying clients to their patrons in seeming perpetuity.¹⁶

Various studies have shown the limits to overly culturalist and selectively historicized accounts of patron-clientelism, including as applied to Cambodia. Early on, Scott warned of making easy distinctions between "parochial" and European models of political authority by over-distinguishing between Asian and European practices of securing political office and favours prior to the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁷ Heder's work on the 2003 election showed how modern elections in Cambodia have very little in common with classic depictions of Southeast Asian political values as conceptualized by classic

¹³ See for example: Kheang Un and Sokbunthoeun So, "Land Rights in Cambodia: How Neopatrimonial Politics Restricts Land Policy Reform," *Pacific Affairs* 84, no. 2 (2011): 289–308.

¹⁴ Allen Hicken "Clientelism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2007): 294.

¹⁵ Lee Morgenbesser, *Behind the Facade: Elections Under Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016): 51.

¹⁶ Lee Morgenbesser, "The Failure of Democratisation by Elections in Cambodia," *Contemporary Politics* 23, no. 2 (2017): 135–155.

¹⁷ James C. Scott, "The Analysis of Corruption in Developing Nations," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 11, no.3 (1969): 315–341.

scholars of the pre-colonial region.¹⁸ More critically for the case at hand is that Morgenbesser is essentializing Cambodian politics as a constant, which cannot explain the variance in political outcomes under investigation here. This is elsewhere implicitly identified by Morgenbesser himself in his analysis of Myanmar's changing politics over time, when he removes historic patterns of patrimonialism as an independent variable in explaining its authoritarian political trajectory. He suggests "the onset of military rule created a schism" with Myanmar's patrimonial tradition.¹⁹ Yet this is puzzlingly absent in his analysis of Cambodia in spite of the purposeful and near total destruction of existing political institutions during the Khmer Rouge period.

Un's work has been the most influential of the modern patronage-based accounts of Cambodian politics, and it is widely cited, including by Morgenbesser. His focus on the CPP as an elite and mass patronage broker comports with comparative work that places emphasis on the function of political parties in authoritarian systems. In these accounts, parties play a dual function: they manage elite competition, and secure some measure of consent to be ruled from the masses.²⁰ They are especially important in competitive authoritarian regimes because the incumbent retains power through elections.²¹

In Un's view, the CPP has effectively combined electoral clientelism and elite patronage for delivering CPP electoral hegemony, situating both in a broader context of performance legitimacy achieved via high GDP growth rates, and contributing to relative political stability under the CPP since the 2000s. He describes a system in which wealth accumulated by economic elites is instrumentalized by the CPP to carry out development projects to secure its electoral dominance: "Hun Sen/CPP have transformed patron-client ties by linking state/party elites to economic elites and then to voters to bolster their electoral victories and legitimacy and thus further strengthen their control of the country."²²

However, the election in 2013 showed that the CPP's mass patronage had not bought it the electoral clients it thought it had, with voters rejecting the terms of the offered clientelist deal and ongoing recognition of their place in it.²³ Norén-Nilsson's study into electoral clientelism in 2013 showed that while Cambodian voters were happy to take patronage and other gifts from the CPP, they did not reciprocate with votes, and instead were more likely to question the legitimacy of the giver based on perceptions of inequality

¹⁸ Steve Heder, "Political Theatre in the 2003 Cambodian Elections: State Democracy and Conciliation in Historical Perspective," in *Staging Politics: Power and Performance in Asia and Africa*, eds. Julia Strauss and Donal O'Brien (London: I.P. Taurus, 2007), 51–172.

¹⁹ Morgenbesser, *Behind the Façade*, 133.

²⁰ Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections Under Authoritarianism" *The Annual Review of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2009): 403–422.

²¹ Levitsky and Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism*, 63.

²² Un, "Cambodia," 548.

²³ Allen Hicken "Clientelism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2007): 289–310.

and dissatisfaction with the political status quo.²⁴ Contrary to what has been previously suggested in the dominant literatures on Cambodian politics, the CPP was not the effective patronage distributor bringing in a steady stream of electoral clients.

A fuller explanation of Cambodia's politics that attends to the electoral threat in 2013, and the CPP's abandonment of competition altogether in 2018, can be found by reconsidering the tensions in the CPP's mass and elite patronage systems, and what this reveals more broadly about the CPP and the loci of political power in Cambodia. This pays attention to the fundamental dilemmas facing authoritarian leaders in managing their political constituencies and the implications under competitive authoritarianism. Svolik's work is important in this regard, as he suggests that dictators can never be sure of their position and must constantly strive to maintain their security.²⁵ He shows that two fundamental imperatives shape the political calculations of leaders under authoritarianism: protecting oneself against threats from below, and the need to placate elite allies within the ruling coalition. This dictates how patronage is allocated within the regime, the use of repression, and ultimately the survival of the leader.

This article applies Svolik's insight in relation to Cambodia's election in 2013 and subsequent abandonment of competitive authoritarianism. The following argument points to a new analysis of the CPP as an institution, historically and presently organized for the purpose of suppressing dissent and rewarding its elite supporters, rather than coopting an electorate from below that has traditionally been ambivalent to the party's legitimacy and that, unlike the military, has never been fundamental to its survival.

Organizational Impediments to Mass Party-Building and the CPP's Repressive Core

Political parties under competitive electoral authoritarianism are most successful in obtaining consent from the masses when they have a legitimate basis in society. In Malaysia, which until recently provided an exemplary case of dominant party hegemony under competitive electoral authoritarianism, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) was extraordinarily successful in winning elections because it institutionalized as a broad-based party in a cross-class coalition.²⁶ In such cases of "strongly institutionalized" parties, they reach "deeply into society and nest within dense networks of both intra-party and external organisations."²⁷

²⁴ Astrid Norén-Nilsson, "Good Gifts, Bad Gifts, and Rights: Cambodian Popular Perceptions and the 2013 Elections," *Pacific Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2016): 795–815.

²⁵ Milan W. Svolik, *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²⁶ Slater, *Ordering Power*.

²⁷ Meredith L. Weiss, "Coalitions and Competition in Malaysia – Incremental Transformation of a Strong-party System," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 32, no. 2 (2013): 19.

In contrast, the CPP was formed under Vietnamese protection in 1979. It was to be the core political organization inside the administration and armed forces of the newly founded People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK). Its role was to administer Cambodia during its occupation in the 1980s, and to be the electoral vehicle to legitimate the Vietnamese occupation in uncontested elections during that decade.²⁸ The Pol Pot-led Communist Party of Kampuchea regime it replaced, from whose lower and defecting ranks many of the PRK's senior and other officials were drawn, had been responsible for some of the most egregious violence of the twentieth century and had purposely set out to clean the slate of the *ancien régime*.

The PRK was thus made up of officials who had neither a pre-existing socially legitimate basis for power nor an embedding in ongoing political structures, the Pol Pot regime having collapsed when the Vietnamese invaded.²⁹ The regime was built from the top down, operating what was essentially a "police state" throughout the decade.³⁰ This included a large Vietnamese and later Cambodian military deemed necessary to deter the remnants of the old regimes displaced by the Vietnamese and encamped on the border through the 1980s. This would prove to be a poor foundation for building genuine reciprocal relationships with voters, but the military was endowed with strong coercive capacity relative to the broader society, which has remained the regime's most fundamental resource.

After the Vietnamese military left almost entirely in 1989, the PRK's large state apparatus and formidable armed forces were the base out of which the CPP operated to contest democratic elections organized by the UN in 1993.³¹ This proved an effective basis for remaining in power against the significant electoral threat of FUNCINPEC, the party of the former King Sihanouk. In this way the CPP was able to defeat the political opposition via "propaganda, politics and violence" in 1993,³² and again in 1998 following a brutal coup de force.

However, by the mid-2000s, the CPP was apparently changing tack by looking to build electoral legitimacy "to win the 'hearts and minds' of rural voters and to undercut competition from opposition parties." This was seen as "the beginning of the development of mass patronage electoral politics" as the CPP was portrayed as having learned that "coercion, intimidation,

²⁸ Evan Gottesman, *Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge: Inside The Politics Of Nation Building* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002).

²⁹ Margaret Slocomb, *The People's Republic of Kampuchea 1979–1989: The Revolution After Pol Pot* (Chiang Mai: Silkwood Books, 2004).

³⁰ Human Rights Watch, "Cambodia: Chea Sim Death Shows Failings of Khmer Rouge Court," 8 June 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/08/cambodia-chea-sim-death-shows-failings-khmer-rouge-court>.

³¹ UNTAC Information/Education Division, "The Takeo Papers," (Phnom Penh, 1993); UNTAC Information/Education Division, "The Prey Veng Papers," (Phnom Penh, 1993).

³² Heder and Ledgerwood, *Politics*.

and violence did not constitute a foundation for permanent strength.”³³ The CPP won big in the election in 2008 characterized by significantly less political violence than in previous elections, seemingly confirming its winning shift from coercion to mass patronage electoral politics.

However, recent analysis of voting patterns by Hughes has shown that, at the national level, the CPP’s vote share has remained fairly static since the 1993 election, casting serious doubt on the notion that there was a growing post-UNTAC efficacy of CPP mass electoral clientelism.³⁴ I suggest too little attention was paid to the fact that this was a triumph over the remnants of what had been reduced to a divided and intimidated opposition, even if the opposition’s damaged situation was recognized as having already been a vital fact of political life in the 1998 election. FUNCINPEC never recovered from the CPP coup de force, which had decapitated it militarily and hastened its decline as a political entity.³⁵ It eventually collapsed in on itself in 2004,³⁶ competing as two separate parties in 2008.

This left the relatively new Sam Rainsy Party and the much newer Human Rights Party, led by Sam Rainsy and Kem Sokha respectively, as the most viable, but still divided, opposition parties. However, Sam Rainsy had been in exile most of the years between 2005 and 2008, while Kem Sokha had been targeted by the government and imprisoned in 2005. Analyses of the CPP’s victory in 2008 also underplayed the extent to which those elections saw the same patterns of “coercion, intimidation and violence” as previous elections, if on a smaller scale, and were carried out in an atmosphere in which earlier violence was still reverberating.³⁷ Behind gradually decreasing but still evident instances of electoral violence,³⁸ throughout this period Cambodia’s Freedom House rating remained “Not Free,” scoring 5.5/7 (1 being the best, 7 the worst) for their freedom rating, and 5/7 for civil liberties and 6/7 for political rights, in every year from 2003 to 2019.³⁹

Thus, the emerging scholarly consensus on the CPP as a hearts-and-minds-winning juggernaut was overblown. That juggernaut remained anchored in the same repressive state bureaucratic apparatus, including the military, that

³³ Kheang Un, *Cambodia: Return to Authoritarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 30.

³⁴ Caroline Hughes, “Understanding the Elections in Cambodia 2013,” *Aglos: Journal of Area-Based Global Studies*, (2015): 1–20.

³⁵ Brad Adams, “Cambodia: July 1997: Shock and Aftermath,” *Human Rights Watch*, 27 July 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/07/27/cambodia-july-1997-shock-and-aftermath>.

³⁶ Steve Heder, “Hun Sen’s Consolidation: Death or the Beginning of Reform?” *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2005): 113–130.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch, “Cambodia: Threats and Intimidation Mar Campaign,” 26 July 2008, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2008/07/26/cambodia-threats-intimidation-mar-campaign>.

³⁸ Information on electoral violence 1993–2019 available at: <https://www-dem.net/en/analysis/CountryGraph/>. Michael Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Cambodia–2020. Dataset v10,” (Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Project, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.23696/vdemds20>.

³⁹ Freedom House, “Cambodia,” accessed 22 May 2020, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cambodia>

had been attempting to consolidate its post-Vietnamese rule since the late 1980s via “the exploitation and marginalization of the poor.”⁴⁰

From the early 1990s, CPP officials tasked with delivering patronage and thus votes were operating—as they do to this day—as part of a top-down system for ordering power, and the regime remained organized around its capacity to coerce voters and exploit Cambodia’s natural resources. Central to this operation are party working groups (PWGs), historically a PRK mechanism for centralized control at the local level.⁴¹ These reflect the relative electoral weaknesses Scott noted of a “party that has created its own network of patron-client linkages from the center” when compared to a party which relies “on preexisting patron-client bonds and merely incorporates them into its organization.”⁴²

As Wintrobe notes, such institutions in authoritarian regimes are ill-equipped to effectively convey the true level of support of the leadership, reliant as they are on coercion.⁴³ In the absence of a credible election in 2008 to gauge support, I would suggest this played no small part in the apparent failure by the CPP leadership to appreciate the depth of antagonism toward them going into the election in 2013. Thus the CPP went into that election with imperfect information, perhaps explaining why Hun Sen took such a laissez-faire approach to campaigning, and allowed Sam Rainsy to return to Cambodia the week before the election in 2013, riding a wave of support that greeted him at the airport and built in the days preceding the election.

It also suggests why the CPP only sought to address land grabbing in late 2012, at a point when it was too little, too late, for hundreds of thousands of Cambodians whose land had been often violently confiscated, and which was a lightning rod for CNRP support. In an interview in 2018, Hun Sen expressed his biggest regret in reference to land grabbing, and acknowledged his inability to get a handle on it: “[W]e caused more land disputes because we could not control the situation with our lower-level officials.”⁴⁴ However, as argued in the latter section of this article, the scale of these disputes, and the role of central authorities in Cambodia’s land grab, show they were the result of more than the greed of lower-level officials.

An early argument that the CPP’s electoral system was ineffectual at winning real electoral legitimacy was presented by Hughes in her analysis of the election in 2003. She suggested that clientelistic practices were devoid

⁴⁰ Hughes, *The Political Economy of Cambodia’s Transition, 1991–2001*, 59.

⁴¹ This point was made to the author by Steve Heder.

⁴² James C. Scott, “Patron-Client Politics and Political Change in Southeast Asia,” *The American Political Science Review* 66, no. 1 (1972): 111.

⁴³ Ronald Wintrobe, *The Political Economy of Dictatorship*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 20.

⁴⁴ Sun Narin, “Hun Sen’s Biggest Regrets: Land Disputes,” *VOA*, 18 July 2018.

of legitimacy, instead reflecting the massive concentration of particularly coercive power in the hands of the CPP in the state.⁴⁵ Heder similarly maintained early on that elections were a “performance” which the electorate was supposed to cheer for in the face of the state’s massive bureaucratic and coercive might, rather than willfully participate in, or regard as a reflection of the genuine will of the people.⁴⁶

This reality was a poor foundation for genuine vote-winning reciprocity but has proven a strong one for the entrenchment of repressive governance by CPP state administrators, including those drawn from the military, who have privileged their own interests over those of the rural population on whose votes they were supposed to increasingly depend for legitimacy.

The Hollowness of the CPP as a Competitive Electoral Vehicle

Coercion lies at the core of Cambodia’s political economy. It has entrenched asymmetries of wealth and power that privilege repression over reform, violence over redistribution, and elite cohesion over fragmentation. To a large extent ordinary Cambodians have been excluded from reaping the economic benefits of CPP rule, and are instead expected to be content with abstract GDP growth rates while witnessing the pervasiveness of corruption in their everyday lives. This was pointed out to me again and again during various interviews with officials and villagers in Cambodia in 2017 and 2018. It was also reflected in internal CPP polling in 2016.⁴⁷

A senior Cambodian election monitor described the “cronyism” of the ruling “cluster,” drawing attention to how the economic inequities created under the CPP’s economic system have been rejected by the electorate, while suggesting that the returning of votes for patronage has been as much about coercion as reciprocity.

You can see the family in the past the parent [the CPP] always give money and the children [the people] obey but this time the parents give money to the children, but the children not obey as before ... They argue with the parents, so the parents now try to understand what happened, why they not able to control their children. Some [argue] they lack discipline, [it’s a] weakness of education, that why the children not follow the parent. But I don’t think so. The reason... [is] the economic activity... [It] reflects the way the patronage systems of the party [to] give money is not effective.⁴⁸

A former senior advisor to the Royal Government of Cambodia put it

⁴⁵ Caroline Hughes, “The Politics of Gifts: Tradition and Regimentation in Contemporary Cambodia,” *The Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 37, no. 3 (2006): 469–489

⁴⁶ Steve Heder, “Political Theatre,” 51–172.

⁴⁷ SHAVIV, “Public Opinion Research Cambodia,” (2016).

⁴⁸ Interview with senior election monitor, Phnom Penh, 16 May 2017.

more bluntly, reflecting the politically counterproductive nature of a patronage system that gives a little with one hand, but takes enormously with the other: “When people need something, they [the CPP] set up a lot of mechanism for the nation ... it’s like humanitarianism inside your own country. But it’s not going to work ... The people are not stupid!” This, he continued, was not least because elite benefits were being doled out in such a way as to seriously undermine the mass patronage system: “[Y]ou can still have villas, luxury cars, children in private school and so on, it’s OK, as long as the majority of the people, you don’t grab their land [without] allowing them to have a minimum of things.”⁴⁹

This has intersected with and contributed to the CPP’s inability to get a handle on new, young voters who entered the electoral market for the first time in 2013. Many were instead captured by the CNRP. Approximately 1.5 million young Cambodians voted for the first time in 2013, and were turned off by a CPP platform defined in terms of its claim of having saved Cambodia.⁵⁰ Opposition leader Sam Rainsy offered me the following plausible explanation:

There are more and more young people who are more informed, more organised, more critical, more demanding People are more educated Even though people remain very poor, when they come to the cities they are not starving anymore. They do any job to survive but the fact that they are even slightly better off; they are less subject to vote buying.⁵¹

The CNRP’s positive platform was amplified by new means of communication. In 2016, 48 percent of Cambodians claimed to have access to the Internet or Facebook, and more people accessed information online (30 percent) than TV (29 percent) or radio (15 percent).⁵² According to the 2016 polling data, 54 percent of voters who got their information from Facebook said they would vote for the CNRP in the election in 2018, as compared to 20 percent of Facebook informed voters who said they would choose the CPP.

Widespread dissatisfaction at state predation over land and resources, harm to the environment, and official corruption was reflected in CPP polling post-2013 and relayed to me in interviews I conducted with villagers around the time of the national election in 2018. As one person put it, reflecting on the inequalities of CPP patronage, “[d]uring ... development we suffer difficulties The poor get poorer and the rich get richer. So, most of our

⁴⁹ Interview with former government advisor, Phnom Penh, 19 September 2017.

⁵⁰ Sebastian Strangio, *Hun Sen’s Cambodia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 258–288.

⁵¹ Sam Rainsy, interview by author, via Skype, 15 August 2017.

⁵² Kimchhoy Phong, Lihol Srou, and Javier Solá, “Mobile Phones and Internet Use in Cambodia 2016,” The Asia Foundation (2016).

people live in poverty, especially farmers in the countryside.”⁵³ Another interviewee explained that there is very little possibility to complain, and that complaints are ignored by officials who act only in their own interest.⁵⁴ In such views, party officials are not seen to reciprocate for the demands they placed on villagers. Thus, the demands lack contingency central to clientelist politics. Villagers complained that the CPP seeks contributions from families when they need money, but the family cannot expect help in return if there is a problem and may actually be discriminated against if they are thought to support the opposition. Another person interviewed likened the local situation to increased repression at the national level, and claimed that they risked losing their job if they complained, and would “get into trouble” if they raised criticisms, facing risks “like Kem Ley,”⁵⁵ the murdered analyst and government critic who was gunned down in Phnom Penh in 2016.

However, perhaps the strongest evidence of the extent to which the CPP mass patronage system was fundamentally weak as an electoral strategy at the local level was made clear during the 2017 commune election, when the CNRP built on its vote share from the 2013 national election to make serious inroads into rural areas the CPP had dominated for decades.⁵⁶

The apparently genuine choice the CNRP represented galvanized this dissatisfaction into a public challenge via the ballot box, and in such a way as to bring the distinction between the CPP’s patron-client systems more sharply into focus. The mass patronage electoral system was far less reciprocal, and far less contingent on benefits for votes, than has previously been assumed. In contrast, the intra-elite system held and continued to be able to employ coercive practices proving sufficient to the task of dealing with the threat of an effective opposition by doing away with it, often violently. That this was the case is not surprising if we turn to consider the real beneficiaries of the CPP’s patronage: the party itself and its security apparatus.

The CPP’s Predatory Patronage: A Military-Eye View from the Land

A deadly three-day assault launched against anti-government protesters in Phnom Penh in January 2014 signalled that political violence remained a critical part of the CPP’s electoral repertoire, a decade after it was supposed to have faded from view. The assault was carried out by a mixed force of RCAF units, including specialist paramilitary forces, gendarmes, and

⁵³ Interviews with villagers in 3 sites, North-eastern Cambodia, 2018. Exact date withheld for confidentiality.

⁵⁴ Interviews with villagers in 3 sites, North-eastern Cambodia, 2018.

⁵⁵ Interview with university student in Northeast Cambodia, 2018.

⁵⁶ In 2017, the CPP won 50.76 percent of votes compared to the CNRP’s 43.83 percent. This was a significant shift from 2012, when the CPP won 61.8 percent of the vote, while the SRP and HRP won 30.7 percent combined. National Election Committee. 2017, <https://www.necselect.org.kh/khmer/content/2399>.

intervention units, taking orders from a mixed command of local and national CPP officials in government.⁵⁷

Cambodia's security forces have been politicized since they were re-established by the Vietnamese in the 1980s. This is documented in an internal CPP history released in 2015.⁵⁸ They remain politicized today. In 2013 and 2018, the then-topmost RCAF generals Pol Sarouen, Kun Kim, and Meas Sophea coordinated the election machines and centre-level work teams in Preah Sihanouk, Oddar Meanchey, and Preah Vihear Provinces respectively, openly reflecting the military role at the top of the party. In each case these men were tasked with heading the CPP election apparatus, running at the head of the party ticket for seats in the National Assembly, and then standing down and ceding the seats to a civilian.⁵⁹

The symbiosis of the CPP and the military in 2017 was explained to me by a senior brigadier general: "The military tend to see themselves as the backbone of society. The one who maintain order . . . [Military people] still identify themselves as within the party. [They] see no contradiction. Officially you don't talk about the party as the same thing as the country. But unofficially, it's still there."⁶⁰

This has an economic dimension that is central to understanding why the armed forces have proved capable and willing to suppress anti-regime dissent whenever deemed necessary.⁶¹ Deputy Commander of the RCAF and Commander of the Gendarmerie Royale Khmer (GRK) Sao Sokha made this point to me in 2017: his forces "must maintain stability and order in order to make possible investment and economic wellbeing for the country."⁶² Eva Bellin has argued that militaries which operate along lines of patronage have a strong material interest in maintaining stability against popular pressures and when reform may be ruinous.⁶³ In Cambodia the RCAF works alongside the state bureaucracy to continue to exploit and marginalize the poor, widening the gap between the recipients of elite and mass patronage, much to the benefit of the former against the interests of the latter.

Land disputes in Cambodia are a critical site in which this CPP-state-military cooperation may be understood. It is a realm in which there is

⁵⁷ The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), *The Right to Remain Silenced: Expressive Rights in the Kingdom of Cambodia*, (Phnom Penh: 2014).

⁵⁸ The Cambodian People's Party, "pravoat ney kar ta-sou neung aphivoat meatophoum kampuchea neung tumneak-tumnorng kampuchea-vietnam pi chhnam 1989 dal chhnam 2013", [History of the Struggle and Development of the Cambodian Motherland and Cambodia-Vietnam Relations from 1989 to 2013], (Phnom Penh: 2015).

⁵⁹ Author's list of CPP Central Committee Centre-level work teams from 2013.

⁶⁰ Interview with RCAF Brigadier General, Phnom Penh, 27 February 2017.

⁶¹ Neil Loughlin, "Authoritarian Regime Durability: An Analysis of Cambodia's Coercion-Dominant Winning Coalition" (PhD Dissertation, SOAS, 2019), 1–360.

⁶² General Sao Sokha, interview by author, Phnom Penh, 17 February 2017

⁶³ Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004): 139–157.

reciprocity, contingency, and iteration between patron and client. As one senior NGO worker put it: “Land is just the distribution of wealth from pillaging Cambodia’s natural resources. Cambodia is seen by the elite as a big pie for them to eat. Each has a role. The security forces do the security. The tycoons do the selling. The party does the rule of law and the paperwork.”⁶⁴

Cambodia’s land-grabbing frenzy went into overdrive in 2004, once the opposition had collapsed as an electoral force, precisely during the same period the CPP was supposed to be securing its hold on power via mass electoral clientelism. The rights group LICADHO reported an enormous increase in the number of land dispossession cases it was monitoring from 2003, with 25 in 2003 to 112 in 2004 and 126 in 2005.⁶⁵ Large swathes of land were made commercially available to local tycoons, and international investors often operating with local partners.⁶⁶

Particularly significant in the period when the CPP was supposedly cementing its legitimacy via mass patronage were exclusionary economic land concessions (ELCs). These are long-term leases of state land that allowed beneficiaries to clear land in order to develop industrial agriculture. According to one estimate they affected up to 700,000 Cambodians between 2003 and 2013.⁶⁷ Official data on these concessions is incomplete. However, numbers compiled by the UN’s special rapporteur on human rights noted a steady increase between 2004 and 2012, with a total of 320 ELCs in 21 provinces granted to foreign and local companies by 2012.⁶⁸ It is estimated that by the time of the election that year an area equivalent of up to 50 percent of Cambodia’s arable land had been allocated to ELCs, with as much as 30 percent of that land owned by 1 percent of its population.⁶⁹

On paper, a number of avenues exist to settle land disputes in Cambodia. However, as observed by rights group ADHOC, “formal conflict resolution processes and institutions are often put aside or do not play their role.”⁷⁰ In 2012 less than 30 percent of complaints filed to the government’s own National Authority for Land Dispute Resolution (NALDR) were resolved.⁷¹ Even when communities could claim to have farmed land for decades, this

⁶⁴ Interview with senior human rights monitor 1, Phnom Penh, 20 January 2017.

⁶⁵ Cambodian League for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (LICADHO), “Human Rights in Cambodia: The Façade of Stability,” 3 May 2006, 3.

⁶⁶ ADHOC, “Cambodia: A Turning Point? Land, Housing and Natural Resource Rights in Cambodia in 2012,” (Phnom Penh: 2013).

⁶⁷ ADHOC, “Land Situation in Cambodia in 2013,” (Phnom Penh: 2014).

⁶⁸ Surya P. Subedi, “Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia,” 24 September 2012.

⁶⁹ Andreas Neef, Siphath Touch and Jamaree Chiengthong “The Politics and Ethics of Land Concessions in Rural Cambodia,” *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 26 no. 6: 1085–1103

⁷⁰ ADHOC, “Cambodia: A Turning Point?,” 2.

⁷¹ May Titthara, “Most Land Disputes in Cambodia Unsettled,” *The Phnom Penh Post*, 21 February 2013.

was difficult to prove and even harder to uphold through the courts. Rulings regularly went in favour of the wealthiest and most politically connected parties to the dispute: tycoons supported by local- and national-level CPP officials, while communities claiming the land saw it cleared and then policed by security forces to prevent them from returning.⁷²

The security forces are the ultimate guarantee of the CPP's survival and are the backers of its predatory behaviour, as both beneficiaries and enforcers on behalf of other beneficiaries. Large-scale land concessions have meant the CPP has been able to maintain a large coercive apparatus dependent on its patronage, despite calls for demobilization,⁷³ as elements in the CPP and tycoons plundered the state with their help. In 2002, RCAF soldiers could expect to earn around USD\$20 and be granted 20 kilos of rice a month. Unable to live on that amount, soldiers supplemented their incomes with second jobs, "sub-contracted out" by their commanders.⁷⁴ A 2000 government defence white paper spoke of "allowing soldiers to cooperate with investment units in the agro-industrial field."⁷⁵ This model has been reaffirmed in subsequent defence reviews and its ongoing relevance confirmed to me by a veteran observer of the RCAF.⁷⁶

According to World Bank figures, military expenditure reached around USD\$370 million in 2016.⁷⁷ At the same time military numbers have stabilized at around 192,000 since 2002.⁷⁸ A simple calculation demonstrates the official budget would just cover a basic salary of around USD\$160 a month per soldier, not dependent on rank, with nothing left over for purchasing or the maintenance of equipment, military bases, or other items necessary for upkeep of a functional army.⁷⁹ The official figures thus reveal the extent to which off-budget financing and sponsorship deals remain vital to military coffers.

The military's involvement in land grabs represents the sharp end of

⁷² ADHOC, "Cambodia: A Turning Point?"

⁷³ Dylan Hendrickson, "Cambodia's Security-Sector Reforms: Limits of a Downsizing Strategy." *Conflict, Security and Development* 1, no. 1 (2000): 67–82.

⁷⁴ David Mead, "Contribution to National Conference on Cambodia's Demobilization and Reintegration," (paper presented at the National Conference on Cambodia's Demobilization and Reintegration, Phnom Penh, 10–11 June 2002): 1.

⁷⁵ Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of National Defence and International Cooperation, "Defending the Kingdom of Cambodia," (Phnom Penh: 2000). See also: Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of National Defence and International Cooperation, "Cambodia's Defense Strategic Review 2013," (Phnom Penh: 2013).

⁷⁶ General David Mead, interview by author, Phnom Penh, 25 January 2017.

⁷⁷ World Bank, "Military Expenditure (% of GDP) – Cambodia," accessed 22 May 2020, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=KH>

⁷⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), "Military Expenditure by Country, in Constant (2015) US\$ m., 1988–1996," accessed 22 May 2020, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Data%20for%20all%20countries%20from%201988%E2%80%932019%20in%20constant%20%282018%29%20USD.pdf>.

⁷⁹ World Bank, "Military Expenditure."

businesses that provide great benefit to high-ranking military commanders who operate in collusion with tycoons protected by the CPP state, but who also are thereby able to act as patrons to their armed soldier clients. Since 2010, military and business links previously only discernible through violent evictions have been joined by direct sponsorship deals, symbolized by the signing of the Decision on Restructuring between Army Units, National Police and Civil Bodies in February 2010.⁸⁰ This was initially heralded as a measure to reinforce border defences in connection with briefly violent territorial disputes with Thailand and to provide welfare to units. However, for ordinary people, this relationship was described to me in an interview with a senior human rights monitor as “very, very dangerous” because of the potential for “severe conflicts of interest.”⁸¹ This has been manifest in practice as military units directly sponsored by tycoons have participated in land dispossessions on their concessions.

Another senior human rights monitor working on the land rights cases noted the continued mutual benefits involved in such practices and their negative impact on state coffers and resource management:

The connection between military and business is most clear at the border. For example, in Preah Vihear during the war. The military made alliances with business, who provided them food, supplies and other things. In return for the alliance the businessman is untouchable. [The businessman] does not even need to pay taxes as they give money to the state ... to the military! The businessmen get a great deal. The tycoons send cheap food. But get back that and more from timber, mining etc.⁸²

Since 2010, cooperation has grown to more than a hundred sponsorship deals, according to Hun Manet, the son of the prime minister.⁸³ At a ceremony in 2015 Tea Banh lauded ten years of such cooperation, declaring it represented “a culture of sharing and contributing to our nation, between civil institutions and RCAF.”⁸⁴ The deals read like a who’s who of CPP-dependent tycoons with track records of involvement in land disputes and linked to illegal logging activity in Cambodia.

It presents a possibility to keep soldiers close economically to their commanders who, working in tandem with civilian tycoons, continue to provide them with resources and jobs on the land as both farmers and as useful enforcers should situations arise deemed to require violence against

⁸⁰ Royal Government of Cambodia, “Decision on Restructuring between Army Units, National Police and Civil Bodies” (Phnom Penh: 2010); Cambodia New Vision, “Inaugurating Achievements at the Military Region 5,” February 2010.

⁸¹ Interview with senior human rights monitor 2, Phnom Penh, 16 February 2017.

⁸² Interview with senior human rights monitor 3, Phnom Penh, 2 February 2017.

⁸³ Sekheng Vong and Daniel Pye, “In Praise of RCAF Inc.” *The Phnom Penh Post*, 30 July 2015, <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/praise-rcaf-inc>.

⁸⁴ Sekheng Vong and Daniel Pye, “In Praise of RCAF Inc.”

those supposedly threatening Cambodia's "stability." As a senior human rights monitor commented on the current situation, "it's collusion between military, political and economic power where people are vying for privilege, all equipped with all three components."⁸⁵ Land and other resource grabs have turned security force commanders into businessmen in their own right and their soldiers into workforces for hire. This has allowed for a mutually beneficial economic relationship within the CPP state between military operators and other businesspersons against much of the electorate, and thus created shared economic incentives to use soldiers for violent repression against anti-regime mobilization.⁸⁶ A foreign military analyst who discussed the RCAF with me concluded:

The military guys are big economic players on the level of Oknhas.⁸⁷ They're involved in everything. These RCAF guys aren't getting their money from their salaries, which is low even for ranking officers. Money comes from the business deals. And the tycoons benefit as a link to somebody in the RCAF. It gives you an advantage over your business competitors ... In the 1990s the game was to win the war. Now the game isn't military, it's the economic game.⁸⁸

Among the most notorious of sponsors is CPP senator and tycoon Ly Yong Phat, whose land grabs in his original provincial base of Koh Kong illustrated a foundational parallelism of the CPP's patronage systems indicative of other party-military-business relationships, through which elites have been rewarded enormously at the expense of rural communities.

Ly Yong Phat, known as "the King of Koh Kong," got his start in cross-border trading from the 1980s.⁸⁹ At this time Cambodia provided an important land bridge to bring goods to Vietnam from Thailand. Business along this border was linked to smuggling activities, which continued through UNTAC times into the present. In the 1990s and early 2000s Ly Yong Phat invested his capital in a number of hotels, including the upmarket Phnom Penh Hotel, which opened in 2003. He became a crucial player in Cambodia's land sector in the mid-2000s, as Cambodia's ELC-granting process went through the roof. The payoff in terms of land acquisition has been enormous. According to a 2012 report released by Cambodian rights group LICADHO and *The Cambodia Daily*, Ly Yong Phat held an interest in 10 sugar and rubber plantations and in a "special economic zone," spanning 86,000 hectares and

⁸⁵ Interview with senior human rights monitor 2, Phnom Penh, 16 February, 2017.

⁸⁶ Eva Bellin, "The Robustness of Authoritarianism in the Middle East: Exceptionalism in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Politics* 36, no. 2 (2004): 139–157.

⁸⁷ Loosely translated as "baron."

⁸⁸ Interview with embassy military analyst, Phnom Penh, 10 February 2017.

⁸⁹ US Embassy Phnom Penh, "Cambodia's Top 10 Tycoons," 09 August 2007. https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07PHNOMPENH1034_a.html

making up roughly 4.3 percent of land concessions nationwide.⁹⁰ Although notorious for sugar, he is a leading player across Cambodia's agricultural sector. His Chub rubber concession in Kampong Cham is Cambodia's largest at 17,720 hectares, accounting for approximately 10 percent of the country's rubber output, churning out around 40 tonnes a day.

Ly Yong Phat has sponsored military units and government ministries that are linked to his business activities. One example involves the state *Electricité du Cambodge* (EdC), which is linked to Ly Yong Phat's casino along the border with Thailand in Military Region 4, where he sponsors Infantry Brigade 42.⁹¹ Cambodia's state electricity giant has a contract to buy electricity from Ly Yong Phat's Cambodia Electricity Private (CEP) for 18 years.⁹² According to the military analyst, in Military Region 4, "there are hundreds of military resettlement houses all in a row. Sponsored by EdC [and] linked to 42 Brigade ... These houses cost \$4000 a pop."⁹³ His Phnom Penh Sugar Company, operating in Kampong Speu Province, is linked to Battalion 313 based in the South-western Military Region 3, which encompasses Koh Kong and Ly Yong Phat's sugar concessions there.⁹⁴ The unit is made up of former Khmer Rouge integrated into the RCAF in the late 1990s, with a long history of involvement in illegal logging and other business activities.⁹⁵

The political utility and popular disutility of such state, military, and tycoon connections is evident in the use of violence by the armed units Ly Yong Phat sponsors in the service of his economic interests. In October 2009, a contingent of approximately 150 police, military police, and hired demolition workers burned and razed the houses of around 118 families. RCAF troops from Brigade 42 set up roadblocks and aided in the burning and bulldozing of the village. The villagers were never allowed to return to their homes.⁹⁶

Ly Yong Phat's concessions also provide an example of the ways in which triumphant and deeply interwoven CPP state-military and tycoon elites have succeeded in utilizing their grip on power to expropriate private goods from the poor and concentrate wealth in their own hands. By the time of the election in 2013, ELCs made up an area of 2.6 million hectares, equalling more than 10 percent of the entire country.⁹⁷ This is over three times the

⁹⁰ Paul Vreize and Kuch Naren, "Carving Up Cambodia: One Concession at a Time," *The Cambodia Daily*, 10–11 March 2012.

⁹¹ Royal Government of Cambodia, "Decision on Restructuring between Army Units, National Police and Civil Bodies" (2010); Cambodia New Vision, "Inaugurating Achievements at the Military Region 5," February 2010.

⁹² Shaun Turton and Seangly Pak, "Inside the Hun Family's Business Empire," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 07 July 2016; Global Witness, "Taking a Cut," (London: 2004).

⁹³ Interview with embassy military analyst, Phnom Penh, 10 February 2017.

⁹⁴ Royal Government of Cambodia, "Decision on Restructuring between Army Units, National Police and Civil Bodies" (2010).

⁹⁵ Global Witness, "Taking a Cut."

⁹⁶ Clean Sugar Campaign, "Blood Sugar," accessed 22 May 2020, <http://www.boycottbloodsugar.net/>

⁹⁷ Forest Trends, "Conversion Timber, Forest Monitoring, and Land-Use Governance in Cambodia," (2015): i.

area of land allocated as agricultural concessions by 2003. Just five CPP senators own 20 percent of all this land. Like Ly Yong Phat, these civilians made their fortunes in the 1990s in crony capitalist deals with the CPP.⁹⁸

On the other hand, smallholders on land taken for concessions have become day labourers on the land they once farmed as their own. Ly Yong Phat's notoriety made him an emblematic target for the CNRP rallying cries: "Ly Yong Phat! I tell you that you cannot live in happiness for the rest of your life. Ly Yong Phat, you have mistreated people in Koh Kong province. Ly Yong Phat, be careful!"⁹⁹

It is little surprise therefore that land was still one of the key sites of contention in the 2013 election. Across the country CPP land grabs had represented the "bad news" of central government policies and practices contrary to local needs.¹⁰⁰ This bad news of land grabs, more easily disseminated via social media and other channels than ever before, had become widespread and often directly felt by villagers. Rights groups had sensitized communities of their rights with regard to land disputes, while national and eventually international media publicity of abuses encouraged them to assert these rights. The overall effect was the CPP had undermined its legitimacy to such an extent as to significantly negate attempts to build it at the grassroots.

Perhaps cognizant of the deep unpopularity of ELCs and with much of Cambodia's exploitable land already privatized to the benefit of the regime, Hun Sen announced a moratorium on the granting of ELCs in May 2012, coupled with a student-led land-titling scheme for rural farmers, the year before the 2013 election. However, the moratorium was deeply flawed and was enacted in such a way as to reinforce repression as central to CPP rule.¹⁰¹ It highlighted the extent to which the CPP's most fundamental patronage system was that which benefitted its elite supporters, and the pre-eminent need to keep feeding the security forces at the core of the regime. This had kept it in power since 1993 in the face of previous crises and would prove to do so again in the post-2013 crackdown.

In the days and weeks following the 2013 election results, the CNRP was able to muster large numbers of protesters, especially in Phnom Penh, to take to the streets. If the result of the 2013 election should not have been so unexpected to the CPP and various observers, given the weakness of their electoral clientelism, the subsequent violent crackdown and repression of the opposition was perfectly in keeping with their record of using state

⁹⁸ Global Witness, "Cambodia's Family Trees," (London: 2007), 2.

⁹⁹ Sokchea Meas, "Rainy 'Attack' Shocks Tycoon," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 18 May 2014.

¹⁰⁰ Caroline Hughes, "Understanding the Elections," 8; Astrid Norén-Nilsson, "Cambodia at a Crossroads: The Narratives of Cambodia National Rescue Party Supporters after the 2013 Elections," *Internationales Asienforum*, no. 46 (3–4) (2015): 261–278.

¹⁰¹ Neil Loughlin and Sarah Milne, "'After the grab?': Land control and regime survival in Cambodia, post-2012," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, (2020). DOI: 10.1080/00472336.2020.1740295

violence in the service of their interests. The repressive apparatus had benefitted enormously from the conditions that spurred the electoral and street challenges to the regime. The violent crackdowns in the streets and squares of Phnom Penh in early 2014 paved the way for further repression that followed, enacted by elements within the CPP state that had, like the military, enjoyed the spoils of corruption of which land grabbing is emblematic.¹⁰² The upshot was the remodelling of Cambodia's electoral landscape by dissolving the CNRP and holding elections with no competitors able to challenge the CPP in 2018, following the exile of Sam Rainsy, the arrest of Kem Sokha, and the dissolution of the CNRP by the CPP-controlled courts.

Conclusion

This paper re-evaluated previous analyses of Cambodian politics that sought to explain the CPP regime's longevity in terms of mass patronage and performance legitimacy to secure electoral hegemony. It demonstrated that the CPP lacked the societal embedding necessary to build a successful mass party to maintain power under competitive authoritarianism over the long term, while coercion has remained its constant and underlying foundation for survival. It explained the symbiosis of the CPP with the coercive apparatus of the state in historical and institutional terms, and provided evidence to show how state, military, and economic elites have benefitted from patronage at the direct expense of large swathes of the electorate, with land grabs emblematic of the "bad news" of government policy. In the face of a resurgent opposition in 2013, the regime's survival was guaranteed via repression enacted by a security apparatus deeply embedded in its extractive political economy. The security forces have been among the main beneficiaries of the land boom, working together with capitalist entrepreneurs whose business interests developed under the protection of the CPP.

Instead of addressing that malcontent, the regime has focused its collective might on repressing it. Their actions since have demonstrated the difficulties in a system of elite and mass patronage that created an enormously unbalanced arrangement for political survival and reflected the tensions in simultaneously managing vertical and horizontal threats to its power. The election in 2013 and political crisis that followed revealed the hollowness in the reciprocity between the CPP as patron and rural Cambodians as election-time clients. This relationship was not iterative, but compelled, and was exposed as such when a genuine challenger appeared behind whom voters could throw their support, in the hopes of better benefits in the future.

¹⁰² Of the 344 demonstrations in Phnom Penh in 2013, 129 were subject to crackdowns by the authorities, leaving two people dead and many more injured. ADHOC, *The Right to Remain Silenced*, 19–20.

As previous scholarship has proven, building a highly institutionalized, mass-based party is difficult, and can be achieved only under certain historic and other conditions. These conditions were absent in Cambodia from the start. Herein lies the explanation for an open return to coercive form. The regime was born out of repression, which was embedded over time within the institutional structures of the state. As a result, coercion remains fundamental and operates against the interests of much of the voting public. This suggests that the CPP's attempts to win hearts and minds only appeared to work when there was no credible opposition, as happened temporarily in 2008 as a culmination of previous violence. Seen this way, there was no "return to coercion." It never really went away and remains the key to keeping opposition at bay.

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The Making of Post-Socialist Citizens in South Korea?: The Case of Border Crossers from North Korea

Jaeyoun Won

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to capture the complex process through which former socialist North Koreans are remade as South Koreans. I argue that the process by which border crossers from North Korea are remade into post-socialist subjects is complex and multi-dimensional. I address the interlocked nature of institutions and subjectivities in citizen-making processes. On the one hand, it involves the institutionalizations of border crossers with the purpose of screening out “dangerous socialist subjects” for security reasons, followed by “post-socialist” education at Hanawon. On the other hand, it also entails the cultural dynamics of the citizen-making processes. Border crossers are taught not only about political democracy and the economic market, but the cultural learning of resilience to cope with hardship and uncertainty in South Korea. This paper finds two distinctive responses to the cultural learning of resilience—fear and rejection. In this sense, the institutionalizations and the cultural teaching of resilience have unintended consequences. These citizen-making processes raise the question of what characterizes normal subjectivity in a modern, marketized economy. Rather than accepting these normal assumptions as given and natural, this paper tries to uncover hidden assumptions and to problematize the arbitrariness of these normative assumptions. What appears normal, rational, free, and democratic can be actually accidental, temporary, absurd, and socially constructed. This paper attempts to challenge and demystify the meaning of rational, free, democratic, resilient, and normative citizenships that tend to be taken for granted.

Keywords: citizenship, border crossers, North Korea, post-socialism, Hanawon

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Introduction

This study confronts the puzzle presented by the remaking of former North Koreans into South Koreans. The post-socialist transformation that border crossers from North Korea go through is a very complex process, involving the simultaneous process of unmaking socialist subjectivity and making post-socialist subjectivity. This paper attempts to deal with two different dimensions of making post-socialist citizens. Becoming South Korean means not only obtaining legal status but also learning the cultural skills to survive in South Korea. Understanding the institutional aspect of citizenship is necessary, but not sufficient to capture the complex nature of post-socialist citizenship. The cultural dynamics of citizen-making processes need to be explored as well. This complex nature of post-socialist citizenship for border crossers entails (re)socialization through institutionalizations and the cultural learning of resilience in order to survive in an uncertain market economy.

To describe this complex process of acclimation, which remakes their personhood, former North Koreans use the cultural metaphor of “changing clothes.” In other words, they must remove their socialist Northern clothes and begin to wear post-socialist Southern clothes. The metaphor of wearing Southern clothes entails a binary opposition between good and evil, liberal democracy and autocratic tyranny, South and North, black and white, and with us or against us. Wearing Southern clothes means one can no longer wear Northern clothes. One cannot be simultaneously anti-communist and communist. The cultural metaphor of clothing also entails the notion of “being normal,” and the “struggle to be ordinary,”¹ which can also be applied to the case of border crossers in South Korea. Discarding Northern clothes and wearing Southern clothes can also be interpreted as the cultural struggle to become ordinary in South Korea. Only after wearing Southern clothes can former North Koreans live a livable life and perform as normal citizens to avoid marginalization and exclusion in the new society in the South. Clothing is not just a metaphor, but also a material marker of normal citizenship. Although the end-goal of the process is for former North Koreans to become free citizen-subjects, I argue that this process itself does not entail freedom or independence. Instead, it involves disciplinary practices designed by the state to instill new post-socialist ethics, with a particular emphasis on the cultural learning of resilience.

The changing of clothes thus describes a complex process of both unmaking socialist subjects and remaking new capitalist citizens. This discussion proceeds as follows. First, I examine the existing literature on

¹ The metaphor of clothing as “a way of being” is elaborated and academically articulated in the sociology of material culture. For more, see Daniel Miller and Sophie Woodward, *Blue Jeans: The Art of the Ordinary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Sophie Woodward, *Why Women Wear What They Wear* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007).

border crossers. Second, I explain the methodology used to study border crossers and their unique characteristics. Then, two different dimensions of post-socialist citizenship are discussed: 1) the institutionalizations of border crossers, and 2) the cultural dynamics of citizen-making processes. For institutional citizenship, I discuss the post-socialist transformation of border crossers taking place at two state institutions. This involves the institutionalizations of border crossers with the purpose of screening out “dangerous socialist subjects” for security reason at the National Intelligence Agency, followed by “post-socialist” education at Hanawon. For the cultural aspect of citizenship, border crossers are taught not just about political democracy and the economic market, but also about the cultural learning of resilience in order to cope with hardship and uncertainty in South Korea. These two parts aim to capture the interlocked nature of institutional arrangements and subjectivities regarding citizenship. Finally, I conclude with two distinctive responses to the cultural learning of resilience: fear and rejection.

Literature Review

The meaning of the term “(re)making” is based upon the definition by Michel Foucault, who argues that human beings are made into subjects. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*,² Foucault argues that modern discipline “makes” individuals. That is, disciplinary power is the specific technique of a power that sees individuals as objects and as instruments of its exercise. Thus, “making” entails the disciplinary process of subjectification, which is the detailed practice and activity of corrective training to make subjects proper, lawful, rational, and responsible citizens of the modern state. This study examines the social and cultural formation of post-socialist individuals; in so doing, I also describe the making of modern citizens, the fabrication of post-socialist subjects, and the inscription of normal and normative individuals in South Korea. In this sense, citizenship is defined as a set of concrete practices undertaken by the government to reinvent its subjects, which involves the institutional aspects and cultural dynamics of citizen-making. The case of North Korean border crossers in South Korea is one that defines, challenges, and redefines the meaning of “Korean-ness” and the notion of normative citizenship in South Korea.

Existing studies of North Korean border crossers have employed diverse concepts and theoretical orientations. Often, Western media focus mostly on North Korean atrocities and Chinese human rights abuses, ending with the border crossers’ arrival in a land of capitalism and democracy such as South Korea, the United States, or the United Kingdom. In such accounts,

² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

border crossers are presented as witnesses or victims of violence perpetrated by evil socialist states and, therefore, as empirical evidence for human rights problems in North Korea. Cultural anthropologist Chung Byung-Ho classifies reports using this approach as “political defector studies.”³ This perspective is dominant in North American studies of border crossers, which present North Korea as part of an “axis of evil.” One of the main aims of this perspective is to further understand and perhaps criticize North Korea through border crossers’ testimonies and experiences.

In South Korea, there is much empirical research on border crossers as well. The existing literature in South Korea starts where political defector studies end, with border crossers’ arrival in capitalist South Korea. Thus, the issue of border crossers here is focused more on their experiences in South Korea than their past in North Korea. Quite a few policy-oriented research pieces, such as government reports, focus on improving the level of social integration and individual adaptation to South Korea, while more academically oriented research mostly employs grounded theory for interviewing border crossers and analyzing their personal experiences.⁴ Though informative and rich in data, the main problem with this approach, however, is that it emphasizes how border crossers assimilate to life in South Korea by focusing on the issue of social integration and individual adjustment, rather than problematizing the discrimination, prejudice, and even hostility border crossers face. For example, the sociologist In-Jin Yoon⁵ uses the migration studies approach to investigate the adaptation and assimilation of border crossers to life in South Korea.

This paper aims to contribute to scholarship by using a new approach of “ironic analysis,” in addition to providing empirically grounded qualitative data. The ironic analysis demystifies what we tend to take for granted in the

³ Byung-Ho Chung, “Between Defector and Migrant: Identities and Strategies of North Koreans in South Korea,” *Korean Studies* 32 (2009): 1–27. There are several books in this tradition. For instance, Cheol-Hwan Kang and Pierre Rigoulot, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Mike Kim, *Escaping North Korea: Defiance and Hope in the World’s Most Repressive Country* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010); Blaine Harden, *Escape from Camp 14: One Man’s Remarkable Odyssey from North Korea to Freedom in the West* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2012). However, some of the stories in *Escape from Camp 14* have been proven false and fabricated, so there are questions of credibility and reliability in these stories.

⁴ In-Mook Cho and Young-Hua Key, “Bukhan italjumin-ui minju simin gyoyuk gyeongheom-eul tonghan sam-ui gwanjeom byeonhwa yeongu [Study on the perspective change on life through democratic civil education of North Korean settlers],” *Hanguk bigyo jeongbu hakbo* 19, no. 1 (2015): 271–293; Seomok Hwang and Hyo Heon Won, “Bukhan italjumin-i insikhan Hanawon gyoyuk-gwa namhan-ui pyeonsaeng gyoyuk-e daehan inteobyu naeyong bunseok [Analysis of interviews on Hanawon education and South Korea’s lifelong education recognized by North Korean defectors], *Susan haeyang gyoyuk yeongu* 29, no. 4 (2017): 1277–1288.

⁵ There are many articles and books in South Korea about border crossers from North Korea. Notable are the publications of In-Jin Yoon. See his book, *Bukhan iumin : saenghwal-gwa uisik geurigo jeongchak jwon jeongchaek* [North Korean migrants: life and minds, and policies for settlement] (Seoul: Jipmundang, 2009), as well as In-Jin Yoon, “North Korean Diaspora: North Korean Defectors Abroad and in South Korea,” *Development and Society* 30, no. 1 (2001): 1–26.

academic tradition of post-socialist transformation.⁶ What appears normal, rational, free, democratic, and natural can actually be accidental, temporary, and absurd. This approach seeks to expose the arbitrariness of the existing order, questioning its hidden assumptions and accidental origins. The approach of “ironic analysis” is the kind of originality⁷ that I attempt to contribute to the existing scholarship of border crossers. In this sense, this study belongs to the tradition of “critical citizenship studies,”⁸ as this tradition does not assume any fixed image of South Korea; rather, it problematizes the notion of Korean-ness and carefully investigates the citizen-making process in South Korea.

As stated above, most of the qualitative research on border crossers belongs to the tradition of grounded theory which focuses on micro-level personal experiences. However, this study attempts to understand how macro-level social changes in the modes of production and micro-level cultural experiences intersect. Alternatively, the extended case method would be useful in tracing the institutional changes of people’s daily lives by connecting a cultural, micro-level analysis with its macro-level changes from socialism to post-socialism.⁹ Unlike the type of research found in grounded theory, the extended case method in sociology deploys ethnography to understand people’s everyday lives in socially and historically specific contexts, and to locate them in larger macro structures of the world.¹⁰ In this vein, macro-level concepts such as socialism and post-socialism are essential in making sense of the transformations that border crossers are going through in South Korea, and this method is also part of the tradition of (re)interpretive research which critically reexamines the institutionalization process and meaning of resocialization in South Korea. For this, the cultural notion of resilience for normal, upstanding citizens will be critically re-examined and challenged.

⁶ R. N. Jacobs and R. Smith, “Romance, Irony, and Solidarity,” *Sociological Theory* 15, no. 1 (1997): 60–80; Gil Eyal, Ivan Szelenyi, and Eleanor Townsley, “On Irony: An Invitation to Neoclassical Sociology,” *Thesis Eleven* 73 (2003): 5–41.

⁷ There are many forms of originality in academic scholarship—a new approach, theory, method, or data, studying a new topic, etc. This study attempts to contribute to the field by providing not only new qualitative data, but also by using a new approach of “ironic analysis.” For more discussion of originality, see Michele Lamont, *How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

⁸ Ji Yeon Lee, “Talbuk yeosong-ui gyeongge neomgi-wa juche hyeongseong” [Transnationality and subject-making of North Korean women in South Korea] (PhD dissertation, Yonsei University, 2017); Byung Ho Chung, ed., *Welkom tu Koria: Bukjoseon saramdeul-ui namhan sari* [Welcome to Korea: lives of North Koreans in South Korea] (Seoul: Hanyang University Press, 2006); Hae Yeon Choo, “Gendered Modernity and Ethnicized Citizenship: North Korean Settlers in Contemporary South Korea,” *Gender and Society* 20, no. 5 (2006): 576–604; J. Lee, “Disciplinary Citizenship in South Korean NGOs’ Narratives of Resettlement for North Korean Refugees,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 38, no. 15 (2015): 2688–2704; S.Y. Park, “Street-Level Bureaucracy and Depoliticized North Korean Subjectivity in the Service Provision of Hana Center,” *Asian Ethnicity* 17, no. 2 (2016): 199–213.

⁹ Michael Burawoy, “The Extended Case Method,” *Sociological Theory* 16, no. 1 (1998): 4–33.

¹⁰ Iddo Tavory and Stefan Timmermans, “Two Cases of Ethnography: Grounded Theory and the Extended Case Method,” *Ethnography* 10, no. 3 (2009): 243–263.

This is essential to address the interlocked nature of institutional arrangements and micro subjectivities in citizenship.

Methodology

I do not intend to prove or test any universal theory, but to borrow sociological concepts such as post-socialist transformation to make sense of and interpret particular citizen-making processes. My description of the process of remaking former North Koreans into citizen-subjects is based on qualitative fieldwork which includes in-depth interviews with 55 informants, a year-long participant-observation at a local NGO, and archival data gathered in South Korea and China from 2005 to 2019. The information presented here is based upon interview data from border crossers as well as former teachers, counselors, and volunteers in Hanawon, along with analyses of course materials such as textbooks. The qualitative data are helpful in disclosing the detailed actions, frustrations, angers, and struggles taking place in the process of post-socialist transformation in South Korea. It should be noted that it is not easy to conduct research on this topic because of its sensitive nature, since some border crossers still have family members in North Korea who could be put at risk, while some fear of discrimination and prejudices in South Korea.

Research informants for this study were recruited primarily using the snowball technique. I had befriended several border crossers before this study, and met more during my participant-observation period at a local NGO in Seoul. In addition, I attended numerous conferences and public events where border crossers were speakers. After the events, I introduced myself and asked for interviews, and from there, more informants were also introduced to me by these initial contacts. They then suggested other possible informants, who in turn suggested more people. The interviews were held in diverse locations that were accessible and comfortable for the participants, such as NGO offices, restaurants, private homes, cafés, and alternative schools.

The interviews were semi-structured with guided questions, yet typically developed into informal conversations; in most cases, casual conversation with food and drink proved most beneficial for learning in-depth information. The interviews themselves were always exciting adventures and wonderful learning experiences. Interviews lasted from one hour to five or six hours, and, if necessary, follow-up interviews were conducted for clarification and additional information. I do not intend or claim to provide the best way to document the lives of border crossers in South Korea nor to represent their voices or to speak for them; rather, I hope my limited data can pave the way for efforts to better understand the lives of border crossers in South Korea.

Conducting interviews is like building a relationship or friendship. One needs to manage, value, and respect the relationship, as well as any

information shared. I made efforts to build a close rapport with the informants. In fact, I maintain family-like relationships with some border crossers, meeting them during holidays and on weekends for meals, attending their weddings, and being called their “Southern brother” or “Southern uncle.”

From my Seoul accent and middle-class presentation, many of my informants initially thought that it would be interesting to get to know me. During the interviews, communication was typically based on shared feelings, emotions, and mutual respect; thus, sensitivity and sympathy to their anger, frustration, outrage, and discomfort were indispensable. Unless I shared this kind of affinity with my informants, it was not easy to build a rapport with them. Interviews were much easier and went more smoothly when they felt comfortable with the setting and with me, and when they were able to lead the conversations. When an interview flowed smoothly, each of us sensed mutual respect, and maybe the possibility of friendship, but this took time, effort, and patience. Of course, meeting more frequently was also helpful. This process truly required the art of relationships, and thus needed to be managed, developed, cultivated, and nurtured.

The Case: Border Crossers from Socialist North Korea

I employ the term “border crosser” to discuss displaced North Koreans residing outside of North Korea. Other terms, such as defectors, refugees, or migrants, are used to describe these individuals, but each is very limited in scope and does not encompass the diverse group of North Koreans residing outside of North Korea. Some may be aptly called “defectors,” while others may behave more like “migrants.” The term “refugees” makes sense for those North Koreans who seek asylum in China or elsewhere, but given the heterogeneous and diverse nature of North Koreans, this concept is also limited. Displaced North Koreans do not form a homogenous or monolithic group. Each term has its own value in emphasizing particular characteristics of North Koreans but also risks excluding a significant number of people that do not belong to each limited category. In some cases, a single North Korean border crosser goes through different stages—from a defector escaping from North Korea to a refugee in China to a migrant in South Korea or elsewhere. The term border crosser is a more inclusive concept that illuminates the fluidity of identity; it is employed as a heuristic device to include these heterogeneous, diverse, and changing aspects of North Koreans living outside of North Korea. However, all terms—not only defectors, migrants, and refugees, but also border crossers—are limited and restricting. In the interviews, some border crossers confessed a dislike for all terms referring to their status as former North Koreans because they serve to stigmatize the population they label. For example, one of the informants stated:

We are all Koreans. Plus, I received my national ID number just like any South Korean. Why should there be separate and special terms for me or any other person from North Korea? These names and terms imply that we don't get equal treatment in South Korea. We don't need these names. Just treat me like other regular Koreans.¹¹

This study sees border crossers from North Korea as post-socialist subjects who are experiencing the reconfiguration of their subjectivity in South Korea. In this sense, they are different from other migrants in South Korea, many of whom are from non-socialist countries. Further, in comparison to other migrants, border crossers are regarded as socialist subjects from the South Korean state, unlike capitalist individuals born and raised in South Korea.

By law, North Koreans are given automatic legal citizenship; however, they still are required to participate in a cultural orientation program purported to help them live in South Korea. According to the South Korean Constitution,¹² the nation's territory includes the entire Korean peninsula and surrounding islands. This implies that the South Korean government holds legitimate sovereignty over all of Korea, and that North Korea's occupation of the northern part of the peninsula is illegal. As such, North Korean border crossers are considered dislocated citizens of South Korea.

Once border crossers arrive, they are initially viewed as dangerous subjects who might be potential spies, so they are screened and classified at the National Intelligence Agency. Once they are deemed safe, they are placed in the facility Hanawon to learn how to become South Koreans. This process of citizen-making employs dual institutions: the National Intelligence Agency for national security and Hanawon for civil education.¹³ In other words, this dual process screens out potential spies and teaches border crossers how to culturally become South Koreans, which is what I call "post-socialist transformation." They are the only group of people in South Korea who have to go through these two stages of institutionalization, unlike other migrants from socialist countries like China and Vietnam. That is, unlike other migrants to South Korea, border crossers must transform themselves

¹¹ Informant 11, 15 May 2009, Seoul. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, all interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement. Border crossers in South Korea currently number slightly over 33,000, and it is possible to trace their identities with information regarding age, occupation, gender, and place of residence given their limited numbers.

¹² Andrei Lankov, "Why Some North Korean Defectors Choose Not to Live in the South," *NK News*, 20 February 2018.

¹³ Will Kymlicka's distinction between "external protection" and "internal restriction" is applicable when thinking about the case of border crossers. It is not the exact same concept, but the institutionalization of border crossers also has two different sites for each goal: national security at the National Intelligence Agency and civil education at Hanawon. One might call this a distinction between "external security" and "internal education." External security screens out dangerous socialist subjects, and internal education provides post-socialist education. For more, see Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

from socialist subjects into post-socialist citizens through these two stages of institutionalization. In the next section, I examine the processes and experiences of border crossers at the two institutions in South Korea as they shed their Northern “clothes” to begin wearing Southern “clothes.”

Post-Socialist Transformation at the Institutions

Socialist Subjects as Dangerous Security Threats

Upon arrival in South Korea, North Koreans are placed in an interrogation centre where they are held for a period of up to six months to evaluate their backgrounds and be debriefed. South Korea's National Intelligence Agency questions border crossers to determine whether they have any sensitive intelligence information or represent a security risk of being spies for the North Korean government. Meanwhile, the border crossers have to prove their authenticity as “North Koreans,” and not ethnic Koreans from China or overseas Chinese from North Korea. The South Korean law of defining a Korean as someone who was born on the Korean Peninsula to Korean parents is strictly applied; thus technically, all inhabitants of North Korea with Korean parentage can become South Korean citizens.¹⁴

The National Intelligence Agency is the place where the government screens for those who are worthy of remaining in South Korea and those who are not. In short, this is a dividing institution that determines who enters the free world, that is, who is acceptable and who is unacceptable in South Korea. Therefore, the idea of distinguishing between “us” (South Koreans) and “them” (North Koreans) is practiced in this facility. Once border crossers are put in the facility, the very first thing they have to do is to take off their old (Northern) clothes, and to put on new (Southern) uniforms given by the South Korean government. This is the very place where the metaphor of taking off Northern clothes originates.

The longest time the South Korean government can detain border crossers in this facility is up to six months, but in the year 2018, the Moon Jae-In administration in South Korea reduced the maximum time to three months to avoid controversies about human rights abuses and forced confessions.¹⁵ During the interrogation process, border crossers are located in isolated single cells for a week or longer without any outside contact, including lawyers.¹⁶ No television, no telephones, and no internet access are allowed. Border crossers have to write in detail about their lives in North Korea to prove their authenticity as Koreans from North Korea, otherwise they cannot

¹⁴ Andrei Lankov, “Bitter Taste of Paradise: North Korean Refugees in South Korea,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 6, no. 1 (2006): 105–137.

¹⁵ See “From 180 Days to 90 Days?” *Seoul sinmun*, 13 February 2018.

¹⁶ Lee, “Talbuk yeoseong-ui gyeongge neomgi-wa juche hyeongseong.”

be accepted to stay in South Korea. In most cases, the border crossers have to write at least 100 pages of their autobiography, including information about their family, friends, neighbours, classmates, and teachers.¹⁷ The intelligence officers have accumulated knowledge and information from previous border crossers, and thus can inspect individuals' writings and testimonies for accuracy and reliability. If any misinformation, inconsistencies, or falsehoods are found, then border crossers have to rewrite their entire testimony again and again to make it acceptable for the intelligence officers. In some cases, even lie detectors are used, and some border crossers are told to go back to North Korea. There have been reports¹⁸ of physical abuse, suicide, and false accusations of espionage for North Korea in this facility.

Border crossers in this facility are treated as potentially dangerous socialist subjects, such as spies, criminals, and non-Koreans, until proven otherwise. They have to prove their innocence as future South Koreans. To be sure, they are de facto inmates of the National Intelligence Agency without full civil rights or legal protections. However, once their authenticity as North Koreans is confirmed and they are ruled out as spies, they are transferred to Hanawon, where their studies to become citizens in South Korean society begin.

Post-Socialist Education at Hanawon

Hanawon is a re-education institution for the purpose of teaching border crossers to become “regular” South Korean citizens. After being released from the National Intelligence Agency, the kind of education border crossers receive at Hanawon can be characterized as an alternative to that of communist North Korea. This is supported by the National Security Law, which prohibits anti-state, pro-North, and pro-socialist activities in South Korea. One cannot live in South Korea as a pro-North Korean communist, and under this law, democracy and socialism cannot co-exist.¹⁹

Hanawon is operated by the Ministry of Unification, which provides “protection and support for the resettlement of residents who escaped North Korea in the belief that they represent a test case for our will and ability to unify.”²⁰ This is the place where border crossers who are classified as persons worthy of remaining in South Korea are sent.

Hanawon means “House of Unity,” and *hana* in Korean means “one,”—that is, one people, one blood, one language, and one nation—entailing the

¹⁷ Informant 55, 28 August 2017, Seoul.

¹⁸ See “South Korea’s Guantanamo,” *Newstapa*, 18 March 2014.

¹⁹ During the Korean War, the United States military and South Korean government engaged in psychological warfare and a reeducation program for their socialist prisoners of war. They taught anti-socialist songs and slogans.

²⁰ Byung-Ho Chung, “Between Defector and Migrant: Identities and Strategies of North Koreans in South Korea,” 10.

unity of the Korean people, while *won* denotes the “house” that hosts the border crossers. Hanawon is an empirical laboratory in which one can investigate so-called normal behaviours in South Korea.

Normalization

Every day at Hanawon, students rise at 6:30 a.m. to gather and sing the South Korean national anthem. Classes last from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m.; students are allowed free time in the evening before going to sleep at 9:30 p.m. As part of the curriculum, students are instructed to learn and sing the song “Our Hanawon,” which describes the facility as “our mother, our house, our hope, our cradle, our lighthouse.”²¹ Ironically, Hanawon teaches the notion of capitalist individualism using rather conformist and totalizing methods such as these examples.

At Hanawon, student behaviour is governed by a clear system of rules based on a point system; positive behaviour can help students earn points. For example, a student can earn five points for tidiness or active class participation, and for preventing violent activities, a student can earn ten points. Likewise, points are deducted for negative behaviours such as the illegal use of a cellular phone or camera (-5 points), absence without leave from class (-10 points), disrupting class (-10 points), physical fighting (-10 points), disobedience to teachers and staff (-15 points), and messiness (-15 points). If at the end of the instruction period, a student’s point total is less than negative three, that student will not be allowed to live in Seoul.

In addition to the point system, Hanawon uses a system of support payment reduction to punish misbehaviour. For instance, sexual violence, sexual abuse, physical assault, and gambling all result in a 50 percent reduction of the basic support payment of 6 million won that border crossers receive when they finish classes at Hanawon. Violence and threats against teachers or staff, instigation inside Hanawon, and unauthorized absence from Hanawon, result in a 30 percent reduction in the basic support payment. Any intentional destruction of Hanawon property results in a 20 percent reduction. Physical fights and arguments among students are the most common delinquent behaviour at Hanawon. Below are the basic rules for students at Hanawon.

Table 1
Student Rules at Hanawon

Students cannot leave Hanawon without permission.
Students cannot use violence against anyone, including teachers, staff, or other students.
Students should take good care of Hanawon property.
Students cannot engage in any profitable activities at Hanawon.

²¹ Informant 3, 15 March 2008, Seoul.

Students cannot reveal anything about Hanawon to people outside.
Students cannot use cellular phones during their stay.
Students cannot bring food from outside, and cannot consume alcoholic beverages inside Hanawon.
Students should behave properly.
Students cannot visit the room of a member of the opposite sex.
Students cannot move after evening roll call.
Students should keep their spaces clean.
Students cannot smoke in non-smoking areas.
Student should respect all rules and regulations.

Source: obtained from Informant 37, December 2012.

The payment reduction and point system and the disciplinary rules at Hanawon resemble Foucault's discussion of normalization.²² Normalization encompasses the processes of defining what is ordinary and acceptable, and identifies what is prohibited, abnormal, and unacceptable. The fine system disciplines border crossers by punishing misbehaviour. It is a way of distinguishing those who act according to norms from those who do not. This kind of corrective practice treats border crossers as objects to be educated, guided, and purified.

Economic-Political Education

Hanawon teaches border crossers to engage in various market activities, to say the South Korean oath, to respect the flag, to understand the South Korean version of history, and to speak the South Korean version of the Korean language. Each of these elements constitutes an article of former North Koreans' new South Korean "clothes." One of the crucial aspects of becoming South Korean citizens is learning about the principles of the capitalist market economy. Courses at Hanawon emphasize the notion of capitalist rationality by teaching about opportunity costs and trade-offs. In the capitalist market economy, as teachers tell their classes, money and resources are limited, so people cannot buy everything they want.²³ One must make rational choices about what to purchase and what to give up, and one must record their spending and in an expenditure book. They are taught not to spend their money beyond their capabilities, not to overcharge their credit cards, and not to overuse their cell phone data and minutes. At Hanawon, border crossers are taught these profit-seeking economic behaviours as moral duties and rightful behaviours, what Max Weber²⁴ discusses as "the spirit of capitalism." However, unlike Weber's idea, the South Korean state acts as an educator of the "spirit of capitalism."

²² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*.

²³ Hanawon, *Sahoe saenghwal* [Social Life] (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2017).

²⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner, 1958).

The courses at Hanawon provide detailed techniques to practice rational consumption, which requires planning, information, and understanding of opportunity costs. For example, the program teaches border crossers to save 10 percent of their income, keep only one credit card, avoid eating out, reduce alcohol and cigarette consumption by 10 percent, plan a monthly and annual budget, and use greeting cards instead of gifts as a form of celebration.²⁵ Hanawon promotes entrepreneurial and competitive behaviours of assumedly economically rational individuals in order to reduce potential burdens and dependence on the state, and for the sake of the market economy. This practice of economic education reflects the state's disciplinary power to modernize new comers from the North with the logic of the market and the rule of law. Under the model of post-socialist capitalist citizenship, the prescribed moral duty of border crossers is to be self-reliant, responsible entrepreneurial citizens.

Another important aspect of Hanawon's education system is the state's emphasis on political democracy and freedom in South Korea. Hanawon's main task is to politically re-socialize border crossers.²⁶ This program is titled the "Democratic Citizenship Program," and the courses teach concepts related to capitalist democracy, including citizens' duties and rights, the rule of law, human rights, the multi-party system, and elections. Border crossers are taught their duties, responsibilities, and legal obligations as democratic citizens of South Korea. During the classes, teachers also emphasize the importance of a free and democratic political system for a future unified Korea.²⁷ Courses on the practice of freedom and democracy in South Korea cover topics such as "Korean Politics and Democracy," "How to Become Democratic Citizens," "Understanding Elections," and "The Korean War." The last course is designed to change former North Koreans' perception that the Korean War was anti-American and anti-imperialist.²⁸ These courses are intended to debunk socialist ideology and to heal the ideological wounds incurred in North Korea. Border crossers learn to develop attitudes favorable to South Korea and learn about capitalist democracy as a better alternative to socialism. In classes, border crossers are shown positive images of capitalist democracy and taught to criticize North Korean society and see South Korean democracy in a positive light. Additionally, border crossers are taught the rituals of singing the South Korean national anthem and pledging allegiance to the flag.²⁹ When discussing the negative aspects

²⁵ Hanawon, *Hanguk sahoe ihae : saehwal yeongyeok* [Understanding South Korea: everyday life] (Seoul: Yangdong Publisher, 2001b).

²⁶ Soo-Jung Lee, "Education for Young North Korean Migrants: South Koreans' Ambivalent 'Others' and the Challenges of Belonging," *The Review of Korean Studies* 14, no. 1 (2011): 89–112.

²⁷ Hanawon, *Saeroun sahoe saenghwal* [New social life] (Seoul: Yangdong Publisher, 2007).

²⁸ Hanawon, *Hanguk sahoe ihae : immun sahoe yeongyeok* [Understanding South Korea: human-social science] (Seoul: Yangdong Publisher, 2001a).

²⁹ Hanawon, *Saeroun sahoe saenghwal*.

of North Korea, teachers discuss blind loyalty to leaders and the party as idol worship and describe collectivism as a lack of individual freedom.³⁰ Border crossers are induced to change their political orientation, and the courses inevitably lead to the conclusion that North Korea is neither free nor democratic.

Hanawon as Total Institution

Hanawon is the place where former North Koreans learn how to speak, act, and think as South Koreans; it is where border crossers are re-educated to examine their Northern thoughts from the Southern perspective. They learn the “correct” way of thinking and the right, moral behaviour of the South. This is a place for purification, where border crossers break their attachment to North Korea and cleanse their polluted Northern souls.³¹

Hanawon can be described as a short-term, intensive boot-camp focused on fabricating South Korean cultural identity. The term boot-camp is apt because Hanawon is an isolated place, separated from the everyday lives of South Koreans, where border crossers are held behind barbed wire and monitored by security cameras. It is a place of confinement; border crossers talk about their time at Hanawon as “imprisonment” in a free, democratic society. Ironically, to become a free, individual citizen of South Korea first requires imprisonment and separation from that very society. Outsiders must gain permission to visit and must register before entering. At Hanawon, men and women are held separately in different branches, meaning families must endure separations of up to three months after entering South Korea. Thus, some families have described Hanawon as “twelve weeks of prison.”³² The closed nature of Hanawon has been criticized for perpetuating gender stereotypes and for implying South Korean superiority.³³ For example, some border crossers stated:

Leaders at Hanawon are like party members in North Korea. They told us what to do, and we had no choice but to obey them. It was really hard to endure, but I was just thinking about meeting my family once I got out.³⁴

Hanawon is not necessary. It's too abstract and theoretical, but adjustment to South Korea is real and you have to experience it by yourself. How can you learn about lives in a closed environment like Hanawon?³⁵

³⁰ Informant 52, 25 July 2015, Seoul.

³¹ Gil Eyal, “Anti-Politics and the Spirits of Capitalism: Dissident, Monetarists, and the Czech Transition to Capitalism,” *Theory and Society* 29 (2000): 49–92.

³² “Talbukijumin i cheoeum mananeun hanguk sahoe ‘12’ juui gamok hanawon” [Twelve Weeks of Prison, the First South Korean Experience], *Hankyoreh*, Version 14 November 2010, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/defense/448622.html>, accessed on 15 January 2018.

³³ Chung, “Between Defector and Migrant,” 16.

³⁴ Informant 12, 25 May 2009, Seoul.

³⁵ Informant 37, 13 April 2013, Seoul.

As a matter of fact, one study points out that 80 percent of border crossers were not satisfied with their education at Hanawon.³⁶ The pedagogy is rigid and has a totalizing effect on students. Some students refer to the pedagogy at Hanawon as “North Korean-style education” and refer to Hanawon itself as “North Korea within South Korea” as well as “the last concentration camp before starting individual lives.”³⁷

The Cultural Dynamics of Citizen-Making at the Subjectivity Level

The Learning of Resilience at Hanawon

The instructions at Hanawon aim to provide a basic understanding of democracy and capitalism and overcome the cultural barriers resulting from societal, linguistic, and lifestyle differences between the North and the South. The education at Hanawon is also about cultural learning to become South Koreans, in addition to learning about capitalism and democracy. What border crossers are experiencing at Hanawon is not just economic or political transformation, but cultural learning of resilience in order to live an unstable and risky market society. In this sense, the post-socialist transformation is not just about making them *Homo Economicus*, but more about getting them ready to live culturally in a new society, and to enhance themselves for that new society. They are exemplars of overcoming oppressions and hardships, and they should do the same in their lives in South Korea.

At Hanawon, border crossers are taught to cultivate their ability to effectively cope with difficulties and hardships, and to successfully assimilate to South Korean society. For example, the linguistic adaptation program at Hanawon is supposed to teach border crossers to sound like “cultured” South Koreans and to be easily understood by local South Koreans. Even in the language courses, border crossers are asked to repeat and exercise what is titled, “positive-message practices” again and again.³⁸

- Transcend life and death.
- Overcome oneself.
- Give up one’s ego.
- Believe in oneself.
- Be aggressive and outgoing.
- Always smile and be positive.

³⁶ Ji-Kyung Lee, “Bukhanitaljumin jeongchak munjeui gaeseonbangdan [Ways to improve the settlement of North Korean refugees],” *Hanguk minju simin gyoyuk hakhoebo* 13, no. 1, (2012): 101–132.

³⁷ Informant 13, 12 August 2009, Seoul.

³⁸ Hanawon, *Hanguk sahoe ihae: eoneo yeongyeok* [Understanding South Korea: language] (Seoul: Yangdong Publisher, 2001): 19–20.

- You can do it, and you will do it.
- You will grow and thrive.
- You will enhance and improve yourself.
- You will accomplish your goals.
- Things will get better.

As found in the above passage from the Korean language textbook, relearning the Korean language is not just about learning new words, but also adapting to the cultural nuances of resilience to survive in the South. The notion of resilience signifies positive emotions for successful adaptations to and acceptance of South Korea. Without resilience, there is no adaptation, only mal adaptation.³⁹ There seems to be hidden scripts of life-coaching, or mind-coaching, in language learning at Hanawon. Border crossers are asked to adjust to the new environment by being open to challenging new tasks and being committed to success. It is possible to accomplish these tasks in South Korea through resilience, as the virtue of resilience is both desirable and realizable. With resilience, border crossers can endure the pains and hardships. One informant told me:

They teach things like this because we were born and grew up under socialism where fairness and equality are valued, while competition is really fierce here in capitalist South Korea. You would become a loser if you don't know how to survive.⁴⁰

An example of coaching resilience to overcome the difficulties in South Korea comes from advice given by a former student to current students at Hanawon. He left a note advising students to lower their expectations and be prepared for prejudices and discrimination in South Korea. In particular, the last advice was a story from Aesop, *The Tortoise and the Hare*, which symbolizes patient, persistent, and perseverant attitudes as survival strategies in South Korea.

³⁹ So-Hee Lim and Sang-Sook Han, "A Predictive Model on North Korean Refugees' Adaptation to South Korean Society: Resilience in Response to Psychological Trauma," *Asian Nursing Research* 10 (2016): 164–172; Marton Lendvay, "Resilience in Post-Socialist Context: The Case of a Watermelon Producing Community in Hungary," *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 65, no. 3 (2016): 255–269; Brad Evans and Julian Reid, "Dangerously Exposed: The Life and Death of the Resilient Subject," *Resilience* 1, no. 2 (2013): 83–98.

⁴⁰ Informant 42, 22 September 2014, Seoul.

Table 2

Ten Commandments for living in South Korea by a former Hanawon student

- 1) Don't expect to be treated well in South Korea;
North Koreans occupy a lower stratum in South Korea.
- 2) Be patient. It takes time to adjust to South Korea.
Your impatience increases the possibility of failure.
- 3) Don't get angry or fight when you are discriminated against, even
when the reason is just that you are from North Korea.
North Koreans are weak and only a social minority in South
Korea.
A minority cannot change the minds of tens of millions of South
Koreans.
- 4) Don't judge this society within three years of your arrival.
What you see and hear is only a small part of this society; your
way of thinking will keep changing.
- 5) Never expect to make big money in three years, and never
expect to be rich in five years.
- 6) Your settlement money is not for irresponsible spending.
Spending a thousand dollars is easy, but making a hundred is
hard.
- 7) Within three years, think ten times and listen to South Koreans'
advice at least twice before you spend more than five
hundred dollars.
- 8) Immerse yourself and mingle with South Koreans.
Get to know a good South Korean who can give you advice.
- 9) Don't get angry; give up your ego and respect others.
- 10) To be successful in South Korea, be a tortoise, not a hare.

Source: A written note obtained in October 2011.

From the interviews, one can also sense the notion of resilience instilled at the individual level. As part of this process, one informant confessed their experiences of “being reborn” as a new person in South Korea:

I had to change my mind. I had to be positive. I should not complain, period. Also, I should not complain too much about this society.⁴¹

The ethic of resilience is celebrated, taught, and instilled at Hanawon. One can say that the concept of individual resilience is instilled to border crossers through the curriculum and teaching. Resilience is a strategy to cope with stigma and discrimination in South Korea. Resilience at an individual level is a key concept for survival in South Korea, while collectivism and political loyalties are the features and ethics of North Korea. At Hanawon, border crossers are taught to criticize North Korea as a whole, and for the North’s lack of democracy, human rights, and individual freedom. At the same time, personal responsibilities—an ethic of self-reliance and resilience—are strongly emphasized at the individual level. These courses strive to impart the correct way of thinking and correct moral behaviour in South Korea. Unlike North Korea, this does not mean that students have to follow a direct order from the state, the ruling party, or government leaders; rather, they have to be responsible for their own lives and be resilient in South Korea.

At Hanawon, border crossers are not only developed into *Homo Economicus*—rational, self-reliant, law-abiding, interest-maximizing beings—but also into resilient cultural beings who can adjust, adapt, and accommodate themselves into the post-socialist environment. The notion of resilience is taught as a marker of a good, responsible model citizen in a post-socialist environment. Resilience in this case is not about resistance or revolution, but about adaptation to the existing order of society in the South. In other words, this notion of resilience is not about teaching radical political actions, but about teaching seemingly apolitical, individual survival strategies. Border crossers have to settle in the South with risks and uncertainties, so they must develop and enhance their individual capacities for survival in South Korean society.

Once released from Hanawon, border crossers have become citizens of South Korea with official identifications;⁴² that is, in theory, they have become legal citizens of South Korea. And yet, culturally, almost everything in South Korea is a challenge. Despite their education about resilience at Hanawon,

⁴¹ Informant 45, 28 October 2014, Seoul.

⁴² Until the year 2007, resident registration numbers for North Korean border crossers were issued at Hanawon. In a South Korean ID number, the eighth to tenth digits indicate a person’s birthplace. Most border crossers were registered as having the same birthplace digits—that of the Hanawon address. This became a visible stigma because it revealed their origins as North Koreans. Now they receive ID numbers indicating their first residential address instead.

they become desperate and begin to hide their identity as border crossers. They are not free even in a free, democratic society. It is very difficult to learn how to become South Korean after their stay at Hanawon, as one border crosser confessed:

North Korea was scary because I was starving. China was scary because I always feared being arrested. Now South Korea is scary because I don't know much about this society.⁴³

Although it is not quite the same, the emotional hardship for border crossers does not end when they come to the South; rather, it is the beginning of something new. Border crossers discuss fears of state violence, hunger, punishment, and possible imprisonment in the North, but they talk about the fear of uncertainty, discrimination, and prejudice in the South. They talk about the shortage of material goods—money, food, and clothing in the North—but they feel that something is missing in the South where material goods are plentiful.

In the following section, I discuss two distinctive responses to the teaching of resilience in South Korea: fear and rejection. These are by no means exhaustive examples to represent the experience of every border crosser; rather, they are two emotional responses⁴⁴ to the notion of resilience that are expected to be cultivated and developed at Hanawon. These responses make sense out of living life in a post-socialist environment while trying to avoid direct confrontation and discrimination.

Living with Fear: Passing in South Korea

Some border crossers choose not to reveal their identities out of fear of discrimination and hostility; instead, they tell people that their Northern accents developed from their upbringing in a southern province of South Korea like Gangwon. Some students told their parents not to come to school, fearing their parents' presence would reveal their backgrounds. Such children try very hard to hide their backgrounds in schools, often not telling even their closest friends. Some teachers even advised border-crosser students to disguise their identity as being from China or other provinces in South Korea. They want to pass as other regular South Koreans. As a couple of border crossers who usually do not come out to others as such, explained:

Why do we hide our background? It is because we face so much discrimination. South Koreans think North Korea is poor, which might

⁴³ Informant 10, 7 May 2009, Seoul. This statement is often repeated by other border crossers who stayed in China before coming to South Korea.

⁴⁴ Sara Ahmed argues that emotions are not psychological states, but social and cultural practices. They are also dependent upon relations of power. See Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004).

be true, but they also think they are superior to us and believe we are really stupid. Maybe this society is not quite ready to accept us as we are. It is hard to live with those strange stares and suspicious looks.⁴⁵

When people say I sound just like South Koreans, that's the very best compliment I can get here. It makes me so happy. However, I always feel very nervous and uneasy when people ask me where I'm from.⁴⁶

Some of the stereotypes and prejudices in South Korea regarding border crossers are that they are inferior and lacking in sophistication. However, from the perspectives of border crossers, South Koreans are neither honest nor straightforward, even though they look kind and gentle on the surface with their fake smiles. For example, border crossers learned not to believe the true meaning of such niceties as, "I'll call you later" or "I'll see you later." Some of them believed in the literal meaning of these greetings, but ended up waiting for a long time in vain.

Another border crosser confessed that he was able to secure a job only after he did not reveal his background as a border crosser on his application. A stereotype about border crossers in South Korea is that they are traitors or criminals. This view sees border crossers as untrustworthy, selfish runaways who fled their country and family. There was even a newspaper article with the headline, "More defectors rely on crimes for living,"⁴⁷ and border crossers are often told, "Go back to your country" or "What's wrong with your country, North Korea?" Some examples from informants are as follows:

There's no place I can get a job. They don't hire any (North Korean) border crossers. On my ID, it clearly states that I am a South Korean citizen. However, I wrote down Korean-Chinese when I applied. That is, they hire Korean-Chinese people, but not us, border crossers from North Korea.⁴⁸

I'm just trying to hide my identity here, and I'm not going to tell my own child about my background as a border crosser. My (Southern) husband told me never to tell anybody about my background.⁴⁹

Border crossers face various kinds of discrimination and prejudices. One talked about such experiences:

There have been so many times when they turned down my job application because I'm from the North. They just ask, "Why did you

⁴⁵ Informant 6, 2 April 2009, Seoul.

⁴⁶ Informant 36, 18 November 2019, Seoul (follow-up interview).

⁴⁷ "More Defectors Rely on Crimes for Living," *The Korea Times*, 26 March 2006.

⁴⁸ Informant 24, 26 October 2010, Seoul.

⁴⁹ Informant 36, 10 November 2012, Seoul.

come? Is it because you committed a crime there?” Then they give me a very suspicious look. They look down on us. No matter how hard we try, this society is not ready to receive us.⁵⁰

This kind of view has placed the burden on border crossers to prove their worth to South Koreans. One border crosser, Ju Seung-Hyeon, recently published a book titled *Jonanjadeul* [Survivors],⁵¹ and argues that border crossers from North Korea are treated like untouchable outcasts in South Korea as the bottom of the social hierarchy, while Korean-Chinese are treated as second-class citizens. According to Ju, border crossers are not even considered second-class citizens, and therein lies the fear of being discriminated against. As a result, whenever possible, border crossers want to live quietly and anonymously, unnoticed by strangers, without having to come out about their backgrounds. Living a normal life in South Korea entails disguising and hiding their identities.

Rejection: Departing from South Korea

According to a 2018 report by Andrei Lankov,⁵² many border crossers would willingly live in other foreign countries if circumstances would allow. Some actually take the option to “exit” or “opt-out”—leaving for other countries because of the discrimination in South Korea. This is what I call “rejection,” and this notion of rejection means the non-acceptance of South Korea as the one and only viable choice of residence, as well as looking for a way out of South Korea. As stated, choosing to stay in South Korea means that border crossers are never able to return to North Korea and that they are settling for the other side of the Korean peninsula where their background becomes a stigma and target for discrimination, despite the various welfare benefits. Rejection means rejection of resilient living within South Korea, and acceptance of living outside South Korea.

It is estimated that about 15 percent of border crossers who came to South Korea chose this option,⁵³ and more than 20 border crossers even chose to return to North Korea.⁵⁴ A highly publicized case was that of Lim Ji-Hyun, who returned to North Korea in 2017 and criticized South Korea after making several appearances on South Korean television shows. A few such as Kim Ryon-hui and Kwon Chol-nam, wish to return to North Korea but remain in the South, as reported by British media.⁵⁵ This sentiment of rejection can be also found in the following statements:

⁵⁰ Informant 26, 27 February 2011, Seoul.

⁵¹ Seung-Hyeon Ju, *Jonanjadeul* [Survivors] (Seoul: Saegakui Him, 2018).

⁵² Lankov, “Why Some North Korean Defectors Choose Not to Live in the South.”

⁵³ Seung-Hyeon Ju, *Jonanjadeul*, 188.

⁵⁴ Lankov, “Why Some North Korean Defectors Choose Not to Live in the South.”

⁵⁵ Benjamin Haas, “Forever Strangers: the North Korean Defectors Who Want to Go Back.” *The Guardian*, 26 April 2018.

I get this kind of second-class citizen treatment and discrimination here in South Korea, a country of the same blood, the same ethnic group. If things are like this here, I would rather face discrimination in the US, a country of strangers and imperialists.⁵⁶

We are North Koreans, and we can never become South Koreans. Plus, we cannot go back to North Korea. Also, it is impossible to say “Chosun” here in South Korea, nor can we fly the North Korean flag. This is why I’ll leave for Europe, and I’m not coming back to South Korea.⁵⁷

If I remain in South Korea, there is no way that I can meet my family in North Korea ever again. However, if I go to Europe, I may be able to visit North Korea someday with my new identity. Plus, I don’t have to choose one Korea over the other there. Being in South Korea actually limits my chances of meeting my family again.⁵⁸

For them, staying in South Korea limits their life opportunities, and countries like the United States, Britain, and Canada would be their preferred destinations. Canada and the countries in Europe are interesting choices for border crossers since they were taught in North Korea that these countries were not enemies, and are supposedly more open and welcoming to refugees and have generous welfare benefits.

At Hanawon, border crossers are taught to reinvent their subjectivity in a new society. They are encouraged to become active agents of changing themselves—people who can cope with hardships and even discrimination, thus becoming resilient in South Korea. Despite their learning of resilience at Hanawon, some border crossers choose options of rejection and leave the South. The citizen-making processes entail not just institutionalization and teachings, but also validation processes outside such institutions through lived experiences. The institutionalizations are only the beginning of the processes, not the end. Sometimes this process can include the notion of rejection, meaning not enduring long, painful validation processes⁵⁹ inside South Korea, and seeking outside alternatives. They are willing to cross yet more borders for new opportunities, and in this sense, they are indeed dislocated border crossers ontologically. Therefore, for some border crossers, their direct experiences in South Korea and their exposure to discrimination and hostility lead to their eventual rejection and departure.

⁵⁶ Informant 7, 9 April 2009, Seoul.

⁵⁷ Informant 55, 14 August 2017, Seoul.

⁵⁸ Informant 47, 25 January 2015, Seoul.

⁵⁹ Katherine Nicoll, et al., “Opening Discourses of Citizenship Education,” *Journal of Education Policy* 28, no. 6 (2013): 828–846; Maria Olso, et al., “Citizenship Discourses: Production and Curriculum,” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 36, no. 7 (2015): 1036–1053.

Conclusion

This paper examined the detailed process of removing socialist Northern clothes and replacing them with capitalist Southern clothes, and discussed the notion of post-socialist citizens who have to live a livable life and perform as normal citizens in the post-socialist environment of South Korea. A livable life here means a normal, ordinary, and acceptable life in South Korea, which is taught at Hanawon as something desirable and feasible; this socialization requires resilience at the individual level to cope with hardship and uncertainty in South Korean society. A radical change in ethics, behaviours, and attitudes is required for a formerly “polluted” socialist person to adapt to a new logic of individual resilience as well as freedom and democracy.

Normal North Koreans become abnormal once they arrive in South Korea—where South Korean culture is considered universal, normative, rational, and even superior. Rather than accept these normative assumptions as given and natural, this paper attempts to uncover hidden assumptions and problematize the arbitrariness of such assumptions as the notion of resilience. This study has attempted to challenge and demystify the meaning of rational, free, democratic, resilient, and normative behaviours that tend to be taken for granted.

Hanawon is a facility which supposedly helps border crossers realize the dream of living in the promised land after escaping from oppressions in North Korea. They are taught not only the political notion of democracy and the economic notion of a market economy, but also the cultural logic of resilience, as a desirable attitude for surviving in society. Yet, instead of being resilient in South Korean society, some border crossers live in fear, disguising their identities, while others reject South Korea as a permanent home, departing for other countries. As the process of citizen-making is something that must be learnt, invented, and socially constructed, there is space for unintended consequences.

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Filial Nationalism in Global Competition: The 2001 Reform of Mandarin Textbooks

Manon Laurent

ABSTRACT

In the early 2000s the Chinese government initiated a profound shift in how it sought to represent China at home and abroad. Whereas many scholars and China watchers argue that a newly assertive China emerged in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis, I argue that this shift took place in the curriculum reforms nearly a decade earlier. An analysis of the evolution of textbooks used for primary Mandarin instruction shows that, starting in 2001, textbooks were developed to inculcate a perennial bond between an increasingly globalized population and its motherland. Specifically, I show how the emergence of filial nationalism was crafted in Mandarin-language textbooks, laying the groundwork for a new generation of Chinese youth to simultaneously feel pride for and loyalty to the motherland while preparing them for integration into a globalized world.

Keywords: primary education, textbooks, filial nationalism, global citizenship

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Introduction

In February 2019, the president-elect of the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus student union, Chemi Lhamo, a Canadian citizen of Tibetan origin, reported being harassed by the Chinese student community on her social media accounts.¹ The Chinese Students and Scholars Association (CSSA) reportedly played a role in the incident. The

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¹ CBC News, "China is your daddy: Backlash against Tibetan student's election prompts questions about foreign influence," *CBC*, 14 February 2019, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/china-tibet-student-election-1.5019648>.

student group has been actively defending China's image and the interests of the motherland over the last decade, engaging in activities that have disrupted campus life to the point that some universities have disbanded the association: Cambridge University in 2011,² the Australian National University in 2016,³ the University of California, San Diego in 2017,⁴ and McMaster University in 2019.⁵ Whereas some scholars depict these recent incidents as continued evidence of the rise of nationalist sentiments among overseas Chinese students and trace their roots back to the patriotic education developed during the 1990s, I posit that overseas Chinese student patriotism has undergone a profound shift during the 2010s.⁶ Less focused on the past, and deeply proud of China's emerging global leadership, the current generation of young overseas Chinese reflect the values of curricular reforms which took place in 2001, not 1994. These students protect their motherland as they would their family, in a more proactive way.

In 2001 the Chinese government set in motion a new form of nationalism that promoted a proud and unapologetic China. This shift, not yet conceptualized by scholars, is just as, if not more, important than the Patriotic Education Campaign (PEC) launched in 1994.⁷ After the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 and the international boycott that followed, the Party-state initiated a "patriotic education campaign" that included a revision of the school history curriculum. Specifically, the PEC highlighted the transgressions of the West, as having bullied China from the mid-nineteenth century, and sought to remake the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as the country's historical saviour. According to Wang Zheng, the CCP "skillfully utilized China's humiliating past to arouse its citizens' historical consciousness and promote social cohesion."⁸ Mainstream scholarship on Chinese nationalism has focused on the impact of popular nationalism on Chinese foreign policy,⁹

² Varsity News, "Chinese Students & Scholars Association disaffiliated from University," *Varsity*, 03 December 2011. <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/4166>.

³ Alexander Joske and Philip Wen, "The 'patriotic education' of Chinese students at Australian universities," *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 2016, <https://www.smh.com.au/education/the-patriotic-education-of-chinese-students-at-australian-universities-20161003-gru13j.html>.

⁴ Josh Horwitz, "China is retaliating against a US university for inviting the Dalai Lama to speak at graduation," *Quartz*, 19 September 2017, <https://qz.com/1080962/china-is-retaliating-against-the-university-of-california-san-diego-for-inviting-the-dalai-lama-to-speak-at-commencement/>.

⁵ Justin Mowat, "McMaster student government bans Chinese students' group from campus," *CBC News*, 29 September 2019.

⁶ Yige Dong, "How Chinese Students Become Nationalist: Their American Experience and Transpacific Futures," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 3 (2017).

⁷ Elizabeth J. Perry, "Studying Chinese Politics: Farewell to Revolution?" *China Journal* 57 (January 2007): 1–22.

⁸ Zheng Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008): 803, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2008.00526.x>.

⁹ Michael Alan Brittingham, "The 'Role' of Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy: A Reactive Model of Nationalism & Conflict," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 12, no. 2 (2007); David M. Lampton, ed., *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform*, 1st ed. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

in particular the impact of nationalist protests.¹⁰ Many scholars take for granted the success of the PEC, and the resulting rise in patriotic sentiment among the population since the 1990s. During this time the state-led nationalist discourse highlighting China's past humiliations¹¹ was in direct contrast with the real-life experiences of many Chinese citizens who aspired to study or find a job in a Western country.¹² While the PEC and its consequences have received much scholarly attention, no one has yet explored the emergence and impact of an equally forceful curriculum revision that took place in 2001, when textbooks were modified to reflect a much prouder, more assertive, and global form of nationalism: filial nationalism.

After the 2008 economic crisis, scholars argued that the resilience of the Chinese economy fostered the legitimacy of the Party-state, which relied on popular nationalist sentiment. The crisis forced Western countries to acknowledge the new position of China on the international stage.¹³ Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the 2001 primary school Mandarin textbook reform, I argue that Chinese leaders began to promote filial nationalism to citizens several years before the economic crisis. Defined by Vanessa Fong as “an imagined family ... composed of ambitious, well-educated people worldwide,”¹⁴ the emergence of filial nationalism marks a sharp break with the aggrieved and backward-looking nationalist discourse of the 1990s. Whereas Fong explores filial nationalism as the spontaneous patriotic behaviour of Chinese teenagers seeking employment on the global labour market,¹⁵ I contend that this new form of nationalism corresponds to a state-engineered discourse that powerfully unites the Chinese nation, whether at home or abroad, and inculcates a sense of duty to repay the nation. I suggest that filial nationalism is the government's tool to solve what Zhao Suisheng has identified as “the tension between upholding the individualistic political values of modernity and the need for a strong, unified state to survive in a world of competitive nation-states.”¹⁶ Building on the

¹⁰ Jessica Chen Weiss, “Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China,” *International Organization* 67 (2013); Jeremy L. Wallace and Jessica Chen Weiss, “The Political Geography of Nationalist Protest in China: Cities and the 2012 anti-Japanese Protests,” *The China Quarterly* 222 (2015).

¹¹ William A. Callahan, “National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 29, no. 2 (2004).

¹² Dong, “How Chinese Students Become Nationalist: Their American Experience and Transpacific Futures.”

¹³ William A. Joseph, *Politics in China: An Introduction, Second Edition*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Vanessa Fong, “Filial nationalism among Chinese teenagers with global identities,” *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 4 (2004): 632, <https://doi.org/10.1525/ae.2004.31.4.631>.

¹⁵ Fong, “Filial nationalism among Chinese teenagers with global identities.”

¹⁶ Anna Costa, “Focusing on Chinese nationalism: an inherently flawed perspective? A reply to Allen Carlson,” *Nations and Nationalism* 20, no. 1 (2014): 99.

feminist critique of the scholarship on nationalism, I argue that filial nationalism relies on the family as a trope to unify the population while sanctioning social hierarchy and economic competition.¹⁷

Language learning is a critical tool through which to inculcate nationalism.¹⁸ My comparative discourse analysis of language textbooks from the 1980s, the 1990s, and the 2000s reveals the role that language learning has played in the development of different conceptualizations of Chinese nationalism. State prescriptions transmitted through language learning not only influence how children communicate but also their way of thinking and their understanding of the world. Indeed, learning a word in a certain context shapes its meanings.¹⁹ In this paper I show how the symbiotic relationship between the mother tongue and the nation produces a filial tie between children and their nation.

Building off of Tse's analysis of citizenship education, this article is organized around three dimensions of filial nationalism expressed in language textbooks. First, I explore how filial nationalism establishes a new "relation between individual and society"²⁰ in the composition of the nation. The definition of the motherland, its physical borders and its components (ethnic groups, landscapes, events, places) supports the discourse of Chinese exceptionalism to fuel national pride. Second, I show how the "civic virtues"²¹ of filial nationalism correspond to traditional Chinese values such as filial piety and self-cultivation, which teach children to respect and honour their nation like their own parents.²² Third, I show how the lessons on "societal development and national conditions"²³ illustrate China's integration in the world. These lessons raise children's awareness about global issues such as climate change and technological innovation while embedding the nation in a competitive international context. Ultimately, my research shows that the filial nationalism embedded in language textbooks is a coherent discourse that articulates how children understand themselves as individuals and as members of a local, national, and global community.

This article begins by replacing filial nationalism within the education

¹⁷ Anne McClintock, "Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family," *Feminist Review* 44 (1993).

¹⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London, New York: Verso, 2006).

¹⁹ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* [General linguistics courses] (Paris: Payot, 1995).

²⁰ Thomas Kwan-Choi Tse, "Creating good citizens in China: comparing Grade 7–9 school textbooks, 1997–2005," *Journal of Moral Education* 40, no. 2 (2011): 165.

²¹ Tse, "Creating good citizens in China: comparing Grade 7–9 school textbooks, 1997–2005," 165.

²² Maosen Li, "Changing ideological-political orientations in Chinese moral education: some personal and professional reflections," *Journal of Moral Education* 40, no. 3 (2011): 387–395; Fong, "Filial nationalism among Chinese teenagers with global identities," 631–648.

²³ Tse, "Creating good citizens in China: comparing Grade 7–9 school textbooks, 1997–2005," 165.

reforms since Mao's death and the scholarship on nationalism, followed by a demonstration of the crucial role of language in the construction of children's worldview. The last part of the article provides a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the Mandarin primary textbooks, published by the People's Education Press during the decades in question.

From Cultivating Communists to Promoting Filial Nationalism

Since Mao's death, China has undergone three radical ideological shifts, reflected in the education reforms. First, in 1976, the end of radical socialism and the arrest of the Gang of Four initiated a new era in which economic development, the prospect of individual wealth, and the betterment of living conditions gave legitimacy to the Party to rule over the country. Education reforms sought to revive vocational training and higher education in order to produce better-trained workers and more highly qualified engineers for economic development.²⁴ In 1985, the promulgation of the Compulsory Education Law initiated the universalization of nine-year compulsory schooling, according to which each child must attend primary and junior high school for nine years. Despite these major reforms, however, the content of the school textbooks in the 1980s remained shaped by Communist ideology.

Second, the CCP launched the PEC in 1991 as an attempt to rebuild social cohesion after the Tiananmen massacre by "explaining how the CCP-led revolution changed China's fate and won national independence."²⁵ In the 1990s, the government also committed itself to a new education framework: "education for quality" (*suzhi jiaoyu*), which was the first step toward major curriculum reform in 2001 and the publication of new textbooks in the next decade.²⁶ Andrew Kipnis, citing Jie Sizhong, describes this shift as part of "a long line of Confucian and social Darwinist writers to argue that improving the people's *suzhi* [quality] rather than institutional reform is the key to victory in the international competition among nations."²⁷ Closely related to the nationalist discourse of "overall national strength" (*zonghe guoli*),²⁸ "education for quality" aims at improving the quality of the Chinese population in order to reinstate the modern and civilized Chinese nation²⁹ and take revenge against the greed of Western nations.

The third and most recent ideological shift occurred in the early 2000s,

²⁴ Mun Tsang, "Education and national development in China since 1949: Oscillating policies and enduring dilemmas," *China Review* (2000).

²⁵ Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory," 789.

²⁶ Belinda Dello-Iacovo, "Curriculum reform and 'Quality Education' in China: An overview," *International Journal of Educational Development* 29, no. 3 (2009): 241–249.

²⁷ Andrew Kipnis, "Suzhi: A Keyword Approach," *The China Quarterly* 186 (2006): 302.

²⁸ Elaine Jeffreys, *China's governmentalities: governing change, changing government* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009).

²⁹ Kipnis, "Suzhi," 295–313; Cheryl Yip, "'Quality' Control in China's Reform Era: Investigating the Suzhi Discourse in Women's Work," Master's thesis in city planning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology-University of California, Los Angeles, 2008.

at which time the Chinese government actively sought to reshape the relationship of citizens to their motherland through a new round of education reform.³⁰ This new discourse fosters a filial bond between the citizens and their nation, one that inculcates a sense of respect and pride for the nation,³¹ but also prioritizes the duty to “give back” by promoting the nation and participating in the national effort to achieve economic growth and integration on the global stage, and unites the different ethnic and social groups constituting the Chinese population. Filial nationalism instills a reciprocal long-term attachment to the motherland in the same way that Confucian norms of filial piety cultivate a reciprocal long-term attachment to parents.

This paper makes two contributions to the literature on nationalism. First, this article departs from the mainstream literature on the rise of Chinese nationalism and its impact on the country’s foreign policy.³² Some scholars have questioned this alleged rise of patriotic sentiment,³³ while others have highlighted the diversity of national narratives in China and reject a single monolithic nationalist discourse.³⁴ However, few scholars use the feminist scholarship on nationalism as a means of rethinking the relationship between the Chinese population and its motherland.³⁵ Kimberley Manning, for example, explores how the enactment of filial (family) ties “opens up new insights about the gendered relationship between intimacy and political practice.”³⁶ Building on Elisabeth Militz and Carolin Schurr’s affective nationalism,³⁷ I contend that nationalism is a relational and emotional

³⁰ Wing-Wah Law, “Citizenship, citizenship education, and the state in China in a global age,” *Cambridge Journal of Education* 36, no. 4 (2006): 597–628.

³¹ Yiben Liu and Shuhua Zhou, “Evolving Chinese Nationalism: Using the 2015 Military Parade as a Case,” *East Asia* 36 (2019).

³² Christopher Hughes, “Reclassifying Chinese Nationalism: the geopolitik turn,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 71 (2011); Christopher Hughes, *Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Xiaolin Duan, “Unanswered Questions: Why We may be Wrong about Chinese Nationalism and its Foreign Policy Implications,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 108 (2017).

³³ Allen Carlson, “A flawed perspective: the limitations inherent within the study of Chinese nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 1 (2009); Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is Chinese Nationalism Rising?” *International Security* 41, no. 3 (2017).

³⁴ Edward Friedman, “Reconstructing China’s National Identity: A Southern Alternative to Mao-Era Anti-Imperialist Nationalism,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (1994); James Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Yuan-Kang Wang, “Toward a Synthesis of the Theories of Peripheral Nationalism: A Comparative Study of China’s Xinjiang and Guangdong,” *Asian Ethnicity* 2, no. 2 (2001).

³⁵ Susan Brownwell and Jeffrey Wassertrom, eds., *Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³⁶ Kimberley Ens Manning, “Attached Advocacy and the Rights of the Trans Child,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 50, no. 2 (2017): 579. See also Manning for her analysis of the relationship between filial ties and state building in the early PRC. Kimberley Manning, *Revolutionary Attachments: Party Families and the Gendered Origins of Chinese State Power* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, forthcoming).

³⁷ Elisabeth Militz and Carolin Schurr, “Affective nationalism: Banalities of belonging in Azerbaijan,” *Political Geography* 54 (2016).

discourse. Filial nationalism allows for different groups to bond with the motherland. Neither “inchoate and incoherent,”³⁸ nor even one all-encompassing narrative,³⁹ filial nationalism reconciles a long-term deep-seated attachment to the motherland with the individualistic lifestyle and the diversity of career paths fostered by China’s market economy and global integration.

Second, building on Allen Carlson’s call to explore the construction of national identity,⁴⁰ this article looks at the teaching of the mother tongue as a tool to inculcate the national narrative. I elaborate on this contribution in the next section.

The Relationship between Language Education and the Worldview of Children

Education is an important tool—albeit not the only one—to transmit and diffuse a state ideology and to shape the development of individual citizens.⁴¹ Insofar as filial nationalism is a state-engineered discourse, I have examined the official knowledge transmitted by textbooks rather than the hidden curriculum enacted during class interactions. According to Michael Apple, the “official knowledge” is the product of “a selective tradition, someone’s selection, some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge.”⁴² My research examines how language education is purposefully organized in a manner to foster filial ties between children and their motherland.

In this article, I chose to analyze language textbooks rather than any other school discipline because language instruction not only shapes how children understand their nation but also how they embody and enact their connection to their motherland.⁴³ My approach is novel: both UNESCO and academic scholars assert that textbooks in geography and history are the most appropriate textbooks to study changes in society.⁴⁴ In the Chinese curriculum, moral education textbooks are also widely studied to explore the ideological discourse they convey.⁴⁵ In moral education textbooks

³⁸ Lucian W. Pye, “How China’s Nationalism was Shanghaied,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (1993): 108, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2949954>, www.jstor.org/stable/2949954.

³⁹ Friedman, “Reconstructing China’s National Identity: A Southern Alternative to Mao- Era Anti-Imperialist Nationalism.”

⁴⁰ Carlson, “A flawed perspective: the limitations inherent within the study of Chinese nationalism.”

⁴¹ Michael W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Michael W. Apple, *Education and Power* 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁴² Michael W. Apple, “The Politics of Official Knowledge: Does a National Curriculum Make Sense?” *Teachers College Record* 95, no. 2 (1993): 223.

⁴³ Mingchen Lu, “Jiaqiang muyu jiaoyu, hongyang aiguo zhuyi jingshen” [Strengthen mother tongue education and promote patriotism], *Beihua daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 6, no. 3 (2005).

⁴⁴ Falk Pingel, *UNESCO guidebook on textbook research and textbook revision*, UNESCO (Paris, 2010).

⁴⁵ Marie Lall and Edward Vickers, *Education as a Political Tool in Asia* (New York: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2010).

published since 2001, scholars highlight the “emphasis on elements of a global citizenship” with the greater integration of global phenomena in the textbooks.⁴⁶ These studies are consistent with my argument of a new form of state-led nationalist discourse that bonds children to their motherland in the context of an increasingly globalized world.

In this article, I pay particular attention to the intimate connection between filial ties and learning of the mother tongue. Several Chinese scholars have expressed regret that among school disciplines, language instruction is assumed to be neutral because it is considered first and foremost as the structuration of a natural communication skill.⁴⁷ I contend that far from being neutral, language lies at the heart of children’s conception of the world. This is particularly true for Chinese children since they are unable to decipher new characters on their own. The dichotomy between the meaning and the pronunciation of a word in the Chinese language makes it hard for a learner to understand or pronounce a new word without help.⁴⁸ Children are only able to read and understand characters that they have learnt in class or with their family. Thus, the state can partially control the meaning of words and the vocabulary content that children acquire. Moreover, the course in which children learn Mandarin, *yuwen*, has an ambiguous scope. The name of the course is the combination of two words: *yu*, which means both language and oral language and *wen*, which can be translated as culture or writing. Consequently, *yuwen* is both the teaching of oral and written language, and the teaching of language and culture.⁴⁹ The pedagogic goals of this course have both linguistic and cultural dimensions.⁵⁰ Warning against the pervasiveness of the English language, Mingchen Lu argues that China should better promote and protect Mandarin language education because “language...condenses how different nations understand the world, their view of the world... Language and nation are symbiotic and cannot be separated from each other.”⁵¹ Language teaching at the primary-

⁴⁶ Tse, “Creating good citizens in China: comparing Grade 7–9 school textbooks, 1997–2005,” 176; Law, “Citizenship, citizenship education, and the state in China in a global age.”

⁴⁷ Yongbing Liu, “The Construction of Cultural Values and Beliefs in Chinese Language Textbooks: A critical discourse analysis,” *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education* 26, no. 1 (2005): 15–30; Ruirui Chen, “Xiaoxue yuwen kecheng chuang sheng de nanwei kunjing yu ku wei celue” [Difficulties and Strategies for the Creation of Mandarin Language Primary School Curriculum], *Changjiang congkan* [Yangtze River Series] 4 (2019): 77–78; Changxiu Xu, “Xiaoxue yuwen keben yuedulinqg de xianzhuang yu sikao fenxi” [An analysis of the Status Quo of Primary School Chinese Textbook: Reading and Reflections], *Zhonghua shaonian* [Chinese Youth] 8 (2017): 294.

⁴⁸ Gladys Chicharro, *Le fardeau des petits empereurs: une génération d'enfants uniques en Chine* [The burden of the little emperors: a generation of unique children in China], (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 2010).

⁴⁹ Amélie Mendez, “L’enseignement du Yu Wen en Chine : cours de langue et vecteur idéologique?” [The teaching of Yu Wen in China: language course and ideological vector?] *Education hubs*, no. 4 (2011): 211–227.

⁵⁰ Zhiyuan Mao, “Guanyu xiaoxue yuwen jiaoxue de yurenzhidao tantao” [About Mandarin language education in Primary Schools], *Zhongxiao xuejiao yanjiu* (2018).

⁵¹ Lu, “Jiaqiang muyu jiaoyu, hongyang aiguo zhuyi jingshen.”

school level raises the question of whether children are not only learning how to speak, but also how to think.⁵²

I argue that language instruction is a strong tool with which the state can shape the identity of children as future citizens. Building on Julia Kwong's findings that the language textbooks of the 1980s maintained socialism and class struggle as the ideological foundations of the regime even as leaders promoted the country's opening and modernization, I show that the 2001 reform constituted a profound shift.⁵³ Language learning directly impregnates children's way of seeing themselves, their motherland, and the world.

New Teaching Format at the Service of Renewed Content

Scholars identify eight major curriculum reforms since the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. Six of them occurred during the Maoist period following major ideological campaigns.⁵⁴ In the mid-1980s, the seventh curricular reforms accompanied the promulgation of the new Compulsory Education Law. In my analysis of language textbooks from the 1980s, it is evident that they remained heavily shaped by the socialist ideology prevalent during the Maoist era, despite the launch of the Open and Reform Era. The school system changed, with the requirement of nine years of compulsory education, but the ideological content remained unchanged. In the 1990s, the textbooks' content was updated but this process was not accompanied by a major curriculum reform. In the early 2000s, the eighth major curriculum reform was driven by a discourse to improve the quality of textbooks, and democratize and diversify their production.⁵⁵ The "one-outline-one-textbook" policy was replaced by the "one-outline multiple-textbooks" policy,⁵⁶ which allowed provincial publishing houses to produce textbooks. However, the People's Education Press (*renmin jiaoyu chubanshe*) remained the main producer of textbooks, thus the PEP textbooks are the most appropriate to observe the official knowledge.⁵⁷

In my study, I examine the textbooks used in the first two years of primary

⁵² Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*.

⁵³ Julia Kwong, "Changing Political Culture and Changing Curriculum: An Analysis of Language Textbooks in the People's Republic of China," *Comparative Education* 21, no. 2 (1985): 197–208.

⁵⁴ Qiquan Zhong, "Yigang duoben: jiaoyu minzhu de suqiu—wo guo jiaokeshu zhengce shuping," [One Outline Multiple Textbooks: the demands of educational democracy—Our Textbooks Policy Review] *Research on Education Development* 4 (2009): 1–6; Yunhuo Cui and Zhu Yan, "Les réformes curriculaires en Chine, hier et aujourd'hui " [Curricular Reforms in China, yesterday and today], *Revue internationale d'éducation de Sèvres* (2014).

⁵⁵ Zhong, "Yigang duoben: jiaoyu minzhu de suqiu—wo guo jiaokeshu zhengce shuping."

⁵⁶ In Chinese this change is translated by the *yigangyiben* policy to the *yigangduoben* policy.

⁵⁷ Chinese scholars have complained about the lack of cohesion and evaluation of textbooks since the eighth curricula reforms, and as a result, in 2017 the Ministry of Education initiated a new reform to establish a "Ministry for Textbook Edition" (*bubianben*) to homogenize textbook content.

school to teach Mandarin to children between the ages of six and eight years old. At this stage, children learn to read and pronounce phonemes and graphemes, to identify and read characters, and finally to trace them and write small sentences. Overall, textbooks published after the 2001 revisions are substantively different from the ones published in the 1980s and 1990s in terms of content, organization, and exercises. Using a thematic discourse analysis,⁵⁸ I define 13 themes and label each lesson according to its substantive content and its iconographies. Only 20 percent of the lessons from the textbooks from the 1980s and 1990s remain in the 2000s collection, and these few are decontextualized by the new textbooks' organization. In addition to the quantitative turnover, the reforms undertook important changes in the pedagogical goals of the textbooks and organization of the content. These changes are not just nominal; they perform a shift in nationalist discourse. Indeed, the 2001 curriculum reform puts the children at the centre of the learning. Whereas the nationalist discourse illustrated by the textbook collection from the 1990s inserts passive children within a community, filial nationalism requires students to play a more active role in both serving and repaying the nation.

In the collection of textbooks from the 1980s and 1990s, texts are followed by questions that require children to reword details of the text. These questions do not require much critical thinking. Pupils need to understand the text and repeat or paraphrase parts of it. There are very few exercises that ask for the personal opinions of children. In the 2000s textbook collection, texts are followed by applied exercises. The instructions are *I can identify*, *I can read*, *I can match*, and *I can complete*. Children are evaluated on the many ways they can use Chinese characters and how they appropriate them. These exercises signal a movement away from rote learning and paraphrasing. By actively completing these exercises, children perform the content of the lessons. Finally, the generalization of the use of inclusive pronouns—such as “we” or “I”—in the introduction of each unit is an even more persuasive way to bring children to identify themselves with characters, whether animals or humans, as behavioural models. These pedagogical changes reframe students as actors of the ideology conveyed by the textbooks.

In the first and second collections, the organization of the textbooks is primarily constituted of text lessons (*kewen*), in which a text is illustrated with a drawing or a picture and followed by two or three questions. A text lesson ends with a list of characters that children should learn to draw. In the two first collections, I could not identify an overall organization rule, except that the length and the difficulty of the text lessons increase progressively.

⁵⁸ Jason Nicholls, “Methods in School Textbook Research,” *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research* 3 (January 2003); Tse, “Creating good citizens in China: comparing Grade 7–9 school textbooks, 1997–2005.”

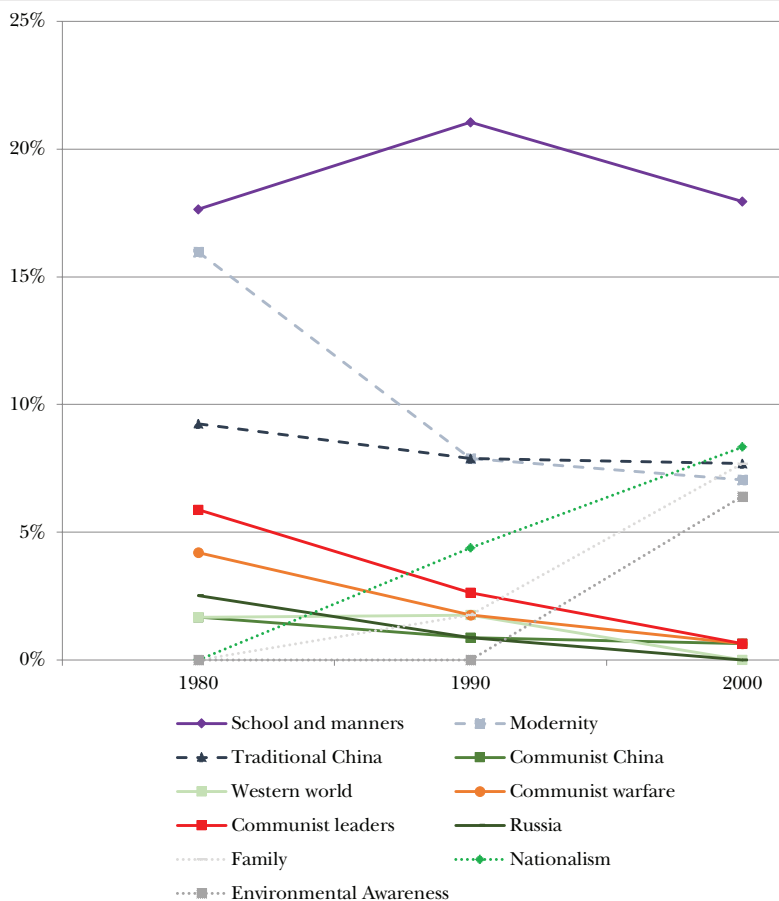
In the third collection, a clear organization is visible. Lessons are organized in thematic units, each containing four or five lessons. Each unit starts with a short text with a poem or a few sentences introducing the theme and ending with a revision lesson. My analysis of the three collections of textbooks reveals three major aspects of filial nationalism: the magnificence and diversity of the motherland, an ethical awareness of a globalized world, and the importance of science to develop and modernize the motherland.

Foundations for Children's Identity Construction

To analyze the textbooks, I sort out the lessons into 13 categories: 12 themes-based categories plus the exercise lessons which are labelled “miscellaneous.” The category “nature” is clearly predominant, featuring in almost half of the lessons across the decades. This category encompasses lessons involving animals, and the lessons do not seem to have any moral content, with story lines based on, for example, pastoral scenes or the four seasons. To give a synthetic overview of my qualitative analysis of the textbooks, I draw a chart to represent the thematic evolution of the textbooks. I remove the categories “nature” and “miscellaneous” to focus on the categories that shape the national narrative.

The second most important theme in the textbooks is school and manners, represented in purple in the chart below. These lessons describe how children should behave in class and in society. On the chart, I identify three trends: a downward path represented in red and brown plain lines, an upward path represented in green dotted lines, and a relatively constant path represented in blue dashed lines. Five themes constitute the first trend: Communist warfare, Communist leaders, Communist China, Western world, and Russia. The category Communist warfare includes texts about historical anecdotes—real or imagined—of young soldiers who sacrificed themselves to defend the Communist Party. Some of them are well-known martyrs such as Lei Feng, Wang Erxiao, or Xiao Balu. They represent the ideal behaviour that Chinese children should adopt. The category Communist leaders includes texts about four main leaders: Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Deng Xiaoping. The texts are inspirational in nature, with each biographical treatment highlighting a different quality such as benevolence, wisdom, and solidarity. The category Communist China includes texts that could not be classified in the two previous categories: they present, explain, and praise symbols of Chinese Communism such as the flag, the national anthem, or the National People's Congress. The categories of Western world and Russia include texts about well-known figures from Western countries including Leonardo da Vinci, Albert Einstein, or Jean de la Fontaine, and Russian leaders such as Vladimir Illitch Lenin. In the 1980s and 1990s, China used Western and Russian figures in textbooks as models for children through sometimes unverifiable anecdotes. In the 2000s, these five themes nearly disappeared

Figure 1
Thematic repartition of the lessons



Source: Author's analysis of Chinese primary textbook collections from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

from the textbooks. Chinese children no longer learned about the bravery of the little Xiao Balu or the benevolence of Zhu De, with new themes appearing in their stead. Shades of green mark the upward path of three themes born in the 1990s or 2000s: nationalism, family, and environmental awareness. The third trend, of relatively constant influence, includes the categories of modernity and traditional China, which remain relatively important throughout the 1980s to 2000s.

In the qualitative analysis below, first, I support the claim that socialist ideology has been progressively supplanted by filial nationalism. An increasing number of lessons focus on the cultural artefacts of the nation to

encourage children to imagine its unity and cohesion. Second, this nationalist discourse is accompanied by prescriptions about children's values and good behaviours to strengthen children's sense of filial duty. Finally, textbooks emphasize the role of science and modernity as tools to enrich the nation. Children should embrace these tools in order to repay their motherland and be filial citizens. Overall, the nationalist discourse embedded in the textbooks aims at producing proud and indebted citizens aware of global issues such as climate change and technological innovations.

Representations of the Nation

Instead of relying on Communist ideology as the basis for the Party-state's legitimacy to rule over China, filial nationalism puts forward a vision of the Party-state as the leader of a modern multiethnic motherland, well integrated into a globalized and competitive world.⁵⁹

Between the 1980s and 2000s, symbols of socialist ideology in the textbooks have been subsumed by more nationalist content.⁶⁰ Textbooks have progressively moved from teaching love for the Party to love for the nation. In the 1980s, pupils learned the term "Chinese Communist Party" in the first lesson of the first book. After learning the *pinyin*, children read their first sentence: "Nationwide, people love the Chinese Communist Party."⁶¹ In the second lesson, they learned "I love Beijing" and "I love the People's Republic of China."⁶² The Party appeared first, before love for the nation. In the 1990s collection, the first lesson of the first book was about love for the country: "I love the red five-star flag" (*wo ai wuxinghongqi*).⁶³ The second lesson portrayed the children as the flowers of the nation (*zuguo*).⁶⁴ In the 1990s collection, edited after Tiananmen events, textbooks depicted the overarching authority as a mix of the state and the Communist Party, with which the children should identify. The expression Chinese Communist Party had been relegated to the fifth lesson of the second book, titled *We love the Chinese Communist Party*.

The shift toward filial nationalism is especially clear in the 2000s collection of textbooks. In the 1980s the phrase "Chinese Communist Party" was part of children's language foundation; it was the first sentence they would learn to read and write. In the 2000s, in contrast, the first lessons engage with nature. The term Chinese Communist Party completely disappears from the

⁵⁹ Hairong, "Neoliberal Governmentality and Neohumanism"; Fong, "Filial nationalism among Chinese teenagers with global identities."

⁶⁰ Li, "Changing ideological-political orientations in Chinese moral education: some personal and professional reflections."

⁶¹ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 1], 2nd ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1987; repr., 8th), 57.

⁶² Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang*, 55.

⁶³ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 1], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1992; repr., 3rd), 54.

⁶⁴ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang*, 57.

language textbooks. In this decade, children are taught about the Chinese Communist Party in their history or society and morals course. The context in which a word or an expression is learnt influences its meaning. The first indirect mention of Party leaders is in the second book, in a lesson titled “Grand-father Deng Xiaoping is planting a tree.”⁶⁵ In this lesson the name of the party is not mentioned, but a Party leader, Deng Xiaoping, appears as a member of the family.

Conversely, lessons about the motherland (*zuguo*),⁶⁶ its unity, strength, and beauty take an increasingly important place and illustrate a filial bond with the nation. In the first book, the eleventh lesson (see figure 2) describes a mother who shows her young boy a picture of Tiananmen Square.⁶⁷ The text is broken into two sections by two images. First is a picturesque drawing of the scene, in which the mother and her son are sitting on bamboo chairs in front of a small house, with chili hanging at the front door. The mother shows a photo of the Forbidden City to her son, who is in awe of this faraway monument. The second illustration is a picture of the flag-raising ceremony on Tiananmen Square, which is followed by sentences expressing the boy’s eagerness to go see the famous square, in front of the Forbidden City. The first image implies that every child craves to visit the capital of the nation.

The lesson ends on the next page, with short sentences expressing children’s love for the red five-star flag. This lesson showcases cultural artefacts to define the nation, famous places, the flag, but also a landscape and a filial relation. The boy asks his mother what there is to see in his motherland. The love for the country is completely dissociated from the love for the Party. The motherland is directly related to the love for the mother. This lesson illustrates the filial bond between a child, his mother, and his motherland, thus expressing filial nationalism. This discourse shows the gendered nature of nationalism, in which the women are “active transmitters and producers of the national culture.”⁶⁸ In the second book, a four-lesson unit is dedicated to the love for the motherland. To assert children’s attachment to their nation, this unit starts with two introductory sentences: “We are the children of a new era, we are the flowers of the motherland. Our lives are fortunate and joyful!”⁶⁹ The lessons illustrate different behaviours enacting one’s love of their nation: one lesson describes the

⁶⁵ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia* [Chinese Textbook Volume 2], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 15th), 10.

⁶⁶ *Zuguo* in Chinese is composed of two characters : *zu*, which means ancestors or ancestral and *guo*, which means country, thus *zuguo* could be translated as ancestral country. I translate *zuguo* as motherland because this is the translation commonly used by the Chinese government and media.

⁶⁷ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 1], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 22th), 102–103.

⁶⁸ McClintock, “Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family,” 62; Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: Thousand Oaks, 1997).

⁶⁹ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 95.

Figure 2
Eleventh lesson in the first book, 2000s collection



Source: *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 1], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 22th), 102–103.

natural wonders of the motherland;⁷⁰ another one is a poem to sing on National Day, when children express “their love and gratitude for their motherland which let them grow up freely.”⁷¹ In the third book, one lesson summarizes filial nationalism with these sentences: “The motherland is our mother, we are the children of the motherland. We all love our great motherland.”⁷² The motherland (*zuguo*) is directly assimilated with the mother.

In the 1980s textbooks, the children are taught to love the CCP, praise its martyrs, and appreciate its influence on the Chinese population. Starting from the 1990s, children are portrayed as the flowers of the motherland; however, the CCP remains an important symbol of the regime. In the 2000s collection of textbooks, the Party disappears in favour of positive images of the nation through symbols such as famous places, flags, or important dates, but also through its naturally diverse landscape. The lessons highlight the harmony of Chinese society, and the magnificence of the country, symbolized by the beauty of the landscape and cultural monuments. They instill pride in the children as well as a deep-seated attachment—a form of filial bond.

⁷⁰ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 102.

⁷¹ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 107.

⁷² Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Er Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 3], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 14th), 42.

To promote a proud multiethnic nation, the textbooks highlight the diversity of the population.⁷³ One of the first projects of the CCP in the 1950s was the classification of the population and the categorization of its diversity.⁷⁴ This classification project identified 55 minorities and the Han. Each minority was described with precise features in terms of language and clothing. The ideal-typical categories were operationalized by the state to better control the population.⁷⁵ In the 1980s collection, ethnic minorities are not mentioned; their existence is made invisible. Children were not expected to learn this category of thought in their language learning. In the second book a lesson titled *A little lamb* tells the story of a young boy who saves and protects a lamb. The boy is called Bate, a Mongolian surname, and lives in a yurt according to the illustrations. Yet, he is not identified as Mongolian in the text. In the 1980s collection, the population is united and nothing evokes its heterogeneity.

In the 1990s, the first lesson of the first book is illustrated by a picture of a crowd of happy children on Tiananmen Square.⁷⁶ It is noteworthy that these children are wearing colourful clothing, which seems to represent the heterogeneity of the Chinese population, and its multi-ethnic diversity. In the 2000s collection, children are asked in two exercises to learn the names of different minorities. In these exercises, ethnic minorities are represented

Figure 3
Third lesson in the third book, 2000s collection



Source: *Yuwen Keben Er Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 3], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 14th), 43.

⁷³ James Leibold, "The Beijing Olympics and China's Conflicted National Form," *The China Journal* 63 (2010): 1–24.

⁷⁴ Thomas S. Mullaney, "Ethnic Classification Writ Large: The 1954 Yunnan Province Ethnic Classification Project and its Foundations in Republican-Era Taxonomic Thought," *China Information* 18, no. 2 (July 1, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X04044685>.

⁷⁵ Mullaney, "Ethnic Classification Writ Large."

⁷⁶ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang*, 54.

in their traditional clothing, and are shown smiling and dancing (see figure 3).⁷⁷ Children associate the name of a minority with specific but simplified features: colourful clothing, a music instrument, dance postures. In these exercises, children perform the behaviour prescribed by the state: they embody a harmonious multi-ethnic population.

My analysis demonstrates a shift from a representation of a homogeneous and united population supporting the Communist Party by praising its leaders to a multi-ethnic population praising the motherland. Through incremental changes the representation of the nation shifts: the word motherland has replaced the Chinese Communist Party as a structuring category. Furthermore, the definition of the nation is shaped by the dominant ethnic group, the Han. By categorizing and attributing clear features to other ethnic groups, the Han are defined by contrast as the “normal” population, the majority. Children acquire a positive definition of the Chinese nation embedded within an international context which praises diversity, quality, and openness.⁷⁸

Good Values and Good Behaviour: Family and Ethics

In this section, I explore the model of values and social behaviours conveyed by the textbooks, in particular in the collection from the 2000s. I divide this into two sections: on the one hand traditional values and filial piety, and on the other hand, environmental awareness.

In the 2000s collection, numerous lessons describe how children should behave within their family. In the second book, the second unit is introduced by: “We all have a warm home. We love our home, we love our father and mother, and we love each person in our home.”⁷⁹ These introductory sentences are followed by a list of 23 character expressions organized like a poem and describing how a good child should behave: be polite, respect the elderly, respect and obey one’s parents, be sincere and honest, help with

Figure 4
Family representations



Source: *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia* [Chinese Textbook Volume 2], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 15th), 18–30.

⁷⁷ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Er Shang*, 43.

⁷⁸ Krishna Kumar and Padma M. Sarangapani, *Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, The Quality Imperative*, UNESCO - Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2004).

⁷⁹ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 18.

chores, and love everyone at home. In the Confucian tradition, the family is the core component of society. In previous decades, the children's primary environment was the Chinese Communist Party. In the first lessons children were taught that they were the loved children of the CCP, and they were cared for by Communist leaders such as Mao Zedong, Zhu De, or Zhou Enlai. In the 2000s, the textbooks rehabilitate the family as the core environment in which a child learns to behave in society.⁸⁰ It is noteworthy that in illustrations of the unit's lessons (see figure 4), the family is represented by a single child, two parents, and a grandmother.

These representations show an extended conception of the family in which the behaviour of filial piety is praised. In the third lesson (last image in figure 4), the boy dries and heats his grandmother's slippers in the sunlight and brings them to her. The child symbolizes a good grandson who cares about his family. In the fourth lesson, a young girl sacrifices her leisure time by giving up a school trip to take care of her ill mother. These stories emphasize the importance of the indebtedness of children to their family.⁸¹

Figure 5

Twentieth lesson in the first book, 2000s collection



Source: *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang* [Chinese Textbook Volume 1], 1st ed. (Beijing: Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001; repr., 22th), 133.

⁸⁰ Lall and Vickers, *Education as a Political Tool in Asia*.

⁸¹ Fong, "Filial nationalism among Chinese teenagers with global identities."

Besides filial piety and good behaviour, an important prescription from the state is environmental responsibility. As shown in the figure 1 chart, this topic, which was not present in the previous collection, appears and covers 6 percent of the lessons in the 2000s. To introduce environmental awareness, animals are personified and adopt childlike behaviours. In the twentieth lesson of the first book, a daddy bear wants to build a wooden house to move out from his cave.⁸² Each season, he goes to the forest with his son to cut the trees, but each time he gives up because the trees are too beautiful. Finally, he abandons the idea altogether. It is noteworthy that a recycling sign appears on his clothes in the last illustration (see figure 5).

Animals personifying humans serve as role models for pupils to learn how to care about the environment. The daddy bear decides not to cut the trees and to protect the environment. Animals in the forest thank him for his decision, which will preserve their habitat. In this story, the emphasis is on having the right behaviour toward the forest. In the second book, a whole unit is dedicated to environmental awareness. This unit is introduced by these sentences: "We live on the beautiful Earth. The Earth is our round-house, everyone loves it."⁸³ In the next lesson, a squirrel decides to plant a pinecone each time he tears one from a tree to sustain future food supply.⁸⁴ This lesson appears as a metaphor for children to realize the importance of sustainable development for future generations. In the third and fourth lessons, animals and children are staged in stories in which they have to collect garbage and clean the environment. These lessons show the importance of preserving the environment from human waste. This unit gathers seemingly real situations in which children can identify themselves with role models in order to learn behaviour that will protect the environment.

The language textbooks of the 2000s seek to raise awareness about global issues such as environmental changes, waste management, and sustainable development. Since the 1980s China has progressively increased its involvement in international environmental governance.⁸⁵ The country quickly asserted its commitment to the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility." With this slogan China recognizes the common issue of climate change but asserts that developed and developing countries do not share the blame equally. Developing countries are allowed to prioritize economic growth over environmental objectives.⁸⁶ Environmental awareness was first included in the natural sciences curriculum in the 1990s.⁸⁷ The curriculum emphasized public awareness and individual responsibility. In

⁸² Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Shang*, 133.

⁸³ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 36.

⁸⁴ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 42.

⁸⁵ Gerald Chan, Pak K. Lee, and Lai-Ha Chan, "China's environmental governance: The domestic-international nexus," *Third World Quarterly* 29 (March 2008): 291–314.

⁸⁶ Chan, Lee, and Chan, "China's environmental governance."

⁸⁷ Min Wang, "Environmental awareness in primary and middle schools in China—A research report," *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* 18 (1996): 135–162.

the language textbooks, environmental awareness does not focus on the scientific process of global warming or environmental changes but rather focuses on showing the “right” behaviour toward these issues.

These issues are brought to children as questions that everyone on earth, from animals to humans, should tackle. It is worth noting that this international dimension did not exist in previous textbook collections and implies the existence of another spatio-temporal frame besides the nation. Most of these lessons also picture a filial relation in which a parent teaches the child to respect mother Earth. Filial relations start from the family, extend to the motherland, and then reach to mother Earth. As future global citizens, Chinese children will probably travel, study, or work abroad; thus, the state is committed to ensuring that they understand global issues such as environmental awareness. Children should respect and protect the nation and the planet like they would take care of their own parents.

Modernization with Chinese Characteristics

The last aspect I examine in the 2000s collection relates to science and modernity. The relationship between tradition and modernity in China is complex. During the 1919 movement, traditions were considered to be the main obstacle to modernity.⁸⁸ The slogan “destroying temples to build schools” symbolized the need to annihilate old superstitions and beliefs in order to move forward. This teleology remained very important during the Maoist and post-Mao era. The 2000s textbooks tell another story.

In the 2000s collection, science and modernity are depicted as part of an evolutionary process with “Chinese characteristics.” Modernity is understood in terms of knowledge acquisition but also in terms of problem-solving instruments. There is no more rupture between Chinese tradition and the modernization process. An introductory lesson, in the 2000s collection, clearly illustrates this approach.⁸⁹ The lesson is spatially organized into two columns, each composed of four five-character idioms. In the first column, each idiom summarizes a traditional tale, whereas in the second column, each idiom covers a recent scientific innovation. Through the spatial organization of the lesson, each tale appears as the traditional explanation for the same phenomenon that is now explored or understood by a scientific innovation. For instance, artificial satellites are linked with a popular mythological story about a heroic archer, Houyi, who destroyed the nine suns which were burning the Earth. Chinese myths and traditions are presented as the root of scientific discovery and innovation. This approach rehabilitates traditions that are no longer considered symbols of backwardness but rather sources of inspiration. In a subsequent lesson, children are taught

⁸⁸ Goossaert, “Détruire les temples pour construire les écoles.”

⁸⁹ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Er Shang*, 142.

about panchronic species (*huohuashi*), living fossils, and animals that have remained unchanged for millenaries.⁹⁰ The lesson gives three examples of panchronic species: the giant panda, the Chinese sturgeon, and the ginkgo biloba tree. These three species are not only panchronic, but they are also endemic to China and symbolic of the country. The panda and the Chinese sturgeon are strictly protected as national treasures. This lesson therefore mixes environmental awareness and scientific knowledge with traditional and national symbolism.

Second, learning about science is presented as a natural process for children. They should cultivate their curiosity about all things around them. As noted by Yijung Wu,⁹¹ one of the goals of the Ministry of Chinese Education is to “promote the good attitude and habit of self-learning; cultivation of self-perpetuating learning mechanism.” In the second book the eighth unit is dedicated to science.⁹² In a lesson, Grandfather Earth explains how gravity (*dixinyinli*) works. The two other lessons of this unit respectively describe how modernization allowed humans to build tunnels under the water and bridges over it, and the history of railways. In this last lesson a father helps his son discover what a magnetic levitation train (*cixuanfuhuoche*) is.⁹³ In these three lessons, children learn complex scientific words through a story in which an old person transmits knowledge to a curious young child. Children are taught to cultivate their curiosity regarding scientific innovations, as the latter are crucial to fostering national economic development. In one lesson children learn how science modernized agriculture and food production for the sake of the country.⁹⁴ In each of these lessons, scientific discoveries and innovations are presented as a source and a symbol of the economic success of the country. Children should not only respect and honour the motherland; they should also repay the nation by participating fully in its economic development.

To conclude, far from the revolutionary outbursts of the early and mid-twentieth century, the Chinese government has increasingly sought to reconcile its past, its present, and its future through scientific modernization. The 2001 textbooks emphasize China’s unique approach to modernizing its society and its economy, an approach which allegedly takes its origins in the Chinese millennial civilization and participates in the discourse of Chinese exceptionalism.⁹⁵ First, children are expected to demonstrate environmental awareness, both to preserve the beauty and the diversity of the national

⁹⁰ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Er Shang*, 155.

⁹¹ Yijung Wu, “Comparing the Cultural Contents of Mandarin Reading Textbooks in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan,” *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* 14 (2011): 67–81.

⁹² Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 134.

⁹³ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Yi Xia*, 147.

⁹⁴ Renmin Jiaoyu Chubanshe, *Yuwen Keben Er Shang*, 158.

⁹⁵ William A. Callahan, “Sino-speak: Chinese Exceptionalism and the Politics of History,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 1 (2012): 33–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911811002919>.

ecosystem and to show that global issues are approached with care in China. Second, children are taught to adopt both a respect for Chinese traditions and an acute curiosity toward scientific discovery and innovation, through their relationship with core members of their family. Chinese traditions are presented as the origins of modernization with “Chinese characteristics” and children are encouraged to foster this modernization process to become good patriots.

Conclusion

In this article, I show that the Chinese state is renewing the national narrative through school curriculum reforms, in particular language learning. Language textbooks shape the meaning of words and by extension the children’s understanding of themselves, and the national community to which they belong. My longitudinal analysis of language textbooks demonstrates that the curriculum reform of the 2000s was the most dramatic since the foundation of the People’s Republic of China. In these textbooks, children are taught to be proud of their motherland and to build a filial bond with their country in the same way they do with their parents. The portrayal of the motherland as an extension of the family is fuelling filial nationalism.⁹⁶ Children should honour their nation the same way they honour their parents, even as they embrace global issues and foster the progress of science.

When questioning why graduating students return to China with a stronger patriotic feeling than when they left,⁹⁷ we must consider how these views first took shape: that is, in the lessons they were taught while first learning their native tongue. This article highlights how the Chinese government fosters a popular attachment to the motherland to reinforce China’s current stance on the international scene: the promotion of a proud and unapologetic nation. To this end, the filial nationalism taught in language textbooks has likely strengthened the patriotism among Chinese students overseas, just as one tries to convey a positive image of one’s family in front of a stranger.

Filial nationalism constructs a national narrative that is not based on the definition of a specific group⁹⁸ or on specific historical moments,⁹⁹ but rather on the relationship between the citizens and their motherland. Filial nationalism creates a primordial bond that can be experienced and enacted differently by Chinese citizens living at home or abroad. This article accounts for the “multiple, sometimes conflicting, levels of identity” as advocated by

⁹⁶ Fong, “Filial nationalism among Chinese teenagers with global identities”; Hoffman, “Autonomous choices and patriotic professionalism.”

⁹⁷ Henry Chiu Hail, “Patriotism Abroad: Overseas Chinese Students’ Encounters With Criticisms of China,” *Journal of Studies in International Education* 19, no. 4 (2015): 311–326.

⁹⁸ Leibold, *Reconfiguring Chinese Nationalism*.

⁹⁹ Callahan, “National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism.”

Allen Carlson and Anna Costa.¹⁰⁰ Rather than quantifying nationalism through surveys¹⁰¹ or the observation of mass protests,¹⁰² this article opens new venues to explore Chinese nationalism with a feminist perspective, as an emotional relationship experienced at the individual level.

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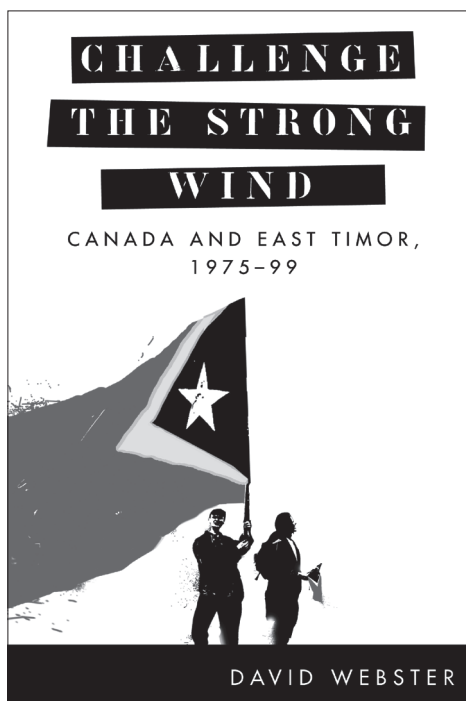
¹⁰⁰ Allen R. Carlson et al., "Nations and Nationalism roundtable discussion on Chinese nationalism and national identity," *Nations and Nationalism* 22, no. 3 (2016).

¹⁰¹ Wenfang Tang and Benjamin Darr, "Chinese Nationalism and its Political and Social Origins," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 77 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2012.684965>; Johnston, "Is Chinese Nationalism Rising?"; Jackson S. Woods and Bruce J. Dickson, "Victims and Patriots: Disaggregating Nationalism in Urban China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 104 (2017).

¹⁰² Weiss, "Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China"; Wallace and Weiss, "The Political Geography of Nationalist Protest in China: Cities and the 2012 anti-Japanese Protests."

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Repeated Multiparty Elections in Cambodia: Intensifying Authoritarianism Yet Benefiting the Masses

Sivhuoch Ou

ABSTRACT

The United Nations (UN) introduced multiparty elections to Cambodia in 1993 in the hope of bringing about democracy in that country. Ironically, the two-and-a-half decades of uninterrupted elections have led to an ever-more authoritarian government under Prime Minister Hun Sen and the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Authoritarianism under the single-dominant party system began in 1997, but has intensified since 2017 with the ban on the leading opposition party. While concurring that repetitive elections have consolidated authoritarianism, this paper argues that elections are not merely tools that authoritarian leaders deploy to hold on to power. Elections are arguably mechanisms that have compelled the CPP to offer several extraordinary economic concessions since 2013; this is the first argument of the paper. The developments have created a win-win scenario for the rulers and the ruled—the authoritarian leaders prolong their rule, and the masses have more disposable income, among various benefits. The second argument is that such policy concessions are made only when the ruling party senses critical challenges from the opposition and voters. This paper contributes to the literature arguing that multiparty elections in electoral authoritarian regimes extract economic policy concessions.

Keywords: repeated multiparty elections, electoral authoritarian regime, hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime, hegemonic party system, dominant party system, authoritarian stability, policy concession, Cambodian People's Party, Hun Sen

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Introduction

The United Nations (UN) introduced multiparty elections in Cambodia in 1993. Under external pressure, Cambodia became a relatively stable electoral authoritarian regime from 1993 to 2017; in that period, the playing field was uneven in favour of the ruling party, yet the opposition could compete for power.¹ By definition, electoral authoritarian regimes hold regular elections, “yet they [rulers] violate the liberal-democratic principles and freedom and fairness so profoundly and systematically as to render elections instruments of authoritarian rule rather than ‘instruments of democracy.’”²

However, in 2017, the leading opposition party, the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), was outlawed. In 2018, the national election was held without the CNRP, and the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) took all 125 parliamentary seats. Consequently, Cambodia’s electoral authoritarian regime regressed to a hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime.³ A hegemonic electoral regime or a dominant party system is a system “in which despite the multi-party situation, only one party is so dominant that it directs the political system and is firmly in control of state power over a fairly long duration of time that even opposition parties make little, if any, dent on the political hegemony of a dominant ruling party.”⁴ Indeed, the well-known political scientist Sorpong Peou⁵ claims that the multiparty system in Cambodia turned into a hegemonic party system or a dominant party system as early as 1997 when “the CPP [has become] the center of power whereas the opposition [has] struggle[d] for survival.” This paper argues that the dominant party system in Cambodia has emerged since 1997, following Peou, but it agrees with Kheang Un and Lee Morgenbesser that the country’s authoritarian nature has intensified since 2017. In 2017, the government dissolved the CNRP and cracked down on targeted independent media

and Mun Vong for proofreading the text, Dr. Chanhang Saing for assisting with some numbers, and Sothath Ngo for the reminder about several economic concessions the author would have otherwise forgotten to list.

¹ Kheang Un, *Cambodia: Return to Authoritarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1; Following Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, *Competitive Authoritarianism: Hybrid Regimes After the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 368–369, 22 - this paper adopts two positions: 1) cases are classified as *stable authoritarian* if incumbent governments or their selected successors hold on to power for a minimum of three executive terms following the beginning of competitive or electoral authoritarian rule as of December 31, 2018, 2) the concepts *authoritarian stability* and *authoritarian durability* are used interchangeably.

² Andreas Schedler, “The Logic of Authoritarianism,” in *Electoral Authoritarianism: The Dynamics of Unfree Competition*, ed. Andreas Schedler (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 3.

³ Un, *Cambodia*, 1.

⁴ Khabele Matlosa and Shumbana Karume, “Ten Years of Democracy and the Dominant Party System in South Africa,” *Election Update 2004: South Africa*, no. 5 (2004): 9–10.

⁵ Sorpong Peou, “Cambodia’s Hegemonic-Party System: How and Why the CPP Became Dominant,” *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 4, no. 1 (March 2019): 43.

organizations and civil society groups.⁶ In sum, ironically, repetitive elections organized over the course of the last 24 years between 1993 and 2017 allowed Cambodia's authoritarian regime not only to endure but also to become more consolidated. In this way, the durability of Cambodia's authoritarian regime as the outcome of repeated multiparty elections is consistent with some scholarly arguments that authoritarian rulers may deploy elections as tools to achieve longevity,⁷ or to retain their grip on power.⁸

Nonetheless, Cambodia's hegemonic electoral authoritarian regime, ruled by the dominant CPP has, from 2013 onward, offered three remarkable economic policy concessions: (1) a tripling of salaries and wages for more than 210,000 civil servants across Cambodia's public administration and for an estimated 700,000 garment workers; (2) a decline in gas prices; and (3) the abolition of manifold taxes and fees. The unprecedented policy concessions offered by the regime challenge the above literature in asserting that elections serve merely as instruments that authoritarian leaders use to hold on to power, benefitting only themselves. Beyond Cambodia, it can be observed that multiparty elections in autocratic regimes offer advantages to voters because such elections may propel the authoritarian leaders to provide the citizens with significant policy concessions.⁹

In this light, I agree with other scholars¹⁰ in stating that authoritarian elections in Cambodia are instruments of authoritarian durability. Nevertheless, I also share the perspective that multiparty elections generate policy concessions. The article advances two arguments. First, an unbroken string of multiparty elections in Cambodia has potentially led to the CPP's¹¹ grant of unusual economic policy concessions, creating a win-win scenario for the rulers and the ruled: the authoritarian leaders prolong their rules, and the citizens have more disposable income, spend less on basic needs such as gas, no longer need to pay for several taxes and tolls on some roads and bridges, and pay less on select public services including civil registration. The concessions are significant not only because they were unprecedented but also because the government implemented several important reforms

⁶ Un, *Cambodia*, 1; Lee Morgenbesser, "Cambodia's Transition to Hegemonic Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 30, no. 1 (2019): 159.

⁷ Guy Hermet, Richard Rose, and Alain Rouquié, eds., *Elections without Choice* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 13–18.

⁸ Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 404.

⁹ Michael K. Miller, "Elections, Information, and Policy Responsiveness in Autocratic Regimes," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 6 (2015): 693; Andrea Cassani, "Do All Bad Things Go Together? Electoral Authoritarianism and the Consequences of Political Change Short of Democratisation," *POLITIKON* 44, no. 3 (2017): 362.

¹⁰ Michael Sullivan, *Cambodia Votes: Democracy, Authority, and International Support for Elections, 1993–2013* (Copenhagen: Nias Press, 2016); Un, *Cambodia*.

¹¹ In Cambodia, the CPP and the state overlap, as it is observed that "The Cambodian state has been synonymous with the CPP." See "Kheang Un, 'The Cambodian People Have Spoken: Has the Cambodian People's Party Heard?,' *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2015): 103.

in order to grant such concessions. The reforms, which were slow or stalled in the 1993–2012 period, are those that seek to increase public revenue and civil servants' pay. Second, in explaining the first argument, the paper maintains that policy changes are offered only *when* the ruling party senses acute challenges from voters and the opposition. Several existing studies, both quantitative and qualitative, demonstrate that authoritarian elections help autocrats gather credible information on large-scale popular discontent; in response, the rulers can provide concessions to ameliorate the public dissatisfaction and thus hold on to power.¹² However, little has been discussed about the exact timing and causes of the unusual concessions. This study contributes to the extant literature in this manner.

Employing qualitative methods, this paper draws on my long-term observations on Cambodia's politics, my previous related works, secondary data (including sources from the Cambodian government, credible newspapers, and various organizations), approximately 128 original interviews, and an in-depth study of two villages in a commune in Kandal Province. The informants were purposively selected to respond to the research question, which is a conventional qualitative approach¹³; in addition, a snowball process was deployed to approach more respondents who possessed the needed information. A total of eight months' worth of fieldwork was conducted over three periods in 2016, 2017, and early 2019, in various provinces and municipalities of Cambodia such as Kandal, Phnom Penh, Takeo, Kompong Speu, Sihanoukville, and Kompong Cham. The paper will begin with an outline of the relevant literature, then present the three sets of policy changes, next provide an analytical discussion of why and how Cambodia's elections generate concessions, and end with a brief discussion of two dominant party systems of Malaysia and Singapore and a conclusion.

Literature: Elections Stabilize Authoritarian Rule and Generate Concessions

Multiparty Elections Lengthen Autocratic Rule

Authoritarian elections benefit autocrats in different ways. It was observed more than four decades ago that elections perform various functions in legitimizing authoritarian regimes and managing conflicts among the elites, as such assisting in prolonging the life of authoritarian rule.¹⁴ In contemporary

¹² Cassani, "Do All Bad Things Go Together?," 362; Miller, "Elections, Information, and Policy Responsiveness in Autocratic Regimes," 693; William Case, "Semi-Democracy in Malaysia: Withstanding the Pressures for Regime Change," *Pacific Affairs* 66, no. 2 (1993): 187; Stephan Ortmann, "Singapore 2011–2015: A Tale of Two Elections," *Asia Major*, no. 26 (2016): 210.

¹³ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009), 178.

¹⁴ Hermet, Rose, and Rouquié, *Elections without Choice*, 13–18.

Table 1
List of informants

Number of informants	Affiliations	Types of interviews	Questions asked/ information sought
8	Senior and mid-range government officials (including a mid-range soldier)	Semi-structured	Whether or not there was electoral pressure on the government. If the pressure had led to policy responses.
12	Donor/ international organization representatives	Semi-structured	Whether or not external efforts in supporting reforms—such as public financial management reform (PFMR) and public administration reform (PAR) have been welcomed by the government.
8	Local government officials (including police officers)	Semi-structured	Whether or not local civil services have improved after the 2013 national election and the 2017 local election. Whether or not popular fear of authority has increased over time.
100	Villagers	Unstructured (including focus group discussions)	Whether or not citizens' dissatisfaction with the performance of the local and national governments has increased, and what tools they have used to express their grievances to the government.
Total: 128			

Source: Author's compilation, 2020.

electoral authoritarian regimes, scholars “now generally view the establishment of elections as a means by which dictators hold onto power.”¹⁵ Likewise, it is asserted that authoritarian regimes holding elections are more durable than those without them.¹⁶ The rationale is that authoritarian leaders employ elections to contain structural threats to their power.¹⁷ Various

¹⁵ Gandhi and Lust-Okar, “Elections under Authoritarianism,” 404.

¹⁶ Barbara Geddes, “What Do We Know about Democratization After Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (June 1999): 140–141.

¹⁷ Jennifer Gandhi, *Political Institutions Under Dictatorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), xxiv.

empirical explanations have been documented on how authoritarian leaders have employed elections to prolong their rule.

First, elections assist in maintaining ties among the elite group and deter defection.¹⁸ During the elections, authoritarian regimes buy, cajole, and intimidate voters to push them to turn out and vote in favour of the regime.¹⁹ The consequent overwhelming victory signals to the elite members of the incumbent regime that opposition is futile.²⁰ Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar²¹ list the second and third functions of elections. Elections work to co-opt the opposition. When opposition members compete in both local and national elections, authoritarian leaders create space for those opposition members to take office and gain benefits. However, the authoritarian rulers limit those opposition members' decision-making power. Elections create a mixed incentive for the opposition members, who are caught between opposing the current authoritarian leadership and desiring to gain from the spoils of the incumbent government. Finally, elections provide information to the authoritarian rule. The results of the elections send signals to authoritarian incumbents about who supports or opposes the regime. Following the elections, authoritarian leaders may punish, buy, or suppress those that did not support them, so they would vote for them in the next election or stay at home.

With this perspective, electoral authoritarian elections are only deployed to the advantage of autocrats and their coalitions, at the expense of society. Elections do not create pressure for accountability and responsiveness in autocratic rule, unlike in democratic regimes.²²

Multiparty Elections Generate Concessions

Challenging the preceding view that elections only serve autocrats, an emerging group of scholars argue that electoral autocrats not only use the *stick* (repression) but the *carrot* (concessions).²³ As previously mentioned, autocrats use elections strategically to contain the behaviour of citizens, opposition, and elites; however, elections simultaneously could shape their own behaviour.²⁴ That is to say, the practices and pressure of multiparty elections can bring about institutional change, altering the relationship

¹⁸ Barbara Geddes, "Why Parties and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes?" (Washington, DC: The University of California, Los Angeles, 2006), 5; Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and Its Demise in Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9.

¹⁹ Geddes, "Why Parties and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes?" 5.

²⁰ Geddes, "Why Parties and Elections in Authoritarian Regimes?" 5.

²¹ Jennifer Gandhi and Ellen Lust-Okar, "Elections under Authoritarianism," *Annual Review of Political Science* 12 (2009): 405.

²² Cassani, "Do All Bad Things Go Together? Electoral Authoritarianism and the Consequences of Political Change Short of Democratisation," 352.

²³ Cassani, "Do All Bad Things Go Together?" 352.

²⁴ Cassani, "Do All Bad Things Go Together?" 362.

between the rulers and the ruled in ways that create mutual returns, at least in strict socio-economic terms.²⁵ Two reasons explain this process.

First, while repression and co-optation are used by autocratic leaders to survive in office, they are insufficient; popular legitimation is required as well.²⁶ This is particularly true in electoral authoritarian regimes that hold multiparty elections to “augment the authoritarian ruler’s *probability* of surviving in office” but still face “the *possibility* of eroding authoritarian stability.”²⁷ Autocratic leaders could resort to a range of stimuli to obtain popular support; however, options are limited to electoral authoritarian regimes.²⁸ For instance, democratic legitimation works in democratic regimes (such as many countries in Western Europe) but not in electoral authoritarian regimes; monarchies and ideocracies work in closed authoritarian regimes (such as in Brunei and North Korea, respectively) but not in electoral authoritarian regimes.²⁹ Hence, “specific support” through the promotion of socio-economic development is a realistic option for electoral autocratic leaders.³⁰ Second, by means of elections, electoral authoritarian rulers may gather actual information from citizens in terms of their needs, preferences, and discontent, then make relevant socio-economic investments to solicit support from the populace.³¹ Closed authoritarian regimes, on the other hand, lack tools to extract such accurate information from the public, thus hampering policy-making processes to efficiently invest in sectors that are socially sensitive and that impact the lives of the majority of the people who are not satisfied with the ruling regime.³²

Some existing research illustrates how elections create pressure on electoral autocratic rulers to invest in a society’s well-being. For instance, elections in Tanzania and Uganda, though flawed, have solicited public investments. The ruling parties target voters countrywide to provide visible and instantaneous concessions.³³ In addition, the “negative electoral shocks” experienced by ruling parties “predict increases in education and social welfare spending and decreases in military spending following elections,” as found in a study examining the policy impact of 269 authoritarian elections

²⁵ Cassani, “Do All Bad Things Go Together?” 365.

²⁶ Johannes Gerschewski, “The Three Pillars of Stability: Legitimation, Repression, and Co-Optation in Autocratic Regimes,” *Democratization* 20, no. 1 (January 2013): 13–38; Lee Morgenbesser, “The Autocratic Mandate: Elections, Legitimacy and Regime Stability in Singapore,” *The Pacific Review* 30, no. 2 (March 4, 2017): 205–231.

²⁷ Andreas Schedler, *The Politics of Uncertainty: Sustaining and Subverting Electoral Authoritarianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 74, emphasis in the original.

²⁸ Cassani, “Do All Bad Things Go Together?” 361.

²⁹ Cassani, “Do All Bad Things Go Together?” 361.

³⁰ Cassani, “Do All Bad Things Go Together?” 361.

³¹ Cassani, “Do All Bad Things Go Together?” 364–365; Jason Brownlee, *Authoritarianism in an Age of Democratization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9.

³² Cassani, “Do All Bad Things Go Together?” 361.

³³ Anne Mette Kjær and Ole Therkildsen, “Elections and Landmark Policies in Tanzania and Uganda,” *Democratization* 20, no. 4 (June 2013): 592.

between 1975 and 2004 in 86 countries.³⁴ Likewise, in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, multiparty elections promote better communication between citizens and rulers, correspondingly forcing the latter to allocate a bigger budget to promoting public goods, especially healthcare; as a result, there is more improvement in people's well-being.³⁵ Finally, it is claimed that multiparty elections are positively correlated with human development³⁶ and the redistribution of economic growth.³⁷

The Sudden Policy Concessions in Cambodia

Having presented the two branches of literature on multiparty elections and authoritarian durability on the one hand, and multiparty elections and policy concessions on the other, let us now turn to the empirical data on Cambodia. Responding to the first set of literature, the introduction of this paper has already established that multiparty general elections (national level for six times in 1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, 2013, and 2018; local level for four times in 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2017) in Cambodia have produced an ever-more authoritarian government under Hun Sen and his CPP.³⁸ That is not the emphasis of this paper; instead, I intend to highlight the fact that the deepened authoritarianism in Cambodia has been accompanied by significant policy concessions for the masses, which the second set of literature illustrates. The paper will address three empirical sets of policy concessions to collaborate the claim: the rises of salaries and wages for civil servants and garment workers; the reduction in gas prices; and the abolition of fees and taxes.

Pay Rises for Civil Servants and Garment Workers

By 2018, there were 213,968 civil servants in Cambodia.³⁹ Until the post-2013 election period, civil servants chronically suffered from low salaries. Myriad reforms were introduced by Western donors such as the World Bank from

³⁴ Miller, "Elections, Information, and Policy Responsiveness in Autocratic Regimes," 691.

³⁵ Andrea Cassani and Giovanni Carbone, "Citizen Wellbeing in African Competitive Authoritarian Regimes," *Zeitschrift Für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft* 10, no. S1 (February 2016): 191–214.

³⁶ Michael K. Miller, "Electoral Authoritarianism and Human Development," *Comparative Political Studies* 48, no. 12 (October 2015): 1526–1562; John Gerring, Strom C. Thacker, and Rodrigo Alfaro, "Democracy and Human Development," *The Journal of Politics* 74, no. 1 (January 2012): 1–17.

³⁷ Lisa Blaydes and Mark Andreas Kayser, "Counting Calories: Democracy and Distribution in the Developing World," *International Studies Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (2011): 887–908.

³⁸ Un, *Cambodia*; Astrid Norén-Nilsson and Frédéric Bourdier, "Introduction: Social Movements in Cambodia," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 38, no. 1 (April 2019): 3–9; Morgenbesser, "Cambodia's Transition to Hegemonic Authoritarianism."

³⁹ "Krassuon Moknkea Sathearonak" [Ministry of Civil Service], "Samethiphal Samkhan Samkhan Knong Visay Sathearonak (1998–2018) Bontep Pi Ka Anuvat Noyobay Chhneah Chhneak Robos Reach Rathaphibal [Major Achievements in Public Service (1998–2018) Following the Implementation of the Royal Government's Win-Win Policy]" (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Ministry of Civil Service, December 28, 2018), 8.

the early 1990s onward to increase public revenue and civil servants' pay; however, until 2013, those reforms were slow and inconsistent.⁴⁰ In the early 2000s, civil servants earned "very little"⁴¹ in terms of monthly salaries and other incentives. During the election campaign in 2013, the opposition promised a pay raise for civil servants to bring them up to a minimum pay of US\$250 per month, and for garment workers up to US\$150 per month, if elected. Under pressure from the opposition's election campaign, the CPP only raised civil servants' pay up from US\$60 per month at the start of 2013 to US\$86⁴² per month in August of the same year; the ruling party claimed that the US\$26 represented a realistic increase and argued that the opposition promises were impossible to achieve.⁴³

The CPP was almost bested by the CNRP during the 2013 election: the CPP landed at 49 percent of votes (68 parliamentary seats) and the CNRP at 44 percent (55 parliamentary seats).⁴⁴ As such, "the CPP interpreted [the striking decline of votes] as a shocking blow to its power and prestige."⁴⁵ Prime Minister Hun quickly issued an ultimatum to the customs department to increase revenue collection; consequently, the public financial management reform (PFMR) (including the initiative to collect more public revenue) during 2014 alone increased more than the previous five years combined.⁴⁶ As illustrated in figure 1, domestic revenue jumped abruptly from 15.2 percent of GDP in 2013 to 22.3 percent in 2018—it took only five years to increase by 7.1 percent, while it had taken 13 years, from 2000 to 2013, to increase only 5.1 percent.⁴⁷

Similar to the donor-led PFMR that had little progress before the 2013 election, the donor-initiated merit-based pay initiative (MBPI), as a part of public administrative reform (PAR) to increase civil servants' salaries, was "rejected outright by the government," and was consequently cancelled in 2009.⁴⁸ Nonetheless, following the 2013 election, the government gave the green light to the implementation of the MBPI reform; it left the reform work to donors to carry out. Subsequently, the results were fast achieved: "in

⁴⁰ Un, *Cambodia*; Shahar Hameiri, Caroline Hughes, and Fabio Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴¹ Robert Taliercio, "From a Whole of Government to a Whole of Reform Approach?: Reforming the Cambodian Civil Service," (World Bank, 2004), 3.

⁴² The 2013 figure of US\$86 is lower than that of US\$98 (real price) or US\$110 (nominal price) illustrated in figure 2 because the lower amount was reported in August 2013, and the higher amount was made available at the end of 2013.

⁴³ Sullivan, *Cambodia Votes: Democracy, Authority, and International Support for Elections, 1993–2013*, 282.

⁴⁴ The National Election Committee, Cambodia, <https://www.nec.gov.kh/khmer/node/793>.

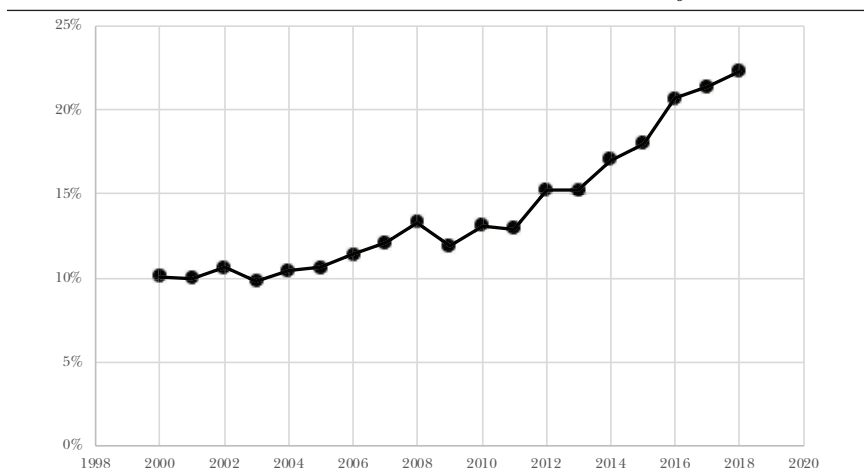
⁴⁵ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 145.

⁴⁶ Un, *Cambodia*, 20.

⁴⁷ MEF, "Cambodia's Macroeconomic Progress: A Journey of 25 Years" (The Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Royal Government of Cambodia, 2016), 21, https://www.mef.gov.kh/documents/shares/Macroeconomic_Progress_at_ADB.pdf.

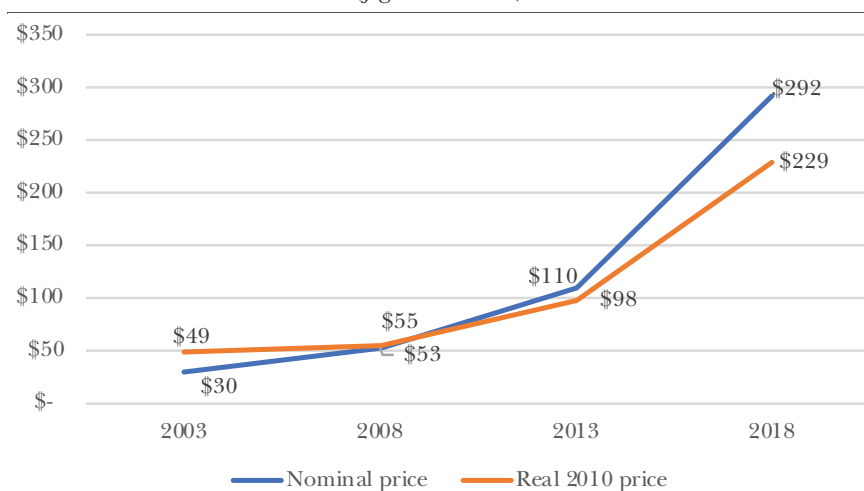
⁴⁸ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 146.

Figure 1
Cambodia's domestic revenue trend, 2000–2018 (% of GDP)



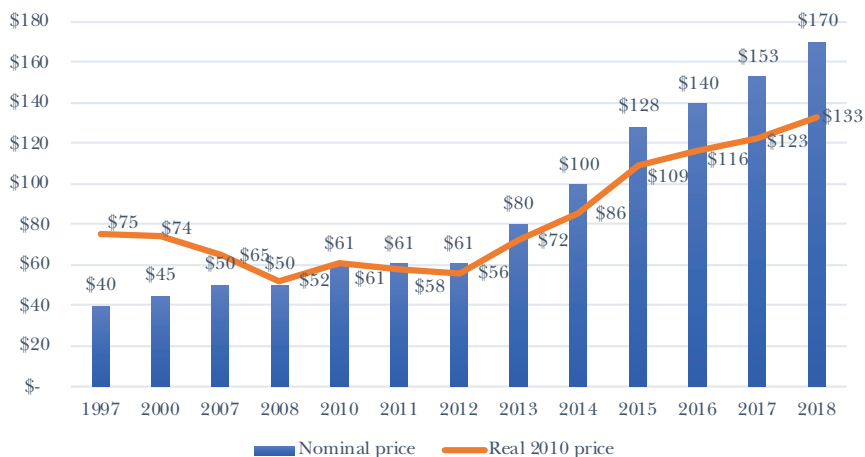
Source: The Ministry of Economy and Finance, Cambodia (2016), 21.

Figure 2
The trend of minimum monthly salaries for Cambodia's civil servants: 2003–2018 (figures in US\$)



Source: Krarsuong Mokngea Sathearonak" [Ministry of Civil Service], "Samethiphal Samkhan Samkhan Knong Visay Sathironak (1998–2018) Bontep Pi Ka Anuvat Noyobay Chhneah Chhneak Robos Reach Rathaphibal" [Major Achievements in Public Service (1998–2018) Following the Implementation of the Royal Government's Win-Win Policy] (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Ministry of Civil Service, December 28, 2018), Inflation is adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index available at the World Economic Outlook Database of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), compiled using data from the National Institute of Statistics of the Ministry of Planning, Cambodia, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/index.aspx?fbclid=IwAR0X-5sX83XkZMBew1Xt1rqn3PmVNchjEqFKIWOpqErUIY5MJmz-vtByYW8>

Figure 3
Minimum wage trends of Cambodia's garment workers
(figures in US\$ per month): 1997–2018



Source: Reproduced based on data from the International Labour Organization; the original data was compiled from sources of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) and the Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia. ILO, “How Is Cambodia’s Minimum Wage Adjusted?” Cambodian Garment and Footwear Sector Bulletin, International Labour Organization, 2016, 1; ILO, “How Has Garment Workers’ Pay Changed in Recent Years?” Cambodian Garment and Footwear Sector Bulletin, International Labour Organization, 2018, 1, 4. Inflation is adjusted based on the Consumer Price Index available at the World Economic Outlook Database of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), compiled using data from the National Institute of Statistics of the Ministry of Planning, Cambodia, <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2019/01/weodata/index.aspx?fbclid=IwAR0X-5sX83XkZMBew1Xt1rqN3PmVNchjEqFKIWOpqErUY5MJmz-vtByYW8>.

civil service salary reform, the achievement in the last year [2014] has been bigger than in the past ten years.”⁴⁹ A concerned senior official admitted that “the government’s recent reform efforts and commitment to increase civil servants’ salaries are the direct responses to electoral pressure.”⁵⁰ The minimum salaries of civil servants were bumped to US\$292 in 2018 (as shown in figure 2), which is almost a three-fold increase in nominal terms or more than twice in real terms over the 5-year period from 2013 to 2018.

Garment workers in Cambodia seeking higher wages have experienced a similar trajectory to that of public servants. The textile, clothing, leather, and footwear (TCLF) sector generates seven billion US dollars for Cambodia’s economy, representing approximately 80 percent of the country’s export

⁴⁹ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 145.

⁵⁰ A senior government official, interview by author, Phnom Penh, 18 July 2017.

revenues, and directly employing approximately 700,000 workers.⁵¹ As shown in figure 3, garment workers' minimum monthly wages in real terms dropped from US\$75 in 1997 to US\$56 in 2012. However, following the 2013 election, the wages, in real terms, abruptly increased from US\$56 in 2012 to US\$133 in 2018, or from US\$61 in 2012 to US\$170 in 2018 in nominal terms, which is an almost three-fold increase in six years.

Reduction in Gas Prices

Gas prices were higher in Cambodia during the pre-2013 election period than after.⁵² Figure 4 illustrates that gasoline prices in Cambodia were consistently much higher than those of neighbouring countries such as Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam between 2000 and 2016.⁵³ Before the 2013 election, the government of Cambodia explained that gas prices in the country were higher than in neighbouring countries for two main reasons.⁵⁴ First, Cambodia imported 100 percent of gas as it had not yet tapped into its own offshore oil reserves.⁵⁵ Second, Cambodia had been unable to provide subsidies to stabilize gas prices.⁵⁶ However, adding to those issues is that gas prices were often kept high even when global crude oil prices declined—in fact, there was a degree of monopoly in the petrol business, in which gas prices were unregulated, as admitted by the government.⁵⁷ The opposition accused the ruling party elites of colluding with the tycoons that owned many of the gas companies; as a result, the companies with such monopolies were free to set gas prices as they wished.⁵⁸

Following the 2013 election, the government made efforts to lower gas prices. For instance, the Ministry of Commerce's negotiation with major gas companies led to an immediate reduction of US\$0.025 per litre in January 2015.⁵⁹ Prime Minister Hun Sen also urged fuel operators to lower gas prices, especially when global prices started to slump in 2015.⁶⁰ Cooperation between the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the

⁵¹ Chan Thul Prak, "Cambodia Hikes Minimum Wage for Textiles Workers by 11 Pct from 2018," *Reuters*, 5 October 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/cambodia-economy-garmentworkers-wages-idUSL4N1MG1Q6>; Stéphanie Giry, "Autopsy of a Cambodian Election: How Hun Sen Rules," *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 5 (2015): 144–159.

⁵² Sam Rith and Charles McDermid, "Record-High Fuel Prices Defy Oil's Drop," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 3 November 2006, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/record-high-fuel-prices-defy-oils-drop>.

⁵³ With the exception of the period between 2008 and 2014 when gas prices in Laos and Thailand were more expensive than in Cambodia.

⁵⁴ Kay Kimsong, "Gasoline, Diesel Prices Soar by 10%," *The Cambodia Daily*, 6 November 2007, <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/gasoline-diesel-prices-soar-by-10-61634/>.

⁵⁵ Kimsong, "Gasoline, Diesel Prices Soar by 10%."

⁵⁶ Kimsong, "Gasoline, Diesel Prices Soar by 10%."

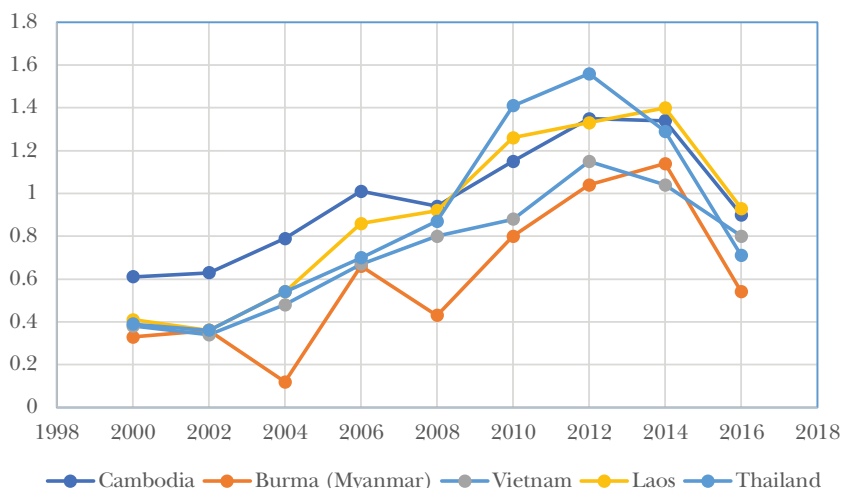
⁵⁷ Eddie Morton, "Gov't Considers Fuel Legislation," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 22 January 2015, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/govt-considers-fuel-legislation>.

⁵⁸ Morton, "Gov't Considers Fuel Legislation."

⁵⁹ Morton, "Gov't Considers Fuel Legislation."

⁶⁰ Sithav An, "Cambodia's Hun Sen Urges Gas Stations to Cut Prices Amid Oil Declines," *Radio Free Asia*, 12 January 2015, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/gas-01122015151333.html>.

Figure 4
Trends for gasoline prices in Cambodia and neighbouring countries: 2000–2016
(in US dollars per litre)



Source: “The Global Economy,” n.d., <https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/compare-countries/%20%20Provides%20the%20trend%20of%20gas%20prices%20between%201998%20and%202016/>.

Ministry of Energy and Mines created institutional routes to decrease gas prices.⁶¹ In March 2016, a joint *prakas* or directive was issued by the three ministries, forging a consensus to calculate and set the retail price ceilings of gasoline with the agreement of leading gas distributors.⁶² In implementing the joint *prakas*, the Ministry of Commerce agreed to update gas prices every 10 days, and gas distributors would be fined US\$1,000 for charging more than the price set.⁶³ In addition, following the 2013 election, the government has offered subsidies to stabilize gas prices. In July 2018, the government lowered tax rates on gasoline from 35 percent to 15 percent, diesel from 15 percent to 5.5 percent, and kerosene from 15 percent to 10 percent, costing the government US\$35 million in revenue per year.⁶⁴

Figure 4 illustrates that from 2015 onward, while gas prices in Cambodia have still been relatively higher than those in Thailand, Burma, and Vietnam, the gap between Cambodia’s new gas prices and the prices in neighbouring

⁶¹ Vireak Sim, “Managing Gasoline Prices,” *Khmer Times*, 29 January 2019, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50573561/managing-gasoline-prices/>.

⁶² Sim, “Managing Gasoline Prices.”

⁶³ Sim, “Managing Gasoline Prices.”

⁶⁴ Kunmakara May, “Retail Price of Gasoline Drops,” *Khmer Times*, 2 July 2018, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/506822/retail-price-of-gasoline-drops/>.

countries has been smaller than during most of the 2000–2014 period. As of mid-December 2018, gas prices have started to stabilize.⁶⁵

Abolition of Fees and Taxes

Other than the above policy changes, the ruling party has made manifold policy concessions to relieve citizens' financial burdens following the 2013 election, as illustrated in table 2.

Two issues merit attention for the elimination of various taxes and fees in this section. First, the privatization of National Road Four in 2002 was considered highly unfair to the users. Primarily it was because the road had already been constructed through US financial assistance, and the contracted company invested little on renovation but generated proportionally high revenues from the fees.⁶⁶ The objection to the privatization came not only from road users and the opposition parties, but also from some ruling party members, not least the National Assembly president, Heng Samrin.⁶⁷ Despite the protests, the company proceeded with toll collection for 14 years between 2002 and early 2016—it was not until the CPP suffered electoral shock in 2013 that the toll was scrapped.

Second, many Cambodians were frustrated with poor civil registration services. The local government in the capital invariably asked for high informal fees; for instance, a birth certificate cost from US\$20 to \$70 while the official charge was supposed to be US\$2.50 maximum.⁶⁸ Moreover, the service provided was often poor and slow—staff were unfriendly and it took up to six weeks or more to get a certificate registered. Since 2017, the CPP-led government has made an effort to improve services,⁶⁹ and not only have the official fees been abolished, but the informal fees have been lowered to approximately US\$5 per one certificate or less.⁷⁰

Discussion: Why and How Elections Generate Concessions

Repeated Multiparty Elections Generate Policy Concessions

This paper concurs with the perspective that Cambodian authoritarianism has intensified despite elections. Undoubtedly multiparty elections in Cambodia have benefitted autocrats, prolonging their regime survival; Prime Minister Hun Sen has governed Cambodia since 1985, which was 33 years by 2018, making him one of the longest-serving government leaders in the world. Nevertheless, repeated elections have extracted three important policy

⁶⁵ Sim, "Managing Gasoline Prices."

⁶⁶ Meas Sokchea, "National Road 4 Toll Fees Nixed," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 14 January 2016, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/national-road-4-toll-fees-nixed>.

⁶⁷ Sothear, "Tolling Operations Stop on National Road 4."

⁶⁸ Three residents, same-time interview by author, Phnom Penh, 09 January 2019.

⁶⁹ Name withheld, interview by author, Kandal Province, 13 January 2019.

⁷⁰ Three residents, same-time interview by author, Phnom Penh, 09 January 2019.

Table 2
Types of public services and goods for which fees were cancelled

Types of goods and services	Characteristics	Fees/amount charged before termination	Effective date of fee/tax cancellation
Veng Sreng Boulevard ⁱ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 6,500 metres × 10 metres; on the south of Phnom Penh - Renovated by a private contractor in 2013, Phnom Penh Tollway (owned by a relative of a CPP senator), cost US\$10.5 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Initial plan to charge fees for thirty years, from December 1, 2015 - Cars and pick-up trucks: US\$0.25 - 12-to-24-seat vehicles and equivalent-sized trucks: US\$0.5 - Trucks: US\$1-US\$2.5, depending on size 	December 30, 2015
Various taxes ⁱⁱ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicable to taxes on motorbikes, agricultural machinery, and small and medium enterprises 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lump-sum taxes on small and medium enterprises: US\$5-US\$7 per month - Motorbike taxes: US\$0.86- US\$1.84 per year, depending on machine capacity - Boat tax: US\$2.45 per year - Tractor taxes: US\$7.36- US\$12.26, per year depending on machine capacity - Tax on upgraded tiller: US\$36.78 per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - January 01, 2016
National Road Four ⁱⁱⁱ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Links Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville Province: two lanes; 210 kilometres - The toll contract, an open-ended concession, was signed in 2001, given to the AZ Group, owned by a CPP elite. - Constructed using US aid money in the 1950s. Free use until 2001, fees charged from 2002 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cars: US\$2.8 - Buses and Trucks: US\$11.10 	January 15, 2016

Issuance of civil registration certificates ^{iv}	<p>-(Re)-issuance of some 20 items including identity card, family record book, residence record, and myriad certificates such as for death, marriage, birth, etc., and adding or removing names from the certificates and records</p> <p>-Crossing over the Tonle Sap River and connecting National Roads Five and Six; located approximately 12 kilometres from Phnom Penh's downtown area.</p> <p>- 9,166 metres × 14 metres (996 metres of bridge and 8,170 metres of road); constructed in 2018; operational from 2010.</p> <p>- Originally contracted to charge fees for 30 years.</p> <p>- Cost of construction: US\$42.55 million</p>	<p>- One-time issuance: US\$0.7 - US\$2.4</p> <p>- Cars and Taxis: US\$1.4</p> <p>- Pick-up trucks: US\$1.67</p> <p>- 12- to 14-seat vehicles and equivalent-sized trucks: US\$3.12</p> <p>- 24- to 25-seat vehicles: US\$4.17</p> <p>- (Trailer) trucks: US\$4.42-US\$8.34</p>	-January 1, 2017
Prek Pnov Bridge and Road ^v			October 15, 2017
Koh Kong Bridge ^{vi}	<p>- Located in Koh Kong Province</p> <p>- 1,900 metres in length, privately constructed by Ly Yongphat Group, and operational from 2002</p> <p>- Cost of construction: US\$8 million</p>	<p>- Motorbikes: US\$0.34</p> <p>- Cars: US\$1.42</p> <p>- Trucks: US\$2.28</p> <p>- US\$8.51, depending on size</p>	November 2, 2017

i Dara Mech, "Fees Eliminated on Capital Toll Road," *The Phnom Penh Post*, 29 December 2015, <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/fees-eliminated-capital-toll-road>; PBS, "Phnom Penh's Veng Sreng Tolls to Go into Effect on Dec 1," *Thai PBS*, 21 November 2015, <https://forum.thaivisa.com/topic/872513-phnom-penh%E2%80%99s-veng-sreng-tolls-to-go-into-effect-on-dec-1/>.

ii Kang Sothear, "Hun Sen Announces Broad Cuts of Petty Taxes," *The Cambodia Daily*, 23 October 2015, <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/hun-sen-announces-broad-cuts-of-petty-taxes-98057/>; Bendith Sek, "Rothaphibal Prakas Lubchaul Pun Loeu Robob Maoka Ning Moto Pi Chhnam 2016 [The Government cancels lump-sum tax and motorbike tax from 2016]," *Radio Free Asia*, 22 October 2015, <https://www.rfa.org/khmer/news/social-economy/reform-tax-from-2016-10222015014558.html>.

iii Kang Sothear, "Tolling Operations Stop on National Road 4," *The Cambodia Daily*, 15 January 2016, <https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/tolling-operations-stop-on-national-road-4-105490/>.

concessions from Cambodia's authoritarian rulers. Those concessions are unprecedented and considerable in degree, and arguably they would not have happened without elections. Moreover, the concessions are significant because in order to grant them, the government has implemented several vital reforms. These reforms have sought to increase public revenue and civil servants' pay, and were slow or stalled in the 1993 to 2012 period. The policy changes arguably have allowed the rulers to stay in power with less popular disapproval. Simultaneously, the citizens have more disposable income, spend less on basic needs such as gas, no longer need to pay for multiple taxes and tolls on several roads and bridges, and pay less on selected public services including civil registration. Such policy concessions are no small feat. This is the first argument of the paper.

Why Policy Concessions Only After Twenty Years⁷¹ of Multiparty Elections?

The second argument of the article is that autocrats in Cambodia provide policy concessions only when they sense critical challenges from the opposition and the politically empowered voters, which they consider an existential threat. Before examining the rise of the opposition and people's political awareness leading to the 2013 election, it is crucial to quickly survey the earlier pressure of voters and opposition on the incumbent party. In fact, the CPP used its 3-Cs strategy to keep the opposition at bay and voters from engaging in and mobilizing opposition political activities: control of the state machinery (especially the judiciary, the legislature, the armed forces), coercion, and co-optation.⁷² With co-optation specifically, the CPP had engaged in patronage via material inducements to gain popular support, legitimacy, and electoral victories. For instance, the International Republican Institute's survey of Cambodian public opinion showed that the majority of the Cambodian public reported Cambodia was heading in the right direction in 2006, 2007, and 2008: as evidence, they listed the expansion of

⁷¹ Cambodia held its founding election in 1993, and significant concessions have been granted since 2013.

⁷² Peou, "Cambodia's Hegemonic-Party System," 46–56.

Table footnotes continued,

iv CNV, "Selected Comments Samdech Techo Hun Sen at the Closing Session of the 2016 Stocktaking and 2017 Directive Settings Conference of the Ministry of Interior," *Cambodia New Vision*, the Office of the Council of Ministers, Cambodia, 24 February 2017, <http://pressocm.gov.kh/en/archives/9750>.

v Ros, Chanveasna. "State Buys Bridge from LYP Group." *Khmer Times*, 5 October 2017. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/84897/state-buys-bridge-lyp-group/>.

vi Sopheakchakrya Khut, "Hun Sen Tinh Spean Koh Kong Pi Krom Hun Ly Yong Phat [Hun Sen Buys Koh Kong Bridge From Ly Yong Phat Company]." *The Phnom Penh Post*, 2 November 2017.

infrastructure such as roads, schools, health clinics, and even pagodas.⁷³ Likewise, Juliet Pietsch's analysis of the Asian Barometer surveys (2005 to 2008) showed that even though scholars categorized Cambodia as an electoral authoritarian regime, the majority of the Cambodian public said they were living in a democracy and that the democracy was "well-functioning."⁷⁴ In short, given the consent of voters and weak opposition parties, there had not been intense pressure on the CPP to, for instance, extraordinarily increase the pay of civil servants and workers prior to 2013.

The opposition's strength and people's political awareness began to upsurge from the early 2010s. In 2012 the CNRP was formed, the outcome of a merger between the Sam Rainsy Party and the Human Rights Party. Indeed, the CPP was still suppressing the opposition. Nonetheless, the ruling party won an overwhelming electoral victory in the 2008 national election, capturing 90 of the 123 seats. It won another astounding victory in the 2012 local election, receiving 1,592 out of 1,633 commune/Sangkat chief positions.⁷⁵ The CPP's remarkable victories in the 2008 national election and 2012 local election caused the leadership to relax its grip on the newly formed CNRP. For instance, Sam Rainsy, the leader of the CNRP, was allowed to return to Cambodia from exile just over a week before the national election day of July 28, 2013. The opposition coalition turned out to be effectual in attracting votes; it grabbed 55 seats of 125 while the CPP took 68 seats during the 2013 election.

In addition, citizens' political awareness had reached a peak by the early 2010s. Scholars declared that "Cambodia's subjects had finally become citizens."⁷⁶ Other observers have remarked that Cambodia's citizens today are "more critical, better educated, and better informed."⁷⁷ Apparently, the system of material inducements, with which the ruling party officials go down to rural areas and fund various development projects to entice voters, "was highly effective for much of the 1990s and the 2000s, but has foundered on the rising expectations and greater sophistication of voters whose demands are increasingly expensive to meet."⁷⁸ Clearly, voters started to deemphasize gifts (traded for votes) and to desire politicians to devise policies to create more jobs, to generate more sustained income, to improve public services,

⁷³ IRI, "Survey of Cambodian Public Opinion" (Washington, DC: International Republican Institute, 2008), <http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2009%20February%2017%20Survey%20of%20Cambodian%20Public%20Opinion,%20October%2022-November%2025,%202008%20-%20Khmer%20and%20English%20version%281%29.pdf>.

⁷⁴ Juliet Pietsch, "Authoritarian Durability: Public Opinion towards Democracy in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* 25, no. 1 (2 January 2015): 35–36.

⁷⁵ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 132; National Election Committee, Cambodia, <https://www.neclect.org.kh/khmer/content/814>.

⁷⁶ Giry, "Autopsy of a Cambodian Election: How Hun Sen Rules," 6.

⁷⁷ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 142.

⁷⁸ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 144.

to collect more taxes, and promote development at large and (political) rights.⁷⁹ During the campaigns for the 2013 national election and the 2017 local election, I witnessed myself the sea of energetic opposition campaigners, most of whom were volunteers. While the CPP campaigns were massive too, their campaigners, the majority of whom were paid, were generally apathetic.

The CPP itself has been apprehensive, for the first time, of the people's power, not least during the massive demonstrations in the wake of the 2013 national election, in which tens of thousands of people filled Phnom Penh's major streets for several weeks.⁸⁰ Indeed, the ruling party started to apportion the blame on its own lack of capacity to handle corruption and to improve public service delivery as the major cause of rising social discontent.⁸¹ The CPP has started to provide concessions accordingly. The popular awareness is the outcome of two major causes. One is what Shahar Hameiri, Caroline Hughes, and Fabio Scarpello call the breakdown of "the rural-urban divide" from the late 2000s.⁸² Second is the emancipation of voters by repeated multiparty elections themselves.

The disruption of the rural-urban divide

For much of the 1990s and the 2000s, there was a clear rural-urban separation in physical terms, and prior to 2013, the CPP deployed this divide politically as an effective way to win votes. In these two decades there was a serious lack of physical infrastructure (primarily roads and bridges) and telecommunication. Therefore, access to Cambodia's hinterland, in which 80 percent of rice farming Cambodians were living, was difficult. In this context, while most of the urban population was pro-opposition, the majority of rural peasants were kept supportive of the ruling party for three reasons. First, the ruling party was using its effective party structure and networks to capture rural votes.⁸³ The commune and village authorities, firmly controlled by and loyal to the CPP, had long-standing, personal, and close relationships with rural citizens.⁸⁴ By 2001, local chiefs could ensure continued land tenure for local peasants and offer them access to scarce natural and development resources, primarily land, which fundamentally constituted the livelihood of those peasants; there is thus a degree of rural people's economic reliance on local authorities.⁸⁵ Further, local people looked up to local armed officials for protection.⁸⁶ Second, through much of the 1990s and the early 2000s, local authorities

⁷⁹ Astrid Norén-Nilsson, "Good Gifts, Bad Gifts, and Rights: Cambodian Popular Perceptions and the 2013 Elections," *Pacific Affairs* 89, no. 4 (2016): 812.

⁸⁰ A researcher/staff member of an international organization, online interview by author; the author was in Ontario and the respondent was in Phnom Penh, 13 March 2019.

⁸¹ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 143.

⁸² Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 140–141.

⁸³ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 129–130.

⁸⁴ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 129–130.

⁸⁵ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 140.

⁸⁶ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 131.

were the primary sources of information for villagers because of people's limited movement and weak connections between rural and urban areas due to a lack of telecommunication and other infrastructure.⁸⁷ Finally, the CPP blended the local government with the party itself and invested immensely in myriad local development projects to ensure public satisfaction and support for the party.⁸⁸

From the late 2000s, three phenomena have undercut local citizens' economic and information dependence on local chiefs, leading eventually to the erosion of the rural-urban divide. First is rural-urban migration by the youth demographic. Without adequate land and jobs in the countryside, hundreds of thousands of youth have moved to work in Phnom Penh's factories, Thailand, or even South Korea.⁸⁹ These mobile workers are detached from their rural home communities, and minimally reliant economically and informationally on local authorities, unlike before the late 2000s. However, they have been exposed to various violence instigated by the CPP-led government that has often cracked down on their demonstrations or even killed their union leaders.⁹⁰ Such experiences have not only cut these youth migrants off from the local authorities, which their parents depended on, but have also created severe discontent toward the ruling party. Second, the rural-urban split has been interrupted by increasing infrastructure development.⁹¹ A post-conflict Cambodia suffered from a serious lack of infrastructure; however, with the massive recent support from China, many major infrastructure projects—including bridges, roads, and transmission lines—have been completed.⁹² In addition, with the CPP's vote-buying strategy of funding local development programs that concentrate on rural roads, most of Cambodia's countryside roads have been paved.⁹³ Finally, radical change is observed in the telecommunication infrastructure development. By 2007, Cambodia did not have a single fibre-optical cable; nonetheless, with the first cable laid in 2007, more networks have been expanded.⁹⁴ Since then, the number of Cambodians with access to the internet and smartphones has surged. By the end of 2018, 12.5 million of Cambodia's 16 million people were internet users, including growing access in rural areas. Facebook users reached 7 million, and mobile connections rose to 19.16 million (as some people subscribe to more than one connection).⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 141.

⁸⁸ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 130–132.

⁸⁹ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 139.

⁹⁰ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 140.

⁹¹ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 141.

⁹² Jin Sato et al., "Emerging Donors" from a Recipient Perspective: An Institutional Analysis of Foreign Aid in Cambodia," *World Development* 39, no. 12 (2011): 2091–2104.

⁹³ A local government official, interview by author, Kandal Province, 13 January 2019.

⁹⁴ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 141.

⁹⁵ Chan Sok, "Number of Internet Users up This Year," *Khmer Times*, 7 December 2018, <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/557066/number-of-internet-users-up-this-year/>.

The breakdown of the rural-urban divide by youth migration, infrastructure development, and the rapid expansion of telecommunication systems has been accompanied by other changes and issues, leading to an increase in popular empowerment yet severe social discontent at the same time. Those issues and changes include sustained socio-economic development; demographic change (of 9 million registered voters for the national 2013 election, 3.5 million are between the ages of 18 and 30); social injustice and inequality caused by land conflicts and poor public services; voters' higher expectations of the CPP, which they consider as the state per se; and declining fear among citizens toward the authorities, at both the national and local levels.⁹⁶ Consistently, the trend of people's empowerment is confirmed by national-level government officials and local authorities across different provinces, with the feedback that these days people are no longer scared of police and local authorities in the way they used to be.⁹⁷

Multiparty elections emancipate voters

People's political awareness has also been associated with exposure to repeated election cycles, a point which has been overlooked by many analysts on Cambodian politics. Staffan Lindberg, an eminent proponent of multiparty elections, argues that repetitive elections, even flawed, promote human freedom and democratic values.⁹⁸ In two villages belonging to the commune I studied, voters have gained their understanding of their roles and rights through the uninterrupted cycle of elections over the past 24 years.

In those two villages, the CPP lost in every single one of the five general elections (1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, and 2013). By contrast, in the same two villages, the ruling party won the local elections in 2002, 2007, and 2012 by a wide margin, as happened in other villages across the whole country. Nationwide, the CPP received 1,598 out of 1,621 commune/Sangkat chief positions in 2002, 1,591 out of 1,621 in 2007, and 1,592 out of 1,633 in 2012.⁹⁹ However, in 2017, votes for the CPP decreased drastically in the two villages, as was the case in many parts of the country: the CPP retained only one commune council seat and the opposition grabbed five seats, including the chief position. Countrywide in 2017, the CPP won 1,156 out of 1,646 commune/Sangkat chief posts while the main opposition won 489 for the

⁹⁶ Sullivan, *Cambodia Votes: Democracy, Authority, and International Support for Elections, 1993–2013*, 269–72; Un, *Cambodia*, 43–47.

⁹⁷ Interviews by author, a commune police chief (Kandal Province, 3 July 2017), a mid-range soldier (Kompong Cham, 15 July 2017), and a mid-range government official (Phnom Penh, 19 July 2017).

⁹⁸ Staffan I. Lindberg, "The Surprising Significance of African Elections," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 1 (2006): 139.

⁹⁹ Hameiri, Hughes, and Scarpello, *International Intervention and Local Politics*, 132; National Election Committee, Cambodia, <https://www.neclect.org.kh/khmer/content/814>.

first time since 2002; in terms of vote share the CPP won by a margin of less than 7 percent: at 50.76 percent to the opposition's 43.83 percent.¹⁰⁰

The reason voters in the two villages cast their votes against the CPP during the five national elections (1993, 1998, 2003, 2008, and 2013), but for the CPP during the first three local elections (2002, 2007, and 2012), and then against that ruling party in 2017 local election was that the voters in the two villages distinguished the CPP national leaders from the CPP local leaders *prior to* the 2017 local election. The voters in those two villages were frustrated with the CPP national or top leaders and have always desired to remove them from power using national elections. Before 2017, nonetheless, voters in these two villages attached more importance to *who* represented them in their communities and to the economic and security benefits provided by local commune chiefs as explained above, rather than the local elected leaders' affiliation with the CPP. Therefore, those voters in the two villages voted for the CPP local leaders during the local elections up to 2012. However, during the 2017 local election, having been angered by the weak and corrupt performance of the local CPP leaders, residents of the two villages concluded that both the CPP national and local leaders were doing more harm than good, and voted the local CPP candidates out, as they did for the national CPP leaders.

Voters in the two villages could be portrayed as outliers in that they had voted in favour of the opposition at the national elections, while nation-wide the majority had cast their votes for the ruling party, which explains the CPP's general election victories prior to the 2013 national election. However, the two villages' voting results from the last four local elections have consistently shown similar patterns to those in the rest of the country: the CPP had won landslide victories in 2002, 2007, and 2012, but almost lost the local election in 2017; voters had developed similar strategies in embracing and tolerating their local leaders for three mandates of 15 years beginning in 2002, and then punishing them in 2017 for failing to live up to their expectations. In short, multiparty elections, over time, have taught the citizens to gain agency.

Multiparty Elections and Economic Concessions Beyond Cambodia

Other than Cambodia, Malaysia and Singapore are two other dominant party systems in Southeast Asia. Cambodia's CPP was defeated once in the 1993 general election, but has gained its hegemony from 1997 to this day. Singapore's People Action Party (PAP) has won every general election, twelve times in a row, since the country's independence in 1965. Malaysia's dominant ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional (BN), had ruled Malaysia for 61 years before it lost the fourteenth general election to the opposition alliance, *Kapatan Harapan* (PH or the Alliance of Hope) on May 9, 2018. Cambodia's

¹⁰⁰ National Election Committee, Cambodia, <https://www.neclect.org.kh/khmer/content/2402>; <https://www.neclect.org.kh/khmer/content/2401>.

CPP has secured dominance using three tactics: control of the state machinery, coercion, and co-optation, or a 3-Cs strategy.¹⁰¹ Malaysia's BN ruling coalition had deployed "the three Ms"—media, money and the bureaucratic machine—to stay dominant.¹⁰² Other than media control, the BN "had unlimited resources" and "controlled all the state apparatus" including the electoral commission to its advantage.¹⁰³ In Singapore, the PAP has reinforced its hegemony via two factors.¹⁰⁴ First, the PAP, through its "trustworthiness, competence, and professional qualification," has gained and sustained credibility from the majority of Singaporeans. Second, the PAP has demonstrated Singapore's long-term development successes.¹⁰⁵ The party's credibility and development achievements have not only led voters to continue to endorse and vote for it, but have also left the opposition with a weak foundation from which to challenge the ruling party.¹⁰⁶ Consequently, the PAP endures.

The recent trajectories of the three dominant parties merit attention. In Cambodia, when the opposition and voters threatened the status quo during the 2013 national election, the CPP applied an aggressive strategy of banning the main opposition and providing the masses with significant economic concessions to relieve public resentment; the ruling party, thus, has retained its dominant position. In Malaysia, the BN began declining in 2008 when it lost its two-thirds majority in parliament, for the first time since 1957.¹⁰⁷ The ruling coalition weakened further in the 2013 general election but still secured victory.¹⁰⁸ Led by Prime Minister Najib Razak, the coalition was compelled to seek resources to buy votes using, inter alia, cash pay-out programs in preparation for the 2018 general election.¹⁰⁹ The drive led to a large-scale scandal involving the laundering of US\$4.5 billion; as the national debt increased and money was insufficient to fund the cash pay-out programs, the Najib government imposed unpopular taxes on citizens, creating

¹⁰¹ Peou, "Cambodia's Hegemonic-Party System," 46.

¹⁰² Andreas Ufen, "Opposition in Transition: Pre-Electoral Coalitions and the 2018 Electoral Breakthrough in Malaysia," *Democratization* 27, no. 2 (17 February 2020): 168.

¹⁰³ James Chin and Bridget Welsh, "Special Issue Introduction: The 2018 Malaysian General Election: The Return of Mahathir and the Exit of UMNO," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 37, no. 3 (December 2018): 3.

¹⁰⁴ Steven Oliver and Kai Ostwald, "Explaining Elections in Singapore: Dominant Party Resilience and Valence Politics," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 18, no. 2 (July 2018): 130.

¹⁰⁵ Oliver and Ostwald, "Explaining Elections in Singapore," 130.

¹⁰⁶ Oliver and Ostwald, "Explaining Elections in Singapore," 130.

¹⁰⁷ Johan Saravanamuttu and Maznah Mohamad, "The Monetisation of Consent and Its Limits: Explaining Political Dominance and Decline in Malaysia," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 50, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 60.

¹⁰⁸ Saravanamuttu and Mohamad, "The Monetisation of Consent and Its Limits: Explaining Political Dominance and Decline in Malaysia," 60.

¹⁰⁹ Saravanamuttu and Mohamad, "The Monetisation of Consent and Its Limits: Explaining Political Dominance and Decline in Malaysia," 57.

widespread public anger.¹¹⁰ The developments created a legitimacy crisis and led to the defeat of the BN in 2018.

However, William Case,¹¹¹ a senior scholar on Malaysian politics, warns that “[e]lectoral turnover has taken place [in Malaysia], but democratic transition has not.” Progress in areas such as a more free media, less obvious corruption, and a more socially inclusive cabinet is accompanied by deep-seated authoritarian legacies such the re-emergence of elite-level patronage and restrictions on civil liberties.¹¹² Indeed, it appears that democratization efforts have stalled: for instance, there has been barely any progress in early 2020 in the opposition-led government’s major structural reforms pertaining to the electoral system, laws on internal security, the administration, and the judiciary.¹¹³ Singapore’s PAP witnessed its vote share dropping in 1991 to 60 percent, for the first time since 1963.¹¹⁴ The PAP quickly looked for policy options to address the decline, such as an increase in welfare spending from 0.46 percent to 0.65 percent of GDP between 1991 and 1993.¹¹⁵ When the PAP saw its vote share decrease again in the 2011 election, it responded in myriad ways, one of which was a policy which provides more support to low-income families.¹¹⁶ More importantly, given the PAP’s credibility and impressive development performance, the leadership that is largely free of corruption, and the lack of foundation for the opposition to challenge the party, it is unlikely that it will be defeated in the 2021 general election.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

Repetitive multiparty elections in Cambodia have led to the durability and intensification of authoritarian rule, yet they have potentially compelled the rulers to offer unusual policy concessions that have directly benefitted approximately one million civil servants and garment workers, and the masses at large throughout the country. In this way, multiparty elections have benefitted the rulers in maintaining their hold on power and the citizens in improving their livelihood—a win-win scenario. To offer the concessions, the government has implemented several fundamental reforms pertaining

¹¹⁰ Saravanamuttu and Mohamad, “The Monetisation of Consent and Its Limits: Explaining Political Dominance and Decline in Malaysia,” 57, 61, 66–67.

¹¹¹ William Case, “Politics in Malaysia Today-Demise of the Hybrid? Not So Fast,” *Taiwan Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (2019): 27.

¹¹² Case, “Politics in Malaysia Today-Demise of the Hybrid? Not So Fast,” 27–28.

¹¹³ Andreas Ufen, “Malaysias Demokratisierung in der Sackgasse (Malaysia’s Gridlocked Democratisation),” *German Institute of Global and Area Studies*, no. 1 (2020): 1.

¹¹⁴ Miller, “Elections, Information, and Policy Responsiveness in Autocratic Regimes,” 702.

¹¹⁵ Miller, “Elections, Information, and Policy Responsiveness in Autocratic Regimes,” 702.

¹¹⁶ Ortmann, “Singapore 2011–2015: A Tale of Two Elections,” 209.

¹¹⁷ Kai Ostwald and Steven Oliver, “Singapore’s PAP Has Little to Fear from Malaysia’s Political Transition,” *East Asia Forum* (blog), 26 September 2018, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2018/09/26/singapores-pap-has-little-to-fear-from-malaysias-political-transition/>.

to increasing public revenues and public servants' pay. Such reforms were largely gridlocked in the 1993 to 2012 period. The policy changes have occurred following the 2013 national election and continued following the 2017 local election, when the ruling party faced critical challenges from a united opposition and empowered voters. The ways in which elections have served as mechanisms to extract economic concessions prove that elections are more than autocratic tools.

When the main opposition was banned in 2017, some commentators were concerned that the momentum of autocratic concessions may stall. Notwithstanding, this paper shows that the salaries of civil servants and garment workers continued to rise in 2018 following the dissolution of the CNRP in 2017. The CPP, unlike Singapore's PAP that uses its high credibility to sustain people's genuine support, has survived with relatively low credibility. The CPP's lack of trustworthiness is clearly shown by the party's significant decline in votes in the 2013 national election and the 2017 local election. In the foreseeable future, the deep-seated political and socio-economic drawbacks such as corruption, widening inequality, drug problems, popular concerns about the depletion of natural resources, and social injustice persist; all these make social discontent prevail. Further, the rate of the social grievances may escalate with the disintegration of the rural-urban divide, improved physical infrastructure and telecommunications, sustained socio-economic growth, mounting exposure to social media,¹¹⁸ demographic change, citizens' high expectations of the CPP, and better educated and more empowered citizens. Therefore, in the post-2013 era, the CPP's 3-Cs strategy has proven inadequate for the party to stay dominant. For autocratic regimes to endure and not concede power through, for instance, a revolution, they need genuine support from the masses to bolster their legitimacy.¹¹⁹ The CPP, then, is left with few options, but to adopt a 4-Cs strategy: control, coercion, co-optation, and concessions.

University of Guelph, Guelph, Canada, March 2020

¹¹⁸ Mun Vong and Kimhean Hok, "Facebooking: Youth's Everyday Politics in Cambodia," *South East Asia Research* 26, no. 3 (September 2018): 219–234.

¹¹⁹ Miller, "Elections, Information, and Policy Responsiveness in Autocratic Regimes," 696.

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P E R S P E C T I V E

Migrants, Minorities, and Populism in Southeast Asia

Thomas Pepinsky

ABSTRACT

Populists in Southeast Asia generally refrain from invoking anti-migrant and anti-minority sentiments as part of their mobilizational strategies. This differentiates them from “exclusionary” populists in Europe, even though many Southeast Asian countries are diverse societies with long histories of migration and ethnic chauvinism. Because the categories of peoplehood that were set alongside the onset of mass politics at independence remain salient today, they constrain contemporary Asian populists’ rhetorical and mobilizational strategies—even in Southeast Asia’s diverse societies. The Southeast Asian experience reveals the importance of historical sequence in nationalist mobilization and mass incorporation in shaping popular identity, citizenship, and membership in contemporary populism.

Keywords: populism, migration, ethnicity, identity, sequence, Southeast Asia

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Introduction

Contemporary European and American populists commonly target migrants, refugees, and religious and ethnic minorities as foreign elements whose very presence represents a threat to the survival and coherence of “the people.” Yet despite the resurgence of populism in contemporary Asia, populists there generally eschew anti-minority discourses, targeting instead elites, criminals, and other social elements whose *behaviour*—rather than *identity*—threatens “the people.”

How can we explain the absence of anti-immigrant, anti-minority exclusionary populism in Southeast Asia? This question has implications for

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contemporary debates about populism and its variants around the world. As Rooduijn recently observed, “it depends on the context whether the outsiders are immigrants, unemployed, or people of another religion or race.”¹ But can we say anything systematic about such “contextual” factors that might differentiate the anti-immigrant, anti-minority populists of Europe and the United States from their more inclusionary counterparts across Southeast Asia? One explanation might be that Asian societies have no minorities or migrants for populists to target. Although this explanation might prove useful for cases such as Japan and South Korea, it founders in the plural societies of Southeast Asia, which feature politically salient ethnic and religious cleavages, as well as long histories of migration.

In this manuscript I propose instead that the onset of mass politics amidst nationalist mobilization explains the absence of exclusionary populism in Southeast Asia’s plural societies. In these cases, mass migration tended to occur under colonial rule or at the moment of independence. The fundamental negotiations about membership in the national political community—what constituted the people—happened alongside the emergence of mass politics and anti-colonial struggle. As a result, multiethnic societies have variously followed assimilationist, accommodationist, or exclusionary practices,² but in no cases do minorities represent a threat to the integrity or survival of “the people” as generally understood.

In short form, my argument is that populists work *within* rather than *against* existing categories of peoplehood. Because the categories of peoplehood set at independence remain salient today, they constrain contemporary Southeast Asian populists. Across postcolonial Southeast Asia, minority populations have—with some notable exceptions—been identified as part of the people rather than in opposition to them. As a rule, then, Southeast Asian populism more resembles the inclusionary populism of Latin America rather than the exclusionary populism of Europe.³ Asian populism coexists with virulent prejudice and ethnic and religious conflict, but populists almost never invoke migrants or minorities to mobilize “the people” against “the elites” or “the other.” The “almost never” clause in the preceding sentence is important: cases of Chinese Indonesians, Rohingya in Burma, and migrants in Singapore prove instructive in testing the limits of this general argument.

The main contribution of this article is to identify a hitherto unnoticed feature of populism in contemporary Southeast Asia. Recent contributions have uncovered and analyzed the dynamics of populist mobilization in a range

¹ Matthijs Rooduijn, “The Nucleus of Populism: In Search of the Lowest Common Denominator,” *Government and Opposition* 49, no. 4 (2014): 573–599.

² Prerna Singh and Matthias vom Hau, “Ethnicity in Time: Politics, History, and the Relationship between Ethnic Diversity and Public Goods Provision,” *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 10 (2016): 1303–1340.

³ Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary Vs. Inclusionary Populism: Comparing Contemporary Europe and Latin America,” *Government and Opposition* 48, no. 2 (2013): 147–174.

of Southeast Asian cases, from Islamic populism and technocratic populism in Indonesia,⁴ Thai politics under Thaksin and beyond,⁵ and Duterte's populism and its long antecedents in the Philippines.⁶ Although scholars such as Ricks have noticed, for example, the absence of ethnic identity cleavages in Thailand's northeast—which he attributes to the success of the state-nurtured “Thai” identity⁷—the link between populism and identity-based politics has not been systematically explored. Even Munro-Kua's analysis of “authoritarian populism” in multiethnic Malaysia adopts a mainly class-analytic perspective, and was written in the decades before the current populist wave swept countries like Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines.⁸

Explicitly comparative research on Southeast Asian populism, by contrast, remains in its infancy,⁹ presumably because its form, rhetoric, and mobilizational appeals differ substantially. The main focus of this comparative research has been to identify common logics of populist mobilization across the region.¹⁰ But what (most) Southeast Asian populists generally share is exactly what their appeals *lack*: exclusionary anti-minority rhetoric.

The argument that I advance in this manuscript provides useful foundations for a more broadly comparative approach to national identity and contemporary populism, one in which Southeast Asia contributes to global debates on populism. An emerging literature that distinguishes between inclusionary and exclusionary populism,¹¹ much like work on “left” versus “right” varieties of populism,¹² has found little purchase in making

⁴ Marcus Mietzner, “Fighting Illiberalism with Illiberalism: Islamist Populism and Democratic Deconsolidation in Indonesia,” *Pacific Affairs* 91, no. 2 (2018): 261–282.

⁵ Chris Baker, “Pluto-Populism: Thaksin and Popular Politics,” in *Thailand Beyond the Crisis*, ed. Peter Warr (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004); Andrew Brown and Kevin Hewison, “Economics Is the Deciding Factor: Labour Politics in Thaksin's Thailand,” *Pacific Affairs* 78, no. 3 (2005): 353–375.

⁶ Nicole Curato, “Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies? Rodrigo Duterte and the New Terms of Philippine Populism,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 1 (2017): 142–153; Mark R. Thompson, “Bloodied Democracy: Duterte and the Death of Liberal Reformism in the Philippines,” *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2016): 39–68.

⁷ Jacob I. Ricks, “Proud to Be Thai: The Puzzling Absence of Ethnicity-Based Political Cleavages in Northeastern Thailand,” *Pacific Affairs* 92, no. 2 (2019): 257–285.

⁸ Anne Munro-Kua, *Authoritarian Populism in Malaysia* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

⁹ For an introduction and review, see Paul Kenny, *Populism in Southeast Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

¹⁰ Beside Kenny, see Mark R. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of Electoralism and the Rise of Populism in the Philippines and Thailand,” *Journal of Developing Societies* 32, no. 3 (2016): 246–269; William Case, *Populist Threats and Democracy's Fate in Southeast Asia: Thailand, the Philippines, and Indonesia* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

¹¹ Nuria Font, Paolo Graziano, and Myrto Tsakatika, “Varieties of Inclusionary Populism? Syriza, Podemos and the Five Star Movement,” *Government and Opposition* (forthcoming); published early online, May 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2016.28>; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary Vs. Inclusionary Populism”; Hans-Georg Betz, “Exclusionary Populism in Austria, Italy, and Switzerland,” *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 56, no. 3 (2001): 393–420.

¹² S. Erdem Aytaç and Ziya Öniş, “Varieties of Populism in a Changing Global Context: The Divergent Paths of Erdoğan and Kirchnerismo,” *Comparative Politics* 47, no. 1 (2014): 41–59; Dani Rodrik, “Populism and the Economics of Globalization,” *Journal of International Business Policy* 1, nos. 1–2 (2018): 12–33; Hanspeter Kriesi and Takis S. Pappas, eds., *European Populism in the Shadow of the Great Recession* (Colchester, UK: ECPR Press, 2015).

sense of Southeast Asian populisms. I place Southeast Asian cases in the comparative perspective, engaging with a literature that has focused primarily on the advanced industrial democracies and on Latin America but choosing to narrow in on the concepts of peoplehood and membership, which are plainly fluid and contested but which nevertheless retain the ability to constrain the options available to contemporary politicians. I outline other, more specific contributions to the literature on contemporary populism in the conclusion.

On Populism

Populism is a contested term and there is substantial disagreement among specialists about how to conceptualize it: as an ideology, as a discursive frame, as a linkage strategy, among many others. However, all prominent conceptualizations of populism invoke “the people.”¹³ For Mouffe, populism “emerges when one aims at building a new subject of collective action—the people—capable of reconfiguring a social order lived as unfair.”¹⁴ For Laclau, the “precondition” for populism is “the formation of an internal antagonistic frontier separating the ‘people’ from power.”¹⁵ For Müller, “populism requires a *pars pro toto* argument and a claim to exclusive representation, with both understood in a moral, as opposed to empirical, sense. There can be no populism, in other words, without some speaking in the name of the people as a whole.”¹⁶ For Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, populism is “a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale*.”¹⁷ For Mouzelis, who conceptualizes populism as a linkage strategy, “populist leaders are hostile to strongly institutionalized intermediary levels, whether clientelist or bureaucratic. The emphasis on the leader’s charisma, on the necessity for direct, nonmediated rapport between the leader and ‘his people’; as well as the relatively sudden process of political incorporation all lead to a fluidity of organizational forms.”¹⁸

So long as “the people” lie at the hard core of any conceptualization of populism, we may ask how different conceptualizations of peoplehood affect populist discourses and/or strategies without taking a position on populism’s

¹³ See Rooduijn, “The Nucleus of Populism”; Cas Mudde and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁴ Chantal Mouffe, “The Populist Moment,” (Open Democracy, 21 November 2016, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/democraciaabierta/chantal-mouffe/populist-moment2016>), 1.

¹⁵ Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 74.

¹⁶ Jan-Werner Müller, *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 20.

¹⁷ Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, *Populism*, 6.

¹⁸ Nicos Mouzelis, “On the Concept of Populism: Populist and Clientelist Modes of Incorporation in Semiperipheral Polities,” *Politics and Society* 14, no. 3 (1985): 329–348.

true essence. Populism scholars—Mouffe, Laclau, Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, Carnovan,¹⁹ and others—emphasize the essential distinction between the people and, variously, “the establishment” or “the elite” or the “oligarchs” or “those who hold power.” But all also recognize that there are many dimensions along which populisms vary:²⁰ among others, in economic orientation, in political demands, and in the inclusiveness of the conception of the “people.”

My argument focuses on the last of these, and relies in particular on the distinction between what Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser term *inclusionary* and *exclusionary* populism. My particular interest is in explaining the rarity of exclusionary populism with an ethnic, religious, or racial focus, the type that Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser find in Europe but not Latin America.²¹ The exclusionary populist’s emphasis on the identity or ascriptive characteristics of the other, in contrast to the behaviour or social position of the other, distinguishes the anti-establishment populism of Alberto Fujimori from the anti-immigrant populism of Jörg Haider. Although the relative absence of exclusionary populism in Asia parallels its absence in Latin America, the two regions’ experiences differ in important ways that may affect the generalizability of my argument to that region. Specifically, most Latin American countries gained independence in the 1800s, whereas decolonization in Southeast Asia began during the early part of the twentieth century.²² That independence and mass peoplehood emerged at the same time *but in a different historical moment* means that the historical processes through which plural societies established inclusionary norms of peoplehood may differ. Murillo argues, for example, that the fact that post-independence elites in Latin America tended to be from relatively small minorities explains the prevalence of inclusionary populism across the region.²³ This argument does not translate well to the Southeast Asian cases, where most post-independence leaders have hailed

¹⁹ Margaret Canovan, “Populism for Political Theorists?,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004): 241–252.

²⁰ See, recently, Mattia Zulianello, “Varieties of Populist Parties and Party Systems in Europe: From State-of-the-Art to the Application of a Novel Classification Scheme to 66 Parties in 33 Countries,” *Government and Opposition* 55, no. 2 (2020): 327–347; Kenneth M. Roberts, “Left, Right, and the Populist Structuring of Political Competition,” in *Routledge Handbook of Global Populism*, ed. Carlos de la Torre (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

²¹ In Europe, “proposed exclusion is multifaceted but always refers to cultural elements.” Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, “Exclusionary Vs. Inclusionary Populism,” 166. On the related concept of “populist multiculturalism,” see also Carla Alberti, “Populist Multiculturalism in the Andes: Balancing Political Control and Societal Autonomy,” *Comparative Politics* 52, no. 1 (2019): 43–63. For an interesting argument for the absence of “anti-populism,” see Brandon Van Dyck, “Why Not Anti-Populist Parties? Theory with Evidence from the Andes and Thailand,” *Comparative Politics* 51, no. 3 (2019): 361–388.

²² On the colonial origins of inclusionary populism, see Dani Filc, “Latin American Inclusive and European Exclusionary Populism: Colonialism as an Explanation,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 20, no. 3 (2015): 263–283.

²³ Maria Victoria Murillo, “La Historicidad Del Pueblo Y Los Límites Del Populismo,” *Nueva Sociedad* 274 (2018): 165–175.

from their countries' largest ethnic groups. Nevertheless, her attention to the logic of national mobilization in the immediate postcolonial context usefully parallels the argument that I develop here.

There are doubtless other dimensions across which Southeast Asia's contemporary populists vary; Mietzner, for example, distinguishes between technocratic, chauvinist, and Islamic populisms within Indonesia alone.²⁴ That said, a left-right *economic* dimension of populism—with right populists emphasizing economic stability and order, and left populists emphasizing the reduction of economic inequality²⁵—offers little useful analytical purchase in Southeast Asia. Neither does Mouffe's more recent articulation of a "left populism" as generally opposed to oligarchic control in an era of what she terms "postpolitics."²⁶ The next section characterizes more precisely the instances of populism that we observe across the region, providing the background information necessary to evaluate why inclusionary populism is so prevalent across the region.

Southeast Asian Populisms

Contemporary Southeast Asian populists include Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines, Prabowo Subianto in Indonesia, and Thaksin Shinawatra in Thailand. These politicians have sought to represent in various ways the will of the people, to bypass or at least to subordinate existing political structures in response to dire social ills, and to cast themselves as the opponents of a corrupt political establishment comprised of unresponsive elites. As such, they fulfill key definitional features for any conceptualization of populism reviewed above. Additional members of the roster of populists in Southeast Asia might include Indonesia's Joko Widodo, Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, and Philippine presidents Ramon Magsaysay, Ferdinand Marcos, and Joseph Estrada.²⁷

One characteristic feature of the contemporary Southeast Asian populists is their targeting of both a corrupt ruling elite and distasteful social elements involved in crime and vice.²⁸ They stress the inability of existing political institutions to address these disorderly social elements, and they claim to hold (or in the case of Prabowo, they seek) a popular mandate to "fix" their countries' political systems. They also, like nearly every other politician in these countries, run on platforms that emphasize (although often in vague terms) the people's welfare and social progress.

²⁴ Marcus Mietzner, "Rival Populisms and the Democratic Crisis in Indonesia: Chauvinists, Islamists and Technocrats," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 4 (2020): 420–438.

²⁵ On this distinction, see Steven Levitsky and Kenneth M. Roberts, eds., *The Resurgence of the Latin American Left* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

²⁶ Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (London: Verso, 2018).

²⁷ For a comprehensive overview of Southeast Asian populists, see Kenny, *Populism*.

²⁸ Thomas B. Pepinsky, "Southeast Asia: Voting against Disorder," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 2 (2017): 120–131.

Southeast Asia's "plural societies"—a term introduced by Furnivall²⁹—are comprised of many ethnic groups. Although some countries have a titular ethnic group (Thai, Burman, Malay) that is a numerical majority, all countries also have large minority populations, some "indigenous" and others of "immigrant" origin (a distinction that I will complicate below). But Furnivall's use of plural society did not simply describe multiethnic states, it also described a socioeconomic system characterized by "racial differentiation of functions"³⁰ under colonial capitalism. Although the specifically *colonial* social formation that Furnivall described is no more, in postcolonial Southeast Asia, ethnic and religious cleavages still tend to be overlaid with differences in economic status and material power. Importantly, then, each of these politicians campaigns in an ethnically and religiously heterogeneous state with a prominent "overseas Chinese" community.³¹

The distinction between "immigrant" or "overseas" communities and "native" or "indigenous" populations is ultimately a question of social categories rather than of human genealogy. A Rohingya whose ancestors have lived for centuries in what is today Burma may be viewed as a member of a migrant community, whereas second-generation Malaysians of Arab or Javanese descent are legally classified as indigenous (*bumiputera*). Exclusionary populists in Europe commonly conflate ethnic diversity with immigration, viewing third-generation German residents of Turkish descent as immigrants. So too can the process of identifying the descendants of migrants as "outsiders" and contrasting them to "natives" function as a way to construct a model of "the people" in Southeast Asia, as I detail below.

The long history of movement of peoples throughout the region of Southeast Asia makes it difficult to draw firm analytical distinctions between migrants and other minority communities. National citizenship and peoplehood—the categories required to distinguish "indigenous" from "immigrant"—presume bounded *territorial* entities, not the fluid territorial organization of a *mandala*-type system that characterized premodern Southeast Asia.³² A *mandala* would feature many ethnic groups, like postcolonial Southeast Asian states, but absent a Westphalian territorial system the distinction between native and migrant was not relevant, and groups commonly moved in response to the encroaching power of lowland

²⁹ J.S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (New York: New York University Press, 1956).

³⁰ *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 46.

³¹ For a comparative perspective on class formation that touches on Chinese identity in Southeast Asia, see John T. Sidel, "Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy Revisited: Colonial State and Chinese Immigrant in the Making of Modern Southeast Asia," *Comparative Politics* 40, no. 3 (2008): 127–147.

³² On the *mandala* model in Southeast Asia, see O.W. Wolters, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (Ithaca: Cornell Southeast Asia Publications, 1999), 27–40.

polities.³³ The very process of colonial border drawing produced divided communities, and colonial and postcolonial politics defined both ethnicity and indigeneity: Tausug and Suluk in the Sulu Sea region comprise a group divided by colonial boundaries, so today Tausug are “migrants” when in Sabah, whereas Suluk are “natives.” For purposes of argument, I follow national political conventions in describing axes of political conflict as being between minorities versus between natives and immigrants, being careful to specify when I mean to refer to actual migrants rather than communities constructed as such.

Chauvinism in Southeast Asia’s Plural Societies

Given the region’s diversity, it is not surprising that Southeast Asia’s plural societies are characterized by ethnic and religious chauvinism. Marked interethnic and interreligious wealth disparities feed into resentment, frequently by “indigenous” populations against exploitation by “immigrant” minorities, in particular the overseas Chinese. There are also cleavages among indigenous groups: between central Thai and Isan in Thailand, between ethnic Burmans and non-Burmans, between Malays and non-Malay *bumiputeras* in Malaysia, between Ilocanos and Visayans in the Philippines, between Madurese and Dayaks in Indonesian Borneo, and so forth. Religious cleavages also abound throughout the region: Catholic versus Muslim in the Philippines; Buddhist versus Muslim in Burma, Thailand, and Cambodia; and Muslim versus Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist in Indonesia and Malaysia. Although regionwide ethnic diversity defies easy classification, within specific national or even subnational contexts, stereotypes and prejudices are well-understood and commonly invoked (“Isan are stupid country folk,” “Madurese are coarse and crass,” “Rohingya are terrorists,” “Chinese are greedy,” etc.).

It is also not surprising that national politicians in Southeast Asia have sometimes openly embraced ethnic chauvinism. The most notable examples deal with the overseas Chinese. Malaysia’s long-time prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, for example, famously penned a book called *The Malay Dilemma*, which outlined a stark economic and political plan to favour the country’s Malay majority at the expense of Malaysians of Chinese and Indian descent.³⁴ Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew was fond of addressing the need for “human capital” and “foreign talent,” linking these to immigration from China and India.³⁵ To these contemporary examples we might add historical examples

³³ On movements of people in response to premodern and modern state authority, see James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

³⁴ Mahathir Mohamad, *The Malay Dilemma* (Singapore: Times Books International, 1970).

³⁵ Lee Kuan Yew, *The Wit & Wisdom of Lee Kuan Yew* (Singapore: Didier Millet, 2013).

in those countries where Chinese are seen as much more integrated than in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore: Phibun Songkhram's anti-Chinese measures in post-1932 Thailand, or anti-Chinese measures taken by both Liberal and Nationalist governments in the early years of Philippine independence.³⁶ And politicians have at times embraced anti-minority chauvinism against "indigenous" minorities as well, from anti-Christian prejudice in East Malaysia to anti-Cham prejudice in Cambodia. Prabowo, Thaksin, and Duterte all live in societies marked by some degree of chauvinism against minorities and the descendants of migrants.

With this comparative perspective in hand, we are now better positioned to ask, why are there no successful anti-minority Southeast Asian populists? The answer cannot be that there are *no populists* in Southeast Asia, nor can it be that there are *no anti-minority politicians* in Southeast Asia. I propose that the answer, instead, lies in the timing of the construction of peoplehood at the onset of mass politics. Southeast Asian states are generally ethnically heterogeneous states that set inclusive and multiethnic terms of peoplehood prior to the onset of mass politics and have not faced subsequent rounds of immigration. Neither of these conditions is conducive to anti-minority populism.

Before proceeding, one might object to this argument by observing that if "the people" are the hard-core element of any conceptualization of populism, then racists, chauvinists, or particularists who divide "the people" cannot be populists by definition. Yet this interpretation is not correct. It would be *possible* for a Thai politician to invoke a notion of Thai-ness that targets Chinese of Thai descent as foreign elements. It would similarly be *possible* for a politician of Javanese descent in Indonesia to target relatively prominent ethnic minorities such as the Batak of Sumatra as representing elite interests. But none of these conceptual possibilities would be politically expedient as a strategy for an aspiring populist leader or movement seeking to construct or mobilize the Thai or Indonesian people. Explaining why such mobilizational strategies would not be politically expedient requires attention to the historical sequence of nationalist mobilization and mass incorporation across Southeast Asia.

Citizenship, Membership, and the Emergence of Mass Politics

My argument rests on two claims. First, existing categories of peoplehood constrain the discursive or ideational strategies available to populists. In plural societies such as Indonesia, minority ethnic and religious communities are unambiguously members of the *rakyat* (or "people"). Second, timing matters. In Southeast Asia, the terms of peoplehood or nationhood were set at or shortly after independence. The very project of nationalist mobilization

³⁶ See Sidel, "Social Origins."

required the delineation of what that nation and its people were, with the result that even multiethnic polities such as Indonesia and the Philippines could create national identities, choosing national languages and delimiting borders that included all people living within them as part of the national community. Ferguson describes the example of Burma: “the vision for a newly independent Burma crucially depended on an image that included these eight official races, and this independent nation posited its indigeneity in opposition to foreign control, and more specifically, against non-indigenous capitalists such as the Chinese, Indians, and Europeans.”³⁷ That these independent states with their emerging nations coincided with the borders of colonial territories is no accident: the Burmese state would occupy the territory of British Burma, and the Burmese people would be the Burmans and all of the “national races” that lived there as well.

Nationalist mobilization in Southeast Asia occurred at the same time as the onset of mass politics, and followed a general pattern in which religious, nationalist, and socialist mass organizations rejected European and American colonial rule (and later Japanese occupation). In this way, nationalist mobilization was generally a mass-based phenomenon, even when its organizational forms had religious or partisan overtones. Religious examples include the Young Men’s Buddhist Association in Burma and Sarekat Islam in Indonesia; nationalist examples include the Katipunan in the Philippines, the Vietnamese Nationalist Party, and the United Malays National Organisation; socialist and communist examples include the communist parties found throughout the region. Each of these groups advanced a different vision of mass politics, but they shared the notion that there existed a people throughout the colony who deserved to participate in that politics.³⁸ Exclusionary visions for mass politics—such as the so-called “Jakarta Charter” which would have implemented sharia law in Indonesia—were entertained, but ultimately defeated by more inclusionary visions.

These inclusionary understandings of peoplehood have, at various historical moments and in various ways, been tested and challenged. In its first decade of independence, Malaysia saw periodic episodes of violence and mobilization against (and by) Malaysians of Chinese descent that reflected the continued effects of colonial-era hierarchies of status and wealth. Shan, Karen, and other non-Burman ethnic groups from what were formerly “frontier areas” in British Burma have fought independence (critically, the response from the Burmese state is to insist that these peoples *are* Burmese).

³⁷ Jane M. Ferguson, “Who’s Counting? Ethnicity, Belonging, and the National Census in Burma/Myanmar,” *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 171, no. 1 (2015): 1–28.

³⁸ Thailand is a special case because it was never colonized. Yet two features of Thai’s political development generated a comparable understanding of Thai peoplehood: the Free Thai movement during the Second World War, and the monarchy’s construction of “Thailand” and hence the Thai nation as the people occupying the territory between French Indochina and British Burma. See Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

The defeat of the Jakarta Charter did not settle the issue of Islamic law in Indonesia, as the Darul Islam rebellion continued long after Indonesian independence. *Konfrontasi*, the conflict between Indonesia and Malaysia over the latter's expansion to include British-held territories in northern Borneo, contested the alignment of colonial and postcolonial national borders—but its resolution also reveals the capaciousness of categories of peoplehood. The first two decades of Vietnamese independence saw deep conflict over the boundaries and the very essence of the Vietnamese nation. Various forms of contestation of established categories of peoplehood continue today, as I elaborate further upon below in my discussion of Islamic populism in Indonesia. But such contestation over national membership and peoplehood is comparatively rare today, replaced instead with a form of ethnic or religious politics that accepts the premise of national citizenship but strives for group rights and privileges in the context of plural societies.

My approach to the politics of national citizenship is distinct from—but in principle compatible with—existing work on the state and ethnic politics in the postcolonial world. Recently, Singh and vom Hau have proposed three models of nation-building in plural societies: assimilationist, accommodationist, and exclusionary.³⁹ The first two provide for broad public goods but differ in that assimilationist strategies strive to erase ethnic differences whereas accommodationist strategies accept them. Unlike accommodation, exclusionary strategies recognize ethnic differences but do not strive for pan-ethnic public goods provision. Singh and vom Hau locate Southeast Asia cases in each of these three categories: Malaysia is exclusionary, Singapore accommodationist, and Indonesia assimilationist. Holding aside the validity of their classification of these particular cases, note that their focus is on *which national groups policies favour*, whereas a focus on national membership targets the prior question of *who the national groups are*.

Populists in Southeast Asia today thus confront ideas of the nation or the people that—in the established political narrative—have previously been defined as multiethnic and inclusive of the descendants of migrant communities. Nations and peoples in Southeast Asia are plural—and this is self-evidently and unproblematically true throughout the region. The important exceptions that I address below illustrate exactly why the terms of peoplehood set at independence carry such weight for explaining populist strategies today.

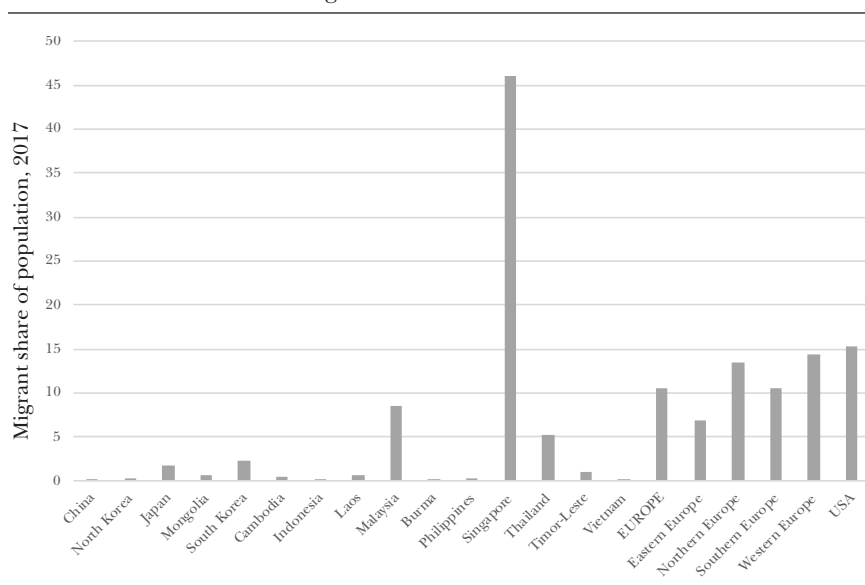
One possible source of exclusionary populist mobilization would be if demographic changes affected the relative composition of national populations in the years since independence.⁴⁰ And yet by and large, this has

³⁹ Singh and vom Hau, "Ethnicity in Time: Politics, History, and the Relationship between Ethnic Diversity and Public Goods Provision."

⁴⁰ Although note that there is no simple relationship between immigration and far-right nativism even in Europe; see Cas Mudde, *The Relationship between Immigration and Nativism in Europe and North America* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2012).

not happened. Differences in relative birth rates and outmigration have led to small changes in relative ethnic and religious shares in most countries, meaning that, for example, the Malay population share in Malaysia is slightly larger today than it was at independence. But immigration is relatively rare outside of Singapore and to a lesser extent Malaysia and Thailand, as shown in figure 1, calculated using data from the United Nations Population Division. Importantly, these figures capture people born outside of the country in question and who have not obtained citizenship, *not* people of supposed “migrant origin.”

Figure 1:
International migrant stock in East and Southeast Asia



Source: Created by author using United Nations Population Division data.

As a result, across Southeast Asia, the shape of “the people” at independence (or, in the case of Thailand, at the onset of mass politics) is roughly the same as the people today. The contrast with Europe and the United States, where exclusionary populists thrive, is stark. Southeast Asian states (aside from Singapore) have simply no experience with immigration, leading to dramatic population changes since independence that parallel the experiences of the United States or Europe.

The most substantial changes to ethnic and religious population shares since independence have come as a result of genocide in Cambodia and the mass emigration of ethnic Chinese and Catholics from Vietnam. These

represent the biggest shocks to any country's ethnic or religious landscape since independence—and note that each had the effect of making Cambodia “more Khmer” and Vietnam “more Vietnamese” due to the disproportionate murder and flight of ethnic Chinese (and in Cambodia, the Cham and Vietnamese).

The popular understanding of “the people” in Southeast Asia therefore follows the terms set at the onset of mass politics across the region. This, I propose, explains why the region's populists do not target minorities: because they understand that “the people” does not exclude these groups in the popular understanding, and so it would not resonate with their intended audience as a discursive or mobilizational strategy. The rhetorical strategy of a European- or American-style populist leader, who challenges the political establishment in the name of the people while invoking tropes of anti-minority and anti-migrant threat, simply is not available as a plausible route for populist mobilization.

This observation does not rule out ethnic politics or chauvinism, but rather populist mobilization through anti-minority politics. The example of Malaysia makes this point clear. The Malaysian constitution provides special rights for the country's ethnic Malay majority. But the Malaysian constitution also explicitly rules *in* non-Malays as citizens by establishing the legal principles through which non-Malays achieved citizenship at independence (and how their descendants would inherit it). Politics at independence was structured around ethnic cleavages, but the question of the right of non-Malays to live in and become citizens of the Federation of Malaya was settled early, and subsequent political wrangling focused almost exclusively on the privileges granted to Malays and other *bumiputeras*. Then as today, ethnic redistributivist demands are expressed not through populist channels, but through an organized and highly institutionalized political party, the United Malays National Organisation.

In addition to having settled the question of national membership in favour of a multiethnic model, Malaysia's regime of active ethnic favouritism—in Singh and vom Hau's terms, an *exclusionary* regime—makes it exceedingly difficult for exclusionary populism to succeed. Recall from the conceptual overview above that populism requires an opposition between the people and the “elites” or the “establishment” and its institutions. Racists, chauvinists, and bigots abound in Malaysian politics, but there is no populist challenger in Malaysia who adopts a language of anti-migrant or anti-minority foment in order to unite Malays or *bumiputeras* as “the people” in response to “the elites” or other unsavoury elements. The elites and the establishment already embody those exclusionary demands. It is no surprise, then, that landmark personalities such as Tunku Abdul Rahman, Razak Hussein, Mahathir Mohamad, and even Anwar Ibrahim are consummate political insiders who

achieved power through the ranks of the party. As Weiss observes, Malaysian politics is just not populist at all.⁴¹

Counterfactuals and Test Cases

If the argument advanced in this note is correct, then it follows that populists in Asia will only be able to mobilize anti-minority discourses (1) for groups whose status as members of the nation or people was not set at independence, or (2) in the context of new rounds of mass immigration. In this section I outline five cases of exclusionary populism in Southeast Asia—some actual, some counterfactual—that comport with these two predictions.

Overseas Chinese comprise the single most visible “migrant” minority across the region, and so they offer an important test for these claims. Each country in Southeast Asia had to develop a legal framework for incorporating the overseas Chinese as citizens of the newly independent states. Following Goodman, we may distinguish between citizenship (a formal legal status) and membership, a broader category that connotes belonging more generally and inclusion in the rights and privileges to which all citizens are entitled.⁴² New laws established the terms of citizenship for overseas Chinese across Southeast Asia, but there is variation across the region in the extent to which ethnic Chinese as a former migrant community are broadly understood *members* of the national community.

The case of Chinese Indonesians illustrates legal citizenship without a full sense of membership. Although the citizenship status of Chinese Indonesians was finally settled in 1958, Chinese Indonesians have faced continuing discrimination. Soeharto’s New Order regime, for example, banned Confucianism, Chinese cultural celebrations, teaching of Mandarin, and Chinese language media. Anti-Chinese sentiments continue to flourish in Indonesia today, and have political consequences.⁴³ The continued questioning of Chinese Indonesians’ status as members of the Indonesian people makes them alone among Indonesia’s plural society a plausible target for anti-minority populist mobilization. Ethnic Chinese Indonesians today, for instance, are sometimes asked to prove that they are Indonesian citizens in encounters with low-level state functionaries. This is not true of other communities descended from migrants in Indonesia, such as Arabs, because their membership in the political community has been unquestioned since independence.⁴⁴ It is also not true of religious minorities such as Christians

⁴¹ Meredith L. Weiss, “Is Malaysian Politics Populist?” (Paper presented at the 2018 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies, Washington, DC, 2018).

⁴² Sara Wallace Goodman, *Immigration and Membership Politics in Western Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 17–21.

⁴³ See e.g. Nathanael Sumaktoyo, “Ethnicity and Jakarta’s Election,” *New Mandala* (2017), <https://www.newmandala.org/ethnicity-jakartas-election/>.

⁴⁴ Thomas B. Pepinsky, “Colonial Migration and the Origins of Governance: Theory and Evidence from Java,” *Comparative Political Studies* 49, no. 9 (2016): 1201–1237.

or Hindus because their membership too is unquestioned. It is similarly not true of ethnic Chinese communities in countries like Thailand or the Philippines, where the membership of ethnic Chinese in broader conceptions of “the people” is relatively unproblematic.⁴⁵ Indonesians of Chinese descent are frequently portrayed as socially undesirable due to their wealth status (perceived or real) or political allegiance (be it to communism or to capitalism); however, it is ultimately their identity rather than their behaviour or social position that forms the basis for their exclusion.

The Rohingya people of Burma comprise a second test case. The Rohingya are a minority community whose citizenship and membership have both long been questioned within the broader Burmese political sphere. Cheesman reviews the genealogy of the Burmese term *taingyintha* (“national race”) and its relationship to legal citizenship, membership, and the Rohingya, who are frequently referred to as “Bengalis.”⁴⁶ An argument that focuses on membership and the timing of mass incorporation implies that a populist in Burma could easily mobilize support using anti-Rohingya discourse in the same way that Duterte mobilizes support in the Philippines by promising to murder drug users.⁴⁷ The same would not be true of Burma’s dozens of other ethnic minority communities—even those such as the Kachin or Shan who have engaged in open military confrontation with the Burmese state—because these groups have always been understood to be constituent members of the Burmese people. Again, exclusionary populism focuses not merely on the behaviour of the Rohingya (frequently portrayed as terrorists or radical Islamists), but their very identity as “Bengalis.”

The previous two examples cover groups whose membership was not set at the onset of mass politics. My third example focuses on new rounds of immigration, and here, the case of Singapore is most instructive (see figure 1). Singapore has long identified as a nation of immigrants, but the continued inflow of both “foreign talent” and low-wage labour affects material concerns (such as housing prices) and also has raised questions about the integration of foreigners into Singapore’s multiethnic society.⁴⁸ The very success of the Singaporean national project has thus opened a new cleavage in Singaporean politics, not in the customary “Chinese-Indians-Malays-Others” ethnic framework, but between native Singaporeans of *any* ethnic background and new immigrants. An argument focusing on peoplehood would predict that

⁴⁵ Thaksin Shinawatra is himself of Chinese descent; Ferdinand Marcos was of mixed Chinese ancestry.

⁴⁶ Nick Cheesman, “How in Myanmar “National Races” Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017): 461–483.

⁴⁷ Khin Zaw Win, “How Populism Directed against Minorities Is Used to Prop up Myanmar’s ‘Democratic’ Revival,” (Open Democracy, 12 March 2018, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/khin-zaw-win/how-populism-directed-against-minorities-is-used-to-prop-up-myanmar-s-democratic-reviva2018>).

⁴⁸ Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Theodora Lam, “Immigration and Its (Dis)Contents: The Challenges of Highly Skilled Migration in Globalizing Singapore,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 60, nos. 5–6 (2016): 637–658.

a populist challenge to the PAP could exploit anti-immigrant sentiments in the name of “the Singaporean people.” Singapore’s status as an electoral authoritarian regime with limited party competition explains the absence of such an anti-immigrant populist challenger, but were Singapore to democratize, such an exclusionary populist would likely emerge. This sort of exclusionary populist would be more likely to target new immigrants from China than, for example, long-settled Singaporean Malays, emphasizing a cleavage based on migrant status rather than ethnic identity.

A fourth test case shifts the level of analysis from the national to the local. I have argued that with a few exceptions, national communities in Southeast Asia are unproblematically plural, encompassing minorities as well as the descendants of migrant communities. The same may not be true of local political communities. In many parts of Southeast Asia, the most politically salient ethnic cleavages are between migrants from other parts of the same country (Visayans who have migrated to the island of Mindanao in the Philippines, Madurese who have migrated to the islands of Sumatra and Kalimantan [Borneo] in Indonesia) or from just across a border (such as ethnic Shan from Burma who have migrated to northern parts of Thailand). No one questions the status of the Madurese as members of the Indonesian people, but they are decidedly “migrants” in the local political context in provinces in Kalimantan to which they have migrated. To the extent that local politicians may adopt “local populist” mobilizational strategies, my argument would predict that migrants from other parts of the same country would be feasible targets.⁴⁹ In the case of cross-border migration and local politics, my argument would similarly predict anti-minority populism would be a feasible political strategy for local politicians.⁵⁰ It may be possible, in this way, to identify anti-minority exclusionary populists in Southeast Asia by refocusing our attention to the local rather than the national.

My fifth and final test case is the most speculative. Given my observation that ethnic and religious chauvinism *does* exist throughout Asia, what sorts of rhetorical strategies would an aspiring ethnic or religious entrepreneur politician who sought to employ populist appeals be forced to adopt? To confront the generally inclusive understandings of “the people” that encompasses religious and ethnic minorities in the region, such a populist would need to promote an alternative way to define membership in the national community as a precondition for mobilizing around it.

Consider the strategy of “Islamic populists” in Indonesia. Those Islamic populists who invoke an exclusionary religious message employ a distinct

⁴⁹ On anti-Madurese conflict, see e.g. Huub de Jonge and Gerben Nooteboom, “Why the Madurese? Ethnic Conflicts in West and East Kalimantan Compared,” *Asian Journal of Social Science* 34, no. 3 (2006): 456–474.

⁵⁰ For examples of anti-Shan views in northeastern Thailand, see e.g. Andrew Alan Johnson, “Progress and Its Ruins: Ghosts, Migrants, and the Uncanny in Thailand,” *Cultural Anthropology* 28, no. 2 (2013): 299–319.

vocabulary to describe their relevant political community in order to shift the conceptual framework that their audience employs in imagining “the people.” Specifically, when invoking “the people,” they use the word the *umma*, an Arabic word that denotes the community of Muslims, instead of the *rakyat*, the Indonesian word that denotes the people more generally. These Islamic populists also tend to focus more on “deviationist” interpretations of Islam than on Indonesia’s minority religious communities, and reject the leadership, but not the citizenship or membership, of Indonesian Christians.⁵¹ This rhetorical strategy of shifting the conceptual framework of “the people” is essential, in my argument, to counter the widely accepted postcolonial understanding of the Indonesian nation as a religiously and ethnically plural one.

And even so, Islamic populists have struggled in Indonesia. Islamists threw their electoral support decisively behind Prabowo Subianto in the country’s 2014 and especially 2019 presidential elections, and yet Prabowo’s campaign style hardly represented an exclusionary Islamic populist one. Although Prabowo’s strongman populism constitutes a clear threat to Indonesia’s constitutional democracy,⁵² he styles himself a nationalist who can protect Indonesians of all faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

Conclusion

The contemporary rise of populism in Southeast Asia has generated wide interest in the varieties of populism in the region and their historical and sociological origins. Cases from Southeast Asia are particularly useful in revealing the social and political foundations of exclusionary populism. My argument highlights citizenship, membership, and sequence: the onset of mass politics coincided with nationalist mobilizations across the region that defined “the people” as “the residents of the colony.” This conceptualization of the people has proven to be sticky, and constrains aspiring populists even as postcolonial societies are characterized by ethnic and religious chauvinism and identity politics. The exceptions to this argument—ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, Rohingya, internal migrants, aspiring Islamic populists—help to show exactly how the historical origins of membership shape contemporary populist mobilization.

This argument about timing of citizenship and the onset of mass politics in the Southeast Asian cases has implications for understanding populists elsewhere in the world. For example, the historical construction of a French people that unambiguously includes Alsatians, Bretons, and Corsicans should

⁵¹ On religious tolerance in democratic Indonesia, see Jeremy Menchik, *Islam and Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁵² See Marcus Mietzner, “How Jokowi Won and Democracy Survived,” *Journal of Democracy* 25, no. 4 (2014): 111–125.

render it impossible for a populist to mobilize exclusionary discourse against these or other groups whose regional identities have been subsumed under the general French identity. However, populists should be able to target those groups whose arrival in France followed the mass acceptance of French peoplehood: Arabs, West Africans, Vietnamese, and others. This may overstate the case: exclusionary populists in France do not target Italians or Hungarians, for example. One way to refine this argument further would be to marry a focus on the timing of peoplehood and the onset of mass politics with popular understandings of the racial foundations of nation and people in Europe, Asia, and around the world.

Looking beyond Europe and Latin America to other postcolonial contexts, this argument also provides insights into the politics of exclusionary populism in Africa and South Asia. Although academic treatments of African politics have long addressed the role of ethnicity in shaping political competition, specifically populist movements and politicians in the immediate postcolonial era were generally inclusionary. A comprehensive review of populism in Africa by Resnick identifies two instances of exclusionary populism, both of which emerged after the 1990s: against Burkinabé Muslims in Côte d'Ivoire, and against whites in Zimbabwe.⁵³ These both comport well with the focus on citizenship and peoplehood advanced in this manuscript. Resnick's discussion of how some contemporary African populists fuse a broad urban focus with selective appeals to particular rural groups invites further cross-regional comparative research on how populist mobilization differs between the plural, postcolonial societies of Southeast Asia and Africa.

India likewise offers useful comparative insights. India's citizenship regime at independence was explicitly inclusive, with religious conflict not targeting citizenship rights but rather local power and control. The Hindutva movement challenges this inclusionary understanding of Indian citizenship: it is not, at root, simply a vehicle for advocating for Hindu favouritism, but a project of reimagining Hinduism itself, as well as its relationship with the Indian state.⁵⁴ The populism of Narendra Modi exploits these reimagined understandings of Hinduism and "Indian-ness." The Indian case thus offers a template for understanding how the project of reimagining or reconstructing "the people" can unfold, with implications for Islamic populism in Indonesia as well as for other aspiring exclusionary populists in Southeast Asia.

Cornell University, Ithaca, USA, July 2020

⁵³ Danielle Resnick, in *Oxford Handbook of Populism*, ed. Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁵⁴ See Brian K. Smith, "Re-Envisioning Hinduism and Evaluating the Hindutva Movement," *Religion* 26, no. 2 (1996): 119–128.

BOOK REVIEWS

GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNITY IN ASIA: Performative Moments. *Asian Visual Cultures.* Edited by Chris Hudson and Bart Barendregt. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018. 241 pp. (B&W photos) €85,00, cloth. ISBN 978-94-6298-112-6.

Globalization and Modernity in Asia examines and implicates public cultural performances, “performance[s] of the modernized self” (12), and “performances of the global” (12) in the creation of new social imaginaries in an inescapably interconnected and cosmopolitanized contemporary Asia. Editors Chris Hudson and Bart Barendregt gather leading scholars—with many recognizable names in theatre studies—to examine a “new Asian modernity” through the lens of the arts and performance, in which the “convergence and dialectical interplay between the global and the national is a key feature” (18). Following this, the authors investigate performances in specific Asian countries to demonstrate “how artistic and aesthetic interventions might generate a social imaginary in which the local can be transformed by the global and in which the problematics of both domains may be investigated” (14).

The book engages performance in a broad spectrum fashion and the authors examine a wide range of performance modalities (and modes of performativity): Craig Latrell looks at weddings, yoga, and the gay hook-up app “Grindr” as they co-define Bali’s identity; Peter Eckersall examines theatre and artworks that are set in Japanese convenience stores (*konbini*) to posit the view of a Japanese modernity entrenched in comforting alienation; Leonie Schmidt considers the aesthetics and politics of contemporary Indonesian performance art; Chua Beng Huat cites a controversial documentary about communists in Singapore; Tania Lewis deliberates on the issue of recognizable figures of expertise in Indian television that have now assumed the role of cultural gurus; William Peterson studies the performance of Filipino identity as evidenced in the 2010 Shanghai International Exposition; Chris Hudson discusses the impact of *grobak* (an Indonesian food cart) on the streets of Melbourne and the third spaces these create; Bart Barendregt examines Islamist flash mobs on the streets of Shah Alam as exemplification of Malaysia in a time of precarity; Jeroen de Kloet explores sanitized modernities in Chinese cinemas with three popular romantic movies; and Barbara Hatley analyzes Rimini Protokol’s *100%* staged in Yogyakarta, Indonesia with this theatre project exposing social divisions in the “city of tolerance” (217).

The authors provide perceptive and provocative analyses as well as intriguing discussions of performance examples that are not frequently

recognized to exemplify how modernity in Asia must be considered in the plural (what Hudson and Barendregt term “multiple” or “alternative” modernities). The chapters reveal how the persistence of history and tradition, cultural and/or religious specifics, contribute to the complexity of contemporary globalized identities and identity politics in Asia; they prove how the local moulds the global even as the global and its attending forces constitute the local.

It is the editors’ intentions to not limit discussions to theatrical performances, theatre artistry, or theatricality, and to embrace “discursive performativities, public spectacle, and embodied performance” (14). This is certainly a hallmark of the work, and the methodology allows for expansive, diverse, and rich analyses. But it is also due to the broad-spectrum approach of activities that leaves me desiring a more consonant focus, especially when compared to more recent works of a similar concern: Varney, Eckersall, and Hudson’s *Theatre and Performance in the Asia-Pacific* (2013); Rogers’ *Performing Asian Transnationalisms* (2014); and Tuan and Chang’s *Transnational Performance, Identity, and Mobility in Asia* (2018) are some examples. With the “performative turn,” it has also become commonplace to employ terms such as performance and performativity in a casual fashion. While the editors do delineate these concepts in the introductory chapter, the analyses of performance are not always consistent: Chua’s chapter for example, an enlightening and sophisticated exposition on Singapore’s state-controlled history by way of a film that challenges the sanctioned narrative of the country’s communist insurgents, does not quite sufficiently evaluate or investigate the cinematic mode of performance.

Yet another issue that warrants consideration is the representation of Asia. While the collection of essays looks at performance examples in various Asian and Southeast Asian countries, they revolve primarily around a limited (and familiar) group (namely performance studies of Japan, China, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Singapore). The book thus inevitably reifies the representational absence of other Asian countries that are rarely given exposition (such as Sri Lanka, Laos, or Myanmar), places where globalization has surely afflicted local consciousness and imaginations (such as through the increasing use of Internet-enabled smartphones in these countries). This gap inspires questions of how alternative modernities are lived, performed, and performatively understood in these places, an exploration of which the book could have explored more fully.

In addition, while one can ignore the occasional typographical error or omitted reference, it is difficult to disregard the recurring misrepresentation of Muslim names in both in-text and in the bibliographical entries; for such oversights reveal, ironically (and performatively), the dominance of Western academic orthodoxies and, by extension, epistemology—one underscored by Gayatri Spivak. Muslim names are oddly attributed a family name: “Noohaidi Hasan” is, for example, referenced as “Hasan, Noorhaidi”; or “Nur Asyiqin

Mohamad Salleh” is cited as “Mohamad Salleh” in the in-text reference and placed as “Salleh, Nur Asyiqin Mohamad” in the Works Cited. This is incorrect for Malays in Malaysia and Indonesia who follow the patronymic naming convention and as such should not be referenced in this fashion. For a book concerned with Asia’s unique modernities by speaking for and about Asia, such matters inadvertently reveal a need for greater acuity and attention when representing difference.

Where its scholarly focus and content is concerned, *Globalization and Modernity in Asia* contains many thoughtful and sophisticated chapters and remains a strong addition to the increasing number of works that have similar or related focal points. The plurality of voices, from various disciplines, allows for a rich and enlightening diversity of views, and the book’s interdisciplinary scope allows it to be an important work for scholars in Asian studies, theatre and performance studies, and critical globalization studies.

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SECURITY IN ASIA PACIFIC: The Dynamics of Alignment. By **Thomas S. Wilkins.** Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2019. ix, 251 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$76.50, cloth. ISBN 978-1-62637-745-5.

Since the end of the Cold War, the relevance of alliances in the Asia Pacific has been questioned, particularly regarding Korean Peninsula-related issues as well as the longstanding US presence in the region. There has been ongoing geographical reconceptualization, such as the Indo-Pacific, and the complicated geographical pictures concerning the rise of China and other neighbouring countries’ responses to it. Analyzing regional security mechanisms in the Asia Pacific through the lens of alignment, *Security in Asia Pacific* spells out the need for adopting an alternative concept to capture contemporary security dynamics in the region. It addresses the key instruments of security cooperation and its characteristics, as well as the security challenges and threats that the alignments may face. While its author Thomas Wilkins remarks on the need for understanding the processes of security relationships in the region that are not Western-centred explanations, he illustrates the current forms of security alignment in the region by reexamining existing theoretical frameworks in analytically eclectic ways, and then adopts the alignment concept to each respective case study. It is an important book for reunderstanding security alignment in the region as well as the potential of deploying alignment concepts in contemporary security analyses.

Wilkins focuses on the concept of “alignment” as first introduced by Glenn Snyder, which was later adopted in Victor Cha’s analysis of the Japan-South Korea relationship vis-à-vis the US. The two aims of Wilkins’ book

are 1) to reconstruct the approach to alignment theory and 2) to apply the reconstituted frameworks to the key regional grouping in Asia Pacific, which are based upon Wilkins's argument that alignment is "a crucially important facet of international politics and demands greater investigation among the IR scholarly community than it presently perceives" (12). While it is acknowledged that alternative concepts such as "order" and "architecture" may (wrongly) be conflated with alignment, it also enables us to analyze beyond the stagnant view of the traditional form of alliances and go beyond the security bias.

Chapter 1, "Security Alignment in Asia Pacific," presents the trend of security political dynamics that cannot solely be explained through alliance concepts, and which must also consider the various forms of strategic partnerships and the security community. Tracing the conceptual and theoretical roots of security literature, this theoretical reconfiguration uses the eclectic analytical approach found in chapter 2. Elucidating the need for reconceptualizing alignment and operationalizing it, chapters 2 and 3 concern alliances and Trilateral Security Dialogue (TSD), which is worth examining considering the developing relationship between the US, Japan, and Australia that can be described as a "virtual trilateral alliance" (61). As Wilkins notes, "Given such 'virtual' alliances, scholarly attention must be dedicated modifying existing theoretical frameworks or creating a new one better fitted to understanding contemporary examples" (36). These chapters deconceptualize alliances and reconceptualize the security mechanism in alliances, which is an important method to reconsider the changing nature of alliances after the Cold War. Chapters 3 and 4 explore security communities by linking to the case of ASEAN Security Communities (ASC), specifically the ASEAN Political-Security Community (APSC). By carefully reexamining the literature of security communities from constructivist and functionalist viewpoints, chapter 3 clarifies the three phases of security communities (nascent, ascendant, and mature) adopted to the case of the APSC. In contrast to the traditional form of alliance, this chapter elucidates that security communities develop and convert into alignment "from the inside out rather than the outside in" (83). Treating the APSC as "a unified alignment 'actor'" (114), the chapter presents an alternative, constructivist form of alignment by converging ASEAN identity and norms, and reexploring the concept of security communities to demonstrate that alignment is a more useful concept to explain the interaction of ASEAN countries. Chapters 6 and 7 explore strategic partnership (networks) such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)—a very interesting case to be considered for the Asia-Pacific region considering the regional influences of Russia and China. Stemming from organizational studies, strategic partnership (however underdeveloped), has been widely emulated by traditional Western powers, thus revealing the pervasiveness of the concept. By examining the SCO case with a particular focus on the Sino-Russian relationship—which

has rarely been linked to the idea of alignment—strategic partnerships can consider that the SCO is operated at “the intersection of the Sino-Russian strategic partnership and both powers’ network of bilateral partnerships and individual Central Asian states” (145). By examining the stages of formation, implementation, and evaluation, the chapter clarifies the alignment security dynamics in the case of the SCO by showing the involved actors’ reasons for developing this relationship.

With its presentation of the many “distinctive variations of the phenomenon of *alignment*” (183), the book has successfully demonstrated the myriad forms of security alignment in the Asia-Pacific region. Even so, Wilkins acknowledges in chapter 8 that the book does not establish a “grand theory” of alignment (the overall explanation of which could have been defined more precisely). However, the book does exhibit the utility of the alignment concept. To further develop alignment theory for the purposes of analyzing security dynamics in Asia Pacific and elsewhere, such variables as joint allied inter-operability—explicated in the cases of the Japan-Australia relationship (49) and the APSC (111)—must be explicitly considered as forms of alignment. Whereas preexisting security concepts are still relevant for security analysis, the book enables us to realize the significance of rescutinizing such concepts and theories in the face of the changing security environment in the Asia Pacific.

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THE COSTS OF CONVERSATION: Obstacles to Peace Talks in Wartime. *Cornell Studies in Security Affairs.* By *Oriana Skylar Mastro*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2019. xiv, 197 pp. US\$39.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-3220-1.

Oriana Skylar Mastro’s *The Costs of Conversation: Obstacles to Peace Talks in Wartime* draws on Chinese, American, Soviet, Indian, and Vietnamese archival materials that have been newly declassified along with data that has never been used by scholars. She covers the wartime diplomacy of Asian conflicts during the Cold War, a framework “for understanding when and how states incorporate talking with the enemy into their war-fighting strategies” (6) and reinterpretation of previous scholarship that incorporates some new primary research. She treats current concerns within a broad historical and theoretical context, explores the depth and scope of presumed factors and constraints that influence states’ decisions about whether to talk to their enemies during wars, and underscores the complexity and abiding tensions inherent in the relationship between the open and the closed diplomatic posture.

Chapters of *The Costs of Conversation* examine a wide range of cases of “how states calculate the costs of conversation throughout a war” (126). Four

distinct cases of such war diplomacy are identified: Chinese decision-making during the Korean War and the China-India War of 1962, India's diplomatic decision-making during the aforementioned China-India War, and North Vietnamese diplomatic decisions during the Vietnam War. Mastro offers a convincing analysis of the strategic costs of conversation by studying these four organically correlated cases. She also investigates the theoretical and practical implications of such conversations for a war's duration and ultimate termination. From the point of view of international relations historiography, *The Costs of Conversation* is an outstanding monograph that combines macro analysis and micro arguments, and demonstrates an academic breakthrough.

Mastro seeks to provide a comprehensive theory for when leaders are willing to talk to each other during a conflict, and why they sometimes refuse. Mastro explores the framework to understand the dynamic of war diplomacy and offers a systematic portrait of the combination of factors that have driven countries to take interrelated postures and actions. She provides an excellent discussion of how decision makers must weigh factors such as "likelihood" and "strategic capability." As Mastro points out, likelihood means an "adversary will infer weakness in the form of reduced war aims, degraded ability to fight, or waning resolve from an open diplomatic posture," and strategic capability stands for "the ability of the enemy to respond to such an inference by escalating, intensifying, or prolonging the fighting" (126).

Unsurprisingly, the author is at her best when she deals with the factors that "influence states' decisions about talking to the enemy during wars and how future generations of policymakers can shape those factors for the sake of peace" (141). Why and how decision makers choose a diplomatic posture is the crux of her argument. Mastro also sheds new light on the role of changing beliefs to determine the strategy of diplomatic posture on the part of decision makers. How much of a role did domestic politics play? What domestic concerns or international factors were most influential in determining the costs of conversation (28–29)? Mastro highlights the interplay between the factors that she believes to be critical to the strategic costs of conversation. Her research and analysis of the origins, meanings, and implications of the strategic nature of diplomatic posture are persuasive. In her discussion about the costly conversation thesis, Mastro rightly points out that "when the strategic costs are low, states will choose an open diplomatic posture; when the costs are high, they will choose a closed diplomatic posture" (9).

What is striking in *The Costs of Conversation* are the implications for contemporary issues. The book brings us not only to an understanding of the costly conversation framework during the Cold War, but also to a realization of how equally important it is in the present times. Mastro correctly notes that "leaders fighting interstate wars have considered the strategic costs of conversation above all else when deciding on a diplomatic posture" (126). Most importantly, as she points out, the future generations of policy makers "should consider establishing openness to wartime talks as official standard

policy before conflict erupts” and “should reevaluate their tendency to rely primarily on coercion—whether through use of force, threats, or sanctions—to get an adversary to the negotiating table” (139–140).

Mastro’s research is undoubtedly challenging; a new perspective rarely comes, however, without questions. Although she stresses “additional research could evaluate the conditions under which mediation is effective at getting all belligerents to shift to open diplomatic postures” (132), there is little discussion in her book of the role of mediators. The declassified archives demonstrate the critical roles of India’s mediators in the Korean War and of the Six Colombo Conference powers in the 1962 War. She makes a convincing case that the role of mediators should be rethought.

Brilliant in its methodological approach and replete with inspirational analysis, *The Costs of Conversation* deserves praise for its extensive research using both primary and secondary sources. Mastro’s book contains detailed overviews of the general historical and political context, and her analytical framework and conclusions, which are argued succinctly and persuasively throughout, should be taken seriously by both scholars working in the field and by leaders. For those already familiar with the context, the book should prove a major contribution both to the research of countries’ diplomatic postures and to explorations of the global order. Though some of the book’s details may still be open to challenge, Mastro’s research is a useful addition to the growing literature on Cold War international history and international relations theory.

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DANGER, DEVELOPMENT AND LEGITIMACY IN EAST ASIAN MARITIME POLITICS: Securing the Seas, Securing the State. *Asia’s Transformations*, no. 51. By Christian Wirth. Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2018. xiv, 238 pp. (Map.) US\$149.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-138-09292-1.

Walking through a subway station in Seoul a number of years ago, I happened upon a miniature-scale diorama of the “beautiful Dokdo” islands laid out in the middle of the station concourse. At first glance, it seemed bizarre that a country would devote so much energy to imbuing its own citizens with a love for some disputed rocks, in this case the Dokdo/Takeshima islets. It was even stranger when one considers that South Korea *already controlled the rocks*; generally, the strategy for the state that controls disputed territory in a territorial dispute is to deny there is a dispute at all, but Dokdo was (at the time) front and centre in South Korea’s relationship with Japan.

How a dispute as seemingly minor as the Dokdo/Takeshima islets could have so much political salience is one of the questions ably answered by Christian Wirth’s well-written, exhaustively researched *Danger, Development,*

and Legitimacy in East Asian Maritime Politics. In a nutshell, Wirth argues that the maritime domain has acquired political salience, and has thus become a source of conflict and competition within East Asia in recent years, because China, South Korea, and Japan have come to see the ocean as “one of the final frontiers of development and progress” (5). As such, the three countries have moved more forcefully to delineate, develop, and take control of the sea, resulting in increased friction within East (and Southeast) Asia.

At times, the book seems to depart from maritime security as such and dwells at some length on the larger issues affecting the South Korea-China-Japan triangle of relationships: historical memory, anxieties about cooperation and competition, and the continuing viability of the developmental state. But perhaps this is the point: maritime security issues, or more specifically regional states’ focus on the maritime domain, are an outflow of the overall anxieties and goals of states in Northeast Asia. Too often work on maritime security in East Asia devolves into a dry recitation of the legal and economic issues surrounding various territorial disputes, and the progress (or lack thereof) made in resolving them. Less attention is paid to why the states care about them in the first place, and why they care about them at specific times. As Wirth points out, even the disputes that seemingly have the most emotional purchase, such as South Korea and Japan’s dispute over the Dokdo/Takeshima islets, are, in terms of political salience, of relatively recent origin.

After placing East Asian seas in historical and academic context, Wirth places the salience of maritime security issues in the context of South Korea, Japan, and China’s drive to respond to perceived dangers that—while in and from the maritime domain—affected and were influenced by larger issues in society, the nation, and civilization. In the chapter on securing society, Wirth argues that the developmental states of all three countries have led to social transformation and modernization, but have also, ultimately, run out of steam, which has led to concerns about stability and security. Turning to the ocean can be seen in all three countries as a way to support continued development, and thus improve the global competitiveness of East Asian societies. As a result, all three countries have re-conceptualized themselves as some permutation of ocean states or maritime powers.

In the chapter on securing the nation, Wirth argues that Japan, South Korea, and China all see themselves as victims of others’ oppression, and thus place particular emphasis on delineating and protecting their territory—framing the space inside as safe, and the space outside as dangerous. But because of the contentious nature of maritime delineations, the huge task associated with actually controlling large swathes of maritime territory (and with many borders left unresolved since the 1951 San Francisco Conference), Northeast Asian countries have had difficulty establishing permanent boundaries, thus leading to conflict and anxiety. Japan’s disputes with China and South Korea, South Korea’s dispute with North Korea, and China’s

disputes with a number of countries in the South China Sea have all escalated in recent years as countries have conflated security with overcoming past national humiliation while defending their maritime boundaries.

Finally, Wirth has a chapter on securing civilization through the maritime domain. It is a more expansive concept, but essentially speaks to the challenges faced by regional states in locating their states in or along imagined civilizational lines. In the case of Japan and South Korea, their turn toward the maritime domain (and more specifically the blue economy) is an attempt to assert that they are firmly on the side of the “West” rather than the “East.” China, by contrast, has no identity crisis in terms of which side of the civilizational line it falls. Instead, it has struggled with reconciling its historical status as its own civilization with its modern status as a Westphalian nation-state. China’s “historical” claims over the South China Sea, which are not in congruence with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), are the strongest examples of this tension.

What does all this mean for understanding Northeast Asian politics? Even if, or perhaps especially if, the maritime territories that are to be secured and exploited do not provide major economic benefits, Northeast Asian states will continue to find disputes in the maritime domain useful in legitimizing the state, securing society, and defining their place in the world.

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THE GREATER EAST ASIA CO-PROSPERITY SPHERE: When Total Empire Met Total War. *Studies of the Weatherhead East Asia Institute, Columbia University.* By **Jeremy A. Yellen.** Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2019. xi, 288 pp. (Tables, map, B&W photos.) US\$45.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-3554-7.

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (GEACPS), the mercurial vision Japan created for a new kind of regional order, was little more than war and oppression coated in Japan’s imperial dream. Yet, Jeremy Yellen’s study demonstrates that the political elite in Burma and the Philippines shrewdly employed Japan’s imagined Co-Prosperity as weapons to wield against not only their white masters but Japan itself. They thus transformed Japan’s imperial rhetoric into a broader process of decolonization. Yellen presents a different narrative of the demise of Japan’s empire (206) and makes an important contribution to World War II studies.

In part I, Yellen delineates how widely the intent and implementation of Co-Prosperity varied depending on the leaders, planners, and intellectuals involved. When the Japanese Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke announced the idea in 1940, he attempted to pursue the sphere-of-influence diplomacy vis-à-vis the Anglo-American powers (chapter 2). Once the Pacific War

began and Japan's military campaign ousted the European colonial powers in Southeast Asia, various brain trusts and research institutes embarked on a project to give an "altruistic" meaning to the sphere such as a new "moral order" and a new system of international law. Under the Tōjō administration, the nature of GEACPS shifted several times. For example, the sphere was crafted into an "organic, hierarchical bloc economy" which expedited exploitation of others by Japan as well as promised regional development (84–85, 88). By 1943, as the war situation became dire, Japan added to the concept of the Co-Prosperity Sphere "a more cooperative and liberal internationalist vision for the region's future" (102) to counter the Allied propaganda of the Atlantic Charter. Yellen interprets this shift as an opportunistic use of "liberal internationalist value in the service of empire." However, the Allied nations also did so in a similar manner (165–166).

In the confluence of these unprincipled isms, the Filipino and Burmese leaders saw a chance for their post-war ambitions. In part II of the book, Yellen argues that José P. Laurel, Ba Maw, and other leaders who opted to endorse the Co-Prosperity Sphere were not merely Japan's collaborators but patriots. They were able to leverage Japan's rhetoric for their liberation from all imperial rulers—be it Japan or Anglo-America. In chapter 6, Yellen shows how the "patriotic collaborators" in the Philippines and Burma actively used the Co-Prosperity Sphere's implementation for their state-building projects. Their endeavors included the creation of new governmental institutions; economic, diplomatic, and defense establishments; and the training of local leaders and future bureaucrats. During a period of what many Filipinos viewed as sham independence, the Laurel regime strove to create a foreign policy establishment and began training its diplomatic establishment (188, 202). It also created a central bank with the hope of taking control over the country's economy.

Yellen offers a symbolic picture of the collapse of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in Burma. In June 1945, following the British recapture of Rangoon, the Burma National Army paraded to celebrate their liberation from Japanese rule. Much to the chagrin of British onlookers, they did so in full Japanese-style military garb through the streets like the Japanese soldiers. Yellen argues that "local leaders took what they could from Japan, using the Co-Prosperity Sphere for anticolonial ends" (200). However, there was an ironic twist to their perfidy. Japan still benefited from their state building because "bequeathing independence was part and parcel of attempts to showcase Japanese benevolence" and a propagandist's dream (201).

In conclusion, Yellen touches on the ghosts of Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere, which continued to haunt Asia long after the war. As Yellen quotes Shinobu Seizaburō's argument, there were two Pacific Wars—one that was a war of empires and another being an anticolonial war fought by occupied territories in Southeast Asia (207). Although Japan lost both wars, the concept of Co-Prosperity did not die. After the war ended, the media in the

US lamented in response to the nationalistic surge across the South East that the slogan “Asia for the Asiatics” appeared to have won. Then, by the fall of 1949, the US State Department discussed the need to “get Japan back into the old Great East Asian Co-Prosperity sphere” to assist Japan’s industrial rehabilitation and make it a stable US buffer in the Cold War. Precisely because the notion of the Co-Prosperity Sphere was a “moving target” (208) and because the name sounded appealing (more so than the German slogan *Lebensraum*), it could be employed and manipulated by different people at different times even after World War II.

To attain a more comprehensive view of the Co-Prosperity Sphere, it is desirable to study and compare China and Manchukuo, the Dutch East Indies, and India on multiple levels of analysis. Precisely because the Co-Prosperity Sphere was overpromising, it remains difficult to discern which parts of it remained mere fantasies or became realities in what manners to whom. New works are emerging in Japan that investigate the convoluted relations the regional leaders had with Japan under the Co-Prosperity Sphere and their impact on Asian development after World War II. Studies on Wang Jingwei and other leaders in Japan-occupied territories in China are burgeoning to gauge their overall impact on the Chinese Civil War. There is also growing literature on the role of white Russian collaborators in Manchukuo as cultural intermediaries between Russia and Asia. The place of Islam in the Co-Prosperity Sphere is another area of growing interest. Takeshima Yoshinari’s latest work, *Dai TōA Kyōeiken no “Dokuritsu Biruma”* (“Independent Burma” in the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere; Tokyo: Minerva Shobō, 2020) is noteworthy in that it discusses both Japanese compromise and appeasement as well as atrocity and injustice in Burma. Yellen’s study is a welcome step toward a fuller understanding of GEACPS led by international scholars on a truly global basis.

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CHINA TOMORROW: Democracy or Dictatorship? By *Jean-Pierre Cabestan*. London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, 2019. vii, 209 pp. US\$32.00, paper; US\$30.00, ebook. ISBN 978-1-5381-2958-6.

Author Jean-Pierre Cabestan is a professor in the Department of Government and International Studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. His recent book, translated from French, lays out in detail why he believes enlightened dictatorship (not his term) will continue to govern modern China. His main thesis is that the Chinese leadership has developed a number of institutions and techniques to listen and consult with stakeholders in the economy and society (but with no obligation of heeding or accountability), while dealing decisively with dissidents and malcontents. As Xi Jinping has assumed

paramount leadership and diluted collective control of the Party, continued economic growth is needed to legitimize the system. Politics remains the theatre of action for the elite.

The book is a careful and structured look at an emerging super power, and especially the carefully constructed party-state as it emerges under Xi. Cabestan addresses the central question of whether China, undergoing massive changes at all levels, will move towards democracy. He examines the potential forces for change, and those striving to maintain the present stability. In the end he concludes that Beijing's authoritarianism has sufficient will, instruments, and techniques to maintain itself. Political order and economic growth remain the common values uniting China's rulers and most of the population.

Cabestan notes the various sources of the party-state, which can be characterized as paradigms, or explanatory models. Each has strengths and weaknesses, but may be necessary to draw a complete picture of the regime. Scholars have interpreted the PRC as a new Chinese empire, with echoes of Confucianism, Legalism, and a meritocratic bureaucracy. The Guomindang has also been a source of more liberal institutions, at least in the form of elections, law, and constitutional government. While the party of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen proclaimed single-party dictatorship as a transition to democracy during a period of political tutelage, the CCP intends to be a permanent ruler of the Chinese state, with few restrictions on its power.

Another source of the party-state is addressed by a third paradigm: Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, although the rhetoric and force of this ideology has declined in recent years, with the term "revolution" drained of its sense of historical inevitability. Xi's anti-corruption campaign has earlier precedents, and the Party's discretionary power has few, if any, legal restrictions. "Rule of Law" strengthens the state, not democracy, and "freedom" has expanded in the economic, not political, realm. Pragmatism overshadows ideology, and China certainly enjoys greater openness than during the Maoist period. Lessons of the Soviet collapse and the spectre of chaos after Tiananmen have guided Chinese rulers to stress economic progress, stability, and central control. Some dissent is tolerated, sometimes as a bellwether of public opinion, but is repressed when it becomes a threat to order.

A fourth paradigm sees China becoming a "normal state," with competing political parties, rule of law, and a market economy. This has been the hope of foreign policy makers, with an expectation that China might follow the path of Taiwan and South Korea. These two countries have been highly successful in economic development, provide recent models, are based on sinic tradition, and advanced under dictatorships. The author considers this scenario unlikely, although reforms of the judiciary and economy have made trade and investment more predictable. According to Cabestan, concessions made to China upon entry into the WTO (2001) have given the country an unfair advantage: "China has been using WTO rules to its advantage, invoking

the right to recourse in settlement matters that the institution offers while maintaining its own protectionism in all sectors where it wishes to support its ‘national champions’” (185).

Cabestan explores these interpretations, though not as paradigms, and examines how these past patterns of behaviour have contributed to the contemporary party-state. He concludes that while these past and present influences have had roles in the formation of modern China, they have not and will not determine its future. While not positing the Chinese state as *sui generis*, the author conveys a reluctant respect for the Party’s ability to consult and lead the masses. Public opinion is consulted, elections are controlled by the Party, and economic growth is maintained. Social media are given limited freedom, and dissidents are tolerated until their power becomes too broad. He urges the Euro-American democracies to remain skeptical of Chinese claims of democracy, and to recognize that “one would have to be blind not to notice that the CCP is at war against us, our values, and our ideals” (177).

He has implicitly defined a fifth paradigm of the Chinese party-state, a powerful human machine with growing strength to protect and expand its interests in Asia and elsewhere. The top leaders are autocrats without becoming aristocrats, although “princely” economic antics are not uncommon. Control of media, long-term plans to integrate Taiwan and Hong Kong, an appetite for economic growth fed by the need to satisfy expectations of the citizenry, oversight of religions, civil society, and social media, and continued modernization of military and public security organs are central components of the Chinese party-state. This unparalleled organization challenges the economic efficacy of liberalism and has brought life-affirming benefits to the largest population in history. Hopes for peaceful coexistence and mutually profitable trade should not delude Euro-Americans into expecting a democratic China to evolve. Rivalry, friction, and disputes will cloud external relations, and one hopes these will not spiral into military incidents. The book makes an important and unapologetic contribution to a more realistic appreciation of modern China.

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WHAT IS CHINA?: Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History. By *Ge Zhaoguang*; translated by *Michael Gibbs Hill*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2018. xv, 201 pp. US\$39.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-674-73714-3.

Ge Zhaoguang, author of *What is China?: Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, is a distinguished professor at Fudan University and a prolific author of books on topics related to the intellectual and religious history of China.

As the titular question suggests, Ge seeks to explicate: the nature of the Chinese polity, how it has changed over time, how it should be understood today, and more tangentially, how it might or should develop in the future. These are issues the author has been engaging with for some years and a number of topics addressed in this book were previously addressed in his book first published in China in 2011 (*Here in 'China' I Dwell Reconstructing Historical Discourses of China for Our Time*, trans. Jesse Field and Win Fang, Brill, 2017). However, the author's ideas have developed and occasionally somewhat shifted over time and readers of that earlier book should find this book rewarding as well.

This book primarily consists of an introduction that sets the concept of China in historical context and examines some contradictions inherent to it, plus six chapters, and a brief afterword. Chapter 1 considers the historical evolution and significance of the shift from a China-centred “All-under-Heaven” (*tianxia*) worldview to one that acknowledges an international order consisting of a China situated amongst “Myriad States” (*wanguo*). Chapter 2 addresses the borders and the shifting delineations of Chinese territory over time. Chapter 3 examines the historically contingent political relationship between the Chinese state and the non-Han peoples who have at different times and given shifting borders lived both within and without the direct administrative control of China's political centre. Chapter 4 proposes characteristic features and values of Chinese culture that have remained constant over time. Chapter 5 addresses how China, Korea, and Japan perceived each other in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Chapter 6 responds skeptically to both Samuel Huntington's “Clash of Civilizations” thesis, and to Chinese theorists who predict a coming remade China-centric world order based on a new “All-under-Heaven” premise.

Readers of *What is China?* will find more thought-provoking observations and insights than can be discussed in a short review. There is much to be learned from this critically engaged, liberal-minded, historically informed questioning from within China of Chinese national identity. In this reviewer's opinion some of the most notable arguments made in this book include: that China's “history shows us a path of state building that is completely different from what is found in early modern Europe” (63); that the development of a national identity centred around a Han ethical, historical, intellectual, and cultural tradition and one that included “the existence of borders and a consciousness of state sovereignty” (62) can be dated to the Song Dynasty (960–1279 CE); and that this early “trend toward a Han nation-state . . . was considerably complicated by the history of rule by foreign peoples under the Mongol Yuan dynasty and the Manchu Qing dynasty” (63).

Among the chief complexities that render the nature of China's polity so resistant to easy categorization is the Qing/Republic/People's Republic transition from what is generally considered an early modern multi-ethnic or multi-national empire to a modern nation-state, and the fact that this

occurred while essentially retaining Qing borders and territory. One need only consider the territorial consequences of the similar transitions of the Ottoman or the Austro-Hungarian empires to see how rare, if not unique, China's experience has been. Chapter 3 largely consists of a superb intellectual history that traces Chinese-language attempts to reconcile the inherent tension between the reconceiving of China as a modern nation-state while retaining the territory and the multi-national demographics of an empire. Among the ideas discussed here are: early Han nationalist calls to "drive out the barbarians"; Japanese justifications for greatly reducing the territory of an ethnically Han nation-state; the idea of "five nations under one republic"; and the idea of a Chinese nationality (*Zhonghua minzu*) that incorporates all peoples within China.

When a slim book tackles such an ambitious subject some lacuna and shortfalls are inevitable. One is that Ge's coverage of the intellectual debates regarding the relationship between ethnic nationalities and the Chinese nation ends in the 1940s. Nowhere in this book is any mention made of the Chinese Communist Party's original fierce denunciation of the *Zhonghua minzu* concept or its adoption of a system borrowed from Stalin's Soviet Union of a minority nationality (*shaoshu minzu*) system. Nor is there any mention of the recent scrapping of that earlier model for the *Zhonghua minzu* approach. The contemporary promotion of a "Chinese Dream" that promises rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (*Zhonghua minzu*), for example, simultaneously reflects the official rejuvenation of that concept.

All in all, there is much that recommends this book. Ge writes in clear and engaging prose, and the translator, Michael Gibbs, has done a terrific job rendering the original Chinese into readily accessible English. The author's familiarity with the relevant major works of Western and Japanese historical scholarship on China allows him, when appropriate, to frame his arguments in response to or in engagement with an internationally diverse set of propositions and insights. Most importantly, *What is China?* provides English-language readers with access to a thoughtful attempt to answer that question by a respected and influential Chinese scholar.

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CHINA'S ASIA: Triangular Dynamics since the Cold War. *Asia in World Politics.* By Lowell Dittmer. Lanham; Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. xii, 289 pp. US\$34.00, paper. ISBN 978-1-4422-3756-8.

This timely book by Lowell Dittmer, one of the most experienced Asia watchers, provides important insights into the dynamics shaping Asian international relations. The book's analytical framework is based on the author's pioneering research on the strategic triangle between the United

States, China, and the Soviet Union in the 1970s. Here, Dittmer uses his insights on triangular relations to make sense of Asian international relations.

Dittmer posits that international relations in Asia since the Cold War can be analyzed within a triangular framework encompassing the United States, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the rest of Asia (ROA). According to him, "triangularity" means that the three are all rational actors trying to "maximize national interests by cultivating the most advantageous feasible relations with the other two, and that each bilateral relationship is premised on relations with the third" (257).

This insightful approach is premised on the spectacular rise of China, which is emerging as a pre-eminent actor in regional international relations. The surge in Chinese pre-eminence, which makes "China's Asia" a distinct, though not inevitable, possibility according to Dittmer, lays the foundation of triangular dynamics that govern other countries' relations with China and the United States.

Dittmer argues that China's rise presents both opportunities and concerns for other countries in the region. In this context, enlisting a third party becomes an important hedging strategy for regional countries. As Dittmer writes, "This is a tactic we shall refer to hereafter as *triangulation*" (10). An example he refers to concerns the foreign policies of Rodrigo Duterte, who has pursued a hedging strategy that seeks to improve relations with Beijing, mainly for economic gains, without cancelling the US-Philippines mutual defense treaty.

According to Dittmer, a triangle is different from external balancing, "for the weaker state does not necessarily oppose and may even continue to need the stronger." Indeed, "the weaker state, state B, while fearing state A, may not fully trust the third party (state C), and may derive advantages from sustained relations with state A. The relationship between B and C may also vary from close embrace to very tenuous collaboration" (10). Dittmer's triangle model "presumes that China's relations with the rest of Asia may be best understood as a triangular relationship in which the United States is the third actor" (13).

This triangular model, in which each actor in its bilateral moves must take into account the interests and possible reactions of a third actor, very much captures today's international relations in Asia. As Dittmer claims, "[a]t present, the triangle can be broadly characterized as a romantic triangle in which the rest of Asia (ROA) enjoys better relations with both China and the United States than the latter have with each other." While the ROA may have diverse preferences, "all members, however, preferring both major powers to remain engaged in the region without winning or losing completely" (258).

In contrast, "[t]he Sino-US relationship can be characterized not as an opposition as much as a rivalry between the two in which both are

competing with a mix of hard and soft power for leadership of the ROA” (258). Therefore, the rivalry between them is “in part bilateral and in part triangular.”

The triangular model of the book is a good empirical fit with today’s international relations of Asia. The general dynamics depicted by the model can accurately explain a broad pattern of behaviour among Asian countries in the context of China’s rise. Regional countries, including US treaty allies, prefer good relations with both. China’s economic power and US military might are both valued by these countries, creating an impetus for the triangular model.

It is thus the rise of China that enables this situation. China’s economic might has turned it into the largest trading partner of almost all countries in the region. As such, few have opted for the balancing model, which should see them allying closer with the United States against China. Therefore, the triangular model is really about the power shift currently under way in the Asia Pacific and the waning of American primacy in the region.

The model also makes broader contributions to international relations theory by presenting an alternative depiction of state behaviour in the context of this power shift. Structural realism thus sees balancing as the law of anarchic international politics. However, China’s rise has resulted in much more complex behaviours by other states in the region. Rather than rushing toward the United States, they actually try to maintain good relations with both.

The first chapter of the book lays out the conceptual framework for the triangular model. Chapter 2 examines Sino-US relations and the contest for regional primacy. Chapter 3 concerns the “great” strategic triangle involving China, the United States, and Russia. Chapter 4 studies Sino-Japanese relations from a triangular perspective. Chapter 5 tackles the triangular model in the context of China’s relations with Taiwan and the two Koreas. Chapter 6 applies the triangular model to China’s relations with ASEAN countries. Chapter 7 addresses China’s relations with India and the emerging role of the United States in that relationship. Finally, chapter 8 deals with China’s relations with Australia, a treaty ally of the United States. Chapter 9 offers a conclusion that draws important insights from the empirical cases in the book and restates the key arguments of the triangle model.

In conclusion, the triangle model and impressive empirical breath of this book constitute important and very timely contributions to the study of Chinese foreign policy, Asian international politics, and international relations theory. It is a highly recommended read for those who research on these topics or teach related courses at different university levels.

ILLIBERAL CHINA: The Ideological Challenge of the People's Republic of China. *China in Transformation*. By Daniel F. Vukovich. New York: Palgrave Macmillan [an imprint of Springer Nature], 2019. xv, 250 pp. US\$99.99, cloth. ISBN 978-981-13-0540-5.

Daniel Vukovich's *Illiberal China* is no staid or cautious work; it is a purposively provocative and unabashedly harsh critique. Though multiple scholars, fields of study, institutions, and ideas fall in its sights, the volume's main antagonists are liberalism and its neo-liberal degradation. This is not to say that the work is unworthy of serious consideration; to the contrary, Vukovich's criticisms should be grappled with by all who wish to better understand China and its role in the modern world.

A basic thrust of the book is that political freedom is meaningless without economic empowerment, and that real democracy is not found in electoral procedures but in humane economic outcomes. From this foundation, Vukovich argues that the People's Republic of China's (PRC) illiberalism is not uniformly objectionable. To the extent that the PRC exhibits beneficial attributes of illiberalism—such as a state uncaptured by money/capital/interest groups, and a commitment to the people's livelihood—its illiberalism should be praised and indeed deepened. Relatedly, rather than criticizing the Chinese party-state for failing to live up to liberal democratic ideals or moving toward political-economic convergence with the West, we should look to the Chinese party-state for potential solutions to the social ills that neo-liberalism has created. Doing so entails “tak[ing] China seriously” (ix) as a viable alternative rather than viewing it as an abnormal or deficient system that will be legitimate only if and when it sheds its illiberalism and mirrors the liberal/neo-liberal West.

The book begins with an overview of Vukovich's argument, emphasizing as well liberalism's growth through slavery and colonialism (despite its hypocritical self-depiction as civilized and tolerant), and the Mao era's focus on social relations as the source of “what it means to be alive [and] human” (8). The second chapter examines China's illiberal “new left” thinkers, who defend China's “revolutionary socialist past as meaningful and not ... merely propaganda,” and voice concern over social and systemic inequality and exploitation (44). This chapter also highlights the positive aspects of maligned Communist Party of China (CCP) leader Bo Xilai and his illiberal “Chongqing experiment,” including increased spending on public housing, requiring cadres to work and live with peasants, removing advertising from the municipal satellite network, and allowing rural *hukou*-holders to re-register as urban residents. Chapter 3 lays out Mao's critique of liberalism's rejection of ideological struggle and embrace of “unprincipled peace” (97), emphasizing that this is what “revisionism” or “rightism” signified from 1949–1976. In the post-Mao period, Vukovich argues, it is precisely this “revisionist” Liu-Deng line that has prevailed, ushering in an era of

de-politicization, commodification, and inequality. In chapter 4, Vukovich critiques the 2014 “Occupy” movement in Hong Kong for exhibiting the misguided beliefs that liberal democracy will solve Hong Kong’s problems, and that Hong Kong is destined to converge with the West. According to Vukovich, democratic activists will never succeed in forcing the “actually sovereign mainland” (130) to agree to their demands, adding that these demands are unreasonable even by liberal democratic standards: “direct civic nomination without parties or other obstacles does not exist in any major city or country of the world” (146). Chapter 5 presents a contrasting case of successful protest that Vukovich believes is both realistic and meaningful in its demands and results: farmer activism over unjust land requisitions in the mainland Chinese village of Wukan. The final chapter reiterates the book’s overall argument and ends with a call for a “progressive” illiberalism that features an active state engaged in planning and capital controls and is focused on the livelihood of the people—an achievement that, in Vukovich’s view, the PRC may better lay claim to than any other state in history (217).

The book’s core claims and critiques are significant and worthy of engagement. At the same time, the text has a number of shortcomings. First, the volume does not always read as a coherent whole. Parts of chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 were published elsewhere, and the book reads as separate pieces that were later woven together. Second, the prose is repetitive and unnecessarily convoluted, such that it can be a somewhat arduous read at times. Third, the book contains numerous unfair, inaccurate, and hyperbolic characterizations. Most notably, Vukovich portrays “political science” and “area studies” as hopelessly dominated by modernization theory and “‘straight’ self-professedly liberal theory” (13), including most scholarly work on political contention in China. He provides little evidence to back these claims, save for a small handful of pieces (including popular media articles and a blog). In reality, the truly vast literature on contentious politics in China generally exhibits the complex and non-pejorative understanding of the PRC that Vukovich claims is almost entirely absent in contemporary China studies. Would any serious China scholar disagree, for example, with Vukovich’s statement that “it would be a mistake to simply map the Chinese [new left] positions onto modular Western ones” (48)? Relatedly, Vukovich makes a number of questionable claims, including that mainland Chinese “are as generally free as ... Americans and Hong Kongers” (25). Finally, although he emphasizes complexity and nuance, Vukovich repeatedly uses imprecise language, such as “China is” or “China is not...” Singled out for explicit criticism are Verso Press, Amnesty International, Jonathan Fenby, Geremie Barme, Anthony Garnaut, Sebastian Veg, Liu Xiaobo, Jeffrey Wasserstrom, and Denise Ho—though only Liu’s work is included in the bibliography.

Nonetheless, the book makes an important argument that warrants thoughtful engagement. Scholars, journalists, and politicians should avoid teleological assumptions of convergence and accept that China almost

certainly will never come to look like the West. We must guard against making arguments based on ideology, or what we would like to be the case or transpire. The Chinese political system is complex and cannot be defined or assessed in simple, dichotomous categories. The Maoist period was not uniformly harmful, and cannot be dismissed as sheer “madness or stupidity” (63). The post-Mao period has lost some of the significant advances of the Mao era, especially in terms of gender neutrality/equality, empowerment of the poor, and a belief that equality is fundamental to a good society. Liberalism and especially neo-liberalism are flawed and in many respects detrimental to humankind. And the Chinese political system may provide some examples of how an illiberal regime can promote the wellbeing of regular people.

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A CENTURY OF CHANGE IN A CHINESE VILLAGE: The Crisis of the Countryside. By *Lin Juren and Xie Yuxi*. Edited by *Linda Grove*. Translated by *Linda Grove, Li Dan, and Marcella Sigueria Cassiano*. Lanham; Boulder; New York; London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018. xliii, 269 pp. (Tables, graphs, maps, B&W photos.) US\$85.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5381-1235-9.

Lengshuigou is a village in the North China Plain near the city of Jinan, the provincial capital of Shandong Province. It was studied by Japanese researchers in the early 1940s as part of the *kanko chosa* project on Chinese customary law, the findings of which have been widely used by such scholars as Philip Huang and Prasenjit Duara. Starting in the 1980s, Chinese scholars conducted follow-up studies utilizing a rich variety of archival, survey research, and ethnographic data. The present book was published in Chinese in 2013 by a team of sociologists from Shandong University and the Shandong Academy of Social Sciences who benefited from close proximity to and deep familiarity with the village. This translation was ably edited by Linda Grove, who writes a useful, perceptive preface.

Because of this long history of research, the book presents a comprehensive overview of a century of rural social change. There have of course been an enormous number of village studies published over the last three decades in English as well as Chinese. Those familiar with this literature will find little to surprise them about the major dimensions of political, economic, social, and cultural change in rural China. Most books, however, focus on one or another aspect of this change over a relatively limited timespan. No other single book combines all of these dimensions in a study that encompasses almost an entire century.

Although the general story told here will be familiar, the specific characteristics of Lengshuigou will provide food for thought about how

contingencies of history and specificities of place give particular shape to general processes of change. Located near an important city, Lengshuigou has always been a relatively prosperous village, with relatively few class divisions. During the land reform of 1950 only 32 households were classified as landlords and 8 as rich peasants out of 400 to 500 households, and the landlords were not seen as “despotic.” More than 100 households were classified as “middle peasant” and most of the rest were “poor peasants,” with a minority labelled as “hired hands.” But even the poor peasants seem to have led fairly stable lives. The village has a long tradition of education, which resulted in village intellectuals whose writings produced valuable material for this book. In the 1930s and 1940s there was no active communist insurgency in the village.

The book is not a single history, but a kind of fractal history. Each chapter recounts the history of a particular dimension of social change: village politics and elites; lineage and family relationships; social structure and social life; cultural tradition and folk customs; social relationships and network structures; economic structure and development; transformation and future of the village.

The underlying sociological framework seems to be structural-functional theory: in “traditional” societies there is a particular equilibrium between family relationships and certain kinds of political and economic relationships, all under the canopy of a “Confucian” moral order that legitimizes this equilibrium and stresses harmony; but then with modernity, the equilibrium is disturbed and there is a search for new forms of equilibrium. An alternative theory might be forms of conflict theory—more popular now in the West—which would emphasize the clash of vested political and economic interests. But the absence of severe class conflict in this relatively prosperous village perhaps makes the conflict theory approach less relevant.

A major theme is that the social, political, and cultural integration of the traditional village has been replaced by a modern differentiation. Up until the communist “liberation,” village political and social life was integrated through its lineages, the predominance of which was justified through Confucian norms about the importance of extended family. Unlike many south China communities, Lengshuigou was a multi-lineage village, with ten lineages, each of which occupied a certain area, dominated by the large Li and Yang lineages. Although during the Republic, the Guomindang government imposed its own administrative structure on the village, the lineages retained a major role in the structure of power. In the Maoist era, the lineages were largely superseded by the structures of production teams, production brigades, and people’s communes, although the weakened lineages did not lose all of their influence. In the Reform era, the lineages regained more of their influence, but now, under the increasing mobility afforded by the market economy, the influence has waned. The old extended

families have been mostly replaced by nuclear families. Lineage loyalties compete with friendships formed under the regime of production teams. New forms of affiliation are created as the younger generation finds work in the cities. In short, many forms of solidarity now compete with one another in an increasingly individuated society.

Similar differentiations take place in the structure of local elites. There are now different competing elites: political, economic, technical, intellectual. As for cultural habits, “villagers—especially the young—enjoy a lifestyle that is almost identical to their urban peers” (168).

As the authors portray it, the traditional village economy (contrary to the portrait of other scholarship that would stress the importance of marketing communities) was largely self-sufficient, based on subsistence farming. By the 2000s, however, that has changed radically. Instead of small-scale farming, the economy is dominated by a big dairy farm and an industrial park. Most of the young commute to jobs in nearby Jinan. Many village residents are now city people who move there because of its cheaper housing.

And in an epilogue, the authors tell us that the village will disappear by 2018 because its land is being requisitioned for a huge Jinan transit hub and the villagers will be moved into a high density apartment complex. The authors write that Lengshuigou’s residents are “deeply concerned about its future.” I would have liked to have seen more vivid examples of the contestations and conflict that these deep concerns have been taking—a deeper portrait of the jagged contradictions of neo-liberal capitalist modernity. Perhaps the book could have benefited from more of a Marxist analysis as well as a structural-functionalist one.

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CHINA AND THE BARBARIANS: Resisting the Western World Order.

By Hendrik Schulte Nordholt. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press [distributed for Leiden University Press], 2018. ix, 361 pp. (Maps, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$49.50, cloth. ISBN 978-90-8728-278-3.

How should we understand the rise of China and the challenges it faces? In *China and the Barbarians*, Nordholt attempts to explain several phenomena: how the history of China shapes the way Chinese policy makers and intellectuals see the world, how the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) utilizes nationalism to shape public sentiment and its policies, and whether the current authoritarian mode of governing can continue. Drawing on the philosopher Tu Wei-ming, who sees China as an ideological battleground between socialism, Confucianism, and liberalism, Nordholt suggests that instead of maintaining the current repressive system of governance or following the Western liberal democratic order, China is most likely to follow

the “third way,” which will draw on Confucianism and be more receptive to the people’s opinions. Acknowledging that this is a bold claim, Nordholt nonetheless thinks that this path would allow China to achieve the “World of Great Harmony” that the *Book of Rites* described over two thousand years ago.

The first three chapters provide an overview of the history of “China,” from the time of the First Emperor of Qin (221–210 BCE) to the end of the twentieth century. Nordholt’s focus is on the sinocentric differentiation between “civilized mandarins” and “barbarians,” the narrative of the “century of humiliation,” and the rise of nationalism. Chapters 4 and 5 look at how the leaders of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the post-Mao era utilized the law and the economy to consolidate Party power and assert its legitimacy. Chapter 6 assesses the conditions for liberalism and democracy in contemporary China. In particular, it draws on oral interviews with eight public intellectuals holding different points of view, providing insights into the possible futures of China.

Chapter 7 focuses on how the narrative of the century of humiliation continues to affect attitudes against foreign countries. It draws attention to China’s territorial disputes with neighbouring countries and its tense relations with Japan. Chapter 8 turns to the foreign policies of the Mao and Deng eras. It emphasizes how CCP leaders have always stressed the importance of sovereignty. Chapter 9 demonstrates how the Party uses foreign policy to stir nationalist sentiment, drawing on cases such as the South China Sea dispute and the rise of China as an economic superpower. Chapter 10 looks at the Party’s attempt to fight institutional corruption. Reforms at central and local levels are attributed more to the Party’s fear of losing power than any genuine pursuit of democracy. Chapters 11 and 12 return to the notion of the “third way.” Nordholt asserts that continuing “in the current direction increases the chance of a violent explosion, while the sudden introduction of a parliamentary democracy will most likely lead to chaos” (281). Hence, the “third way” will allow a humanistic approach without the Party forfeiting its dominance.

This book largely covers familiar ground in Chinese history and contemporary politics for keen China observers. It demonstrates how history shapes the mindset behind contemporary policies, such as the classical idea of China being the pinnacle of civilization (versus the neighbouring “barbarians” who were often “tributaries” of China), or the worry/skepticism that foreign countries are still trying to force China into submission as in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By utilizing the narrative of the “century of humiliation” (1839–1949), the CCP can buttress its legitimacy by suggesting that with the establishment of the PRC, it brought foreign influences on China to an end, and that it would not let foreign powers oppress the Chinese people again.

Nordholt’s highlighting of history’s role in shaping PRC foreign policy is understandable, given this monograph’s publication date (originally

published in Dutch in 2015 and revised in 2018). What is surprising is that little is said about Hong Kong, Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang, four contentious issues that the PRC currently faces. In recent years, anti-PRC sentiment has been on the rise in Hong Kong and Taiwan, notably as reflected in the Umbrella Movement and Sunflower Movement of 2014, while tensions between the government and both the Tibetans and the Uyghurs have long been a problem for the CCP. This book would have benefitted from having a discussion of the local socio-political development of these places, which Nordholt covers briefly without going into much detail, specifically to interrogate how the PRC handles its foreign relations with other countries regarding these places. Moreover, it begs the question of why the PRC would have the incentive to follow the “third way” when it has been taking a strong stance regarding these places.

One final point: In a conversation with his Chinese friends about the number of victims of the Cultural Revolution, Nordholt notes that his friends, while highly educated, found it difficult to “confront objective information,” and that their discomfort is a reflection that “centuries of emphasis on collective thinking have disabled their minds of seeing things in an alternative way” (286). I wonder if an alternative reading might be true: Given the power of censorship in mainland China (which Nordholt addresses in the book), people might be afraid to voice their true opinions out of fear that they would accidentally cross the “red line” and hence get into trouble with the authorities. They dread the prospect of getting reported for saying the “wrong” thing, and hence their reluctance to share their thoughts on sensitive topics. It could also simply be that they know people, perhaps even their family members, who were involved in that traumatic period. The “third way” will have to first address this issue of self-censorship and repair this aspect of torn social fabric before it becomes a feasible model of governing.

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THE BATTLE FOR FORTUNE: State-led Development, Personhood, and Power among Tibetans in China. *Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University.* By Charlene Makley. Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 2018. xviii, 324 pp. (Tables, maps, B&W photos, diagrams.) US\$95.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-1964-6.

The Battle for Fortune is a well-written book based on author Charlene Makley’s long-term fieldwork in a Tibetan area not far from Xining, the capital city of Qinghai Province. Ethnographically grounded and theoretically sophisticated, the book’s discussion centres on 2008, an eventful year that witnessed China’s hosting of the Olympic Games, the horrific Sichuan earthquake, and a highly contested period of ethnic strife, especially between

Han Chinese and Tibetans. Makley stayed in Rebgong, a well-known Tibetan town with deep religious roots and cultural influence in the region. She writes with an articulate style full of theoretical rumination and ethnographical nuance. Her ethnography is thus a valuable contribution to the study of contemporary Tibetan lives, especially in a region that is difficult for Western scholars to access.

It is clear to readers that Makley takes theoretical inspiration from Mikhail Bakhtin's emphasis on discourse as dialogic and multivocal social processes in everyday life. She points out that "in Bakhtin's understanding of linguistic practice, 'voice' is decidedly not the disembodied speech of a singular self. Instead, it is always manifested as a historically loaded figure or chronotope" (74). Makley sets out to write "a dialogic ethnography" that "is not about the ethnographer crafting narratives of harmonious 'dialogues' with ethnic others and thereby claiming an easy intimacy on equal grounds. Dialogic ethnography pushes one instead to grapple with the everyday realities of unequal access to communication and voice" (10). She has tried to accomplish this goal by conducting multi-site fieldwork, collaborating with local interlocutors, and situating her writing in multiple contexts.

As the title of book suggests, the livelihoods of local Tibetans in a broader historical situation are inevitably influenced by the Open the West campaign, a state-led development plan that has been in place since the beginning of the twenty-first century, and which thus overlapped with most of the author's time in the field. Makley depicts a complex picture of local Tibetans' reactions and resistances to this grand development initiative. She does an excellent job exposing the rich layers of local Tibetan everyday life in different aspects by not simplistically presenting the people as a homogenous and harmonious group.

Readers can see the power struggle between the medium of village deities, elders, and party secretaries at ground level, where religious and secular networks of power collide with each other (69–73). More interestingly, while the role of religious figures has historically been kept under a watchful eye by the Chinese state, Makley documents an unexpected twist, in which the village deity medium has recently been transformed into a master of "intangible culture heritage," reflecting the changed discourse of religious-cultural practice in contemporary China (250). Tibetans are also divided in response to the government-sponsored resettlement plan that aims to move them down from villages in the high mountains. In the case of Langmo, a village of only twenty-eight households, eight of them choose to move down to a new settlement while the rest choose to stay. Why did the entire village not act collectively? According to the author, the first eight households consisted mainly of families with salaried employment, and the resultant difference of social position influenced their decision-making (166). In addition, Makley documents conflicts between different villages. According to the author, the struggle to access grasslands "led to a series of brutal fights" (179). Conflict

also erupted between two neighbouring villages when one tried to build a road and a bridge to access more pasturelands and timber, and the other saw this action as an encroachment on its territorial rights (194). The three villages where Makley conducted fieldwork, indeed, each adopted different responses to the state:

In contrast to Jima village's class and generational factionalism, and to Kharnak leaders' neo-socialist communalism, Langmo elders ultimately prioritized Buddhist counterdevelopment efforts, grounded in particular claims to past and present lama-lay leader alliances. (162)

In depicting the full complexity of Tibetan village life, I think the author might need to take a closer look at her use of the term "elders." In many instances, the term refers to villagers in powerful positions without making any further differentiation, yet in reality they are not a singular group, and are subject to challenges from others. In Makley's depiction of three-day lay harvest festival called "Lural" in Jima village, for instance, the authority of elders was undermined when they were evicted by the medium of the village deity, even though the village party secretary was also a member of the elder group (69–72). In the case of village resettlement, decision-making by elders appears to have been a complex process with internal division and conflict. Elders is thus not a homogenous category.

In addition to Tibetan villages, the Chinese state is another subject of analysis throughout the book. In the spirit of "dialogic ethnography," Makley claims:

We consider states not as uniquely unitary and rational administrative orders encompassing discrete local realms, but as, in practice, contested claims to particular forms of supreme authority or sovereignty that require constant embodiment and invocation by situated people. (71)

While the author has an admirably clear conceptualization of the state, the reality is much messier. As she acknowledges, when analyzing the Chinese state in the wake of ethnic unrest, she "can only claim a very partial knowledge of what was in many ways a highly opaque situation" (40). Given the difficulty of conducting ethnographic studies in the Tibetan area, several factors clearly have impeded Makley's ability to fully achieve her goals. In terms of multivocality, the author is conscious that she needed to spend more time talking to women, and that the villager voices presented are thus mainly from Tibetan men. Her fieldwork site is a multi-ethnic area, with Muslims and Mongols present, yet their voices are rarely discussed or even mentioned, leaving a binary between Tibetan and Han Chinese populations. These considerations, if embraced, might produce an even more refined dialogic ethnography.

THE POLITICS OF THE CORE LEADER IN CHINA: Culture, Institution, Legitimacy, and Power. By *Xuezhi Guo*. Cambridge, UK; New York; Port Melbourne, Australia; New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xiii, 423 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$120.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-108-48049-9.

Xuezhi Guo's new book is an exceptionally valuable addition to the literature on elite politics in China. It presents readers with an insightful analysis of political leadership by way of an eclectic approach that represents the best of theoretically informed area studies research. Guo's study is engaging, dispassionate, and convincing.

The book adopts, in Guo's words, an "alternative conceptual paradigm" for studying elite politics in China. In justifying and distinguishing this approach, he cautions the student of Chinese elite politics against outdated functional accounts where China's modern political system is treated as some modified version of USSR-style communist rule, peppered with a few "Chinese characteristics." At the same time, Guo explicitly distances himself from a deterministic culturalist approach by acknowledging the extent to which China's post-Mao authority structures have moved toward "rationality." Rather, Guo simply embraces Chinese political theory and traditional philosophy as sources relevant to understanding the Chinese phenomenon of the "core" leader, his primary unit of analysis. So qualified, Guo's analysis draws on cultural history—inclusive of China's deeply rooted Confucian, Legalist, and imperial foundations—to demonstrate the compatibility of the "core" leader practice within the structure of the post-1949 Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Beyond a commonplace strongman, the "core" leader in China's party-state system rules virtually as dynastic leaders once did: personally infallible, as the mediator of ideology and culture, and as the supreme arbiter of what is true and false.

Guo presents evidence that there remains, even in the post-Mao era, a desire among China's ruling elite for "core" leadership, a desire imbued with cultural legitimacy. Guo emphasizes that "core" leader status is not subject to appointment but must be earned by the leader, the result of a legendary career replete with a record of demonstrable political skills, "profound" *guanxi* networks, personal charisma, and "revolutionary political vision." Where Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping exhibited its features, CCP successors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao did not. His analysis explains both the post-Deng rise of a collective leadership model as well as the more recent resumption of a "core" leader structure under the current Chinese president, Xi Jinping.

Logically structured, the first half of the book analyzes the philosophical, historical, and ideological dimensions of an enduring tendency toward "core" leadership in China. These initial chapters include a masterful discussion of traditional political thought and moral order in imperial China that exhibited flexibility over rigidity from era to era. This part of the book also revisits theoretical debates on elite politics in China and examines the cycle

of strongman politics and collective leadership, the problem of succession, and the centrality of traditional moral legitimacy in political governance.

In Guo's treatment of the Mandate of Heaven, for example, he articulates the moral and ritual roles a Chinese ruler must adopt as part of the "normative rules of the game." Rooted as they are in the legacies of Confucian benevolence and Legalist bureaucracy, "core" leaders past and present ideally cultivate voluntary compliance from the highest-ranking officials to the population at large, a system where "all stars twinkle around the moon." By then comparing Xi Jinping's "China Dream" ideology against Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory—and the less comprehensive ideological formulations advanced during the Jiang and Hu eras—Guo efficiently explains the consolidation of "Xi Jinping Thought" and its all-important recognition by the CCP in 2016.

In the second half of the book, Guo's discussion relies even more heavily on experiences from the Mao, Deng, and post-Deng periods as he outlines the "politics of the core leader" (the book's title) within the context of China's elite politics generally. Admitting research limitations due to the opaque realities of upper-echelon party dynamics, Guo nevertheless dives into a detailed analysis of CCP factionalism, special-interest cliques, and identity groups. Further contextualizing the intense political environment within which "core" leaders must operate, he ultimately employs three case studies to illustrate the role of informal politics, personal ties, and alliances in shaping and constraining elite behaviour.

Building his argument, Guo suggests that when China lacks a "core" leader, the party-state's collective leadership becomes less disciplined and prone to greater nepotism and corruption. Emerging from such a period of weakened leadership and factional sclerosis, Xi Jinping's own rise to power in the 2000s evolved in response. Within the context of the book's preceding content, Guo's recounting of Xi's rise to power in the study's latter pages rewards the reader with a skilled and nuanced academic version of what the popular media treats as banal political biography. Readers eager to better understand Xi's ascendance and current dominance in China's system will benefit from Guo's analytical treatment of the subject through the cultural lens of China's "core" leader politics.

With the removal of a term limit, President Xi, currently in his mid-60s, has the opportunity to be China's autocratic ruler for life, to rule for many decades (similar to both Mao and Deng). Given China's indisputable global importance, such an extended leadership scenario suggests there may be no single leader more important to study in the world today than Xi Jinping. Understanding the cultural and institutional contexts of Xi's leadership, and the elite politics that conditions his leadership, seems indispensable to developing a broad command of global politics generally. Therefore, beyond the book's academic readership, the foreign policy establishment in the world's democracies would also be wise to pick up this book, read it, study

it, and mark it up. The benefits of doing so may not end with current policy considerations but could extend to the next generation of global leaders who will govern alongside China's "core" leader when today's more transitory leaders have passed from the scene. Let's hope Xuezhi Guo's meticulous and thought-provoking work remains a key reference for years to come.

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LEGAL LESSONS: Popularizing Laws in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1989. *Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 411.* By Jennifer Altehenger. Cambridge, MA; London, UK: Harvard University Asia Center; Harvard University Press [distributor], 2018. xviii, 388 pp. (Illustrations.) US\$49.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-674-98385-4.

How did the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) mobilize the masses and social engineer its population through the dissemination of legal knowledge? How did the CCP balance the needs of empowering people with legal "weapons" and the plans of monopolizing legal interpretations in a population with diverse opinions? Addressing all these questions, Jennifer Altehenger's *Legal Lessons: Popularizing Laws in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1989* explores China's unprecedented campaign of mass legal education and its influences on Chinese politics, culture, and society. Drawing on abundant archival sources in Beijing, Shanghai, and Berlin, Altehenger argues that the dissemination of legal knowledge was essential to the CCP's governance from 1949 to 1989.

Primarily since its founding, the young CCP regime started some of the most extensive campaigns of mass legal education in the world. The campaigns were closely related to demands for creating new citizens in a "new society," educating the masses with correct consciousness, and delivering socialist promises in legal reforms (6–16). To break with the "Old China," party leaders proclaimed that laws were the will of the people (*renmin*) and aimed to punish the non-people—the enemies of the people (27–42). Nevertheless, the party failed to provide sufficient clarification about a mass campaign to study laws, and few of the propagandists were ready to assume their duties of dissemination work (49–55).

In chapter 2, Altehenger traces the mechanics and structures of law publishing during the early 1950s. Due to the lack of clear ideological guidance, the government developed a number of measures to improve propaganda materials. These measures included producing *Illustrated Regulations* and *Illustrated Marriage Law*, mobilizing local cadres to deliver and sell law-related publications, expanding state publishers to outperform private competitors, and placing the circulation of law information under state supervision (62–75).

Chapters 3 and 4 examine how mass legal education was carried out in Beijing and Shanghai. The 1953 Marriage Law campaign declared a divide between the lawful “New Democratic legal system” and unlawful “feudal marriage system.” Using simplified language and painted images, party officials made sense of the “basic spirit” that bounded together law, morality, and people’s consciousness (96–111). Yet the top-down knowledge transmission encountered a dilemma of hierarchical learning as questions raised by propaganda workers, publishers, and local residents all displayed significant challenges regarding the “correct” meaning of the laws (92–96, 119–124). In the end, as Altehenger argues, these two national events left a lasting influence as party officials continued to use many of the techniques developed during this time.

Chapter 5 examines how the CCP adopted the methods used in the 1950s, while also developing a new way to transform Chinese society through laws in the 1970s. The new discourses de-emphasized class struggle and indicated that all members of the populace should help the state gain hegemony and “realize order across the country” (186–187). To achieve stability and unity, the late 1970s law propaganda aimed to smash the “lawlessness” during the past “ten years of turmoil” (177–183), linked legal knowledge with crime prevention (189–197), and asserted that the CCP leadership could assure order (204–211). Chapter 6 further explores how the first five-year plan for the “popularization of common legal knowledge” (1986–1990) turned legal learning into an institutionalized and bureaucratized technique of CCP governance. Facing an increase in commercial media, the CCP strengthened the control of dissemination and responded to the diversification with the quantity of law propaganda and the teaching of “legal consciousness” (216–220), the circulation of law narratives through district gazetteers (227–230), and the construction of new media and propaganda networks (230–243).

Drawing upon abundant archival records, internal reports, newspapers, and posters, Altehenger offers a fresh look into the CCP’s campaigns of disseminating legal knowledge. Her vivid accounts not only demonstrate the significant role of mass legal education in China’s socialist governance, but also disclose the complex dynamics between party leaders, propaganda officials, state and private publishers, and cultural workers in various campaigns. However, while Altehenger exhaustively researches the dynamic evolution of mass legal education and convincingly places it in the broad historical context, some points raised by her analysis also deserve further exploration.

First, Altehenger vigorously demonstrates varied modes of (re-) production and transmission of legal knowledge, and echoes the scholarship that perceives the ritual communication of laws as essential to socialist and late-socialist regimes. Yet she does not provide sufficient discussion on an equally important concept that appears across the book: mass legal education. If mass legal education under the CCP, as Altehenger persuasively

presents, had bounded together law, morality, and people's consciousness, what constructed the ways in which people perceived moral principles, social norms, and political agenda in their not-so-law-related discussions and practices? Did the practice of ordinary people and their debates over their customs, rituals, and communal affairs influence the ways propaganda officials and cultural workers re-define the "correct" and "erroneous" explanations of "laws"? If so, how did the bottom-up perspectives play off the campaigns of mass legal education, and how did their interactions with law propaganda reshape the complex process of China's dissemination of legal knowledge?

Second, if the core subject of this study includes the mass line of legal education and the popular understandings of the laws, how did the campaigns influence the life of the "masses" (*qunzhong*)? How did ordinary people strategize their actions between different levels of bureaucracy and the various sorts of local actors throughout these campaigns? What are their stories and perspectives about the dissemination and construction of abstract legal concepts and their associated interpretations?

The third point has to do with the broader historiographical context of the narratives about "lawlessness." As Altehenger demonstrates, the increased discourses about lawlessness represented a reaction towards the past turmoil during the Cultural Revolution and the emerging socio-economic tensions during the 1980s. Yet such discursive constructions had already appeared in previous periods and continuously influenced Chinese society, politics, and legal culture. Even during the Cultural Revolution, when laws were "largely absent from official discourses," as Altehenger describes, narratives about crime and justice were not uncommon and were an intriguing part of China's legal-political culture (for recent studies on the role of law during the Cultural Revolution, see Daniel Leese and Puck Engman eds., *Victims, Perpetrators, and the Role of Law in Maoist China: A Case-Study Approach*, Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018). During the 1980s, the campaigns of "strike hard" (*yanda*) also created a discursive divide between exception and regularity, following the lines of classifying different sorts of citizens. All of these questions require lengthy studies in the future. Altehenger's analysis provides an excellent starting point for scholarly inquiry into these issues.

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF MAOIST CHINA: Conflict and Change, 1949–1976. By *Felix Wemheuer*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xv, 331 pp. (Tables, maps, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$29.99, paper. ISBN 978-1-107-56550-0

Historically, the basic premise of the dictatorship of the proletariat is that in order to overcome the unfreedoms and hierarchy of capitalism, society must pass through a new, transitional period of unfreedom and hierarchy (socialism) during which classes and the state are themselves overcome. The core paradox of the transitional period is the practical working out of how its own unfreedoms point toward freedom. Felix Wemheuer's *A Social History of Maoist China* is an adroit and engaging account of the lived experience of this paradox during the 27 years of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule under Mao Zedong. Wemheuer's goal is to "maintain a reasonable balance" between the People's Republic of China's (PRC) achievements in "modernization and social reform" without neglecting the human toll of campaigns like the Great Leap Forward or the "political terror" of the Socialist Education Campaign and the Cultural Revolution (14). On its own terms, the book is a welcome success. Wemheuer combines the work of a wide array of Western and Chinese historians with official collections of CCP documents, so-called garbage materials and ephemera, and a host of interviews conducted between 2001 and 2016 with "intellectuals from Beijing, peasants in Henan Province, and Cultural Revolution-era rebels in Shandong and Shanxi" (6). The result is a detailed history that operates in each chapter at micro, local, and national scales.

The book is divided into an introduction and eight substantive chapters, which follow a traditional periodization of the Mao era. Space does not allow for a summation of each chapter, but a general outline can be provided. In chapter 1, Wemheuer identifies "the transition from a semi-colonial, underdeveloped country to state socialism" as the "fundamental dynamic" of Maoist China (17). This was largely achieved in China's cities by 1957, where state-owned and collective enterprises were successfully embedded into a planned economy, private accumulation of wealth through labour exploitation and property ownership was banned, and labour was de-commodified through the establishment of the "iron rice bowl," jobs in state-owned industries from which the worker could not be fired and were guaranteed social benefits for life. Wemheuer argues, however, that the countryside was, at best, "semi-socialist" during the Mao era (18). There, attempts to eradicate private property during the Great Leap Forward (1958–1961) resulted in a famine that claimed tens of millions of lives. Afterward, the state redistributed private plots to the peasantry and allowed mixed ownership of the People's Communes. Although private land use by peasants remained largely unquestioned even during the Cultural Revolution, being officially labeled as rural in the CCP's household registration system also

blocked access to the social benefits awarded urban workers. Urban versus rural household registration thus serves as a key state-imposed classification in Wemheuer's analysis. Beyond this, Wemheuer identifies rank (the status of urban residents based on geography; membership in political, public, or industrial work units; and, for workers, participation in state-owned or collective enterprises in heavy or light industry), class status (a combination of political labels, occupation, and family background), gender (the CCP's cis-gendered binary distinction between men and women), and ethnicity as the key categories for an intersectional understanding of Chinese society under Mao.

Successive chapters provide an overview of the period and campaigns under discussion as well as the historiographic debates that surround them. Wemheuer deepens our knowledge of these campaigns by considering them from the perspective of each category identified above. While the chapter on New Democracy (1949–1952) explains Mao's basic concept and provides fascinating statistics on land reform, it also pays careful attention to how class labels were determined and assigned by rural cadres, the genesis and impact of the 1950 Marriage Law promising gender equality and freedom to marry and divorce, and the contemporaneous experience of building the CCP's multi-ethnic United Front in Tibet and Xinjiang. Overlapping identities come into the latter process in interesting ways when Wemheuer notes that many People's Liberation Army recruits for development projects in Tibet were Tibetan women due to their "low status and the refusal of many Tibetan men to work for the Han" (78). Wemheuer's account of the Great Leap famine is detailed and convincing. The organization of peasants into communes in 1958 left them with no means for self-sufficiency. Once communes were established, declining agricultural productivity, over-reporting of agricultural yields, the determination of the CCP's central leadership to focus on feeding China's cities, and an increase in the urban population between 1957 and 1960 of "over 30 million people" combined to create a famine whose death toll will likely never be known with certainty (136). This account is made richer by the inclusion of women's roles in urban communes and concurrent uprisings in Tibet. Similarly, alongside the high court politicking of the late Cultural Revolution (1969–1976), Wemheuer analyzes the urban-rural divide and female sent-down youths' experience of rural patriarchy (252–254).

The limits of this book will depend on the reader's attitude toward the use of intersectionality, which plays an entirely descriptive role. Wemheuer provides a Venn diagram of state-assigned categories that (correctly) identifies rural, non-Han, and women with bad class labels, as those likely to face the most layers of oppression in Mao-era China (26). A powerful descriptor, this type of presentation also tends toward a static, rather than relational, understanding of these categories. Further, these categories are themselves given by the state rather than abstracted from Wemheuer's analysis. On the one hand, the state origins of these categories give them incredible

importance in the lives of the people in this book. On the other hand, the analysis is restricted to understanding Chinese society using the CCP's own tools. This is clearest with the concept of class. Wemheuer uses the term to describe the costs and benefits attached to labels such as worker or landlord rather than as abstractions for understanding the new relations of production after 1949. Yet, the power of this book lies in its lucid description of corners of Chinese society rarely brought together in the same volume.

Readable, arresting, and broad in scope, *A Social History of Maoist China* will be as valuable an addition to undergraduate syllabi as to the bookshelves of PRC historians.

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NICHOLAS R. ZELLER

VIOLENCE AND ORDER ON THE CHENGDU PLAIN: The Story of a Secret Brotherhood in Rural China, 1939–1949. By *Di Wang*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018. xiv, 260 pp. (Maps, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$29.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-5036-0530-5.

Using a bachelor's thesis completed in 1946 by Shen Baoyuan from the Department of Sociology at Yenching University as the main source, Di Wang has written a microhistory of the secret society the Paoge (the Gowned Brothers) in rural Sichuan province in the 1940s. Wang has successfully revealed two voices in his research: one of the protagonists, a local Paoge leader Lei Mingyuan and his family, and another of the author of the thesis, Shen Baoyuan. Through these two voices, Wang not only shows the social and cultural history of the Paoge in rural China in the 1940s, but also examines the academic and intellectual environment that influenced the creation of the thesis, enabling readers to gain insight into China's broad political and intellectual development at the time. Wang further argues that "rural activists in Republican-era China made outstanding contributions to our current understanding of rural China" (14). This book not only contributes to our understanding of secret societies in modern Chinese society, but also sheds new light on the local control and social patterns in modern China. This work should be on the reading list of anyone interested in modern China.

The book has twelve chapters that are divided into three parts. Part 1 introduces the location of the research and a brief history of the Paoge. Part 2 further examines the Paoge organization, including its spiritual beliefs, its mode of communication (especially the using of secret codes), and the way they recruited and regulated members. Part 3 focuses on a local Paoge leader Lei Mingyuan and his family. Part 4 shows Paoge's end under the Chinese Communist regime, and how the Chinese Paoge fits into the "social bandits" theory developed by E.J. Hobsbawm.

Wang has made an impressive contribution to our understanding of Chinese secret societies, specifically the Paoge, or Gelaohui (Sworn Brotherhood Society), an organization that emerged in the seventeenth century and lasted until around 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) controlled the country. Existing scholarship on secret societies has mainly focused on the Heaven and Earth Society and popular religions in the late imperial time. This book focuses on a different but equally influential organization: the Paoge. For those who have done research on the Paoge, much of the information on the organization provided in this book is already known. The book's contribution lies in the way it allows readers to view Paoge life on a micro level, which is difficult due to the lack of sources for such marginalized groups. Additionally, Wang's research focuses on the 1940s, an important transitional period in modern Chinese history. It showcases Chinese local society under the Republican government and the conditions that served as foundations for the system established later by the Chinese Communist government.

The book enriches our understanding of local control and social patterns in modern China, especially the important role played by secret societies. Wang's findings add to existing studies and demonstrate that the Republican government of China had limited control over local society. He shows that the Paoge leaders in rural Sichuan played a crucial part in preserving social stability in local society, and even local government officials had to rely on them to deal with local affairs. Wang concludes that rural China in the 1940s was still mostly "cloaked in the past several centuries" despite various modernization movements initiated by the Republican government (32). Wang further explains that those modernization movements created opportunities for the Paoge organization to grow in early twentieth-century China (45).

The most fascinating part of the book is the chapter on Lei Mingyuan and his family. It offers a rare glimpse inside the life of a rural Paoge leader. By analyzing the Lei family's economic, social, and familial situations, Wang provides a window through which to understand the broad Chinese rural society. Wang reveals that the CCP's social systematization could not be applied to every part of China, and points out that the Communist government differed from previous regimes in that the former had wide support from local and rural places. By combining such support with brute force, the CCP forced the Paoge to vanish from Chinese society.

Wang adopts the methodology of new cultural history by utilizing various nonarchival sources such as literature. He questions the reliability of archives, as all archives are created and preserved with a purpose and therefore may be biased. Wang's focus seems to be on government archives, but what about other types, such as missionary archives? In fact, Western missionaries left quite a lot of records about secret societies in China. Wang could have

researched other aspects of the Paoge had he utilized more missionary sources. It might also have been helpful if the author had analyzed the reliability of literary works as sources in historical research.

Overall, this book is highly readable and is a welcome addition to the historiography of modern China. One minor issue is that Wang's translation of the title of Shen's thesis is not consistent. The Chinese title is, *Yige nongcun shetuan jiating*. Wang translates this as "A Family of the Rural Social Organization" on page 10 but as "A Family of the Rural Organization" on page 14. Based on the context, it seems the former translation should be used consistently throughout the book.

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HONGYAN XIANG

JAPAN. By Jeff Kingston. *Cambridge; Medford, MA: Polity, 2018. 212 pp. (Map.) US\$17.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-5095-2545-4.*

As the 2020 Summer Olympics approach, the world's attention will turn toward the host nation, Japan. And thus, books like Jeff Kingston's extremely readable *Japan*—published along with *Syria* as the first two installments of the new "Polity Histories" series from Polity Books—will be useful as people from the rest of the world try to catch up on recent developments in that country.

Kingston's book aims to "zoom in on the key forces, developments, and events that have characterized Japan's post-WWII trajectory" (5). The book is a short six chapters which give an overview of an impressive array of topics important to understanding contemporary Japan. After an introductory chapter called "Bouncing Back," chapter 2, "Japan Inc." dives into an overview of the structure of Japan's postwar political economy. This chapter highlights the tremendous successes of that political economy, as well as trade friction with the United States, a variety of well-publicized political corruption scandals, and environmental disasters including the poisoning of Minanata Bay with mercury.

Chapter 3, "American Alliance," provides a brief history of the US-Japan Alliance, beginning with the occupation and continuing on through the Abe Doctrine. This chapter does a particularly nice job highlighting the way that the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty helped sow the seeds for Japan's current territorial disputes with Russia, South Korea, China, and Taiwan (59–64). Chapter 4, "Lost Decades and Disasters," highlights an upsetting array of disasters that postwar Japan has faced, including the 1990 bursting of the asset bubble, the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas attack on the Tokyo Subway, the 1995 Kobe earthquake, and the 2011 "triple disaster" of earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown in the Tōhoku region of Japan. This chapter also discusses a variety of challenges that are less dramatic but still extremely

important for contemporary Japan, including problems associated with government regulation of and far right backlash against immigration as well as poverty and “precaritization” (96–104).

The volume’s strongest section is chapter 5, “Dissent,” which discusses an impressive array of dissent in Japan, including the protests against the treaty formalizing the US-Japan security alliance, the Vietnam War, the radicalization and violent infighting of far-left student groups in the 1970s, protests against the building of Narita Airport, as well as the post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movement. This chapter begins with Kingston’s observation that “[t]o understand Japan it is essential to peer behind the façade of harmony and prevailing stereotypes of a conformist citizenry prone to groupthink and inclined to be overly deferential to authority” (116), and he does just that in this nicely-written chapter.

The book concludes with chapter 6, “Abe’s Japan,” which gives an overview of the various ways in which the administration under current Prime Minister Shinzō Abe has changed Japan, including his economic and immigration policies, his active approach to diplomacy with Southeast Asia and Taiwan, his close ties with the Trump Administration in the United States, and his approach to issues like press freedom, constitutional revision, and Japan’s official response to World War II issues such as the issue of “comfort women” and the Rape of Nanking.

As I note above, Kingston introduces chapter 5 on dissent by arguing that we must peer beyond the façade of harmony to truly understand Japan, and yet early in this book Kingston makes some statements which run the risk of reinforcing that façade, including quoting the axiom that one often sees in popular writing in Japan that “the nail that sticks up gets hammered” (2), and then going on to note the various ways in which Japanese society “hammers” difference.

Furthermore, chapter 2 on Japan Inc. perhaps overstates both the dominance and static nature of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in Japan. Kingston notes that “voters briefly ‘threw the bums out’ in 1993 and 2009, but the LDP has re-established its dominance despite scandals and flawed politics because there does not appear to be any viable opposition that gives them an alternative” (42). Indeed, this book does not discuss how the opposition parties changed the electoral rules after briefly taking power in 1993, a change of considerable consequence. The results helped a new opposition party to form, the Democratic Party of Japan, which would eventually defeat the LDP in a landslide victory in 2009; it also contributed to major reform in the LDP’s party organization (Ellis S. Krauss, Ellis and Robert Pekkanen, *The Rise and Fall of Japan’s LDP: Political Party Organizations as Historical Institutions*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2011).

Despite these relatively minor concerns, this is a book on contemporary Japan that is written in a lively, accessible way that addresses the most important

political and social challenges postwar Japan has faced. I recommend this book for people looking for an overview of the political and social history of, and contemporary issues in, postwar Japan.

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MICHAEL STRAUZ

EMPIRE OF HOPE: The Sentimental Politics of Japanese Decline. By **David Leheny.** *Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2018. xiii, 230 pp. (B&W photos.) US\$39.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-2907-2.*

David Leheny is the most innovative constructivist scholar writing on Japan today. In *Empire of Hope* he introduces a theory of “national emotion” in Japanese political life and transnational relations, guiding the reader through a series of vignettes taken from film, theatre, literature, and public diplomacy that capture a national effort to find hope and legitimacy at a time of declining relative power. His theory of national emotion draws on new work in neuropsychology and the humanities in which emotion is taken not as an independent variable but instead as the object of deliberate construction and political calculation, shaped both by leaders and by broader national narratives in politics and popular culture beyond leaders’ control. The theory, while not strictly testable as a matter of social science, nevertheless adds colour, nuance, and new explanations that would not be apparent in more traditional rational choice approaches to state behaviour.

Leheny offers six vignettes or “sentimental episodes” that focus on Japan’s internal politics and relations with Southeast Asia and the United States since the 1980s. The first vignette centres on the 2000 *Ehime Maru* incident in which a US Navy nuclear submarine struck and sank a Japanese high school fishing boat off Hawai’i killing nine on board. The US Navy’s ability to understand the emotional narrative in Japan and respond promptly with high level apologies and a major operation to salvage the sunken ship stood in stark contrast to the emotionally tone-deaf response of the US Army after two young girls were killed by mechanized vehicles in South Korea two years later. The US-Japan alliance emerged from the *Ehime Maru* incident stronger, while the US-ROK alliance struggled for years to recover. Though Leheny does not touch on the Korea case, the contrast demonstrates the valuable policy lessons his study of national emotion might contain.

The second vignette tells the story of the conjoined Vietnamese twins Nguyen Viet and Nguyen Duc, known as “Beto-chan” and “Doku-chan” in Japan where they were celebrated after their successful separation in a Tokyo hospital in 1986. Seen as victims of Agent Orange and thus American airpower, the twins evoked a deeper sense of shared victimhood in Japan, the only target of American nuclear bombing, and a nation divided over the war in Indochina. Interestingly, it was hawkish Prime Minister Nakasone

Yasuhiro who harnessed the story of the twins to demonstrate the solidarity of post-colonial Asia with Japan as he rode to a massive electoral victory at the polls that year. While primarily a story of common humanity, the contest to control the sub-narrative about Japan's historic relations with the region is revealing.

The third vignette examines the Foreign Ministry's effort to operationalize Japanese soft power. While government PR exercises are always open to ridicule, this chapter is perhaps too hasty in dismissing Japanese soft power as a "Harvard-validated *deus ex machina*" (116) solution to deteriorating hard power. In fact, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs found in a well-designed survey of Asian soft power in 2008 that Japan stood second only to the United States in the region—a result confirmed by the even more elaborate Samsung Economic Research Institute's National Brand Dual Octagon survey in 2010. While it remains to be seen exactly how Japan can harness this soft power as a matter of statecraft, there is clearly something more significant at play than this chapter reveals, with skeptical scenes of Ministry of Foreign Affairs diplomats congratulating themselves on coming up with the "Cool Japan" brand.

The fourth vignette introduces Caramel Box, a popular contemporary theater group that presents the stories of individuals facing loneliness and despair over personal choices they made in the past, and the salvation that comes from making new connections to society at large—a metaphor for Japanese relations with Southeast Asia and the United States explored in the earlier chapters. The final vignette tells the poignant story of Kamaishi, a gritty steel town that found new hope for the future after coming together to recover from the death and destruction of the 2011 tsunami.

Leheny is an elegant writer, providing gripping images from the drift pattern of oranges floating above the sunken *Ehime Maru* to the traumatic split-second decisions of citizens in Kamaishi whether to rush to their children's schools or return home to their unattended elderly parents as the tsunami warnings sound. In a study of national emotion, the book engages the reader's own humanity to make its point. It is impossible not to agree with the closing observation that Japan's own successful search for solutions and hope in the face of natural calamities and demographic crisis is itself the best source of leadership in a world where Japan's challenges put it "a few pages ahead" (194) of China, Europe, or the United States.

What *Empire of Hope* misses, like most constructivist studies, is consideration of structural and geopolitical variables. The hope for Japanese leadership is evident not only in cultural narratives within Japan, but there is also a growing recognition in Washington, Canberra, and Delhi that Asia is moving towards a contested multipolarity in which the leading powers must act to prevent coercive Chinese hegemony. As the United States has lost its focus, Japan has stepped in to lead on regional trade and diplomacy, championing the trans-Pacific Partnership after the Trump administration

withdrew, and pulling Washington back to the region with the proposal for a joint Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy. In virtually every poll taken in the region, Japan emerges as the most trusted country by a wide margin (except in China and South Korea). In an examination of the search for hope at a time of declining relative national power, it is worth remembering that there is power in the hope that the rest of the region has for Japan.

That said, *Empire of Hope* should be read above all by those international relations scholars who focus primarily on power. It will challenge their assumptions and enrich their understanding of Japan in ways few other studies have in recent years.

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NATIONAL IDENTITY AND GREAT-POWER STATUS IN RUSSIA AND JAPAN: Non-Western Challengers to the Liberal International Order. Politics in Asia Series. By Tadashi Anno. *London; New York: Routledge [an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business], 2019. xi, 200 pp. (Tables, figures.) US\$150.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-38-29048-8.*

This book is a revised version of a PhD dissertation, submitted, as author Tadashi Anno himself admits, a while ago. In the introduction, however, Anno seeks to locate the emergence of Russia and Japan as great powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries within one of the most important ongoing debates in international relations (IR)—namely, the rise of non-Western powers such as China and India, and the implications of this rise for the future of the liberal international order.

The book has five main chapters in which the author sets the theoretical framework (chapter 2), outlines the emergence and crisis of the liberal order in the first half of the twentieth century (chapter 3), and explores the rise of Russia and Japan (chapters 4 and 5, respectively). In the concluding chapter, Anno examines the implications of his findings for the contemporary debate regarding the challenges facing the international liberal order.

The theoretical framework outlined in detail in chapter 2 draws on the constructivist school of IR theory. It posits that the international order is defined not only by power relations, but also by a social structure of norms and values, the “cognitive-normative framework” (32). This framework regulates and standardizes states’ behaviour but also locates them within a value-based hierarchy, which is not necessarily accepted by all of the states. As Anno argues, the non-Western states, located low in this hierarchy, have sought to create their national identities in such a way that they seek to enhance their status and self-esteem within the existing normative structure. This framework differs from other constructivist works in its position that state identity is not a pure social construct, but one that is also shaped by

“history and present conditions” (25). Anno also emphasizes that national interests are influenced by the strength and credibility of the international order and the state’s position in the order (33).

Chapter 3 outlines the rise of Western international order, its “cognitive-normative framework” defined by notions of civilization, progress, and liberalism, and the crisis that befell it in the aftermath of World War I. Here Anno argues that one important aspect of this crisis was the demise of the legitimacy of the existing normative framework. As a result, elites in non-Western countries sought to reshape their national identities in a way that enabled them to establish their superiority over the so-called West.

Chapters 4 and 5 are the main empirical chapters of this book. Each chapter traces the rise of Russia and Japan vis-à-vis Eurocentric international society and their respective challenges to the international order in the first half of the twentieth century as brought about by the crisis described in chapter 3. The two chapters provide a condensed and somewhat simplified view of the process of modernization in the two countries, their pursuit of status and self-esteem in their interactions with the West, and their revolts against the international order. In the case of Russia, Anno starts with the Byzantine Empire and ends with Stalinism. In the chapter on Japan he depicts the rise of Japan from a pre-modern state on the periphery of the Sinocentric order to the declaration of the Great Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere in late 1930s. In line with the theoretical framework developed in chapter 2, Anno argues that the elites in both countries sought to create their respective national identities based on status and self-esteem. This process was shaped by both their “corporate identities,” made of historical experiences, and their interactions with the “cognitive normative framework” of the international liberal order. Both chapters conclude by examining the ideologies of Bolshevism and Japanism as Russia and Japan’s respective responses to the cognitive crisis of the international order.

The analysis of the process of socialization is rather thin, and the transformations brought by it are depicted as almost mechanical or simply resultant of a strategy chosen by the elites. It is unclear why pre-modern historical experience—interactions with the Byzantine Empire and the Mongols in the case of Russia, and with the Sinocentric order in the case of Japan—is seen as the dominant but also static lens through which the elites view their nation and the international order. No doubt, identities are built of pre-existing experiences, but the latter also undergo reinterpretation and reconstruction in the process of socialization. As an example, consider the recent interpretations of the concept “Mongolian yoke” and the whole set of relations between Kievan Rus’ and the Mongols that emerged in Russian historiography.

It is only in the conclusion that the author returns to the question of the present rise of non-Western states and the future of the international order. Anno argues that while it is undergoing a crisis, the international

liberal order is hardly on the brink of collapse, as no cognitive framework to replace liberalism has yet appeared.

The main merit of this book lies in its comparison of Russia and Japan. A number of interesting insights can be drawn, especially the comparison between the particularistic ideologies of the two countries. However, the emphasis on certain historical experience as a static and defining frame of identity, and the breadth of the periods examined, make the comparison somewhat unfulfilling. The identities of Russia and Japan, as well as their interactions with the international system, have been examined in numerous works, many of which have deployed the IR constructivist framework. Some of these works are cited in Anno's book, but unfortunately the arguments made there are not engaged.

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ALEXANDER BUKH

LIMINALITY OF THE JAPANESE EMPIRE: Border Crossings from Okinawa to Colonial Taiwan. Perspectives on the Global Past. By Hiroko Matsuda. *Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. xi, 205 pp. (Tables, graphs, maps, B&W photos.) US\$68.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8248-6756-0.*

Over the past few years, an increasing number of scholars have addressed the particular histories of the southern portion of Japan's empire, giving greater attention to regions that have been overshadowed, in both history and historiography, by Korea and Manchuria. Hiroko Matsuda's extensively researched and informative study of Okinawan immigrants to Taiwan is a welcome addition to this growing body of scholarship because it centers our attention upon the autonomy of a hitherto marginalized population. Placing Okinawans at the physical and discursive border between Japan's Inner and Outer Territories, and drawing upon Victor Turner's idea of liminality as an in-between position, Matsuda argues, "Liminality created the space for the common people of Okinawa to exercise their agency and enabled them to make their careers in the Japanese colonial empire" (151). She also follows the work of Jun Uchida and Emer O'Dwyer in highlighting the reality that Japanese settlers often acted in their own interests rather than those of the imperial state.

In building her argument, she first situates Okinawans within the broader Japanese population, particularly among those who left Japan. Although representing a small percentage of the entire nation, Okinawans at times constituted a remarkably large proportion of Japanese abroad, from roughly a quarter in the Philippines to an astonishing 45 percent in Argentina, which allowed them to forge a strong ethnic consciousness. Not so in Taiwan, where Okinawans were a small percentage and were spread across a range of professions, factors that mitigated against ethnic cohesion. We learn in

chapter 2 that the centre for Okinawan migration to Taiwan was the Yaeyama Islands, a region closer to Taiwan than to the rest of Okinawa Prefecture. Pushed out of this peripheral zone by the economic dominance of mainland Japanese, Yaeyama islanders were also drawn by an image of Taiwan as a more modern, civilized place than their homeland. Chapter 3 explores how Okinawans attempted to become more Japanese in Taiwan. Looked down upon at home, in the colony their relative familiarity with Japanese language and customs allowed them to advance their socio-economic position.

It is in chapter 4, which explores the educational opportunities open to Okinawans in Taiwan, and chapter 5, which concentrates on how these migrants navigated the Japanese-Okinawan borderlands, that Matsuda reveals the complexities of Okinawan liminality. In her fascinating examination of the substantial numbers of Okinawan settlers who pursued medical training in Taiwan, she shows the contradictions between Yaeyama as a part of advanced Japan that was, developmentally, behind the urban centres in Taiwan where Okinawans moved to; and between the initially less-educated Okinawans, who eventually surpassed the Taiwanese because of their greater access to education. Then she details the identity struggles of these migrants. Some chafed at being placed below other Japanese when they were sent to school with Taiwanese students, and yet recalled no particular difficulties in their interactions with those classmates. Most eschewed an Okinawan heritage in their quest to assimilate, and yet during the war years, Matsuda tells us, one settler named Kabira Chōshin, grandson of an aide to the last monarch of the Ryukyu Kingdom, led a movement to promote Okinawan culture, with support from a Japanese scholar, Sudō Riichi, and other participants in Japan's folklore studies movement of the 1930s and 1940s. This relatively minor episode served as a bridge to the postwar period, when Okinawan identity resurfaced due to a confluence of factors. First was the repatriation policy formulated under US influence, which divided Okinawans from other Japanese and kept a higher percentage of the former in Taiwan longer than the latter, even though many Yaeyama islanders managed to clandestinely repatriate themselves. Second was the condition of living in Okinawa after repatriation, where the experiences of settlement in Taiwan marked the repatriates as different from those who had not left and had endured the Battle of Okinawa. Although the subsequent focus on that horrific episode caused the erasure of colonial migration from the collective memory of Okinawans, Matsuda indicates that many repatriates (*hikiagesha*) emerged as leaders in the reconstruction of their homeland. Once again, their liminal status worked to their advantage.

Throughout the book, Matsuda provides incredibly rich details on the lives of Okinawans, gleaned from a wealth of memoirs, oral histories, other documentary evidence, and her own interviews with former residents of Taiwan. She demonstrates well the benefits of an ethnographic approach for recovering long-ignored histories. However, the vibrancy and clarity with

which she depicts the individual Okinawan immigrants, and that overall community, stands in contrast to the Japanese and Taiwanese, who appear as relatively flat, shadowy collectives. This unevenness challenges her otherwise compelling use of liminality, because it is not as clear between where, or who, the Okinawans were situated. Moreover, Matsuda uses the memories of Okinawan settlers to present a highly positive image of interactions between them and the urban Taiwanese, but one wonders if the historic relationships were indeed that smooth and unproblematic. The absence of Taiwanese voices is particularly noticeable in this regard.

Nevertheless, this book should be read by scholars of Japan's empire, of modern Japanese immigration, and certainly by anyone with an interest in Okinawan history. It brings that under-studied history to light and, in the process, it serves to accentuate the fissures within the modern Japanese nation-state. Far from a seamless political entity, or a collectivity of "100-million hearts beating as one," in the phrase of wartime propaganda, modern Japan emerges from the pages of Matsuda's book as a somewhat fragile construction during its imperial heyday, and it is equally clear that some of those divisions remain, in the incomplete and contested memories of that past.

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NATION-EMPIRE: Ideology and Rural Youth Mobilization in Japan and Its Colonies. Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University. By Sayaka Chatani. *Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018. xiv, 347 pp. (Maps, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$55.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-3075-7.*

Sayaka Chatani opens her book with a question: Why did youth in Korea and Taiwan, both colonies in the Japanese empire, volunteer for military service during the Asia-Pacific War? It might not surprise most readers that a certain section of elite-educated youth in the colonial cities, who looked to Japan as the pinnacle of modernity in Asia, might seek benefit from participating in the Japanese war effort; but what motivated large numbers of young people in the countryside to do the same? Chatani focuses on youth group organizations (*seinendan*) in Japan, Taiwan, and Korea to answer this seemingly simple problem.

The book is divided into three parts, the "so-called" inner territories of Okinawa and northeast Japan, the outer territories of Korean and Taiwan, and a short third part about consequences. Part 1 builds upon earlier work on *seinendan*, exploring the types of ideologies that the state tried to promote among youth groups, in particular nationalism and agrarianism, and how youth groups organized themselves for the betterment of local

communities in general. What shines in this part is the local and microhistory case studies—what individuals wanted to gain from joining seinendan and how they appropriated activities for their own purposes. Chatani introduces the phrase “social mobility complex,” a concept woven throughout her book, referring to youth who not only used seinendan for career mobility, but also to have the emotional sense of themselves as upwardly mobile, modern youth. I like Chatani’s decision to use the word “complex” because it emphasizes the tension inherent to changing ideological messages about rural youth throughout Japan and the empire. Rural youth are at once seen as uneducated and unmodern compared to their urban counterparts, but at the same time, more hardy, closer to a “pure” Japanese identity, and harder workers. And in marginal, inner territories, youth had to face stereotypes about being from northeastern Japan or Okinawa.

Part 2, about “outer territories” of Taiwan and Korea, continues to focus on the seinendan to support several claims. First, because the seinendan were created in Japan and acted as a prism focusing the light of Japanese state and military ideology—but actually operated differently throughout Japan and in the colonies—Chatani demonstrates that nation and empire building occurred simultaneously. Thus, encouraging patriotism and identifying with the “Yamato race” was not an ideological project confined to Japan, but, unlike colonialism by Western powers, informed the assimilation activities in the colonies as well. Youth activities that emphasized self-discipline, Japanese language acquisition, martial training, and the like, gave young people in the colonies a sense of belonging to the select young people who often deemed it a privilege to conduct training in special youth corps events. Some truly felt that they belonged to an empire that was leading the good fight against Western countries. Moreover, each place had its own unique challenges—ethnic conflict was a big issue in Taiwan but not in Korea, while generational tensions were more pronounced in Korea.

Part 3 is short and introduces topics that would require further study elsewhere, namely, memory. Indeed, any one of the three parts could be its own book, which I intend as a compliment not a critique. This third section nicely rounds out the rest of the study by recounting some the author’s interviews with former seinendan members—a generation that will, sadly, no longer be alive within the next few years; one would hope that some scholar somewhere will follow up with other interviews of this generation. Through diaries, which, Chatani notes, were often essays intended for newsletter publication, we know what young people from different countries thought about each other during international seinendan conferences; for example, that Koreans and Taiwanese believed that youth groups in the colonies were purer than those in Japan, where, some felt, groups had been coopted by politicians.

Nation-Empire contributes to a number of fields and should be widely read outside of East Asian history. First, this is a much-needed study of what

was occurring outside of colonial metropolises. Second, as the author notes, studying *seinendan* brings with it an analysis of youth as a category; and scholars of childhood, its own field of study, would benefit from this book when doing comparative projects. Third, while there are other works that address the local-global dynamic as it applies to colonialism in East Asia and elsewhere, Chatani raises the bar by adding several layers to both the local and “global” without slighting one over the other. Sometimes, however, the large swaths of otherwise interesting details lead to conclusions that might not be so surprising; for example, that the closer historians look, the more complex or “messier” things appear. Ideology and emotion are concepts invoked throughout the book but are not fully explored. Some might accuse me of playing “terminology police,” but since the subtitle of the book has “ideology” in it, and both ideology and the history of emotions are fields onto themselves with complex interdisciplinary insights from psychology, critical theory, and philosophy, it would have been nice to see some comment about how the author’s approach changes the way we think about those concepts. This is only a minor complaint and is more properly a critique of the field and how graduate students are trained. It does not take away from the landmark nature of Chatani’s contribution.

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UNEVEN MOMENTS: Reflections on Japan’s Modern History. *Asia Perspectives: History, Society, and Culture*. By Harry Harootunian. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. viii, 372 pp. US\$35.00, paper. ISBN 978-0-231-19021-3.

Harry Harootunian (b. 1929) does not technically belong to what is often referred to as the “founding generation” of Japanese studies scholars, who trained in wartime military language academies and helped to rebuild the defeated nation during the US occupation. Yet his influence over the field has been no less profound. Since the appearance of his first monograph, *Toward Restoration: The Growth of Political Consciousness in Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton University Press, 1970), he has dominated the landscape of Japanese intellectual history. His most recent publication, a collection of his own previously published essays (mostly from the 1990s and 2000s) entitled *Uneven Moments: Reflections on Japan’s Modern History*, provides a sense of the diverse problems and commitments that have engaged him throughout his long career.

The volume takes its title from Harootunian’s theorization of the relationship between politics and culture. Following Gramsci, he sees the two as inevitably destined for revolutionary incompatibility (“unevenness”), with the former ever more constrained by shrinking possibilities, the latter

ceaselessly productive of novel forms, and each “either too broad or too excessive” from the perspective of the other (2). Unevenness is also found in the imbrication of past and present, history and memory, reflected through case studies of specific “moments” from the history of eighteenth-century through contemporary Japan. The selection of moments is governed by Harootunian’s abiding preoccupation with the everyday: not the geopolitically significant interactions of nation-states and those who act on their behalf that are often thought to constitute “history,” but “the repetitive routines and a scarcity of events, whose rhythms remain unassimilated to the national form” (3).

The dozen essays featured in *Uneven Moments* are divided into four parts. Part I consists of two post-2000 essays offering a critique of area studies. (The republication of these pieces is particularly timely given contemporary debates over “the death of Japan studies.”) Part II, also composed of two essays, looks at culture and politics in early modern Japan (the author’s original research focus). Part III, the longest section in the book, is entitled “Pathways to Modernity’s Present and the Enduring Everyday.” The six essays grouped together here cover topics ranging from the scholarship of Hani Gorō (1901–1983), described by Harootunian as “the most gifted practitioner of a Marxian intellectual and cultural history before and after the war” (16), to the history and memory of the 2011 “triple disaster” in Fukushima.

The final section of the volume, “Ideological Formation: Colluding with the Past,” juxtaposes the oldest essay in the book, dating from 1988, with its only previously unpublished piece (aside from the introduction). “Visible Discourses/Invisible Ideologies” discusses Japanese intellectuals’ attempt to render the phenomenon of modern mass culture, devised by and imported from the West, into an authentically Japanese (national) construction purged of its negative associations with materialism and consumerism. Harootunian subsequently published a full-length treatment of this topic in perhaps his most influential work, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton University Press, 2000). The final essay, “The Presence of Archaism/The Persistence of Fascism,” explores the ways in which the government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzō (2006–2007 and 2012–) recalls some of the political trends of early twentieth-century Japan. The relationship between capital and fascism, Harootunian argues, has never disappeared, but rather evolved and strengthened in our time—a “silhouette of repetition” (327), in his beautiful phrase. After Japan’s defeat in World War II, the occupying United States attempted to replace militarism and imperialism with a new ideology of democratic freedom, capitalist expansion, and peace. These values, the author provocatively suggests, characterized the era typically designated by historians as “postwar.” Now, however, the postwar period may be ending, as Abe seeks to sweep aside the American legacy in favour of neo-emperorism, gangsterism, and ultranationalist Shintō.

Beyond the rich ideas it juxtaposes and synthesizes, the pleasure of *Uneven*

Moments lies in its candour. Harootunian has famously never dissembled his intellectual convictions. His sharpest critique targets academia and its constituent formations. He describes the University of Chicago (where he taught for many years) and its peer institutions today as “holding pens for the children of the rich and famous, indebted students, and professional administrators who see themselves as managers pitted against the labouring classes of teachers, principally dedicated to disciplining them” (13). Area studies and modernization theory are “dinosaurs in an intellectual Jurassic Park, where creatures with large bodies and small brains are on display” (24). The Social Science Research Council, a primary source of support for area studies scholarship, is described as “pimping” for funders; its retreat from a classic vision of area studies, “like Hegel’s owl ... is always too late” (27). Asian studies is a simulacrum; the Association for Asian Studies (to which the bulk of Harootunian’s readers presumably belong) is both lifeless and arrogant, privileging arcane topics at the expense of self-reflection and self-critique (22–23).

Like Harootunian’s many other works, *Uneven Moments* is undoubtedly destined to provoke lively debate and to inspire a large following both among and beyond the ranks of history and Japanese studies scholars.

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AESTHETIC LIFE: Beauty and Art in Modern Japan. *Harvard East Asian Monographs, 400.* By *Miya Elise Mizuta Lippit*. Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 2017. xv, 315 pp. (B&W photos, coloured photos, illustrations.) US\$75.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-674-97516-3.

Aesthetic Life is a volume with an attractive front cover that features a painting of a traditionally clad Japanese woman, an “illustrated masterpiece” by renowned *Nihonga* artist, Kaburaki Kiyokata. Depicting Miya, the female protagonist of *Konjiki yasha* (The Gold Demon), a novel serialized by Ozaki Kōyō from 1897 to 1902, the front cover of *Aesthetic Life* conjoins modern Japanese art and modern Japanese literature in an image that reflects the two disciplinary areas through which the author will develop the focal point of her text: the *bijin*, or beautiful woman whose glamour came to embody a “meta-aesthetic” (18) that helped to establish the genre, *bijin-ga*, or paintings of beautiful women, and also contributed to the development and construction of modern Japanese aesthetics. This is a lot to cover, and *Aesthetic Life* casts a wide net, bringing together a substantial array of exemplary material from both the visual and literary fields to illustrate the significance of this iconic figure as it was brought into prominence in Meiji Japan (1868–1912). Encompassing painting, woodblock prints, lithographs, photographs, and illustrations as well as literary and critical texts that portray and describe

the *bijin*, *Aesthetic Life* provides a fulsome view of this figure and its role in the modernization of Japanese art and aesthetics. As can be surmised from the cover, the text itself is also a work of art, with a selection of excellent reproductions, intriguing chapter frontispieces, and glossy pages. Clearly, as the lengthy acknowledgment section reveals, *Aesthetic Life* is the result of extended and extensive scholarly research into the formation of the image of the *bijin* in modern Japanese art.

The volume consists of an introduction, seven chapters, and a coda. As the introduction informs us, the subsequent chapters seek “to examine the origins of the *bijin* that emerged in the final years of the Meiji period as the subject of the *Nihonga* painting genre of *bijinga*” (19). A brief overview of each chapter will indicate the trajectory of the volume as it delineates the emergence of this idealized figure. Chapter 1, “All Too Aesthetically: The *Bijin* in the Era of Japonisme,” traces the representation of the beautiful Japanese woman to nineteenth-century encounters with Western art and aesthetics, exploring cultural difference as viewed by Akutagawa Ryūnosuke (albeit from the later Taishō period), Lafcadio Hearn, and other Japanese and Western commentators. Chapter 2, “‘Fair Japan’: Art, War, and the *Bijin* at the St. Louis World’s Fair, 1904,” takes up the notion of “aesthetic warfare” based on a lecture given by art historian Okakura Kakuzō at the fair and shows how Japan sought to utilize art and artworks featuring the *bijin* as a means of exhibiting its position as a powerful and civilized nation during the time of the Russo-Japanese War. In chapter 3, “True *Bijin*: The Debate on Truth and Beauty,” the concept of beauty is examined with regard to the *bijin*, who was deemed to possess an artificial beauty which, when juxtaposed against the “natural” beauty esteemed by the West, “posed a challenge to Western aesthetic ideals” (20).

Chapter 4, “*Bijin* Graphic: Illustrated Magazines and the Popular Ideology of Beauty,” moves into the domain of popular culture, where women’s magazines of the times offered ordinary women advice on how to cultivate the appearance of the *bijin* while male commentators commented on the *bijin* figure as a “natural resource or asset,” and posited the beautiful Japanese woman as a “national treasure” (122). Chapter 5, “‘Short-Lived Beauty’: Illustration and the *Bijin* Heroines of Literary Realism,” delves into two Meiji novels, Ozaki Kōyō’s *The Gold Demon*, and *The Cuckoo* (*Hototogisu*, 1899) by Tokutomi Roka. In these texts the demand for realism is seen as paramount, resulting in the deployment of less visual imagery in descriptions of female beauty and also less demand for accompanying illustrations, thereby allowing the *Nihonga* genre of *bijinga* to come into its own. Similar to the previous chapter, chapter 6, “Living Works of Art: Sōseki’s Aesthetic Heroines,” examines two novels, *The Three-Cornered World* (*Kusamakura*, 1906) and *Sanshirō* (1908). This chapter considers these works through analyses of the experiences of the male protagonists in their associations with *bijin* figures, leading to the formulation of particular aesthetic positions. In the

former, the male painter protagonist comes to understand beauty through the mediation of the *bijin* figure, while in the latter, the male protagonist acquires maturity by becoming an interpreter of modernity through his understanding of the *bijin* as artwork. Chapter 7, “*Bijinga*: The *Nihonga* Genre and the Fashioning of Material Beauty,” returns to the focus on the *bijin* as a subject of *Nihonga* painting, exploring the costumes, styles, and trends that marked the *bijin* as a modern idealization of the feminine in contrast to the nude female figure in *yōga*, or Western-style painting. In the Coda, the word *bijin* is reconsidered in its association with the neologisms *bijutsu* (modern Japanese art) and *bigaku* (aesthetics), thereby suggesting further possibilities for interpretation of this figure.

While *Aesthetic Life* seems at times to acknowledge the *bijin* figure as a commodified object and an elaborate construction of masculine desire, a more informed and sustained discussion of these contexts would greatly enhance this volume. Nonetheless, *Aesthetic Life* offers a novel interpretation of modern Japanese art history by combining the study of art history, aesthetics, and literary text and is likely to be of interest to students and scholars of Japanese art and art history, particularly those focusing on *japonisme*, as well as others engaged in Japanese studies more broadly.

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JAPAN’S CARNIVAL WAR: Mass Culture on the Home Front, 1937–1945.

By Benjamin Uchiyama. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019. xii, 280 pp. (B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$99.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-107-18674-3.

In *Japan’s Carnival War*, Benjamin Uchiyama offers a breath of fresh air to readers all too familiar with the narrative of tightening restrictions and stringent censorship that characterizes most depictions of Japan during the years of total war. In a careful and imaginative reconsideration of daily life and mass culture on the home front, Uchiyama advances two key arguments: first, that modernity did not fizzle into oblivion with the start of total war but instead lingered, reconstituting as subtle and elusive fractures in the shadows of daily life. And second: that the canonical portrayal of state ideological control exerted upon a compliant populace has obscured the realities of that reconstitution. Uchiyama endeavours to fill a space in the scholarship by tracing cultural practice in the context of cultural ideology, and by thoroughly considering the “consumer” half of Miriam Silverberg’s “consumer-subject” conceptualization of Japanese subjects.

Uchiyama develops a framework of “carnival war” to explore daily life in total war Japan as dynamic and improvisational. A carnival “shakes up but does not destroy the official order of things” (17). It suspends norms

and levels social hierarchies. This Bakhtin-inspired lens offers a heuristic device for examining the ways that state controls over society fractured the identities, aspirations, and pursuits of the people, forcing them to find other, “carnavalesque” avenues of expression. Such fracturing, argues Uchiyama, could only exist because of (and in concert with) the “total war” conditions that characterize the period captured in this book, 1937 to 1945. During these years, as Japanese citizens anticipated, prepared for, and experienced mass mobilization for the imperial cause, they coped with the state’s dramatic imposition of social levelling by oscillating between two key roles: loyal imperial subject and glamour- (speed-, thrill-) hungry consumer of transnational culture.

Employing the “carnival war” as extended metaphor, the book traces the unevenness of daily life and public imagination through five chapters, each of which dives into a unique “carnival king,” an archetype of mass culture who reigned during the period of total war. In chapter 1, the reporter emerges as a “thrill hunter,” typecast as young, daring, and enthusiastic, dodging overworked censors to convey the twisted excitement of wartime brutality in stories that blur the lines of war and play. Chapter 2 introduces the munitions worker, the slick-haired, well-dressed “industrial warrior” who thumbs his nose at state propaganda of thrift with spending sprees and job switching, who thwarts long-standing social stratification by presenting himself as an “instant gentleman” able to afford the material markers of high society. The soldier, detailed in chapter 3, evolves in the public imagination in three incarnations as the war wears on: first the godlike hero racing to conquer city after city, then the humbler, humanistic Everyman deserving of comforts and heartfelt connection to the homeland, and finally the pitiable returned soldier, full of resentment that the people at home so misunderstand the realities of war despite the excess of war films, books, and newspaper articles besieging them. Chapter 4 introduces not a carnival king but a carnival queen, the movie star who offers tantalizing glimpses of glamour amid widening austerity measures at home. The final chapter sheds light on the youth aviator, a figure who encompasses a thriving cult of popularity surrounding the very *idea* of the aviator—fan magazines, enthusiastic aviation aficionados, and a charismatic image of the triumphant airman cultivated by a propaganda machine convinced that aerial warfare (and a citizenry well-versed in it) would be the key to winning the war against the Allied Powers.

In developing these carnival kings as archetypes, Uchiyama does indeed provide a convincing characterization of Japan at war as more than the dour faces of compliant citizens. And yet his effort is an overcompensation for that canonical narrative, and therein lie its weaker points. Uchiyama speaks of his carnival kings as “liminal,” but in their liminality lies a power, an ability to shape-shift, a voice of entitlement entirely out of reach for those on the Japanese home front who were truly the liminal ones, such as colonized subjects, the elderly, women who were *not* movie stars, and those who

were foreign or racially ambiguous. Uchiyama's five chosen kings were all paradigms vitally important to morale, to the war cause—they were not the tenuous, dispensable tens of thousands who would not dare to roll their eyes at policemen, order Western meals at a secret Ginza restaurant, or engage in the “carnavalesque revelry” that Uchiyama describes. Uchiyama takes scholars like Alan Tansman and Thomas Havens to task for their depiction of the humourless mood on the home front, but the more obvious studies with which to engage are those by Sheldon Garon and Yoshimi Yoshiaki, which *do* focus on the ways people cooperated with and responded to state-sanctioned propaganda; Uchiyama reduces his comments on these works to mere footnotes. In attempting to counterbalance the narrative of social constriction and regulation, Uchiyama is at times dismissive of self-policing, as if all cooperation is a tongue-in-cheek charade.

The bottom line: this is an excellent companion book for those who have read widely on the war and crave a fresh perspective. Uchiyama's interrogation of gesture and material culture, alongside his well-chosen photographs and illustrations, convey the dynamic topsy-turviness of a splintered mass culture. The pomade of munitions workers, the smile of a movie star, and the fur-lined cap of an aviator swirl around the reader and offer a tantalizing and compelling alternative depiction of life during total war. Uchiyama's exhaustive archival work also enlightens the reader with thought-provoking details absent from standard histories of Japan at war, such as the crisis of an understaffed press department, the conundrum of failing wage controls for desperately needed workers, the contention surrounding comfort packages, and the cultural icon of the heroic aviator before he became *kamikaze*. And although Uchiyama only briefly gestures to extended applications of the carnivalesque framework in his conclusion, he does offer food for thought, encouraging us to question how states continue to wage wars with seemingly little restraint from their people.

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SOVEREIGNTY EXPERIMENTS: Korean Migrants and the Building of Borders in Northeast Asia, 1860–1945. *Studies of the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University.* By Alyssa M. Park. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2019. xviii, 284 pp. (Tables, maps, B&W photos.) US\$49.95, cloth. ISBN 978-1-5017-3836-4.

Sovereignty Experiments is a long-awaited monograph which comes amid rising research interest on this tripartite border area in Northeast Asia, which author Alyssa Park terms the “Tumen Valley.” Park's book primarily aims to provide a truly transnational history of this borderland by focusing on Koreans who

were mobile throughout the three countries in the expanse of the Tumen Valley (Korea, China, and Russia). Easy to say but much harder to execute, writing a transnational history of this area involves not only extensive archival research equipped with multi-linguistic competence but also a balanced yet focused view on the history and people. Park has carried out this daunting task in a rigorous and calm manner. The transnational approach adopted in this aspiring work fills a gap formed by the conventional nation and empire-centred historical approaches in predefined regional studies of Northeast Asia (16). The period which the book investigates spans from 1860, when Russia advanced to East Asia, to the eve of Cold War after World War II. Though considerable parts of the book were devoted to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when “sovereignty experiments” were implemented and attempted by the Korean, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese authorities. As the title of the book indicates, the author provides the reader with firm historical evidence on the process of modern formations of national borders, and traces back this process by showing how current boundaries in this Northeast Asian borderland were the result of historical contingencies at the beginning of modern history. The scholastic implication and political importance of this book manifests in the historicization of a contemporary political order which is not “a naturally pre-existing institution or unilaterally imposed upon” (3). In this light, the book does not merely portray Korean migrants as an ethnic group subject to the hosting governments’ policies, but highlights that these migrants participated in the experiment together with “officials, diplomats, [and] explorers” (17), as their migration itself raised “the problem” (16) of sovereignty—the so-called Korean question—in this Northeast Asian borderland.

The book is largely divided in two parts. While the first part, “Across the Tumen Valley,” focuses on the mobility of Koreans who crossed the Tumen River back and forth across the northern part of the Korean Peninsula, Kando, and the Russian Far East, the second part discusses the settled lives of these mobile Koreans in the Russian Far East. The first chapter discusses the pre-history of this borderland which was characterized as a “prohibited zone” by both Qing and Chosun Joseon. Until Russia entered this borderland scene, international relations between Qing and Chosun was based on a tributary system whereby both courts recognized “each other’s sovereign authority over territory and implicitly understood the two rivers [Yalu and Tumen] as the natural geographical boundary” (39). Despite some difficulties in drawing clear boundaries between the two countries, prohibited zones have been reserved for its natural resources and highly valued ginseng habitat to which indigenous peoples and Koreans had seasonal access without any need to prove their status. It was in 1860 when Russia gained territory from the Russian Far East up to the Tumen River that this old buffer zone was dismantled through an international relations clash between East Asian tributary logic and treatise-based jurisdiction maintained by Russia and

other Western powers in East Asia. Park eloquently illustrates how a non-consensus of jurisdiction on “people and place” in this borderland between the three countries in the late nineteenth century has had a lasting impact on subsequent historical developments. In particular, she discusses how this international problem is posed by “incommensurability” between East Asian and European powers and became more complex and complicated on the ground due to various actors’ engagement with this international situation, “taking the law into their own hands” (54). The following two chapters (chapter 3 and 4) show that the question of sovereignty in this borderland of Northeast Asia was tightly linked with control on Korean migrants—not confined to delimit its territory—as a massive influx of Koreans to Manchuria and the Russian Far East made it almost impossible to align territory and people. This fact was further compounded due to Japanese intervention after the Russo-Japanese War, and the problem with colonization on the Russian side. In the second part of the book, chapters 5 and 6 vividly describe village life among Korean migrants in the Ussuri region and how their “transnational life-world” resulted from the “plural jurisdiction” of Tsarist Russia and its need for an Asian labor force. Most interestingly, the book presents much archival evidence showing “self-rule” in Korean villages in the Russian Far East. Chapter 7 discusses Korean nationalists’ activities and Soviet authorities’ policies towards the Korean population in the region. Park sees a parallel between these two modernist endeavors for the enlightenment of Korean migrants. The epilogue briefly summarizes the situation surrounding Koreans in the Russia Far East after the Russian Civil War (1918–1922) ended. As did Tsarist authorities, the Soviet regime also “experimented with multiple ways to govern the population” (245), but in the end concluded its “sovereignty project” (244) by removing all Koreans, as they “embodied” all conflicting “local, national, and global agendas” (246).

Sovereignty Experiments might set new ground for future scholarly work on the transnational border areas of Northeast Asia and beyond. I highly recommend it for those who seriously study interregional history. Many readers would be surprised by the extensive literature and source materials utilized in this book, which is clear evidence for the difficulty not only in research but also in the border-making of this region.

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HYUN-GWI PARK

THE INTERROGATION ROOMS OF THE KOREAN WAR: The Untold History. By *Monica Kim*. New Jersey; Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2019. xii, 435 pp. (Table, map, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$35.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-691-16622-3.

The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War provides a sophisticated and insightful approach on the issue of prisoners of war (POWs) and their repatriation—issues which have often been reduced to footnotes in the literature on the Korean War (8). Monica Kim explains how the United States utilized POW repatriation in order to strengthen its position in the hegemonic struggle with the communist bloc in Korea's post-colonial era. Kim also shows how individual POWs struggled to maintain their subjectivity in the face of pressure from various international actors. She does this by redirecting her focus from the battlefield to the interrogation room, which the US saw as a place to showcase its liberal principles, such as “freedom of choice” and “the right of individual self-determination” (8). What the POWs actually encountered, however, was endless suspicion, surveillance, and investigations aimed at identifying communists.

The main body of the book consists of two parts. The first half titled “The Elements of War” has three chapters that explain the historical and political contexts under which the interrogation rooms of the Korean War were created. Above all, Kim shows how a surveillance system and counter-intelligence network were institutionalized as a form of governance in South Korea under the American military occupation (chapter 1), and how the policy makers in Washington, DC actually treated the issue of POW interrogation and repatriation (chapter 2). Here, the author masterfully shows the gap between the perspectives of US officials and Korean POWs towards the sovereignty of South Korea. The United States legitimized its military occupation of South Korea by arguing that the Korean people were not ready to govern themselves. What the Koreans expected, however, was the establishment of their own government and not a new foreign occupier. In 1948, the US recognized South Korea as the only lawful state on the Korean Peninsula, whereas the sovereignty of North Korea was rejected. The communist POWs in US custody consistently expressed their state's sovereignty through uprisings and hunger strikes, demonstrating that the conflict within the POW camps was not solely for ideology but also for recognition of statehood.

Subsequently the author sheds light on the American interrogators: who they were, how they were trained, and how they actually interrogated POWs in Korea (chapter 3). One fascinating aspect of the book is that it shows how the war between the US and Japan affected the interrogation rooms of the Korean War. Japanese Americans joined the US military to show their loyalty, and by doing so, could be recognized as real American citizens. The US sent these former “enemy aliens” to language training and to the Korean

Peninsula where thousands of “Oriental” POWs had to be investigated. For the Korean POWs, to be interrogated by the Japanese (American) soldiers even after liberation from Japanese colonial rule surely felt like double victimization. Stories such as that of the understudied Japanese American soldiers add to the book’s depth.

The second half of the main body, “Humanity Interrogated,” depicts the violent aspect of voluntary repatriation by capturing the dynamics of the interrogation rooms in four sites: Koje Island and below, on, and above the 38th Parallel. First, Kim demonstrates how the communist POWs in the largest US- and UN-run POW camp in Korea tried to uphold their subjectivity by kidnapping the camp commander, Brigadier General Dodd (chapter 4). Thereafter, she describes the South Korean anti-Communist paramilitary youth groups that were created and supported by US forces and the South Korean government, and which played the role of everyday interrogators inside the POW camps (chapter 5). Finally, she provides stories of the Korean POWs who chose to be repatriated to neutral nations (chapter 6) and the American POWs who decided not to go back after being persuaded by the Chinese and North Korean militaries (chapter 7). Throughout these chapters, readers can get a sense of the enormous pressure the POWs were under to side with the US and thus advance the imperial ambitions that were hidden in its voluntary repatriation policy. The POWs who made decisions that ran counter to US interests were labeled as fanatics, traitors, or brainwashed.

One of the book’s weaknesses is that it sometimes uses unnecessarily inaccessible language to explain rather straightforward content, especially in the introduction and first two chapters. Moreover, the book requires considerable background knowledge about Korean history, American politics, and international law. An appendix explaining names, events, and places would have been helpful. Those factors may frustrate nonacademic readers or those unfamiliar with the research topic.

Last but not least, the greatest contribution of this book is to demonstrate that “the experiences of ordinary people on the ground” is an important aspect of political history (358). From African American POWs who refused to be repatriated over concerns of racism in the US, to Japanese American interrogators who saw their work as a loyalty test, this book shows how a myriad of personal motivations and national interests intersected to constitute the Korean War.

PARADOXES OF THE POPULAR: Crowd Politics in Bangladesh. *South Asia in Motion.* By **Nusrat Sabina Chowdhury.** Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019. xiii, 245 pp. (Maps, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$28.00, paper. ISBN 978-1-5036-0947-1.

From the secession of East Pakistan from its overbearing West Pakistan partner in 1971 to the military/technocratic coup d'état in 2007, Bangladesh experienced a succession of assassinations of political leaders and coups. By the mid-1990s, the country's political institutions degenerated into two bitterly opposed coalitions, each with its 1971 liberation war hero: Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, first president of Bangladesh from 1972 until his assassination in 1975; and Ziaur Rahman, a major located in Chittagong in 1971, a leader of the guerrilla forces, and president from 1976 until his assassination in 1981. In late 2008, Sheikh Hasina, daughter of Sheikh Mujib and leader of her father's party, won a reasonably credible election. Since 2008, she has created a measure of political stability—but she has done so by effectively imposing one-party rule.

Usually, the Western media limit coverage of Bangladesh to casualties from collapsed buildings, factory fires, cyclones, and capsized ferries. In the last several years, coverage has extended to brutal assassinations of “atheist bloggers” and to the murder of 18 foreigners and two locals in a Dhaka restaurant by Islamist terrorists inspired by ISIS. In late 2018, Sheikh Hasina won re-election for a third term. There followed some critical media comment on the intimidation and vote rigging that enabled her party's alliance to win 288 of 300 seats.

Bangladesh is a country of 170 million. It deserves more than media discussion. Chowdhury has made a contribution, by insisting on the importance of “crowd politics” in Bangladesh. In brutal summary, her thesis is that “we need to view crowds as political actors who are self-consciously shaped through mass publicity while also recognizing that it is in the tangle of representations and practices that one must always come to the political” (20).

Chowdhury's intellectual roots are in early twentieth-century analysis of group behaviour by writers such as Le Bon and Freud, conservatives who emphasized that crowds typically adopt oversimplified ideas, which may contain truths but also falsehoods. Crowds are prone to polarize: a virtuous “us” versus an excluded “them.” However, Chowdhury's interpretation is not that of a conservative; she leans toward Marxist interpretations of crowd behaviour.

Her foil is Muhammad Yunus, successful founder of a large NGO, winner of the 2006 Nobel peace prize, and “failed politician.” Yunus offered qualified endorsement to the 2007 coup on grounds that, “Bangladeshi politicians are all for money. It's about power, power to make money. There is no ideological thing, simply who gets the bigger booty” (36). This is a conclusion with which

few, outside militant supporters of the major political parties, would disagree, either in 2007 or in 2020. (In the 2000s, Transparency International ranked Bangladesh, several years running, as the world's most corrupt country.)

At the time, Yunus wrote several public letters requesting advice as to whether he should form a political party, engage in electoral politics, and attempt to defeat the two well-established parties in a future election. Chowdhury doesn't deny Yunus's characterization of Bangladeshi politicians. Instead, she criticizes his faith in liberal individualism. His failure as a politician, she concludes, arose from his inability to appreciate the centrality of crowds.

Her first case study is the peasant revolt in 2006 in northern Bangladesh against the proposal of a UK mining company, supported by the Bangladesh government of the day, to develop a large open-pit coal mine in a remote northern district. The coal would fuel much-needed extra power capacity. Peasant opposition took the form of crowd politics: violent demonstrations against the company offices and the police. In this case, the crowd's rhetoric contained a fundamental truth. Given rampant political corruption, it was very likely that peasants would not be adequately compensated for expropriation of their land and destruction of village institutions. Ultimately, however, the mine was built.

To her credit, Chowdhury introduces a second, far more complex case—hence “paradoxes” in the book's title. Sheikh Hasina interpreted her election in 2008 as a mandate to organize a tribunal to prosecute those who had supported West Pakistan in the 1971 civil war. It was convenient for Hasina that many prosecuted *razakar* (collaborators with the West Pakistani occupying forces in 1971) were now, as old men, prominent opposition political leaders. In one of the early tribunal decisions, a *razakar* received a life sentence in prison. More-or-less spontaneously, students at the University of Dhaka formed a crowd to defend national ideals of democracy and secularism, and called for more severe punishment meted out to the *razakar*. The crowd, associated with the Shahbag district in central Dhaka, insisted on a change in law enabling the tribunal to hear appeals on the sentence. Hasina obliged, amended the law, enabled an appeal, and the court duly imposed a death penalty.

Initially, the government was supportive of the Shahbag movement and, although the evidence is fragmentary, it almost certainly financed Shahbag activities throughout Dhaka. Social media played a prominent role among supporters, and some of the student bloggers were explicit in their opposition to Islam as a state religion. Hefazet-e-Islam, a militant Islamic organization, successfully mobilized a counter-crowd intent on defence of Islam and denunciation of students as “atheist bloggers.” The government promptly abandoned support of the Shahbag demonstrators and enabled Hefazet-e-Islam in organizing a “long march” of the faithful to Dhaka. In the summer of 2013, the two crowds entered into violent confrontation. Subsequently,

militants among the Islamists identified a dozen bloggers, and undertook brutal executions with machetes.

The above summary is my conclusion from many conversations at the time with friends and colleagues in Dhaka. Chowdhury's conclusion roughly coincides with mine. My major critique is her lack of a serious analysis of elite manipulation of crowds. Perhaps, the fault lies not in her but in the limits of her discipline, ethnographic anthropology. Her first case conforms reasonably closely to a Marxist interpretation of corporate dominance, supplemented by complicit Bangladesh politicians. Peasant leaders were locals who proved themselves as orators and organizers. In the second case, a spontaneous student crowd arose, but many of the subsequent activities, both those of the Shahbag activists and Hefazet supporters, were directed by respective elites. At various points, Chowdhury hints at manipulation, but she never proceeds to a political analysis of the respective elites.

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JOHN RICHARDS

POPPIES, POLITICS, AND POWER: Afghanistan and the Global History of Drugs and Diplomacy. By *James Tharin Bradford*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2019. xii, 281 pp. (Tables, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$27.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-5017-3976-7.

The phenomenon of opium cultivation in Afghanistan has been so widely publicized that it is very tempting to equate “Afghanistan” with “opium.” According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, opium output in Afghanistan in 2018 totalled 6,400 tonnes, making up the overwhelming volume of what is produced worldwide. Afghanistan's opium trade has been the subject of a range of useful scholarly and popular studies, including Alain Labrousse's *Afghanistan: Opium de guerre, opium de paix* (Éditions Mille et Une Nuits, 2005), Joel Hafvenstein's *Opium Season: A Year on the Afghan Frontier* (The Lyons Press, 2007), Gretchen Peters' *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2009), and David Mansfield's *A State Built on Sand: How Opium Undermined Afghanistan* (Hurst & Co., 2016), as well as a steady flow of specialist and technical reports produced by the UN and the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) in Kabul. Bradford's excellent book very usefully augments this existing literature, locating attempts to prohibit opium in Afghanistan in a rich historical context sensitive to both the international pressures encountered by Afghan governments, and to challenges arising from processes of state formation.

The book blends discussion of international history and the history of Afghanistan in an accessible fashion. Drawing on a wide range of sources, the author adopts a largely chronological approach to dealing with the

evolution of both drugs policy in Afghanistan, and the Afghan state itself. He notes at the very least a correlation between the modernizing impetus of King Amanullah (1919–1929) and the disposition at the time to see drug addiction as somehow *anti*-modern. He goes on to show how Afghanistan's push to engage with the wider world following its joining of the League of Nations in September 1934 saw its approach to drugs increasingly entangled with the wishes of the United States, which during the Second World War was interested in purchasing Afghan opium. He then offers a meticulous case study of the 1958 prohibition of opium by the Afghan government and of the way it sought to pursue this prohibition in the province of Badakhshan. Subsequent chapters deal with the “hippy trail” of the 1960s, the effects on Afghanistan of the War on Drugs of the Nixon Administration, and the origins of opium cultivation in Helmand, where recent efforts to address the problem of poppy cultivation have failed rather spectacularly (see David Mansfield, *The Helmand Food Zone: The Illusion of Success*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, November 2019). The central argument of the book is well captured in Bradford's persuasive conclusion that “what has developed, arguably over the last century, and has become most acute in Afghanistan in the last decade and a half, is the perception that drugs are the cause of instability, crime and political chaos. However, underscoring these conceptions is a lack of historical understanding about the mutually constitutive relationship between opium and state formation that has shaped the conditions that now characterize the opium trade in Afghanistan. Throughout the last century, drug control often amplified the issues of governance that gave rise to, or sustained, either nonstate actors or criminal organizations” (220–221).

Poppies, Politics, and Power fills a notable gap in studies of Afghanistan, and does it very well. The author makes admirable use of his sources to bolster a credible and interesting line of argument. In doing so, he contributes to a growing literature which challenges older accounts of state formation in Afghanistan that understate both Afghan agency, and the powerful effects of interactions between actors in Afghanistan and players in the wider world, all with objectives of their own to realize. In this respect, he walks alongside other researchers such as Robert Crews, Nile Green, Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, B.D. Hopkins, Magnus Marsden, and Mujib Rahman Rahimi, whose works have raised important new questions about how Afghanistan and Afghans have connected with the wider world, in material, political, and ideational terms.

Bradford's careful analysis also brings into sharp focus an issue which he does not confront directly, but which Afghanistan's recent experience itself has illustrated, namely that there can be acute tension between on the one hand the requirements of an international legal regime that has developed incrementally through the interaction of a multiplicity of actors, and on the other hand the policy settings that an evidence-based appraisal of a complex problem might dispose one to adopt. The international narcotics regime is

strongly prohibitionist in its thrust, but bitter experience suggests that in the real world, strict prohibitionist approaches can have dramatic unintended consequences that thwart the realization of the objectives that the proponents of prohibition have advanced. The experiences stemming from the “wars on drugs” mounted by successive US governments have not been especially happy ones. Prohibition drives up prices, attracts criminal networks into drug distribution, and can set the scene for attempts by cashed-up cartels to corrupt processes of state building in order to advance their own nefarious interests. Just as the factors that have contributed to opium cultivation in Afghanistan are complex, so too are the policy settings that might succeed in confronting the problem. Bradford’s penetrating analysis leaves open the question of whether an approach grounded in the requirements of international law is more likely to be part of the solution, or part of the problem.

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WILLIAM MALEY

KHAKI CAPITAL: The Political Economy of the Military in Southeast Asia. *Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, Studies in Asian Topics, no. 61. Edited by Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitoolkiat. Copenhagen: NIAS Press; Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press [distributor], 2017. xiv, 351 pp. (Tables, graphs, maps.) US\$27.00, paper. ISBN 978-87-7694-225-0.*

Editors Paul Chambers and Napisa Waitoolkiat bring to the body of literature an important book that examines a phenomenon often discussed but seldom defined convincingly, precisely due to the complex environment of Southeast Asia. Chambers and Waitoolkiat seek to show how regional militaries, emerging either from the struggles of independence or from the demands of self-sufficiency during post-colonial nation-building, built power structures that endured or insulated the military from civilian government and accountability. The militaries of then-Southeast Asia played a key role in the creation of their nations, carving a path as guarantors of national security, often in key economic roles. Understanding this phenomenon is important for regional politics, especially in the areas of civil-military relations, and by extension, the dynamics between the military and national agendas.

Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei have very different colonial experiences from the other nations in this study, and established very different militaries. The lack of coverage, although understandable, proves to be the book’s biggest challenge to parsimony. Focusing on two of the nations discussed in the book (Thailand and Indonesia), on opposite sides of the “Khaki Capital” spectrum, this review discusses the premise and currency of the book.

The editors begin with an ambitious definition of Khaki Capital, scaffolding a cognitive structure to juxtapose the seven case studies. Khaki Capital is a form of income generated by the military that allows it to influence

national budgets for formal and informal enterprises, to extract and distribute financial resources, and to establish opportunities for its supporters. The key distinction the editors make is that the greater the level of control the military has over these economic avenues, the lower the level of civilian oversight. This in turn leads to a monopoly of economic potential, which then leads to greater political power, creating a “self-perpetuating mechanism” for military control. The book proceeds to focus on individual countries with each chapter beginning with an introduction to the context of the military before examining each military’s role in income-generating economies.

Presenting the clearest application of this framework is Thailand’s experience, especially since 2014. Both editors agree that Thailand will become “the envy of Southeast Asian militaries” with the Thai military further entrenching itself in capital-gain areas, resulting in a sustainable control of the nation. This was played out in March 2019, with the military-aligned party’s win in the Thai elections, as well as the appointment of General Prayut Chan-o-cha as prime minister. With this win, the Thai military ensured total budgetary independence, free to pursue its own agenda.

Amongst the nations discussed, Indonesia managed to transit to civilian prerogative gradually since independence, where at one point it self-financed 70 percent of its own needs. This journey is significant, with the Indonesian military transferring its roles in internal security to the Indonesian police force. However, the chapter also speaks of the difficult transition in a country as large, and diverse, as Indonesia. This difficulty is seen in market conditions, local economies, and businesses spread around archipelago’s 17,000 islands. Despite the successful transition, the Indonesian military still engages in economic activities, albeit to a lesser extent. Furthermore, the military is still prominent; for example, terrorist attacks in Indonesia have raised the military’s profile. The military’s efforts have kept it in the public eye in a positive light and have enabled it to consolidate and secure autonomy for self-actualization.

In the final chapter, the editors attempt to bring the silver lining into the discussion of embedded military governments at the institutional level. The editors opine that strong civilian oversight would result in lower corruption and derogate from military chauvinism. Not surprisingly, the editors do not discuss how to achieve this effect extensively. This conclusion, perhaps ironically, is one of the reasons why this book is important. By drawing out the contextual complexities that cemented the role of the respective militaries, the book illuminates the difficulties in unravelling the power structure that has guided the nation during the difficult years of nation-building. Much of these difficulties relate to the strong leaders, unique histories, socio-political legacies, and the legal frameworks engendered during those times. This book bears out its purpose here, where an understanding of the military leads to an understanding how these nations work, and by extension, how Southeast Asia works. Furthermore, the editors reinforced their contribution to the

study of civil-military relations by discussing militaries within Southeast Asia that are underdeveloped, in this case Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia.

The effort of the editors to bring together academics well-versed enough to discuss the complexities of national and economic entrenchment by an institution like the military deserves our appreciation. However, in fairness to the militaries studied in the book, the role of national defence is a difficult one. When faced with daunting challenges to secure one's sovereignty against the demands of the economy and infrastructure, divergent agendas arise. Under the cloud of the Cold War and its concomitant geopolitics, the surety of a convicted and committed armed force was necessary.

Significant as *Khaki Capital* is to understanding the military in Southeast Asia, it also offers valuable insights into other aspects of the region. The different chapters offer perspectives on how to engage the individual economies by discussing the role of the military within them. For readers interested in understanding the dynamics of regional political leadership, including ASEAN, this book offers key insights into the continuity and change of leadership. As a whole, it offers most to the individual seeking to understand how different countries in Southeast Asia are from most other nations, especially those of the Westphalian model.

Khaki Capital is evidence that economic influence equates to political power. The extent in which the militaries hold on to this influence determines their independence to fulfil its own agenda, on top of that as the national "manager of violence." This book reinforces the truism that the history and international relations of Southeast Asia clearly show that the nations with a history of political instability engender stronger militaries that resist sharing power with civilian authorities.

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EDDIE LIM

PENTECOSTAL MEGACHURCHES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA: Negotiating Class, Consumption, and the Nation. *Edited by Terence Chong. Singapore: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, 2018. xii, 243 pp. (Tables.) US\$29.90, paper. ISBN 978-981-4786-88-1.*

This edited volume describes Pentecostal megachurches that have been growing rapidly in Southeast Asia since the early 1990s (6). Reportedly, this Christian denomination is now second in size only to the Catholic Church (71). Despite their influence, Pentecostal megachurches have not been well-documented (viii), perhaps due to two assumptions: that Pentecostal megachurches are not indigenous, but "the by-products of colonization and foreign missionaries" (viii), or that they are exported wholesale from other countries.

However, the central argument woven through this book is that Pentecostal

megachurches are both indigenous and transnational institutions that, in the process of interacting within local contexts, actively create institutions that provide meaning for their congregations (1). As editor Terence Chong says, the megachurches researched in this book raise “a theological discourse that is responsive to the impulses of mass consumption and entrepreneurship as it negotiates for a place in the national civic space” (viii). Based on detailed and thorough ethnographic fieldwork, the chapters substantiate this argument by documenting how a variety of Pentecostal megachurches in Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Singapore have adapted the essential Christian message to local beliefs and practices. Pentecostalist megachurches in these countries differ significantly; their creative adaptations amid differing local contexts yield “different Pentecostalisms” (1). Some of the key forces that can give rise to differences in church structure, ethos, and practice are social influences like entrepreneurialism, diverse ethnicities, and mass consumption.

As mentioned above, the authors use an ethnographic approach to uncover themes they find in their case studies. Two themes the book spends significant time on are the prosperity gospel and the factors that attract people to join a Pentecostal church. In the case of the prosperity gospel, Christians have grappled with enjoying wealth when some verses in the Bible indicate that putting a high priority on wealth may draw people away from a love of God (e.g., 1 Timothy 6:10). For most of the congregations discussed in this volume, largely composed of a burgeoning middle class, the prosperity gospel offers a theological explanation that links wealth and faithful Christian service. The authors move beyond the reductionist argument that people join a Pentecostal church because they want God to give them material possessions. As Chong puts it, “Material accumulation is, it is believed, a tangible measure of one’s obedience to God; less of a reward but a by-product of faithfulness” (vii). Not only does material accumulation indicate one’s faithfulness to God, but it also “allow[s] the middle class and the aspiring middle class to demonstrate conspicuous consumption without moral awkwardness” (6); thus, the prosperity gospel provides a path for believers to incorporate consumerism and their Christian faith.

The second theme that runs through most of the chapters is why people are attracted to join a Pentecostal church in the first place. In general, the answer lies in the way that churches are able to frame their Christian message in a way that meshes with ideas and values held by people rooted in particular classes and economic realities. Specifically, the church adapts to and remains relevant within the local context through the use of indigenous motifs and frameworks, the portrayal of a dynamic and vivid spirituality through technology and media, the desire to experience the supernatural in light of a felt “ecstasy deficit” (3), and the increased effectiveness arising from employing marketing strategies.

Besides these two themes discussed above, the authors discuss the use

of multimedia, social media, and other digital technologies to communicate the leaders' messages in a dynamic and exciting way, the importance of a leader who has experienced a radical transformation from a sinful past, and the intentional and sometimes aggressive focus on evangelism.

Occasionally, some statements were unattributed, and I could not determine whether they came from an author or an interviewee. In one case, the author writes that Pentecostal megachurches "offer false hope and misleading spirituality" (170) while another writes that a pastor is known as "a celebrity pastor with obscene wealth earned on the back of his church's labour" (201). The chapters would have been stronger if either these statements were tempered, attributed to someone who was interviewed, or were acknowledged as the author's perspective, coming from a certain ideological position.

In conclusion, the authors insist that Pentecostal megachurches in this region are not "hollowed out" (198) institutions exported from other countries, but that they give meaning and purpose as people navigate their daily lives. The Pentecostal churches mentioned in the case studies are embedded in local historical, political, economic, and theological contexts, and are actively involved in helping their adherents "see the divine through the local" (2). As Chong explains, "Pentecostalism's ability to adapt practices and theologies to local conditions has seen the faith emerge in a multitude of expressions while retaining enough common characteristics for global coherence. Its global spread ... has hinged on its simultaneously indigenizing and transnationalizing nature" (1). This volume is a welcome and needed collection of studies of an under-researched and yet vibrant and active Christian denomination operating in a field of diverse contexts and challenges. It will be useful for specialists in Christianity and the countries of Southeast Asia, as well as those interested in an ethnographic description of Pentecostalism in general.

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CONTESTED TERRITORY: Điện Biên Phủ and the Making of Northwest Vietnam. Yale Agrarian Studies Series. By Christian C. Lentz. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2019. xvi, 331 pp. (Tables, maps, B&W photos.) US\$35.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-300-23395-7.

Although Christian Lentz's online profile at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, (where he is an associate professor of geography) describes his first book, *Contested Territory*, as "the definitive account of one of the most important battles of the twentieth century, and the Black River borderlands' transformation into Northwest Vietnam," readers hoping for a detailed

account of the horrors and glories of the battle of Điện Biên Phủ will be disappointed. This is by no means a bad thing, however. It is the second half of the description that is more accurate, as Lentz explicitly turns away from the tendency of some military historians, or historians of the Cold War, to study Điện Biên Phủ as a site of world-historical importance while neglecting its history as an ethnically diverse borderlands region between Vietnam, Laos, and China. In *Contested Territory*, the battle becomes a backdrop for other—arguably more interesting—actors, such as ethnic Tai cadres drumming up support for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), Kinh cadres trying to negotiate the intricacies of ethnic difference with mountain peoples and peasants—highland and lowland—trying to find a balance between materially supporting the anticolonial movement with *dân công* labour and being able to survive and reproduce themselves.

In his exploration of how the DRV constructed territory in the northwestern spaces of the Black River borderlands it claimed, Lentz argues that their eventual incorporation into Vietnam during the First Indochina War was a contingent, contested process that could have gone another way with relative ease. The transformation of these spaces into “Northwest Vietnam” was accomplished through pragmatic compromises that meant that land reform and social revolution in the region were postponed for the sake of national, anticolonial unity between the Kinh/Việt national majority and the local Tai/Thái minority elite—compromises that actually expanded the latter’s reach over other local minorities, such as the Hmong/Mèo and Khmu/Xá. This led to the emergence of a paradox in DRV control over the Northwest, whereby the state sought support from the local non-Kinh peoples by promising a future of ethnic equality and freedom from exploitation (unlike the French colonial past and present); but military exigency ended up forcing DRV officials to extract ever-increasing amounts of food and labour, especially from the non-elite portions of society. These demands led to widespread hunger and even millenarian backlash. And yet, it was in pursuit of these extractive practices that the state finally “climbed up” to the highlands and rendered its peoples visible to its gaze, finally binding them to the Kinh-dominated lowlands. Broadly, Lentz joins others in arguing that territory should not be taken as a given; rather, territory’s construction by different agents must be viewed through a critical lens of specific, historically informed processes.

Throughout his book, Lentz makes productive use of Thongchai Winichakul’s concept of “geobody,” an imaginary, emotive concept of the space corresponding to the nation-state, which is often articulated in maps of a binary nature that clearly establish what is within and what is without the nation, homogenizing and simplifying what are often complex (or unknown) realities on the ground. Lentz shows how the DRV leadership and cadres considered the Black River region a part of the Vietnamese geobody despite the dearth of readily available statistical, demographic, or ethnographic

knowledge on the region. Although they stressed ethnic solidarity between downstream Kinh and upstream Tai, Hmong, Khmu, etc., in practice, Kinh cadres sent to the area considered it “remote” and its inhabitants “primitive” or “feudal,” and lobbied insistently for transfers closer to their homelands. Despite the foreignness of the Black River region, the impulse to bind it to the rest of Vietnam persisted, which is especially remarkable considering the relative ease with which Laos and Cambodia were cut loose. Lentz shows how—the acknowledged ethnic differences between downstream and upstream peoples, and French policies to keep them separate (even creating an autonomous Tai Federation) notwithstanding—DRV leadership and cadres insisted on the Black River region belonging to the new republic inasmuch as it had been mapped as part of Tonkin. In this sense, their labelling of French- or Tai Federation-controlled territory as a “zone still temporarily occupied by the enemy” (83) illustrates (figuratively and literally) a geobody-inflected teleology of space. In spite of it all, much like in other cases in formerly colonized parts of the world such as the Philippines or Peru, colonial mapping (or the imagining of colonial mapping) remained the basis for the anticolonial or postcolonial geobody.

Overall, *Contested Territory* is a fantastically researched book that will prove valuable to historians, geographers, and scholars interested in territory and the geobody. By refocusing his attention away from combat itself, Lentz shows how the need to engage the colonial enemy in the Black River region and build a logistical network to supply the military had much broader implications for the consolidation of the Vietnamese geobody. Given his stress on historical contingency in this process, one could wonder if, had the French-sponsored Tai Federation in the Black River region remained a military backwater, this region would have slipped from Vietnam’s reach, even in the event of a DRV victory. Lentz’s wide-ranging archival research includes materials that have only recently been made available to researchers, which is of special value in the fascinating chapter dealing with the post-battle trajectory of the Black River region and the little-known “Calling for a King” millenarian movement that challenged to DRV hegemony in the region. Finally, given its eminent readability, *Contested Territory* could be used productively not only in graduate seminars but also in undergraduate classes.

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BOMB CHILDREN: Life in the Former Battlefields of Laos. By *Leah Zani*. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2019. viii, 171 pp. (B&W photos.) US\$24.95, paper. ISBN 978-1-4780-0485-1.

In January 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower approved Operation Momentum, a covert military operation in Laos. It was designed to leave a

light footprint: a few CIA officers would train and arm local Hmong villagers to fight the Pathet Laos, the Laotian Communist forces, and then they would vanish. Instead, what transpired was the largest CIA paramilitary operation in US history, a nine-year secret war over the Ho Chi Minh Trail. As Laos became a higher priority to US foreign policy (Eisenhower called Laos the “cork in the bottle”—the contents of that bottle being communist expansion across Asia—and allegedly spent more time discussing Laos than Vietnam in declassified records), the CIA’s program ballooned in budget and body count.

This secret infiltration escalated into a war fought primarily with bombs. By 1975, the US dropped 2,093,100 tons of bombs on Laos, which was one-third more tonnage than was released over Nazi Germany during World War II. This is the equivalent of one planeload of bombs falling every eight minutes around the clock for nearly a decade. Since the civil war ended in 1975, unexploded bombs have continued to kill: the death toll stands at 30,000 Laotian civilians and counting.

Leah Zani’s argument proceeds from a simple question: How have bombs become a part of Laotian life? She shows how, through the legacy of explosive ordnance, war can sediment itself into the layers of contemporary society. As a consequence, many forward-looking policies aimed at developing or modernizing the country, from economic liberalization to authoritarian consolidation, are taking place in parallel to an environment still haunted by its violent past. Zani’s process of answering her question incorporates creative forms of observation. She translates Laotian poems to ground her concept of parallelism. She writes her own award-winning field poems, which start each chapter. She conducts a sound ethnography of a supervised bomb detonation. She studies hauntings at a gold mine, and frames ghosts as social actors. And all of this is accomplished in a high-surveillance setting where soldiers patrolled the streets, enforcing a curfew for foreigners, and many respondents feared that she was an American spy.

The conflict between American military weapons and contemporary Laotian society shapes the book from start to finish. It shares this theme with *Salvage: Cultural Resilience among the Jorai of Northeast Cambodia*, a 2016 book by Krisna Uk also reviewed by *Pacific Affairs*. As Uk explains in her ethnography of Leu, a village that was formerly part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the US bombing was a traumatic historical event that tore apart local life and led to a fundamental reordering of previous political, economic, social, and religious systems. Uk explores two facets of post-war reconstruction: first, a subsistence-level existence leads some to engage in high-risk economic activities—hunting for bomb remnants for financial and spiritual gain; second, traditional rituals have incorporated reproductions of planes and weapons, demonstrating how the memories of war are passed down through cultural rites.

Zani’s case in chapter 2, the town of Sepon, presents an intriguing counterpoint to Uk’s remote village of Leu. Sepon serves as a district capital,

and is only minutes away from a section of Route 9, perhaps best known for being the main route of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. During the US airstrikes, every building in Sepon was destroyed, and much of the land was ruined by defoliants sprayed from the airplanes. Today, Zani describes the new road (“paved, clean, well-marked” [71]) and the emergence of the town New Sepon, which derives its wealth from the mineral-rich mountains that surround the area.

Like Uk, Zani finds war materials incorporated into daily life and religious ritual: a temple bell made from a carpet bomb shell, craters used as trash pits. Despite the incoming flow of money and people, Zani observes the psychological devastation that still remains from the bombing at the Lang Xine gold mine nearby. Her chapter brings to light the mineworkers’ beliefs of the ghosts and spirits of those killed by explosive remnants of war. The land near the mine is heavily contaminated with unexploded bombs, and Zani focuses on the story of three brothers who tried to dismantle a general-purpose bomb, but died in the process. The physical obliteration of their bodies, along with the fact that they had no family nearby to conduct proper burial rights, doomed their spirits to wander as ghosts. This section is a fascinating example of how two worlds that typically operate in parallel—like life and death or historic violence and future prosperity—can intersect to haunting effect.

A thoroughly original work, *Bomb Children* is likely to become a useful reference for students and scholars alike, and indeed anyone interested in the social consequences of airstrikes. It is also an arresting personal account of the hazards of fieldwork in a highly monitored and dangerous country.

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DOWN AND OUT IN SAIGON: Stories of the Poor in a Colonial City. *Studies of The Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University.* By **Haydon Cherry.** New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2019. xviii, 259 pp. (B&W photos.) US\$50.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-300-21825-1.

The title of Haydon Cherry’s new history of early twentieth-century Saigon, *Down and Out in Saigon: Stories of the Poor in a Colonial City*, might undersell its contributions to the analysis of urban life in Indochina. The stories themselves are well researched and told, richly detailed, and offer captivating glimpses of individual efforts to survive the poverty and inequality of colonial Saigon. And of course, the title signals the author’s intention of countering dominant historiographic approaches to colonial-era Vietnam by focusing on the quotidian struggles of poor people—stories typically omitted in Western-authored political histories or locally-published revolutionary biographies. But these are not *mere* stories, idle and disconnected from wider political-economic forces. To the contrary, Cherry’s accounts animate individual

experiences within the contexts of the regional rice trade and the institutions of colonial rule, offering useful insights into, among other topics, the drivers and impacts of migration, biopolitical strategies of administrative control, and the consequences of social and ethnic identities.

Presented as a “social history” of colonial-era Saigon and the surrounding region, *Down and Out in Saigon* is structured around the experiences and pathways of six poor residents of diverse origins, detailing the livelihood strategies of those lurking in the shadows of the city once considered the shining “pearl of the Orient.” Following an introductory chapter devoted to the “vagaries and vicissitudes of the regional rice economy” (3) which conditioned individual life trajectories, the next six chapters follow a rough chronological sequence, each focusing on one person appearing in the colonial ledgers between the years 1904 and 1929: a prostitute, a Chinese labourer, a rickshaw puller, an orphan, an invalid, and a poor Frenchman. Cherry draws upon a wide variety of historical sources to flesh out these often-elusive biographies, including administrative records and statistics, newspapers, letters, and most notably, documented interviews with the six protagonists and others in their orbits, allowing the poor and forgotten “to speak in their own words” (5) as much as possible. The author weaves together enough fragmented bits of information concerning these actors to “trace [their] itineraries” (3) and speculate on the circumstances, motives, and decisions that brought them to Saigon and into the web of French surveillance and intervention.

Cherry’s first chapter demonstrates how the performance of Cochinchina’s rice-based economy had an overdetermining effect on the lives and livelihoods of Vietnamese farmers, Chinese immigrants, and French colonists alike. He explains how plentiful harvests triggered intensified economic activity among producers, buyers, millers, and exporters, thereby lifting the entire region and fueling both urban migration and consumer demand in the markets of downtown Saigon and Cho Lon. And he shows how natural disasters and faraway wars could throw the entire Cochinchinese economy into upheaval, prompting desperate villagers to pull up stakes and try to earn a living in the city. In fact, all of the subjects of Cherry’s “stories of the poor” can be considered migrants to Saigon of one kind or another—Vietnamese people from surrounding villages or other parts of Indochina along with settlers from China or France—and accordingly the analysis of migration figures prominently in all chapters, so much so that it could easily be identified, along with the economics of rice trading, as a central theme of the book.

Saigon was and remains a city of transplants, and Cherry’s strategy of tracing the paths of his protagonists throughout their sojourns—rather than choosing an artificial spatial boundary for the work—results in the inclusion of a variety of urban and rural sites, Cho Lon most prominently among the former, and Bien Hoa Province representative of the latter—the

place of origin of the young woman who became a prostitute, and a stop along the way to Saigon for the Chinese migrant. Interestingly, Cherry notes the frustration expressed by French authorities at the perceived “taste for moving” among the Vietnamese, even as histories of Tonkin point to the opposite complaint: that the Vietnamese are unreasonably “attached” to their native places (*que hương*) and unwilling to heed the call to open new areas for settlement (Andrew Hardy, *Red Hills: Migrants and the State in the Highlands of Vietnam*, Singapore: NAIS Press, 2005). These contradictory discourses could be explained by regional factors, with northern Vietnamese claiming stronger connections to their homelands, but the discourse of dangerously unmoored villagers finds more relevance in this case: Cherry acknowledges the pull of native-place ties in Cochinchina, but shows clearly how poverty and crisis can overcome even the fiercest loyalties to home villages, generating the uncontrollable exodus from the countryside that provoked such handwringing among colonial administrators.

Other insights into colonial-era migration patterns emerge as Cherry’s analysis follows each actor’s pathways, demonstrating occupational specialization among those with common origins, circular migration as an economic strategy to accommodate both urban employment and ongoing village-based responsibilities of planting and harvesting, and the role of Saigon’s informal economy—including such professions as day labourer, rickshaw driver, and prostitute—to absorb excess labour arriving from the countryside.

In places where a lack of historical records force Cherry to speculate on the options facing his protagonists, readers are treated to yet more insight into the livelihood strategies of Cochinchina’s poor. For example, he covers the different occupations to which a young village child could aspire, as well as the unexpected last-resort strategies undertaken by the downtrodden in Saigon, including checking into prison or assuming the identity of a monk to receive alms and shelter. In this way, six stories become capable of speaking to the experiences of countless more poor people living in or passing through Saigon whose names feature even less prominently, if at all, in the historical record.

With its person-centred approach and depth of investigation, *Down and Out in Saigon* represents a significant scholarly achievement within the fields of Vietnamese studies, Asian history, and urban studies. Readers from all backgrounds interested in the topics of colonialism, public health, migration, and the interplay between governing structures and individual agency will also find much of value within the book. In addition to these contributions, the author’s lively and expressive writing style make it a pleasure to read and suitable for a variety of audiences, from the undergraduate to specialist levels.

SECRETS AND POWER IN MYANMAR: Intelligence and the Fall of General Khin Nyunt. By *Andrew Selth*. Singapore: ISEAS - Yusof Ishak Institute, 2019. xxvii, 248 pp. US\$31.99, paper. ISBN 978-981-4843-77-5.

Myanmar's military regime exercised tight control over the country prior to the beginning of its political opening in 2011. Among its most powerful instruments was an encompassing intelligence apparatus that played a central role in the country's political, economic, and social affairs. Much to the surprise of outsiders, that apparatus was almost completely dismantled in 2004. Fascinating as this event was in isolation, it is also important as an antecedent to the initiation of the hybrid "discipline flourishing democracy" in place today. Intelligence organizations, by their very nature, play a murky role in politics even where transparency is among a state's professed principles. Few would describe Myanmar's state as anything but opaque. This makes Andrew Selth's meticulously researched book, *Secrets and Power in Myanmar*, all the more remarkable, as it provides an accessible and insightful overview of Myanmar's intelligence services and their role in the country's politics over the past several decades.

It is difficult to overstate the expansiveness of Myanmar's intelligence apparatus in the 1990s. Selth references estimates that there was one intelligence officer or informer for every twenty students in the universities, and one for every ten servicemen in the armed forces. Up to 30 percent of the military development budget may have gone towards intelligence. The service penetrated all levels of society from the inner elite circles down to the street level. Its head, General Khin Nyunt, was seen by the international community as among the most powerful figures in the country. The intelligence apparatus performed a wide range of conventional functions for the regime—from collecting and analyzing intelligence in the country's ongoing ethnic conflicts—to rooting out dissidents in the military, civil service, and broader public. Other functions were less conventional. The Office of Strategic Studies (OSS), founded in 1994 under Khin Nyunt, became a quasi-state-within-a-state staffed by some of the country's "best and brightest." It took on a leading role in Myanmar's domestic and foreign affairs, becoming the preferred point of contact for foreign missions looking to bypass the notoriously slow civil service. At its peak, it was instrumental in keeping the military regime—which struggled with a legitimacy deficit—in power, enforced by a conviction that "mastery of information [was] a vital component in the ability of a self-appointed minority to rule a large country with a diverse population..." (207).

This conviction makes the 2004 purge of Khin Nyunt and a large majority of the country's intelligence personnel all the more remarkable. Selth provides five carefully formulated theories for the purge, all of which point to rivalries and factions within the Tatmadaw (the armed forces). Beyond making sense of the events themselves, the explanations provide valuable

insights into the general functioning of Myanmar as an “intelligence state.” Much like Indonesia’s New Order, the military elite feared that Myanmar’s fractured history and the centrifugal forces of perpetual conflict along its periphery would break the country apart. They also believed that they were uniquely positioned to prevent that from occurring, provided they had the necessary intelligence to pro-actively engage threats when and where needed; that presented a fundamental dilemma. A consolidated intelligence service was clearly more powerful than a fragmented one, but it also empowered its chief—Khin Nyunt—to an extent that other senior military officials feared he could singlehandedly bring down the government. His historic 2003 speech, which outlined the proposed transition to “discipline-flourishing democracy” amidst festering tensions within the Tatmadaw pressed the issue. Ultimately, the intelligence service that propped up military rule was dismantled not from foreign or other domestic forces, but from within the military government itself.

Beyond providing an overview of Myanmar’s intelligence apparatus and the fall of Khin Nyunt, Selth covers the partial rebuilding of intelligence capacity, notable intelligence failures, the foreign relationships of the new intelligence apparatus, and questions of accountability. The discussion on intelligence failures in particular provides a unique perspective on current crises—including in Rakhine state—that will be of particular interest to scholars of conflict resolution. The chapters are all meticulously referenced, increasing the book’s value as a general reference on Myanmar.

Writing on the intelligence apparatus of a secretive state presents obvious challenges, particularly for an outsider. Selth is laudably open about this and the limitations it imposes for the book. The result is a generally cautious approach to interpreting available evidence that sometimes avoids even informed speculation, leaving several big questions unaddressed in the process. There are no explicit discussions, for example, on how the upheaval of the intelligence apparatus in 2004 shaped the country’s political opening several years later, though there undoubtedly are important implications. Similarly, while the section on intelligence failures in the country’s periphery engages the current conflicts, Selth keeps the discussion tightly focused and avoids broader conclusions about their trajectories. By doing so, Selth bolsters the credibility of the claims he makes, but leaves the job of connecting further dots to readers who likely have less expertise and fewer insights. Ultimately, the book provides a richly-detailed view into one of the most powerful but elusive institutions in Myanmar, which makes it fascinating not just for scholars of Myanmar, but more broadly for scholars of authoritarian regimes and other “intelligence states” as well.

SINGAPORE: A Modern History. By **Michael D. Barr.** New York: I.B. Tauris [an imprint of Bloomsbury Press], 2019. xxxv, 257 pp. (Maps, B&W photos, illustrations.) US\$40.00, cloth. ISBN 978-1-78076-305-7.

In this new history of modern Singapore, Michael Barr takes aim at the Raffles-centrism and People's Action Party-centrism of the "Singapore Story"—the national narrative of Singapore's modern history propagated by Singapore's political leadership from the mid-1990s onwards. This narrative lionized British East India Company official Stamford Raffles, who signed a treaty with local Malay rulers to establish a British factory in Singapore in February 1819, and the Lee Kuan Yew-led People's Action Party (PAP) government, as the founder and makers of modern Singapore respectively. Barr seeks to make 1819 "a punctuation mark, not a headline in Singapore's story" (202) by illuminating other foundational moments and formative developments in the making of modern Singapore. His chapters show that, far from being a "Third World" awaiting the PAP's incorrupt and excellent leadership, Singapore was, by the 1950s, an advanced colonial port-city with a developed economy, a cosmopolitan and socially pluralistic society, and an extensive state apparatus. Barr's approach is nuanced and balanced. Even as he undermines "the legitimizing narrative of the country's current ruling elite," he credits them for steering its transformation from "successful colonial port city" to "successful global city" (203).

Barr devotes more space to discussing developments before 1945 in his eight thematic chapters. This is, of course, congruent with his objective of foregrounding Singapore's pre-colonial and pre-PAP past. In chapter 1, Barr contextualizes his motivations and objectives in writing this "alternative national history" (9) within the PAP government's promotion of nationalist histories from the 1980s onwards and the resulting revisionist histories that questioned these nationalist histories. Some readers may come away with an impression that the PAP government did not care for history until the 1980s. Barr's chapter in fact underlines that they have constantly viewed history as a powerful, evocative medium—hence their desire to control the Singaporean public consumption of historical narratives. The broad contours and template of the Singapore story could also be dated even earlier to the PAP's commemoration of Singapore's sesquicentennial in 1969, and not only the 1980s.

In chapter 2, Barr explores the ideas of Singapore articulated by different PAP leadership at various points in its post-1965 history—from the idea of Singapore as an exceptional city-nation boasting of an exceptional system of rational government and an exceptional socio-political order founded on meritocracy and multiracialism—to the idea of Singapore as a global city enjoying regional and global connectivity. Chapter 3 situates Singapore within the *longue durée* of its geographical location in a dynamic region at the crossroads of trans-oceanic trade. Barr provides an interesting revelation

in that Raffles selected Singapore not because the island itself was strategic or politically significant, but because it was the one available location in a strategically vital region not claimed or controlled by the British's rival, the Dutch.

In chapter 4, Barr shows that it was only in 1867, when Singapore was transferred to the Colonial Office in London for direct administration, that Singapore gained "modern governance" (87). Previously left on their own by a minimalist colonial administration, the different communities in Singapore then had to face the increasing intrusion of the colonial state into their commercial affairs and private lives. Chapters 5 and 6, on politics and governance in modern and independent Singapore, highlight 1942 when the Japanese replaced the British as overlords of Singapore; 1946, when Singapore was left out of the British's ill-fated Malayan Union plan; and 1965, when Singapore left Malaysia to become an independent nation, as key turning points. In chapter 7 on Singapore's economy, Barr traces, in broad succinct strokes, the beginnings and growth of Singapore from a regional trading centre for the processing and distribution of Malayan-produced tin, rubber, and oil, to a ubiquitous model of state-driven capitalism under the Singapore PAP government. In chapter 8, Barr traces the evolution of Singapore society from a small Malay settlement established in 1811 to the current nation-state populated by Singaporean citizens. Usefully, he highlights the centrality of language, race, and education in shaping identities and divisions in colonial, decolonizing, and post-colonial Singapore.

Singapore: A Modern History is a weighty complement to the late C.M. Turnbull's *A History of Modern Singapore, 1819–2005*. I would include the book as compulsory reading in survey courses on modern Singapore history. I have minor disagreements with Barr's interpretations of specific events or policies, however. In one instance, he rather cursorily asserts that the introduction of racial quotas in Singapore's public housing policies (the Ethnic Integration Programme in 1989) was due to Lee Kuan Yew's desire to "dilute the Malay community's political power" (135). In the same chapter, he gives too short a shrift to the fourteen-year tenure of Goh Chok Tong, Singapore's second prime minister (1990–2004), characterizing it as the "interregnum" of a care-taker holding the fort while Lee Hsien Loong recovered from blood cancer (137).

None of this makes me appreciate Barr's contribution any less. He has synthesized a wide array of seminal works and more recent research to offer thought-provoking perspectives and insights that any student of Singapore history should consider and reflect on. These include questions about how we frame key events and moments, and who we valorize and downplay, in Singapore's modern history. I personally agree with his recognition of transient workers and migrant labour as vital contributors to Singapore's economic development (161). They, like many other groups submerged by

the Singapore story, merit greater space in a narrative that the mythic figure of Raffles has dominated for too long.

Ironically, Barr's new history may no longer be as "alternative" as he intends. The Singapore government launched its bicentennial commemoration this year shortly after the book's publication. The main highlight is the multi-sensory exhibition, "From Singapore to Singaporean: The Bicentennial Experience." Its narrative was partly based on new research extending Singapore's history back 700 years. Barr himself credits Peter Borschberg, a Singapore-based historian at the forefront of this new research, as having "a fundamental impact on the shape and scope" of his book (xx). Unsurprisingly therefore, the bicentennial's narrative, which goes some ways towards complicating the centrality of Raffles and 1819 in Singapore's modern history, is partially consonant with Barr's arguments.

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CONTENTIOUS BELONGING: The Place of Minorities in Indonesia.
Indonesia Update Series. Edited by Greg Fealy and Ronit Ricci. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2019. xviii, 280 pp. (Tables, graphs, figure, map.) US\$29.90, paper. ISBN 978-981-4843-46-1.

Once regarded as a hopeful model of a Muslim-majority democracy, Indonesia in recent years has seen its global image fade. Ethno-religious violence in the early years of the "reform" era (*reformasi*, 1998–today) and a much-discussed conservative turn in Muslim society blemished the country's democratic credentials. So too have controversies surrounding the subject that lies at the heart of this welcome book: the place of ethnic, religious, sexual, and differentially enabled minorities in contemporary Indonesia.

The papers assembled in this volume were originally presented at the 36th Indonesia Update Conference at the Australian National University in September 2018. The book's thirteen topical chapters are divided into four parts: History and Law, Disability, Sexuality, and Religion and Ethnicity. The editors open the book with a scene-setting review of the historical and legal circumstances of Indonesia's minorities. The editors revisit recent events as well, including the 2016–2017 campaign against the Chinese-Christian mayor of Jakarta, Islamist campaigns against LGBT activism, the sectarian targeting of Ahmadiyah and Shi'a, and the growing prosecution of religious "deviants" under Indonesia's law on religious blasphemy. The authors argue, I think correctly, that lack of legal enforcement and "a growing culture of intolerant Muslim majoritarianism" (10) have worked to undercut major portions of Indonesia's new democracy.

The book's topical chapters open with Robert Cribb's survey of the history and meaning of minority standing in Indonesia from colonial times to the

present. Cribb notes that minority standing sometimes carried privilege rather than stigma, as with Indo-Europeans, Japanese, and Chinese in the late colonial period. However, he warns that today Indonesia is “in the midst of a major change in the configuration of Indonesia’s minorities” (19). The change is undercutting Indonesian legacies of civic nationalism and threatens to bring about “a de-integration of Indonesia into subnational cantons, each defined by a specific religion and/or ethnic groups” (31).

In chapter 3, legal scholar Tim Lindsey provides an impressive overview of the legal framework that regulates minorities and shapes patterns of discrimination in Indonesia. His review touches on the 2016 law on disability in Indonesia, a recent Constitutional Court decision on homosexuality, legislation affecting ethnic minorities and customary law (*adat*), and the legal environment affecting the small but influential Chinese minority. Lindsey concludes that, although Indonesia put an impressive array of liberal-minded reforms in place just after the return to democracy, poor enforcement of the laws has tended to “raise wider questions about the faltering trajectory of *reformasi* in Indonesia” (53). In chapter 4, another prominent scholar of Indonesian law, Simon Butt, examines the role of Indonesia’s Constitutional Court (established in 2003) with regard to minorities. He singles out two cases handed down in 2017, one dealing with LGBT rights, and the other with legal and constitutional recognition of the country’s many “indigenous spiritual traditions” (*kepercayaan*). Both court decisions were initially regarded as a victory for vulnerable minorities. But the legal implications of these decisions remain unclear because of the court’s lack of enforcement authority and its recent tendency to factor conservative understandings of Islamic norms into its rulings.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on the politics and law of disability. In chapter 5, Thusara Dibley and Antoni Tsaputra explore activist efforts to shift public understandings of disability from a “welfare” approach to a “social model” that recognizes the differentially enabled as rights-bearing individuals entitled to structural accommodations. In chapter 7, Dina Afrianty provides an insightful sectoral perspective on the same shift, examining the ways in which Indonesia’s huge Islamic educational sector has slowly but steadily sought to improve disabled Indonesians’ access to Islamic schooling.

The next two chapters examine the plight of sexual minorities. In chapter 7, Saskia Wieringa challenges the myth of Indonesia as tolerant on matters of sexual pluralism. She examines the politics of two periods of “sexual panic” in modern times, the first in the course of the anti-communist bloodletting in 1965–1966, and the second in the 2000s with the rise of Islamist militias. In chapter 8, Hendri Yulius Wijaya explores the changing language and practice of LGBT activism. His analysis offers a casebook example of the ways in which globalized discourses of sexuality and rights are localized in an Indonesia-specific way.

The final five case study chapters deal with religion and ethnicity in

minority politics. In chapter 9, Marcus Mietzner and Burhanuddin Muhatadi draw on surveys carried out before and after the 2016–2017 campaign against Jakarta's Christian-Chinese mayor. The authors show that today a full third of Indonesian Muslims are "strongly intolerant" of non-Muslims and Chinese. In a brilliant and distressing analysis, the authors conclude that, although "lower-class Muslims were the main recruits to the intolerance pool during" recent protests, "rich and highly educated Muslims were the key drivers of intolerance"; this trend is one more sign that "Islamist ideas of politics and society are becoming ... mainstream" and contributing to "a slow but perceptible process of democratic deconsolidation" (173).

In chapter 10, Ihsan Ali-Fauzi examines the role of the government-sponsored Interreligious Harmony Forum in managing disputes over places of worship. His case comparisons show that "in each instance, the ... [forum] was more of a contributor to the dispute than an institution for resolving it" (177). In chapter 11, Charlotte Setijadi shows how the return of anti-Chinese discourses in public life have also led to a revival of the once legally stigmatized category of "indigenous" (*pribumi*) Indonesians. In chapter 12, Maria Myutel shows how the small but wealthy Indian Sindhi community has carved out a place for itself by practicing a policy of "mutual disregard" (227) with regard to the state. In chapter 13, Butet Manurung examines the plight of a more typical minority, the forest-dwelling Rimba people of Sumatra.

In the book's conclusion, the analyst Sidney Jones provides an apt reflection on the book's findings. Observing that the category of minority in Indonesia is both malleable and politically charged, she touches on a theme broached by most of the contributors to this volume: that minority-majority relations today seem to be in the throes of a great transition marked by the rise of an intolerant Muslim majoritarianism.

In both its breadth and policy implications, this is one of the most important books in recent years on social minorities, majorities, and citizenship in Indonesia. It merits reading by all observers of contemporary Indonesia, as well as by researchers concerned with the promise and perils of democracy and majoritarianism today.

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SECRET: The Making of Australia's Security State. *By Brian Toohey.* Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2019. 400 pp. US\$34.10, cloth. ISBN 9780522872804.

Simply put, Brian Toohey has written the most comprehensive book ever about the history of the Australian security state and its key agencies. This comes as no surprise to readers. Since 1973, Toohey has been recognized as one of Australia's most distinguished journalists. He has written for many of

the nation's top newspapers and magazines, such as the *Australian Financial Review*, the *West Australian*, the *Sunday Age*, the *Sun Herald*, the *Nikkei Asian Review*, and he was the editor of the *National Times*. Additionally, Toohey has authored, or co-authored, four books: *Oyster: The Story of the Australian Secret Intelligence* (co-authored with William Pinwill), *The Book of Leaks*, *Tumbling Dice: The Story of Modern Economic Policy*, and *The Winchester Scandal*. In some quarters, he has been compared to the highly regarded but controversial American investigative reporter Seymour Hersh.

Toohey's *Secret* has the irrefutable feel of being a journalistic memoir, given that the author is 75 years old. He has reported for almost five decades on various elements, events, and issues concerning Australian national security. The book is detailed-oriented, well-researched (34 pages of footnotes are provided), informative, and interesting. I found it hard to put down.

Toohey's experiences as a reporter and the knowledge that he acquired over many years is quite apparent to the reader from the very beginning of the book. Toohey infers that the genesis of the book stemmed from the avalanche of intimidating and repressive legislation aimed at constricting the media's ability to cover national security matters, as well as the actions of the national government. Further, potential whistle-blowers have been targeted by the new legislation. The reader senses that a Kafkaesque aura has steadily enveloped Canberra, the nation's capital.

Instinctively, Toohey views these legislative mandates as a direct threat to the understood natural rights of the average Australian citizen to learn and understand what its government is doing on its behalf. He points out that there have been 75 new laws established to deal with terrorism since the events of 9/11. Toohey believes the passage of the Espionage Act, in June 2018, is representative of the new legal leverage that the central governmental will possess over Australia's media. Hence, it is now illegal to receive any kind of classified information, in any form—an opinion, a report, a conversation.

Toohey is also deeply troubled by Australia's dangerous alignment with, and its embracing of, America's political interests and global agenda, and identifies two serious geopolitical dilemmas that presently confront Australia as a result of this positioning. First, the nations of the Indo-Pacific region are deeply suspicious that Australia's 'interests' and America's 'interests' are one and the same. Secondly, the Australian government and the nation's foreign policy establishment have allowed themselves to be co-opted by the US foreign policy nomenclature. As a result, very few Australian political figures, academics, or journalists are willing to question the real value, and the real danger, of the US-Australian alliance. Hence, Toohey sees these evolving developments as an outright abdication of Australia's sovereign right and duty to "represent" its people and to create its own "strategic" interests.

Though *Secret* consists of approximately 330 pages of text, the book's construct makes for quick reading. The book is divided into ten parts, consisting of sixty chapters overall. The chapters are more like small essays,

addressing various subjects relating to the history of Australian foreign policy and the nation's security agencies.

The primary focus of *Secret* is the often difficult and volatile national security relationships that Australia had with both major powers, the US and Great Britain. After World War II, Australia became increasingly dependent on US leadership and power in the Pacific region. However, Australia's quasi-alliance with the Americans did not solidify until the signing of the ANZUS treaty in 1951.

Nevertheless, historically, the pivotal moment for Australia occurred in February 1942 when Britain surrendered to Japan at Singapore. This event influenced the Australian government to reach out to the American government for its very survival as a nation. Once embraced by the US, Australia began the process of slowly moving away from its former colonial master, Great Britain.

After WWII, Australia followed the American lead in the creation of two critical national security agencies: the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (1949) and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (1952). The former was Australia's version of MI5 (Britain) and the FBI (USA). The latter agency was based upon MI6 (Britain) and the CIA (USA). As is the case in Britain and the US, these security agencies have often been controversial in Australia, and critics claim they are too intrusive and powerful. Toohey agrees that both agencies are in need of much better oversight, but he is doubtful any real reform will occur.

Finally, the book, in its final chapters, deals with US-Australian relations. Toohey does a fine job defining the challenges and issues that both Australia and the US had to confront during the Cold War (a resurgent Japan, the Soviet Union, Korean War, Vietnam War), the post-Cold War (post-Soviet Empire, Eastern Europe, and the rise of China), and the first two decades of the twenty-first century (9/11, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the rise of Asia).

In truth, Toohey is not an ardent admirer of either Australia's or America's national security state. But, the author readily admits that both nations need each other. The historic transformation of the world is simply mind-boggling. Nevertheless, Toohey believes that Australia must begin to exhibit a greater degree of policy independence concerning its own regional and global interests.

Reading Toohey's excellent book will provide the reader with a greater historical understanding concerning Australia's present-day security state, and its potential future role in the nation's foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

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RANDALL DOYLE

LIVING IN THE STONE AGE: Reflections on the Origins of a Colonial Fantasy. By **Danilyn Rutherford.** Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2018. xiv, 209 pp. (B&W photos.) US\$25.00, paper. ISBN 978-0-226-57024-2.

Danilyn Rutherford's book *Living in the Stone Age* contains two main arguments; foremost is her analysis of the state-building process in Netherlands New Guinea, mirroring the subtitle of the book, "Reflections on the Origins of a Colonial Fantasy." In the final two chapters, however, Rutherford shifts focus to a dissolution of the marriage between anthropology and its so-called "savage slot."

In the introduction to the volume, Rutherford focuses on the almost indelible link between Papua and the Stone Age. As a classification—humans living at the most primitive level of technology and culture—it predates the colonial period in Papua. Presently, this link still surfaces in the Papuan/Indonesian conflict, and in the developing sales pitch for cultural tourism. Rutherford provides a brief sketch of the main aspects of Papua's colonial and postcolonial history. Her focus in the book is on the Wissel Lakes (Central Highlands) and its population: the Me, Moni, and Dani. The main protagonists in her argument are two civil servants, Jean Victor de Bruijn and Jan van Eechoud, both prominent in the exploration and pacification of the area. Despite a variety of co-actors in this drama, and occasional contrasts with similar encounters in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea, the focus is narrow, while the stage-setting is ideal: the Wissel Lakes area was one of the last to be "opened up"; chronologically, we speak of only twenty-five years' duration. And adventure figures large: "New Guinea ... a 'virgin land,' where ... paupers would be reborn as real men ..." (16).

In four chapters Rutherford envisages the state building in the Wissel Lakes through the eyes of De Bruijn and Van Eechoud, using (auto) biographical texts (Lloyd Rhys, *Jungle Pimpernel: The Story of a District Officer in Central Netherlands New Guinea*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1947; J.P.K. van Eechoud, *Met Kapmes en Kompas door Nieuw-Guinea*, Amsterdam: De Boer, 1953). Rutherford's approach results in "thick description" using anecdotal sketches of their encounters. A disadvantage is that these texts only take us until 1955, where we lose track of further developments. Chapter 1, "Hospitality and the Highlands," sketches how the Papuans initially "[hospitably] ended up having to deal with guests who refused to leave" (43). De Bruijn initially sets out to be an insistent, but good guest. Though he was convinced of the positive reaction of the Papuans, Rutherford points out that local leaders equally profited from the situation. In fact, both sides exploited the possibilities provided by their encounters.

In chapter 2, "Sympathetic State Building," Rutherford approaches De Bruijn's actions in terms of Hume's use of sympathy as an instrument of state building (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, edited by D.G.C.

Macnabb, Cleveland: Meridan, 1962 [1738])). While Rutherford shows both sides becoming closer, there is friction. Where De Bruijn and Van Eechoud depict the Papuans as dependent, primitive, subjects, Papuan guides and local leaders use their administrative contacts for personal prestige. Thus, they enhance their position within their own networks without becoming the required conduit for Dutch state building.

That this caveat becomes increasingly apparent to the Dutch, i.e. De Bruijn and Van Eechoud, is shown in the subsequent chapters, “Technological Passions” and “Technological Performances.” The hierarchical perception of the Dutch civilizing the Papuans clashed with daily reality. Rutherford’s focus on sympathy as instrument for state building shows it to be a double-edged knife. The Papuans appreciated the Dutch but had no interest in the state. Here, technology served a purpose. The Dutch possessed gadgets that amazed (and frightened) the Papuans: guns, radios, planes, gramophones. Yet, because familiarity breeds contempt, this was a race against time as the anecdotes show. Nevertheless, with the Dutch investing in the image they created and acted upon, the Papuan’s role as “Stone Age Man” became increasingly set in stone itself.

In the final two chapters of the book, the argument takes a turn. So far, Rutherford has only occasionally hinted at the similarity of sympathy as instrument for state building to the empiricism of anthropology. We can perceive De Bruijn and Van Eechoud as ethnographers and the Wissel Lakes’ population as their savage slot. Ironically, this was how the Dutch colonial administration throughout the 1950s used its district officers. Seemingly, Rutherford goes off on a tangent by focusing in the fifth chapter on the work of Leopold Pospisil among the Me (Kapauku). Pospisil in his search for the universality of law, seems unlike the average ethnographer. Yet, choosing the most egalitarian society he could find and working exclusively in the local language, he was nevertheless empiricist in his approach. Key to realizing sympathy were Pospisil’s houseboys. They provided him with a useable network of informants. Similarly, the houseboys (and the big men in their network) profited by the opportunities provided by the outside world.

In the final chapter, “The Ethics of a Kinky Empiricism,” Rutherford brings all these strands together. Ethnography, like state building, does not just function because of sympathy. Rutherford adds two further concepts Hume discerns: circumstance and inference. Sympathy brings people together in a universe shaped by circumstance. Inference allows us to predict future events from past events. The closer we can get to the way our informants live, the better our inferences—our ethnographic description—will be. Why, then, “kinky” empiricism? As Rutherford points out, we must be able to step out of our involvement in sympathy and answer the question that what we write down is for their good, not just ours.

The so-called savage slot becomes in the final analysis unnecessary. As anthropologists we can study the efficacy of a factory working floor as well

as Pospisil studied the Kapauku. Similarly, the Papuans need not live in the Stone Age to be made part of the Dutch colonial system, but their depiction as such helped the process along.

In writing all this down I have increasingly come to appreciate Rutherford's book, although I still find the focus on De Bruijn and Van Eechoud too narrow. I would be very interested in a further exploration of how the Me, Moni, and Dani profited from the way they were incorporated into a state (and later absorbed into the more brutal reality of Indonesian exploitation). I find the secondary argument on anthropological empiricism superfluous, but it helps in understanding the fullness and subtlety of Rutherford's argument. Any good book like this one leaves the reader wishing to explore further (and perhaps hope for a sequel).

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SJOERD R. JAARMA

MARKING INDIGENEITY: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations. First People: New Directions in Indigenous Studies. By Tēvita O. Kaʻili; Foreword By Ōkusitino Māhina. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2017. xvii, 180 pp. (Tables, figures, B&W photos.) US\$50.00, cloth. ISBN 978-8165-3056-4.

Marking Indigeneity contributes to the field of Indigenous anthropology through using theory that emerges from, and is embedded in, Tongan epistemology to explain Tongan practices related to sociospatial relationships amongst the Tongan diaspora. The communities that are described in the ethnographic sections of this work are Tongans living in Hawaiʻi, and more specifically, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) living in Lahaina, on the island of Maui. The author, Tēvita O Kaʻili, also belongs to this faith community. Tracing genealogical connections with people who participated in the research process is described as an integral part of his relational approach as an Indigenous scholar who argues that “genealogy is a critical part of indigenous anthropology” (50).

The book begins by making explicit links between the ancestral and contemporary mobility of the Tongan community, and pointing out the ancestral, cosmological, and genealogical connections between Tonga and Hawaiʻi. Kaʻili argues for an extended conception of indigeneity which recognizes and includes ancestral mobilities and interconnectivities between Moanan peoples. In chapter 5, Kaʻili draws upon genealogies and oral histories about Moanan voyaging and migration to develop the argument that Hawaiian and Tongan peoples have common ancestors, as well as shared histories of contact and cooperation.

Kaʻili's approach to redefining indigeneity involves recognizing enduring and “ancient systems of thinking and behaving” such as *tauhi vā* (5). Kaʻili

defines tauhi vā as “an older cosmology that promotes the indigenous marking of time-space through rhythmicity, symmetry, synchrony, and harmony” (5). He argues that the multiple ways of marking time and space through tauhi vā are important ways of marking indigeneity within social relations (6). “Tauhi vā is an indigenous artistic device that uses symmetry to reconcile sociospatial conflicts and create harmonious and beautiful sociospatial relations” (5).

Chapter 2 provides a useful review of existing academic literature about Moanan conceptions of *tā* (time) and *vā* (space). Ka‘ili illustrates that these concepts can be found in Tongan, Samoan, and Hawaiian language and cosmology, and discusses how such ideas have been used as conceptual frameworks for Indigenous scholarship and within the work of anthropologists. Ka‘ili acknowledges that most scholars to date have focused on *vā*—the social and relational spaces between people and how these relational spaces are maintained, nurtured and cared for.

Inspired by the work of Ōkusito Māhina (“Tā, Vā and Faiva: Time, Space and Art,” paper presented at the Philosophy Conference, Chico, California, 2001) on the *tā-vā* theory of reality, in chapter 3, Ka‘ili sets out to redress the balance vis-à-vis academic analysis of the temporal dimension of tauhi vā, arguing that the inextricable dimensions of time and space need to be considered together. Ka‘ili argues that the omission of *tā* is “significant because tauhi vā, as indicated by its name, is a spatiotemporal concept and practice. For instance, *tauhi* means to create and maintain a particular rhythm (time), and *vā* is a social expression of space” (34).

Another important conceptual omission which Ka‘ili seeks to address in this chapter is the lack of academic focus to date on the artistic and aesthetic aspects of tauhi vā, in which conflicts are mediated through the creation of “symmetry and harmony” (34). Ka‘ili makes specific reference to material arts, fine arts, and the performing arts as forms of tauhi vā that attend to and reflect the rhythms of social expectations. He argues that skilled artists and performers who can identify and meet the needs of a community play a central role in establishing customs and practices that regulate social life. Artists are uniquely placed to be able to “transform society in a tempo-spatial sense from *tokatāmaki* (chaos) to *tokamālie* (order and peace)” (39). Artists and performers create both aesthetic and socially experienced forms of *mālie*, meaning harmony and beauty, which is experienced through rhythm, symmetry (42) and feelings of “inner warmth” arising from the maintenance of “beautiful social relations” (47).

Through combining ethnographic and Indigenous approaches Ka‘ili has created a work which builds on Indigenous theory and research practices from Moana, contributing to an anthropological understanding of concepts of time and space which are rooted in Tongan epistemologies. For scholars interested in the concept of *vā*, or for people wanting to utilize *vā* as a research methodology or method, this book provides a review of existing

literature that is a valuable and useful contribution to the field. In addition, Ka'ili has clearly articulated how his research process involved taking care of social relationships and responsibilities to the community, thereby offering clear and practical suggestions for embodying research ethics and ensuring that communities are involved not only as people whose ideas and practices contribute data, but also as co-creators and co-constructors of theory whose input and “roasting” of concepts (62) alongside the author provide crucially important critique that connects theory to practice. Ka'ili argues that: “The process of understanding and developing a cultural concept is like roasting yams. It takes time, with much turning and counterturning. A cultural concept must be *fokifokihi* (turned upside down and downside up) to develop all of its dimensions. Fokifokihi also provides a critical examination of all the dimensions of a concept” (62).

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TUI NICOLA CLERY

PACIFIC WOMEN IN POLITICS: Gender Quota Campaigns in the Pacific Islands. *Topics in the Contemporary Pacific*. By Kerry Baker. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. ix, 198 pp. (Tables, illustrations.) US\$68.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8248-7259-5.

Women in most countries are underrepresented in parliaments; according to the Inter-Parliamentary union the global average of women in parliament is about 24 percent. However, the proportions of women in Pacific Islands states and territories are among the lowest in the world. As documented in this book, of the twelve Pacific Island states, currently Fiji has the highest proportion of female parliamentarians with 16 percent; the rest had 10 percent or less, and in three cases, none. This situation has elicited various responses from Pacific Island governments and their development partners towards increasing the proportions of women. *Pacific Women in Politics* presents an analysis of four campaigns with this goal—for quotas and reserved seats (Samoa, Papua New Guinea, and the Autonomous Region of Bougainville), and in response to parity laws (the French Pacific territories).

Samoa led the way with a legislative amendment requiring that 10 percent of seats in parliament be held by women. A parity law requiring parties to preselect equal numbers of male and female candidates was not considered as an option because political parties in Samoa do not preselect their candidates, but may endorse several competing candidates for the same seat. The amendment to the Electoral Act provided that if less than 10 percent of women candidates in a parliamentary election were elected in the usual way, those with the largest share of votes that were achieved (without actually winning a seat) would be appointed to parliament. The amendment was motivated by the government's wish to be responsive to international

concerns rather than to a significant local demand for the change. Samoa had a poor showing on the indicator for the number of women in parliament under Goal Three of the Millennium Development goals (2000–2015). In addition, the United Nations Committee for the Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) had called Samoa to account a number of times on structural barriers to women's candidacy in its electoral system. The 10 percent law was pushed through by a powerful prime minister, and made possible (although not without some background grumbling) by the fact that Samoa has what is in effect a one-party system with a firm, long-term grip on parliament.

The case of Samoa provides a distinct contrast to the other three cases considered in the book. In Papua New Guinea, calls for reserved seats came from prominent women, supported by international agencies committed to women's equality, and with considerable public debate on the merits from both women and men. A Women's Bill was passed in 2011, but the two-thirds parliamentary majority required to incorporate it into Organic Law on National and Local Level Government Elections was not achieved in 2012. After the 2017 elections (when no women won seats, as they had done in previous elections), the proposal lacked sufficiently powerful sponsors to push it into law. In the case of Bougainville's post-conflict Constituent Assembly, calls for the allocation of reserved seats for women also mainly came from women, and advocates of the measure succeeded in getting seats reserved for women in each of Bougainville's three regions. In the French territories, France imposed its gender parity law requiring political parties to nominate approximately equal numbers of men and women in the electorates they were contesting. The result was a significant increase the proportion of women elected to national assemblies in New Caledonia and French Polynesia.

Author Kerry Baker provides a thoughtful and detailed analysis of the complex underlying circumstances of each of these campaigns. As the many studies of women and politics in the Pacific cited by Baker demonstrate, women are rapidly achieving equality with men in terms of education and employment, although there are proportionally far fewer women than men in the formal sectors of the economies. Politics seems to represent the so-called glass ceiling. Baker describes how in each of the campaigns there was a consensus that without some form of quota, few women would ever win seats in open elections. She identifies and explores a number of overlapping themes that emerged in the four campaigns, as well as arguments that justified or disputed the need for special measures for women's inclusion in parliament. Do women bring different perspectives to parliament compared to those of men? Are women's interests different to those of men? Should measures be taken, not because women are essentially different from men, but because it is their right as citizens? Are quotas the best way to gradually accustom electorates to the idea of women parliamentarians and to overcome

male prejudice? Do quotas contravene democracy? Or custom?

Custom was invoked in these campaigns to both justify and to oppose special measures. For example, in Bougainville many groups are matrilineal, and in Samoa a custom often invoked is that a brother must respect his sister and include her in deciding extended family matters. But in neither Bougainville nor Samoa did women traditionally exercise public political authority.

The parity laws imposed by France have produced by far the best results. In 2018, 49 percent of seats were held by women in the Assembly of French Polynesia, and in 2014 women held 44 percent of seats in the New Caledonia Congress. Yet, in Wallis and Futuna, lacking a strong party system, the parity measure could not be effectively applied.

Baker's detailed analyses of the processes underlying the four case studies touch on other very relevant issues such as the low proportion of women in local and municipal governments where gender quotas have yet to be considered. In the traditionalist system of village councils in Samoa women tend to be either overtly or tacitly excluded, whereas in more Westernized systems such as that of French Polynesia, women are making significant gains. Baker concludes the book with a call for research to "further examine the questions of what success looks like in quota campaigns and who defines it" (159). This reviewer heartily agrees; data that I and my colleagues collected on success factors in Samoan elections were ignored by the organizers of a donor-funded project to increase women's candidacy in the 2019 election. The project increased the number of women candidates, but had no effect on the results, according to a post-election survey. The donor-led design of the project was based on the doubtful assumption that campaign measures found successful in metropolitan democracies are transferable to the electoral systems of Pacific Island states.

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PENELOPE SCHOEFFEL

THE PAST BEFORE US: Mo'okū'auhau as Methodology. Indigenous Pacifics. Edited by Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019. xiv, 141 pp. US\$78.00, cloth. ISBN 978-0-8248-7339-4.

The Past before Us presents an inspiring window into Native Hawaiian ontology and methodologies, both critiquing Western academic research methodologies and offering practical alternatives drawn from the Hawaiian context. Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu has artfully assembled pieces from eleven Native Hawaiian scholars and practitioners, a collective "committed to creating social, political, and epistemological change" (128). Their multi-disciplinary explorations of Native research methodologies trace a path through taro fields, Native Hawaiian chants, proverbs, philosophy, lei making, wayfinding, and diaspora. Each chapter explores different aspects and

applications of *mo'okū'auhau*, or the Native Hawaiian concept and practice of a deep and continuous social, spiritual, and genealogical connection to each other and all things across time. The result is a rich and multifaceted vision of sustainability as a form of continuity rooted in Native Hawaiian history and ontology.

One of the most refreshing things about the book is its willingness to be a work of activism. As Wilson-Hokowhitu and Manulani Aluli Meyer note in the introduction, it is meant to “capture the *function* of Indigenous, Pacific, and Kanaka 'Ōiwi (Native Hawaiian) scholarship and to be a vehicle for expanding consciousness” (4). Each of the contributors realizes this goal in their own way, through the myriad possibilities of *mo'okū'auhau* and its central themes of connectivity, continuity, and succession.

In chapter 1, Kū Kahakalau explores Native Hawaiian proverbs as a touchstone for shared values, ontology, and a methodological approach she calls *Ma'awe Pono*. She details the process of *Ma'awe Pono* through eight phases of research that both critique Western methodologies and offer a promising alternative, albeit one that conforms to a specific “Hawaiian framework and Hawaiian paradigms” (26). Mehana Blaich Vaughan's subsequent contribution presents a wonderful illustration of this framework by introducing us to her grandmother, Tūtū, and Native Hawaiian lei making (chapter 2). As she walks through lei making with Tūtū, Vaughan gracefully demonstrates how this work actually enacts basic principles fundamental to respectful Indigenous research.

Next, Kalei Nu'uhiwa delves into how a paradigm known as *Papakū Makawalu* can be used to guide research (chapter 3). Based on a genealogical creation chant, the methodology of *Papakū Makawalu* captures the timelessness, multivocality, and infinite potential of orally transmitted knowledge and offers one way for today's Hawaiians to reconnect with their past through ancient wisdom. In chapter 4, Ku'ualoa Ho'omanawanui builds on the themes of cyclical time, connection, and multiple perspectives by looking at *mo'okū'auhau* as a bridge between “orature and literature” (53). Emphasizing how this “critical, culturally-based Indigenous methodology” (51) is a form of kinship that is being rediscovered, rather than invented, she presents *mo'okū'auhau's* “expansive web” (64) of connections as a possible pan-Indigenous methodology that could help heal communities across the globe. 'Umi Perkins then brings *mo'okū'auhau* into conversation with the genealogical methods of Nietzsche and Foucault (chapter 5). Her fascinating discussion of continuity and rupture, colonialism, power, and the troubling tensions between science and intuition illustrate how *mo'okū'auhau*, firmly rooted in *mana* (spiritual power), is a useful and necessary combination of both theory and empiricism, objectivity, and subjectivity. Hōkūlani Aikau brings this dynamic quality back into the context of Native Hawaiian practice through exploring shared responsibilities to each other, the environment, and all things (*kuleana*) (chapter 6). Beautifully told through her own

experience as an academic “outsider” brought in to work on restoring taro fields with a local community on O‘ahu, Aikau shows how the practice of mo‘okū‘auhau can trouble false binaries like Native/non-Native and help to foster action, culturally respectful relationships, and kuleana regardless of a person’s background.

David Chang builds upon the Perkins and Aikau chapters by looking at how mo‘okū‘auhau can be mobilized as a “decolonial practice” (98) that engages directly with settler colonialism, power, and mana (chapter 7). By explaining how this methodology rejects such classic Western categories as the atomized individual, the bounded nation-state, and linear, progressive time, he illustrates its potential political power. Similar connections across time and space feature in Lisa Kahaleole Hall’s exploration of today’s Hawaiian diaspora (chapter 8). Hall shows how mo‘okū‘auhau, as an active, contingent web of relations, might serve as a connecting force to counteract such divisive categories as “blood” and “race” (115).

In the final chapter, Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu emphasizes the active, guiding role of the Native Hawaiian ancestors as a source of both connectivity and continuity. Drawing upon the inspirational story of *Hōkūle‘a*, the Polynesian canoe that circled the globe using ancient wayfinding, she suggests using mo‘okū‘auhau as a path forward into a sustainable future and a method for helping Native Hawaiians to see themselves as both modern and Indigenous—a challenge shared by all Indigenous peoples.

One weakness of the book is the strict specificity of mo‘okū‘auhau, which is deeply embedded in Hawaiian language and ontology. A broader scope is suggested by several contributors, and briefly explored by Ho‘omanawanui and Hall, but mo‘okū‘auhau’s potential for engagement beyond Hawai‘i still appears limited. The prevalent use of Hawaiian, though enriching, reinforces this narrow focus and might make the book less accessible to a broad readership. Still, the volume has enormous potential for sparking innovative action beyond Hawai‘i. For example, the Marquesan concept of *a‘itua*, similar to mo‘okū‘auhau, evokes both genealogy and continuity. Further investigations of Oceania would likely reveal more such links and opportunities.

This book is a unique and valuable addition to the growing body of work by Indigenous scholars on Native methodologies and ways of knowing, and a welcome complement to the work of Western phenomenologists like Keith Basso and Tim Ingold. Its detailed attention to practice and engagement also makes it potentially useful for not just academic researchers, but for practitioners working in Hawai‘i and with Indigenous communities elsewhere. I greatly enjoyed reading *The Past before Us*, and strongly recommend it to anyone interested in Hawai‘i, Indigenous peoples, research methods and engagement, philosophy, decolonization, or genealogy.

THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC: Micronesia and Papua New Guinea. Edited by Grant K. Goodman and Felix Moos. London and New York: Routledge, 2019. xiv, 289 pp. (Tables, maps, B&W photos.) US\$149.95, cloth. ISBN 978-0-367-29696-4.

The United States and Japan in the Western Pacific is an edited volume researched in 1977 and 1978. It was first published in 1981 as a Westview Replica Edition. The Westview Replica Editions disseminate research quickly by avoiding the lag time involved in traditional publishing arrangements; as such it was not edited, but rather accepted in “camera-ready form and move[d] immediately into the production process” (np). Given the quality and resolution of maps and images, the dates mentioned in the text, and the lack of any indicator otherwise, the book appears wholly unaltered from 1981 in this publication by Routledge. Certainly, with the passage of time and the privilege of hindsight we can see how some of the predictions and proclamations made in the book never bore fruit in reality; even some of the major players have changed, and with this, shifting boundaries and priorities. The book also lacks a section on methods although field sites are touched upon in the preface and some indication of how the information was gleaned can be found in the endnotes. Despite these shortcomings, the book highlights the historic role of politics and economics in vying for influence and varying degrees of control in the Pacific as well as discussion of the politics of development of Papua New Guinea and Micronesia. The book also provides an overview of the historical relationship between the United States and Japan as well as that of Japan and Micronesia. As such, it could serve as valuable resource and starting point for those researchers willing to delve into it.

The book is the result of thirty months of collaboration between University of Kansas professors from a variety of disciplines: Grant Goodman (History), Felix Moos (Anthropology and East Asian Languages and Cultures), Robert Fluker (Business), Carl Lande (Political Science), Nobleza Asuncion-Lande (Speech Communications), and Chae-jin Lee (Political Science). The work was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and Japan Society of New York (Sumitomo Fund) likely lending the emphasis on the historic and contemporary (1977–1978) relationships between Japan and the US in Micronesia (during Trust Territory times) and Papua New Guinea. Moos served as the director of the project with research and writing of the various chapters being divided amongst the co-authors. The division of labour for the book is as follows: chapter 1, “Introduction,” Fluker, Goodman and Moos; chapter 2, “An Historical Overview: Micronesia and Papua New Guinea,” Moos, Lande, Asuncion-Lande; chapter 3, “Micronesia Under American Rule, 1944–1978: Change and Persistence,” Moos and Goodman; chapter 4, “Papua New Guinea Under Australian Rule and After: The Shock of Independence,” Lande and Asuncion-Lande; chapter 5, “Papua New Guinea: Issues and Politics in Economic Development,” Lande and Asuncion-Lande;

chapter 6, "Micronesia: Issues and Politics in Economic Development," Fluker and Moos; chapter 7, "Japanese Politics and Perspectives in Micronesia and Papua New Guinea," Lee and Goodman; and a final conclusion (chapter 8) by Goodman and Moos.

Although the title of the book suggests coverage of the role of the United States and Japan in Micronesia, it also discusses the role that other countries have played. For example, it deals extensively with Australia, particularly in Papua New Guinea, which is discussed thoroughly in chapter 4. Notable in this text is the relative absence of China, which is only mentioned in passing. China and the Soviet Union were becoming more active in the Pacific during the time of writing by "testing the water" (9) to "assess possible opportunities for political influence and economic benefits. The Pacific nations, for their part, are hopeful of possible economic advantages and are immediately aware of the political leverage of opening windows on the communist world" (10).

The book also considers development in Micronesia and Papua New Guinea and, "what kind of development is really advisable or viable, or possible for what kind of Pacific locale. Such considerations clearly concern not only the [I]ndigenous populations but the specific former or present colonial mentor of the new state in question" (3). The authors also point out that other countries will be impacted by said development, emphasizing policy analysis of Japan and the US to "determine the extent to which American and Japanese policies are congruent, divergent, or even conflicting" (3). Despite their attention to transnationalism, globalization, international trade, and resource extraction in chapters 2 through 7, the introduction reveals that this is not necessarily in the best interests of the population. The issue of power and cost benefits are considered as the authors note that, "technologically limited assistance needed by Less Developed Countries to sustain and enhance small-scale subsistence agriculture, particularly important in the Pacific [I]slands, is either downgraded or overlooked in favour of showcase projects requiring lavish funding and, in turn, theoretically redounding to the political advantage of the donor state as well as of the recipient local authorities in power" (2). Goodman and Moos point out in the conclusion how these inequities persist through the American-style education system in Micronesia, which focuses on government employment, lack of attention to local agriculture and fisheries, and cultivation of desires and taste for imported goods.

The material is obviously dated, but the critique still reverberates today in many contemporary concerns faced in the Pacific. As such, *The United States and Japan in the Western Pacific* provides a valuable historic frame of reference for addressing not only issues of development, but also many of the same issues confronted by and in Micronesia and Papua New Guinea today. Topics discussed include: the impacts of nuclear testing in Micronesia, food security issues (including repeated calls in the book for the development of the fisheries industry as well as subsistence agriculture),

issues of dependency and development, colonialism, language and education, resource extraction, nationalism, tourism, war, and conflict. These various topics are easily accessible as the index is well put together, allowing for researchers, academics, and policymakers to mine the book for historical information that they may find valuable in conducting their own work.

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DAVID FAZZINO

A SUITABLE GIRL. *Directed by Sarita Khurana and Smriti Mundhra. Portland, OR: Collective Eye Films, 2018. 1 DVD (94 min.). US\$295.00. In English.*

A Suitable Girl provides an intimate portrait of three unmarried (and marrying) Indian girls (Dipti, Amrita, and Ritu) and their parents as they go through the tortures and thrills of seeking and finding suitable spouses. All three come from urban Hindu families with a range of socio-economic backgrounds and the film does very well to demonstrate the marriage stakes and constraints in India today. One of the three of the film's protagonists, Dipti, celebrates her birthday in her parent's flat with neighbours and friends cramped around a cake with the number "30" scrawled ominously over it. Did it really need to be advertised, she wonders aloud. Interestingly, the unassuming Dipti has a fan-following of sorts in her Bhayandar building; we are drawn in by her warmth and open-heartedness and begin to see why her parents so dote on her; even her building neighbours seem to be willing her into marriage through their friendship, prayer, and love.

As a snapshot of the home truths about the gendered nature of marriage in India and the importance of both caste and class (the latter as an economic and symbolic system), this film comes up trumps through three intimate portraits that involve a range of measures to arrange a good match. Whilst Dipti seeks a "straightforward" man, the language of the wider marriage market involves a different sort of equation. "Height 5'2", Weight: 70 kg," says the gleaming plastic Rotary Club of Bombay banner advertising Dipti and two other suitable girls trying their hand at a modern version of the *swayamvar* ("self-choosing") ceremony. The girls (accompanied by one parent) sit facing a room full of prospective male suitors who are made to stand as their names and castes are called out by an elderly local Rotarian running the ceremony. As in the ancient epics of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, a woman can choose a suitable boy from amongst a group of male suitors and garland the one she wishes to marry. In Bombay, Dipti's garland languishes in her lap at the end of the occasion. The Rotarian-sage provides his diagnosis: In today's day and age, boys must consent to marriage too. Dipti's weight, he says, was a bit too much and this is what caused "confusion" amongst the boys. We may add that socioeconomic standard, education, occupation, age,

and skin colour are boldly seen in this film to play their parts alongside the size of one's waist. Eventually, Dipti's kind heart and warm and loving smile come to rest (via the good offices of *shadi.com*—a popular marriage website for South Asians in India and abroad) with a handsome dark-skinned South Indian man who dares to call her “darling.” She properly redirects him to speak to her father, and soon, it's a done deal.

In another encounter, a “face reader and astrologer” (with a cream office and auspicious orange painted door frames) receives Ritu's mother as she seeks his assistance in narrowing down possibilities for her daughter's marriage. Staring down her phone at an image of a young man's face declaring ominously: “He has medium fortune only. Medium.” The message to the mother is to subtly recalibrate her ambitions for her daughter in the upward direction, so that both their fortunes might be greater than this medium-ranked loser. He advises her to press delete and move swiftly on. Meanwhile, Ritu's Delhi-based father has also built up high hopes, citing with amazement a marriage “application” (note the subtle and telling shift in language from marriage “proposals” of yesteryear to today's “applications”) from “a small city like Agra,” where, he states, his daughter would have “no future!” On these grounds, the final destinations of these three women reveal something of the co-constitution of social class and caste through careful calculations around prospects post-marriage: Dubai (big future), Bangalore (not bad), and a very small town in Rajasthan called Nokha (oh dear); though it is notable that the one who marries into the family living in this small desert town marries a wealthy boy who fell for her in school and hotly pursued her (and her parents) into making this union. The argument that the family, rather than the individual, is the source of class in India (Sara Dickey, “Anjali's Prospects: Class Mobility in Urban India,” in *Everyday Life in South Asia*, edited by Diane Mines and Sarah Lamb [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002], 217) finds strong resonance in the film. For instance, a suitor who visits Dipti's home fails to call again and when pressed for a reason cites “standard of living.”

Interestingly, Amrita (now of Nokha) is also highly qualified with an MBA, and prior to marriage spends her time working and strolling around Delhi's malls in jeans and t-shirts. Amrita's husband promises before marriage to ease her into the family manufacturing business he runs once they are settled. She folds up her jeans and deposits them in her cupboard on a shelf too high to reach, presumably awaiting the time when they may return into her life. Donning saris selected especially for her by her mother-in-law, she proceeds to play the part of a loving and respectable wife in the home of a rich man from a politically prominent family. Sadly for her, Nokha soon imposes further expectations upon her which provide a test of her resilience and good-natured submission to the requirements of being a beautiful and dutiful *bahu* (daughter-in-law) running her husband's home. Poignantly, her mother-in-law asks Amrita in Hindi: “Did you remember to put dried

mango into the cauliflower?” With remarkably little bitterness, Amrita says no as her husband busies himself with his food. Amrita provides this closing observation about her life in Nokha: “You lose your identity when you get married, and that’s one thing I never wanted to do. More than 80 percent of people who come to the home would not even know my name. They just recognize me as Keshav’s wife.”

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PERVEEZ MODY