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In Dedication

Every year, the East Asian Studies Journal is dedicated to a Wittenberg University faculty or staff member who is actively involved in the East Asian Studies Program, promotes academic achievement and encourages students to stretch beyond their limits in their chosen fields of study. The student staff would like to dedicate this year's issue to Dr. Nona Moskowitz, Professor of Japanese Anthropology and Sociology.

Dr. Moskowitz is currently Director of the East Asian Studies Program and Chair of the Department of Sociology at Wittenberg. Dr. Moskowitz received her B.A. at Cornell University and her Ph.D. at the University of Virginia. A cultural and linguistic anthropologist by training, her research focuses on education, youth cultures and youth practices in Japan. She has conducted fieldwork on Chichijima Island, in Yamaguchi Prefecture and in Tokyo, Japan and teaches classes on Japanese culture and youth, gender, and education in cross-cultural contexts. Dr. Moskowitz has been the faculty advisor for the *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal* for the past 6 years. Over the years, she has loved working with the students who have labored to maintain the Journal and see it through to its 45th volume. We at the *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal* would like to thank Dr. Moskowitz for giving us a range of experiences, both in and out of the classroom.

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Cyberpunk Anime: An Expression of Japanese Anxiety in a Modern World

Kaitlyn Burke

Kaitlyn Burke (they/them/theirs) is a 2021 graduate of Wayne State University with a dual focus in Asian Studies and Electrical Engineering. They currently work as a battery test engineer at Ford and will be returning to Wayne State in the fall to pursue a Master's in Computer Engineering. They hold a long-lasting love for cyberpunk media which inspired their look at the genre in Japanese media.

The unique genre of Japanese cyberpunk debuted in the early 1980s against a backdrop of economic prosperity and sociopolitical struggle that was reflected strongly through its myriad works across various mediums. However, Japanese cyberpunk, much like Western cyberpunk, had almost fully fizzled out by the late 1990s, making it a short, yet sweet collection of pop culture works. Cyberpunk anime in particular revealed much about the changing nature of Japan in the roughly ten years of its prime and left a lasting influence on the medium. Cyberpunk anime—often directly adapted from their manga counterparts—began with Katsuhiro Otomo's iconic *Akira* (1988), a manga and film that influenced not only Japanese stories following its release, but many Western cyberpunk stories as well. *Akira*'s major post-apocalyptic, 'low-life, high-tech', and transhuman themes built the foundations on which later works were built. Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)—based on Masumune Shiro's manga of the same name—Hiroshi Fukutomi's *Battle Angel* (1993), and Shinichirou Watanabe's cult-classic *Cowboy Bebop* (1997) in particular stand out amongst the cyberpunk anime works as they further built upon the foundations that *Akira* set. This collective body of work offers a look into the Japanese psyche by allowing outside viewers to understand the ways in which Japan was grappling with its postwar anxieties amidst an economic boom and the subsequent collapse of

its economy alongside mass globalization by using post-apocalyptic or dystopian imagery; low-life, high-tech, and anti-establishment sentimentalities; transhumanism; and diverse, placeless narratives. Thus, this paper seeks to establish cyberpunk in the context of Japan, discuss the above motifs in relation to the circumstances which influenced them, and to uncover what exactly the decade of cyberpunk anime has to say about a rapidly modernizing 1980s Japan.

Cyberpunk as a Genre in Japan

The accelerated evolutions in technology and anti-government punk sub-cultures of the 1980s formed cyberpunk as a genre almost simultaneously in both the Western and Eastern worlds. At its inception, the modern Japanese cityscape of the 1980s heavily inspired the cyberpunk aesthetic in the West, so much so that William Gibson, known as the father of cyberpunk, claimed that “modern Japan simply [is] cyberpunk”.¹ Beyond its borrowing of Japanese aesthetics, Western cyberpunk has long since been defined as a genre of low-life, high-tech stories with narratives centering an anti-establishment low-life—often in the form of either a low-class, punk persons or a dirty cop—as its hero in worlds defined exclusively by their advanced technologies and neon-lit neo-cities modeled after modern-day Tokyo. As the direct result of the 1980s bubble economy and the creation of a “technopolis,” cyberpunk cities resemble Shibuya more-so than any modern Western city.² Thus, modern Japan unintentionally became the heart of many Western cyberpunk stories not for its unique circumstances, but rather for Japan’s pure ‘neo’ aesthetic look.

However, simply applying the narrow low-life, high-tech, ‘neo’ aesthetic definitions to Japanese cyberpunk works constitutes a largely ethnocentric mistake—one which forces a Western-specific limitation onto works created in a set of unique circumstances that largely differed from those of the Western world in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. Japan’s unique circumstances are easily picked out in any of its cyberpunk works; such circumstances

¹ William Gibson, “The Future Perfect,” *Time Magazine*, April 30 (2001) <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1956774,00.html>.

² William O. Gardner, *The Metabolist Imagination: Visions of the City in Postwar Japanese Architecture and Science Fiction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 111-142.

include the lasting nuclear anxieties of the postwar period, the student protests of the 1960s and '70s, the extremist bombings of the 1970s, and the bubble economy and its almost immediate bursting in the 1980s and '90s. Such applications of the Western low-life, high-tech definition have, in the past, led to the attempted exclusion of such seminal works like *Akira*, as well as the entire anime medium, from the cyberpunk genre.³ Thus, rather than applying the simplified low-life, high-tech definition to Japanese cyberpunk works, this paper seeks to place cyberpunk into the context of Japan, most specifically those circumstances of the 1980s and the immediate decades before them, which birthed the genre. The explicitly cyberpunk works of the 1980s and 1990s Japan often have anti-establishment sentiments, typically as social commentaries buried in exposition; however, unlike its Western counterpart, Japanese cyberpunk is not inherently anti-establishment, nor is it inherently lowlife. In fact, Japanese cyberpunk stories often twist the traditional low-life, high-tech themes of Western cyberpunk to meet their unique needs. Furthermore, unlike Western cyberpunk, Japanese cyberpunk tends to focus heavily on transhumanism, whether it be through the grotesque or through post-human artificial intelligence, and center dystopian and/or post-apocalyptic narratives in diverse worlds. Therefore, this paper makes the important distinction between Japanese and Western cyberpunk as a genre; Japanese cyberpunk exists as more than a simple low-life, high-tech punk narrative; it is an entire genre reflective of the nuclear, sociopolitical, and economic anxieties of a defining period in modern Japanese history.⁴

The Post-apocalyptic, the Dystopian, and Nuclear Anxiety

The most obvious theme present in nearly every work within the cyberpunk anime lexicon is the post-apocalyptic or dystopian world. Certainly not every backdrop or narrative is

³ Martin De la Igelsia, "Has Akira always been a Cyberpunk Comic?" Arts 7, no. 3 (2018), 8-9; Kumiko Saito, "Anime" in *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture*, ed. Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy, and Lars Schmeink (New York: Routledge, 2020), 151.

⁴ Gardner, *The Metabolist Imagination*, 111-142; Saito, "Anime," 151-152, 160.

explicitly post-apocalyptic; in fact, many of the settings in Japanese cyberpunk works look like a modern city. However, the characters and the narratives of these works often imply a post-nuclear apocalyptic or dystopian setting—or both. This theme, however, is usually not present only in setting; world-ending or high stakes, dystopian circumstances are also key in many cyberpunk works with *Akira* being the most obvious of examples. Whether it is apocalyptic or simply dystopian, the widespread usage of this theme in Japanese cyberpunk makes it an obvious point of investigation: nuclear anxiety, and, by extension, technological anxiety (often with undercurrents of anti-American sentiment) make themselves known when looking into works with either theme present. Such anxieties being so omnipresent in a genre centered around the advancement of technology are, of course, predictable. As Japan grappled with its postwar identity in the decades after the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, followed by the negligent Red Cross studies and the brutal American occupation, such nuclear and technological anxieties became a characteristic of many Japanese mediums and genres in the years following. Beyond this, the unique timing of cyberpunk in 1980s Japan lent itself to nuclear anxieties amplified by the cold war, in both its conclusion and the tensions in the decades before it: it is no coincidence that films such as *Akira* and *Battle Angel* center worlds ruined by global, nuclear wars. The argument for anti-American sentiments in relation to nuclear anxiety is further supported by criticisms found in several Japanese cyberpunk anime of America and its great technological and nuclear ambitions. With this in mind, this paper will now look at post-apocalyptic and dystopian themes in the context of Japanese cyberpunk anime.



Fig. 1. *Akira*, the animated film, both opens and closes with similar visual sequences evoking the detonation of the atomic bombs over Japan.

The most obvious example of a post-apocalyptic narrative in the cyberpunk genre occurs in the iconic 1988 film *Akira*. The inspiration for this narrative is just as obvious: within the first few minutes of the film, a mushroom cloud and blinding light swallow 1988's Tokyo. Thus, the connection between Japan's identity as the only country to have experienced not one but two atomic bombs to the global tensions of the Cold War is made clear as day: there is no doubt that nuclear anxiety fuels this particular film.⁵ The blinding light fades to reveal a renewed city in the not-so-distant year 2019 A.D., one aptly named not only in classic cyberpunk fashion, but in a way reflective of postwar government plans for rebuilding Japan, as Neo-Tokyo.⁶ However, as the film ends, the city is, once again, swallowed by the same blinding light which caused the third world war, revealed to be the second-coming of Akira, a subject of government experiments on humans. From his resting place, which resembles the first atomic bomb used at Trinity, to his abilities, everything about Akira ties him to nuclear power. Thus, while almost delicately hidden away amongst the struggles of the main characters, Tetsuo and Kaneda, Akira directly represents the atomic bombs. Furthermore, the film presents Akira as a multi-faceted force: he is, at once, both the power that ended Tokyo and brought upon World War Three and the power that saves Neo-Tokyo from Tetsuo's extreme and uncontrollable psychokinetic powers. However, this representation should not be mistaken for advocacy; even when Akira uses his power for salvation, Neo-Tokyo must still be sacrificed—his power is simply too great. Thus, within the post-apocalyptic setting, *Akira* makes the point of distinguishing between the good and evil of nuclear power while also condemning it entirely.⁷ It is no coincidence that the film ends with the same blinding light and renewal of the city that it opens with. Otomo is making a cyclical point: as long as nuclear weapons exist, the world is doomed to an eternal cycle of destruction and rebirth. Thus, the post-apocalyptic in *Akira* exemplifies the nuclear anxieties of an

⁵ Christopher Bolton, "From Ground Zero to Degree Zero: *Akira* from Origin to Oblivion," *Mechademia: Second Arc*, Vol. 9, Origins (2014): 296-297, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/mech.9.2014.0295>.

⁶ Gardner, *The Metabolist Imagination*, 145-146.

⁷ Thomas Lamarre, "Born of Trauma: *Akira* and Capitalist Modes of Destruction," *Positions*, 16 (1) (2008): 136, doi: <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/10.1215/10679847-2007-014>.

entire country, perhaps best captured in the story's immense popularity.⁸



Fig. 2. In *Akira*, Akira's cryogenic pod resembles the Trinity test bomb, The Gadget.

Akira has the unique positioning of being both a post-apocalyptic and a dystopian film. After having been rebuilt following the catastrophic endings of the third world war, Neo-Tokyo exists in both political and social disarray. Neo-Tokyo's conditions resemble actual happenings in Japan, both in the 1980s and the decades leading up to them: anything from student riots and biker gangs to religious zealots and extremist attacks plague the city as the government struggles to crack down. While such conditions certainly present a direct social commentary, they also make up the backdrop on which the world of *Akira* exists. *Akira*'s dystopian setting lends itself heavily to cyberpunk anti-establishment ideals, which will be discussed in the following section; however, the setting also represents a nuclear anxiety best captures in the three psychic children—Takashi, Kiyoko, and Masaru—on which the narrative revolves. Within the first half of the film, Takashi, having escaped from government experiment facilities, sees his savior gunned down by police before being recaptured by the government for more experimentation. The other two children, Kiyoko and Masaru, are revealed to also be in secret custody of the government for observation and experimentation. The film, at first, fails to clarify whether these children are a result of nuclear power or not; however, with Akira's later reveal as a former psychic from the same program, the link between the children and nuclear energy

⁸ *Akira*, directed by Katsuhiro Otomo, Toho Studios, 1988, accessed November 22, 2020, <https://www.hulu.com/movie/sub-akira-64a5a8d0-1406-4178-97a5-2649504faa85>.

becomes clear. This link is further established by their appearances; the children, after undergoing experimentation, have leathery and discolored skin resembling the keloids found on hibakusha after the bombs. Two of these children cannot walk and need special care to remain alive, as is implied by Kiyoko's advanced sleeping pod and Masaru's floating chair. Tetsuo also displays the link between psychic powers and nuclear energy through his own care, lesions, hallucinations, and eventual mutations. These children—and Tetsuo—exist as a metaphor for the hibakusha, and their struggles and appearances, while fantastical for the sake of the plot, mirror the experiences of atomic bomb survivors in the days, months, and years after the atomic bombs.⁹ Thus, the usage of both a post-apocalyptic and a dystopian setting in *Akira* strengthens the films link to nuclear anxiety.¹⁰

While *Akira* is the clearest example of Japanese cyberpunk using post-apocalyptic and dystopian settings to capture nuclear anxieties, it is not the only example. *Ghost in the Shell*, *Battle Angel*, and *Cowboy Bebop* all utilize post-apocalyptic or dystopian settings in their storytelling; these settings are key to their narratives and present a further linking of the genre to nuclear and technological anxieties, albeit to a lesser degree than *Akira*. Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, for example, quietly focuses on anxieties regarding nuclear power and what such power means for American technology. The antagonist of the film, known as the Puppet Master, reveals itself to be a sophisticated, sentience-claiming AI of American origin.¹¹ Similarly, Fukutomi's *Battle Angel*, an OVA based on the *Battle Angel Alita* manga, likewise heavily implies its post-apocalyptic setting to be the result of a great nuclear war 300 years prior; this war led to the total destruction of Earth, leaving only the lower classes, robots, and garbage to inhabit it whilst the rich continue living high-tech lives in the satellite city above.¹² The fact that *Battle Angel* takes place entirely in America exemplifies not only Japanese nuclear anxieties, but also Japanese anxieties regarding America and American technology and ambition during the Cold War; the implication of mutually assured destruction between America and The Soviet Union during the Cold War no

⁹ Lamarre, "Born of Trauma," 138-140.

¹⁰ *Akira*.

¹¹ *Ghost in the Shell*, directed by Mamoru Oshii, Bandai Visual, 1985, DVD.

¹² *Battle Angel*, directed by Hiroshi Fukutomi, Madhouse, 1993, DVD.

doubt influenced such a global post-apocalyptic setting. Similarly, in Watanabe's *Cowboy Bebop*, a catastrophic accident with hypergate technology destroys the Earth, forcing the world's population to colonize the remaining planets in a post-apocalyptic attempt to survive.¹³ This setting, while not making explicitly clear that the hypergate incident is a nuclear explosion, implies a deep anxiety regarding the future of both Japan and the world in the face of rapidly advancing technologies, nuclear or otherwise. Unlike *Akira*, the post-apocalyptic and dystopian themes in these anime exist as backdrops to the main narrative; however, this does not reduce the settings' importance to their respective narratives. Post-apocalyptic or dystopian themes may not be the central message of the above works, but they are key to telling their stories and help define these anime as cyberpunk works.

Low-life, High-tech, and the Anti-establishment

While it is certainly important to detach Japanese cyberpunk from the narrow "low-life, high-tech" definition of Western cyberpunk, this does not mean that the low-life, high-tech aspects of cyberpunk are completely lost within Japanese cyberpunk. In fact, like cyberpunk narratives found in the West, the low-life, high-tech motif of cyberpunk is just as central to the genre in Japan. However, unlike Western cyberpunk, Japanese cyberpunk uses low-life, high-tech in a unique way. Low-life, high-tech does not always mean that the heroes of the narrative are low-life—lower class, punks, degenerates, or otherwise—nor does it mean that the high-tech is always beyond the grasp of current human innovation. Simply put, Japanese cyberpunk uses the low-life, high-tech motifs of cyberpunk alongside real world influences to put a unique spin on anti-establishment cyberpunk stories. Perhaps the low-life, high-tech sentiment of Japanese cyberpunk is best captured by Major Makoto Kusanagi in *Ghost in the Shell*: "If man realizes technology is in reach, he achieves it. Like it's damn near instinctive."¹⁴ In the case of Japanese cyberpunk, such ambition is not always a good thing; Kusanagi's expressed sentiment lays at the heart of every

¹³ *Cowboy Bebop*, directed by Shinichirou Watanabe, Sunrise Studios, 1998-1999, accessed December 1, 2020, <https://www.hulu.com/series/cowboy-bebop-af54be93-ee11-475c-b786-3543a9a7d4ba>.

¹⁴ *Ghost in the Shell*.

societal breakdown in every Japanese cyberpunk story; low-life, high-tech is an expression not of a punk subculture overthrowing a corrupt government, but of a society driven to collapse by human ambition. This manifestation of low-life, high-tech is a key, but overlooked, difference in the way that cyberpunk manifests in Japanese pop culture.

Low-life, high-tech is, at its core, a social criticism; thus, it is a complex motif that Japanese cyberpunk uses in varying ways. Otomo's *Akira*, Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell*, and Watanabe's *Cowboy Bebop* best exemplify the myriad of ways that low-life, high-tech presents an anti-establishment message and social critique. In contrast, Fukutomi's *Battle Angel* uses the motif solely as a device for exposition; the film certainly utilizes low-life, high-tech in its story telling, but does not center the theme in a meaningful way, instead focusing strongly on the post-apocalyptic and the transhuman.

In *Akira*, low-life, high-tech exists in the juxtaposition of the lives of everyday people, Kaneda's bike gang, and the high-tech and oppressive military and police forces. The breakdown of society makes itself known almost immediately: the city of Neo-Tokyo is completely covered in grime, both literally and metaphorically. *Akira* opens with quick references to drugs—referred to as capsules—and feuding biker gangs followed by the brutal gunning-down of the man implied to be the savior of Takashi, one of the child government experiments, in the street. Shortly after, a man attempts to suicide bomb the police station where Kaneda's bike gang is being held, and, even later, religious zealots preach about the divine cleansing of the city. This chaos that the everyday peoples of Neo-Tokyo survive in is contrasted sharply by the government and military forces. Those under government charge stand out in the crowds of people with riot gear and advanced weaponry. When Kaneda and his gang encounter the escaped child, Takashi, and lose Tetsuo, they are swarmed by over-armed military forces in foreboding trucks and helicopters. In the same scene, the gang also encounters a child, later revealed to be Masaru, in a self-piloting, floating device. In contrast, even the most high-tech of the gang's bikes, Kaneda's, simply does not compare to the high-tech government forces. In the case of *Akira*, the low-life, high-tech

contrast paints the picture a police state on the verge of collapse—and the plot supports this.¹⁵

While *Akira* has a far-from-happy ending, the plot tells a classic cyberpunk narrative: upon meeting Kei at the police station, Kaneda becomes wrapped up in an anti-government, anti-taxation, and anti-corruption resistance movement which propels the story forward. Through Kei and the resistance, Kaneda co-opts high-tech state weaponry and machines and uses them to fight back against not only the corrupt government, but the monster which it created in Tetsuo—a very blatant metaphor for the consequences of an uncapped greed for power and money.¹⁶ Thus, *Akira* exists as an anti-establishment narrative, one which twists the classic low-life, high-tech cyberpunk themes to paint a picture of a society driven to collapse by its government's greed.¹⁷

Masumune's 1995 *Ghost in the Shell*, however, subverts the classic usage of low-life, high-tech. The heroes of this story are not low-life and neither are their antagonist counterparts. Rather, *Ghost in the Shell* uses the low-life, high-tech motif to paint a picture of a government which tears itself apart from the inside-out. In this case, the low-life aspect is not found explicitly; rather, the everyday people whom the puppet master manipulates, by hacking into their ghosts and planting false memories, create the low-life heart of the story. The puppet master, revealed to be a government project gone rogue, and Major Makoto Kusanagi, then, exist as a unique blending of the low-life, high-tech aspects: while one is human and the other an AI, they both inhabit entirely cybernetic shells, making them high-tech; yet, despite the implied state nature of high technology, both the puppet master and, eventually, the major oppose the government directly, twisting them to become low-life despite their government ties. In fact, the major becomes so closely linked to the low-life that, despite being the most valued in her sector, she becomes disposable. The film ends with the implication that both Kusanagi and the puppet master must be destroyed not for the chaos caused, but for the implications their knowledge holds for the state of the country. In this way, Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* twists the traditional low-life, high-tech motifs to fit his narrative. *Ghost in the Shell* is not a story of the triumph of human ambition and

¹⁵ *Akira*.

¹⁶ Lamarre, "Born of Trauma," 149-153.

¹⁷ *Akira*.

technology; it is instead a criticism of a government so blinded by its own greed and corruption that it becomes self-sabotaging. In the end Kusanagi and the puppet master survive, but the same cannot be said for the government which sought to destroy them.¹⁸

In the way that *Ghost in the Shell* focuses on the high-tech to subvert the classic usage of low-life, high-tech in cyberpunk, *Cowboy Bebop* focuses almost entirely on the low-life. The series tells the story of a world driven unchecked by the crime syndicates of the seedy underworld; as such, the government enlists the help of cowboys, or bounty hunters, to put the crime world back in check. While *Cowboy Bebop*'s setting uses straight-out-of-science-fiction levels of high-technology, such a setting takes a backseat to the overwhelming theme of low-life personhood present in almost every character. Whether it be in the heroes of the series, the everyday people, or the villains, each is haunted by some variation of a dark past. In this way, the anti-establishment is almost dropped; rather than being an explicit, in-your-face message, the conditions that have led *Cowboy Bebop*'s world into lawlessness imply the anti-establishment sentiments. In such a lawless and chaotic world, even the hero, Spike Spiegel, has a checkered past. Spike's past as a former member of the very drug syndicate he now works against colors the entire world of *Cowboy Bebop* and drives the plot to its final ending, leaving Spike to ascend into the sunset mortally wounded and alone. Spike's story, like many of the other character stories explored throughout the series, captures the very essence of the low-life aspect: Spike and his co-cast drift through life almost listlessly, focused on the past more than the present and driving themselves into corners. A metaphor for a criticism of the everyday Japanese living in a post-modern world divorced from its roots in community, *Cowboy Bebop* centers the low-life of low-life, high-tech to explore the human condition as a result of corporate and government greed in the post-war period, resulting in a poignant and unique series which captivates audiences to this day.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Ghost in the Shell*.

¹⁹ *Cowboy Bebop*; Will Bridges, "The Past Tense and the Future Perfect: The Postmodern Play of Watanabe Shinichiro and the Possibility of the Coming Community," *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 51, no. 3 (2018): 789, <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.wayne.edu/10.1111/jpcu.12692>.

Transhumanism and the Grotesque

The most prevalent theme across all Japanese cyberpunk works, anime or otherwise, is transhumanism; the question of identity, more specifically what it means to be human, in an ever-evolving technological future plagues the genre. Even the least cyberpunk of Japanese cyberpunk works features transhumanistic questions, motifs, or aesthetics to some degree. For example, in *Cowboy Bebop*, a series argued often to be a hybrid rather than pure cyberpunk, Jet exemplifies transhumanism with his mechanical arm, which stands out starkly in both detail and color compared to the rest of him.²⁰ Transhumanism in Japanese cyberpunk is often explored through cybernetics, such as sentient AI, androids, and cyborgs, and, to a lesser degree, through mutations and the grotesque, such as the case with *Akira*'s Tetsuo and the degree to which extreme violence or body horror exists in many cyberpunk works. Thus, cyborgs, mutants, and the truly grotesque have become key motifs in Japanese cyberpunk, pointing to a changing Japanese identity in an increasingly technological world, one in which technology responded directly to touch and directly influenced everyday life, and in which technology existed in a, as Shige Suzuki put it, "cyberpunk combination of fashion and technology intimately coupled with the human body."²¹



Fig. 3, 4. In *Akira*, Tetsuo recreates his lost arm with scrap metal. Later, he is swallowed by the same machinery he sought to control, losing himself in his transformation.

The themes of transhumanism and the grotesque begin, like the cyberpunk genre of anime itself, with *Akira*. The film, although

²⁰ Bridges, "The Past Tense and the Future Perfect," 784-785..

²¹ Shige Suzuki, "Manga," in *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture*, edited by Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy, and Lars Schmeink (New York: Routledge, 2020), 109.

to a lesser degree than the manga, introduces important aspects of transhumanism to make arguments about not only the accelerated changes in technology, but also about the evolutionary way in which humans adapt to it and the hubris of the corporations and scientists providing it.²² Tetsuo and his eventual transformation first into a being half-man, half-machine and then into a grotesque amalgamation of flesh and wire, provide the vehicle for Otomo's argument. First, Tetsuo uses his psychic powers to reinforce his existing body: when he loses an arm to the government's attacks with the SOL, he fashions himself a perfectly functioning mechanical arm out of nearby scrap, much to his opponent, Kaneda's, surprise. Later, when he faces off against the colonel who came to finish him while he rests in the Olympic stadium, he unites further with metal and wire as his opponents watch in disbelief and horror. These two scenes present a new kind of human, an advanced human as a seemingly perfect melding of man and machine, one whom Otomo himself described as a "new type of posthuman being."²³ Thus, in merging with the scrap around him, Tetsuo is able to reject the boundaries set by those in power—in this case, the colonel—and to embrace a new level of evolution thanks to technology.²⁴ However, just as quickly as he gains his new power and form, Tetsuo loses control of his evolution, convulsing as he unwillingly transforms into a grotesque bubbling of flesh, wire, and scrap, and taking in any and everything around him. Thus, in the same breath that Tetsuo's character asserts the potential advantages of a posthuman melding with technology, he also presents the consequences, namely a totally grotesque, even unholy, marriage of man and machine that is uncontrollable and insatiable and defies what it means to be human. In the face of a technological boom, Otomo presents the two-sided coin of a technological posthuman being, much in the same way that he asserts the destructive and renewing powers of nuclear technologies. *Akira* encourages the advancement of humanity using technology through transhumanism,

²² Steven T. Brown, *Tokyo Cyberpunk: Posthumanism in Japanese Visual Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 3.

²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁴ Brown, *Tokyo Cyberpunk*, 5.

while using the grotesque to warn of the consequences of arrogance, greed, and hubris in the pursuit of a posthuman advancement.²⁵

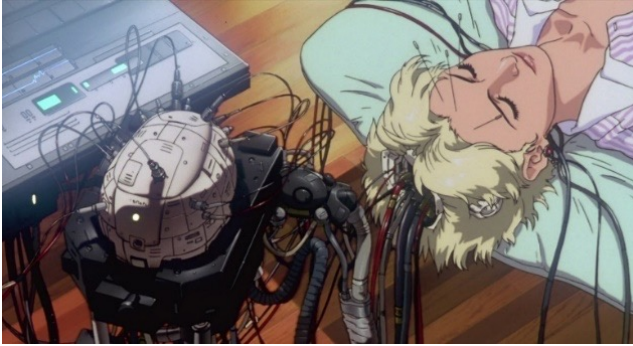


Fig. 5. In *Ghost in the Shell*, humans are regularly cybernetically enhanced, to the point that their ghosts, or souls, exist in a completely mechanical brain.

Ghost in the Shell is the next best representation of transhumanism as a theme in Japanese cyberpunk after *Akira*. The 1995 film explores transhumanism, with its entire plot focusing on the cybernetically enhanced Major Matoko Kusanagi who, for all intents and purposes, exists not as a human being but an android, more specifically a human ghost in a robotic shell. The major is centered amongst other cybernetically enhanced characters, both major and background, in a plot to chase down an elusive hacker later revealed as a government AI project gone sentient and, thus, rogue. *Ghost in the Shell* uses technology and transhumanism to ask what it means to be human in a technological world, and the answer given is seemingly simple: “memory defines mankind.”²⁶

Yet *Ghost in the Shell* challenges this simplicity, asserting that memory is too simple a definition of humanity. Kusanagi, although human, doubts her own humanity throughout the film. Despite having clear memories, Kusanagi doubts if they are even hers: if the puppet master is able to manipulate the everyday person, who lacks the same degree of cybernetic enhancement as she does, and implant false memories and personalities into their brain, Kusanagi questions if the same has not already happened to her. A later conversation with Batou echoes this doubt with Kusanagi explaining that there is no way to distinguish her body from a totally mechanical shell robot without cracking open her brain and seeing

²⁵ Brown, *Tokyo Cyberpunk*, 8; *Akira*.

²⁶ *Ghost in the Shell*.

the grey matter for herself. When fighting the tank in the ending scenes, Kusanagi attempts to summon the strength to defeat the machine, and, in doing so, her body convulses and contorts in inhuman ways before finally tearing apart completely, leaving her without an arm and a leg. Such grotesque imagery compounds Kusanagi's earlier doubts; she is able to display such inhuman strength, to the point where it quite literally destroys her. Such body horror contributes to the theme of the grotesque as a feature of transhumanism. In the world of *Ghost in the Shell*, the lines between man and machine have become so thoroughly blurred that they almost cease to exist. The grotesque alterations and destruction of the human body within the film exists to further this.²⁷

Then comes the quandary of the puppet master. According to the simple definition that memory equates to humanity, without memory an entity certainly cannot be a living thing; yet, as it is revealed, the puppet master does have memory. He has sentience. The puppet master boldly declares in the presence of Kusanagi that "I am not an AI [...], I am a living, thinking entity," and he is; the puppet master is known to have a ghost, the equivalent of a soul, in its mechanical shell. Yet, being a posthuman entity, the puppet master lacks the means to reproduce and to die, characteristics that he views as vital to being alive. These statements made by the puppet master add a complexity to *Ghost in the Shell*'s earlier definition; if the puppet master cannot have offspring and cannot die, is it living? The short answer, Oshii asserts, is yes. The puppet master fuses with Kusanagi in the final moments before they are graphically destroyed. The implication, therefore, is that two ghosts may inhabit the same shell in union, and such a union leads to the transference of one ghost to many other shells—thus, a totally artificial being may reproduce. Similarly, if the organic shell in which an AI ghost resides is totally destroyed, the artificial being may also die. *Ghost in the Shell*, unlike its predecessor *Akira* which seeks to caution against human folly in a high-tech world, directly asserts that the future is posthuman, and, in such a world, there need not be such a distinction between man and machine, AI and living creature.²⁸

²⁷ *Ghost in the Shell*.

²⁸ Ibid

Similarly, *Battle Angel* focuses on many of the same aspects of humanity that *Ghost in the Shell* does, albeit through a subtler lens. Alita, a rebuilt cyborg, slowly regains her memories as she fights her way through the world of Zalem, and, in doing so, regains her identity. Thus, like *Ghost in the Shell*, memory becomes the focal point of *Battle Angel*'s transhumanism. Though explored less thoroughly in the OVA than in the manga, Alita's journey to regain her identity acts as a vehicle for the assertion that machines can become human—or at least close enough to it that the distinction is unnecessary. As Alita remembers more and more of her past life, she becomes more and more human; she acts less like a newly recalibrated machine and more like the being she once was. Thus, again, memory is intimately tied to the concept of posthumanism. In a world in which the lines of man and machine are blurred by technology, what makes a man, a living being, is not the absence of machinery but the presence of memory and thus identity. This transhumanistic approach, like in the works before *Battle Angel*, explores an evolving identity in a highly technological world, one where the relationship between man and machine is becoming increasingly intimate, one where technology responds to every whim of man.²⁹

Other animated works, like *Cowboy Bebop*, pick up the same transhumanism themes established by the powerhouses *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*, albeit to lesser extents. As mentioned above, transhumanism, related explicitly to the high-tech in low-life, high-tech, takes a backseat to themes of globalism and social criticism in *Cowboy Bebop*, existing merely as eye-catching details that Spike's world exists in a posthuman setting. In fact, one episode, *Brain Scratch*, entirely focuses on and explores trans- and post-humanist ideas by looking at a group of delinquents who seek to reach a transcendence by uploading their brains to the internet. While the episode hardly exists as a drop of water in the vast *Cowboy Bebop* bucket, it poses a unique look into the way the Japanese have responded to the accelerated advancements of technology and the posthuman questions they have posed; simply put, *Brain Scratch* asserts, much like other Japanese cyberpunk works, the only thing encumbering humanity is the human body, to which the obvious solution is a merging of human and technology, of internet and

²⁹ *Battle Angel*.

soul.³⁰ Therefore, *Brain Scratch*'s very existence in the *Cowboy Bebop* lexicon reinforces already existing transhuman ideals in Japanese cyberpunk. Although certainly not as assertive as more explicit works, *Cowboy Bebop* takes the messages in its successors and simplifies them; certainly, there is no need to make the distinction between man and machine when the lines are so blurred and the similarities so obvious.³¹

Diversity and the Placeless World

Themes of diversity and a placeless, culturally odorless world are prevalent in much of Japanese cyberpunk anime, so much so that the lack of their influence in later works is notable. While films such as *Akira* ignore these themes, they are still present enough in Japanese cyberpunk anime that it warrants a discussion.³² As Japan entered the world stage for the first time, the Japanese began to grapple with a new identity as a truly global country and people; thus, Japanese cyberpunk reflects such a struggle in its ambiguous settings and diverse casts in both race and sex.



Fig. 6. *Cowboy Bebop* centers racially diverse characters.

³⁰ Laurie Kanick Jacobson, "Cowboy Bebop and the Virtual Soul" in "TechKnowledgies: New Imaginaries in the Humanities, Arts, and Technosciences," ed. Paula Yablonsky, Tara P. Monastaro, and Mary Valentis (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 205-107.

³¹ *Cowboy Bebop*.

³² Such themes are used so often and so similarly throughout the Japanese cyberpunk anime genre that its lack of presence in *Akira* is thought-provoking, to say the least. However, *Akira*'s lack of diversity and explicitly Japanese setting most likely speak to the film's origins in state and social criticisms rather than any sort of declaration for or against a global Japan; as such, its absence does not warrant a discussion in relation to this paper's argument.

While many cyberpunk anime utilize such themes they often do so passively, unlike *Cowboy Bebop* which best exemplifies the themes of diversity and placelessness. The anime follows Spike Spiegel, a racially ambiguous cowboy bounty hunter, and his companions, Jet Black, Faye Valentine, and Ed, who are all also racially ambiguous. *Cowboy Bebop*'s background characters and villains exist under the same ambiguity with varying skin tones, cultural outfits, and ethnic backgrounds. Due to their ambiguities, such characters are often claimed as explicitly non-Japanese—a feature of Japanese cyberpunk anime not often found outside of the genre. This diversity pairs especially well with the *Cowboy Bebop* universe, which lends itself to blending location and culture through its spacetime setting of a rebuilt society across many different heavenly bodies; colonies, such as Tijuana, on an asteroid, or Mars, envision a fully globalized world through various background details including shops, signs in various languages, and background characters. The lack of true or concrete cultural borders is mirrored strongly even in the soundtrack, which bounces anywhere from jazz-hip-hop fusions to purely Western sounding music and back in ways meant to both compliment and contrast with the world.³³ The cast, setting, and soundtrack of *Cowboy Bebop* work together to create a series without a home, one that easily crosses borders and expresses the true nature of globalization—certainly an idea at the forefront of many minds as Japan was thrust onto the global scene.³⁴

Yet *Cowboy Bebop* is not the only cyberpunk anime to sport such a lack of fixed locale. *Ghost in the Shell*, while set in 2029 Japan, displays a similar diversity implied through racial ambiguity and a near placeless setting. While characters like the Major and Chief Nakamura are more explicitly Japanese, others like Togusa and Batou have an ambiguity in design which often leads to online speculation, much in the same way of Spike or Jet Black. Similarly, many of the mechanical shells sport a more western look: the puppet master wears the classic blue-eyed, blond haired look of an American woman despite his shell being manufactured in Japan. This is in line with opening conversations regarding immigration, implying that the Japan of *Ghost in the Shell* is diverse, rather than homogenous. In terms of setting, while much of the architecture is

³³ Andrew S. Granade, "'Some People Call Me the Space Cowboy': Sonic Markers of the Science Fiction Western," 22.

³⁴ *Cowboy Bebop*.

explicitly Japanese, store fronts and signs are displayed in several languages, most notably Japanese and English.³⁵ *Battle Angel* uses its cast and setting in much the same way, using racially ambiguous



Fig. 7. *Ghost in the Shell* utilizes signage in various languages to create a post-globalization setting.

characters in a nameless setting, which resembles both rural America and modern Japan, cemented with background details including signage in Korean and Japanese.³⁶ Thus, *Ghost in the Shell* and *Battle Angel* imply a Japan—and a world—post-globalization through diversity and a sense of placelessness, similar to *Cowboy Bebop*.

Conclusion

The lexicon of Japanese cyberpunk anime explores Japan as a newly global entity, one that, at the time, saw a great economic and technological boom alongside a myriad of sociopolitical pressures—including punk subcultures, biker gangs, religious fanatics, and extremist attacks—that directly impacted the everyday Japanese way of life. Such quick and tumultuous changes resulted in rapidly evolving Japanese anxieties regarding nuclear power, technology, and globalization best captured in Japanese cyberpunk's key themes, defined in this paper as: post-apocalyptic or dystopian worlds; classic low-life, high-tech aspects; transhumanism; and diversity. Japanese cyberpunk, albeit a short and sweet decade of works, exists as a genre of anime representative of an ever-evolving set of Japanese anxieties in a time where technology felt both intimate and invasive. To put it simply, no such genre of works so

³⁵ *Ghost in the Shell*.

³⁶ *Battle Angel*.

thoroughly captures the tumultuous changing of Modern Japan in the 1980s and 1990s in the same way that the decade of cyberpunk anime does; thus, the genre exists as a lasting and important time capsule of Japanese anxieties—one which waits, patiently, to be unlocked by its viewers.

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The N-Po Generation: The Struggle with Housing Insecurity in Seoul for the ‘Numerous Giving Up Generation’

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Introduction

Young people in South Korea comprise what is known as the “N-Po Generation” or the ‘N Give-Up Generation.’ Referring to how the youth must give up a numerous number of things in life, the ‘N’ represents a variable for the ever-growing list of things.¹ Over various resources the youth have been identified as being about 19-39 years old, ranging from millennials to the eldest of Generation Z. That means that this ‘generation’ of people giving up different aspects of life actually transcends multiple generations, which should allude to the severity of the issue. The idea of putting a name to the generation of people in South Korea suffering from harsh life conditions took root in a book by Woo Seok-hun and Park Gwon-il published in 2007.² Their book, titled *The 880,000 Won Generation*, reflects the economic fear Korean millennials hold of being unable to find full-time employment, stuck working as temporary or contract workers. At the time of the writing, Korean millennials

¹ Kelsey Chong, “South Korea’s Troubled Millennial Generation,” *California Management Review*, April 27, 2016, <https://cmr.berkeley.edu/blog/2016/4/south-korea/>.

² Hye-yun, Kim, Yoon-ju Kim, Hye-mi Seo, Jae-gu Kang, and staff reporters, “[Special report] S. Korean youth values health and financial stability the most,” *Hankyoreh*, January 1, 2020, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/922854.html.

made an average of 880,000 won per month (\$650 USD).³ At that time, higher education was believed to secure graduates a stable full-time job, but the 2008 global financial crisis severely impacted the job market, creating South Korea's "first generation of chronically underemployed and unemployed among the highly educated since the country emerged as a global economic power over the [previous] few decades."⁴ Because full time work was largely unavailable, the youth were forced to work temporary part-time jobs with lower wages and less opportunities to advance, setting them up to struggle with economic and job insecurity.

Just a couple years later, in 2011 the *Kyungyan Shinmun* coined the term "3-Po Generation", suggesting that Korean youth were subjected to give up three things in life due to the unstable conditions in the country that were intensified by the 2008 global financial crisis.⁵ Because the youth had to devote all their time to finding employment and trying to establish an economic foundation for themselves, they had to forego dating, marriage, and having kids, these being the three things referred to in the generation's nickname. The continuation of economic and job instability in the following years resulted in this same generation of Korean youth to give up more than just dating, marriage, and children, now having to give up hope of stable employment and owning a home as well.⁶ The term evolved again as young Koreans were forced to give up social relationships and a general hope for a bright future. Employers had such high standards for applicants, only accepting students with the highest rankings from the most prestigious universities, such that excelling in university took precedence over relationships with friends and family.⁷ As previously mentioned, this group of people are now dubbed the "N-Po Generation" as the list of things the youth have to give up continues to grow alongside worsening life conditions, to the point where it becomes too much to keep track.⁸

³ Kim, et al., "S. Korean youth."; Junghyun Kim, Seo Eun-kyung, "Young South Koreans become the '880,000 Won Generation'," *Taipei Times*, April 12, 2009, <https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/bizfocus/archives/2009/04/12/2003440846>.

⁴ Kim and Eun-kyung, "Young South Koreans."

⁵ Kim et al., "S. Korean youth."

⁶ Chong, "Troubled Millennial Generation."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

One of the most significant things today's youth have given up is proper housing, as the combination of job instability and high prices and short supply of housing have made it exponentially difficult to find a decent place to call "home".⁹ In order to fully understand the severity of the issue of housing insecurity for South Korea's N-Po Generation, it is necessary to be given historical context on the issue as a whole, its present-day situation, what housing the youth are living in and its effects on quality of life, and recent government policies to address the situation.

Historical Context of Housing Insecurity in Seoul (1945-2008)

Housing instability, a significant issue in South Korea goes beyond recent decades, traces all the way back to the mid-1940s. The end of the second World War (WWII) in 1945 signaled the end of Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula (1910-1945), resulting in a sharp increase in population as Koreans flooded in from former Japanese colonies abroad where they had been sent to work by the Japanese colonial powers.¹⁰ The sudden increase in population put a strain on the housing supply forcing refugees to build makeshift homes out of found materials, creating illegal settlements that were targeted by the government over the next few decades.¹¹ The Korean War (1950-1953) caused similar circumstances as Koreans migrated to the newly established South Korea from the also newly established North Korea.

During South Korea's industrial boom of the 1960s to the 1970s major cities like the capital of Seoul emerged as urban centers with employment opportunities in developing industries. Seeking this employment, a wave of rural Koreans migrated to these urban centers, again putting a strain on the housing supply.¹² As land was developed and the housing supply decreased during the time of economic expansion, housing and land prices soared, doubling in

⁹ "Housing for Young Adults," *Seoul Metropolitan Government*, <http://english.seoul.go.kr/policy/welfare-health-security/housing-2030-youth/>.

¹⁰ Ju Hwa Jung, "The Comparative Cross-sectional Study on the Affordable Housing Finance Policy for low-income households: Lessons from NYC and Seoul," (M.S. diss., Columbia University, 2020), 76. <https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-4fss-1742>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

just the couple years between 1963 and 1965.¹³ In the 1970s illegal settlements were targeted by the government just as they had been in previous decades, this time resulting in demolition to make way for new high rise rental apartments that were typically catered towards middle-income families rather than the low-income individuals that needed affordable housing the most.¹⁴ This means that even though the housing supply was increasing with the construction of these apartments, many were still left living in inadequate housing because they could not afford the new apartments; therefore, the problem of a short supply of affordable housing was not remedied by the government's initiatives. During this same period, there was a change in the social structure of Korean homes that put an additional strain on the housing supply. As the idea of the nuclear family was promoted, people were no longer living with their parents, creating an increased demand for housing, following the pattern of increased demand that leads to a decreased supply of housing resulting in higher housing prices.¹⁵ The later 1988 Summer Olympics held in Seoul inspired the South Korean government to embark on major urbanization projects in an effort to impress the world, which only increased the price of housing.¹⁶ The supply of housing was also affected by the 1988 Olympics due to the demolition of shantytowns and low-income housing to make room for the new urbanization projects, prompting the government to announce a plan to supply two million housing units for public housing, and to create Seoul's first permanent public housing units.¹⁷

By 1997 the South Korean economy was suffering to the point where the country needed a financial bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the condition that South Korea restructure their economy according to the neo-liberal model.¹⁸ This model of deregulation, privatization, and labor flexibility imposed by the IMF led to increasing job and housing

¹³ Jung, "Comparative Cross-sectional Study," 77.

¹⁴ Ibid., 76.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 76-80.

¹⁸ Minwoo Jung, "Precarious Seoul: Urban Inequality and Belonging of Young Adults in South Korea," *Positions* 25, no. 4 (2017): 746, 751, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-4188398>.

insecurity, explaining why this period is referred to as the IMF crisis.¹⁹ Just a decade later, the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 plagued South Korea, intensifying the instability of jobs and housing that was already present in the country.²⁰ These two financial crises combined with decades of housing and job insecurity, following the pattern of increasing demand for housing, shorter supply, and higher prices, explain current conditions in South Korea that the youth face today.

Current State of Housing Insecurity

In recent years, housing instability for the younger generation can be attributed to high youth unemployment, and the continuation of high prices and low supply of housing.²¹ Because current conditions cause the youth to give up numerous things in life, South Korea is referred to as “Hell Joseon,” reflecting the young generation’s frustrations.²² Seoul is home to the best job opportunities (though scarce) and a disproportionately high number of prestigious universities, so young people in their twenties move to Seoul in pursuit of these.²³ The renowned South Korean education system produces a large and highly skilled labor force, but the number of distinguished university graduates exceeds the number of high-skill jobs available as older generations hold onto their positions.²⁴ The recent COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted the already suffering job market, contributing to the impoverishment of Korean youth.²⁵

¹⁹ Jung, “Comparative Cross-sectional Study,” 751.

²⁰ Hyun-Jeong Lee and Yoon-Seo Hwang, “Housing Cost Burdens and Parental Support for Young Renters in South Korea,” *Sustainability* 13, no. 19 (2021): <https://doi.org/10.3390/su131911105>.

²¹ “Housing for Young Adults.”

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²³ Chun-ho Yu, “Policy measures to address housing needs of young people in selected places,” *Research Office of the Legislative Council Secretariat* (January 22, 2019): 9, <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1819in04-policy-measures-to-address-housing-needs-of-young-people-in-selected-places-20190122-e.pdf>.

²⁴ Soomin Jun, “Korea’s ‘N-Po’ Generation Looks to New Administration for Jobs,” *The Asia Foundation*, May 31, 2017, <https://asiafoundation.org/2017/05/31/koreas-n-po-generation-looks-new-administration-jobs/>.

²⁵ Jisun Kim and Seunghyun Yoo, “Perceived Health Problems of Young Single-Person Households in Housing Poverty Living in Seoul, South Korea: A Qualitative Study,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 18, no. 3 (2021): 9, <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18031067>.

Because Korea's younger generation is underemployed and impoverished, paying for high housing prices becomes difficult and takes a large proportion of their small income, even more so in Seoul, one of the most expensive places in the world to live.²⁶ Looking at the rent to income ratio (RIR) is a useful way to measure how severely people are impacted by housing costs as it looks at the ratio of how much of their income is being spent on rent.²⁷ According to various housing surveys, in recent years young people's RIR ranges from 30.8-33.0%, exceeding what the US Department of Housing and Urban Development considers an affordable ratio.²⁸ For those who cannot afford housing, the burden typically falls on their parents. A survey of 100 respondents by Lee & Hwang showed this was the case for most youth, almost half of which were found to rely on their parents to pay for the entirety of their rent.²⁹ This means that not only are parents paying for their own housing, but they are paying for their children's housing as well, increasing their overall housing costs. The older generation paying for their children's housing exhausts their own finances and leaves them with less resources to live comfortably once they are elderly and retired, putting their future economic welfare in jeopardy.³⁰ This explains the findings from an analysis of housing affordability by the Journal of Korea Planning Association in 2021, which concluded that the younger generation and elderly are most deeply affected by Seoul's housing cost burden.³¹

Currently the most common ways to pay for rental housing are with a monthly rent payment along with an initial deposit or *jeonse* in which a renter pays a large lump sum at the beginning of their rental period and does not have to pay a monthly rent.³² Because a *jeonse* rental doesn't require monthly payments, it allows renters to save up more money during their lease and is the most

²⁶ Jun, "Korea's 'N-Po' Generation."

²⁷ Jiyeon Kim, and Jin Nam, "An Analysis of the Changing Influence Factors on the Housing Affordability for One-person Tenant in Seoul," *Journal of Korea Planning Association* 56, no. 4 (2021): 156, <https://doi.org/10.17208/jkpa.2021.08.56.4.153>.

²⁸ Kim and Nam, "Changing Influence Factors," 154, 156; Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 4.

²⁹ Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 5.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kim and Nam, "Changing Influence Factors," 156.

³² Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 3.

desired type of rental but *jeonse* is less common than monthly rent.³³ This is because *jeonse* deposits range from 60-70% of the market price of the property, so that even those with jobs have a difficult time saving up enough money to pay for the deposit.³⁴ The high cost of *jeonse* explains why renters who occupy *jeonse* properties show the greatest tendency to receive financial assistance from their parents.³⁵

What Housing Typically Looks Like for Young People

The N-Po Generation have typically given up on marriage or on having romantic relationships which means, more often than not, that young people in South Korea live alone. It has been predicted that by 2045, one person households will become the most common housing type.³⁶ As of 2019 the average housing area of single person households in South Korea is 30 m² (~323 ft²), much smaller than the average one-bedroom apartment in the U.S. which is 714 ft² or the average U.S. studio apartment which is 472 ft².³⁷ These Korean studio apartments referred to as one-rooms come in various forms, often as *panjiha* (semi-basement apartments) or *okt'appang* (roof-top apartments).³⁸ Young Koreans not living in one-rooms are likely to live in a form of collective housing referred to as *goshiwon*.³⁹

Panjiha, or semi-basement apartments were not originally intended to be used as housing, but as the housing shortage intensified in the 1980s, they began to be transformed into lower-cost housing.⁴⁰ An example of a *panjiha* can be found in Bong Joon-ho's 2019 award-winning film *Parasite*. The movie shows how *panjiha* can be subjected to humidity creating an environment

³³ Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 3

³⁴ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 9.

³⁵ Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 6.

³⁶ Kim and Nam, "Changing Influence Factors," 154.

³⁷ Ibid., 161; Nadia Balint, "As Apartments Are Shrinking, Seattle Tops New York with the Smallest Rentals in the U.S.," *Rent Café*, November 30, 2018, <https://www.rentcafe.com/blog/rental-market/real-estate-news/us-average-apartment-size-trends-downward/>.

³⁸ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 7; Jung, "Comparative Cross-sectional Study," 751.

³⁹ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 7.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 753.

perfect for mold and mildew growth.⁴¹ It also shows how the only windows in the apartment are towards the top of the walls, are very small, and look out onto a ground-level view of the outside.⁴² Though the *panjiha* in *Parasite* has multiple rooms rather than having just one like the *panjiha* occupied by young people as one-room housing, it is still a relevant example of this type of housing. *Okt'appang*, or roof-top apartments are another common type of housing for low-income Korean youths. These apartments are built typically without going through proper legal procedures, technically making them an illegal form of housing.⁴³ *Okt'appang* can be found in Seoul, built on top of low-lying buildings in the inner city.⁴⁴

The most common form of collective housing is *goshiwon*, dating back to the 1980s when they were built to accommodate students preparing for various national exams, or *goshi*.⁴⁵ As job and housing insecurity skyrocketed post-IMF crisis, the target demographic for *goshiwon* changed from just students to single and mobile populations like “laid-off fathers” and “IMF homeless” because of their affordability in comparison to other housing.⁴⁶ The renter’s room in a *goshiwon* is on average 6.6 m² (71 ft²) with just a bed, desk, and chair contained by four thin walls made of wooden boards that can only provide an illusion of privacy rather than the real thing.⁴⁷ The small size is what makes the rooms so much more affordable comparatively, going for around 150,000 to 400,000 won a month with no rental deposit.⁴⁸ Because people who are of lower socioeconomic statuses typically reside in *goshiwon*, there is a stigma against this type of housing, which is reflected in media. Describing them as crowded, dirty, and unsafe, the media thus shows its inherent bias against the lower class.⁴⁹ One notable media representation of *goshiwon* is *Strangers from Hell*, a 2019 Netflix series that revolves around Eden Goshiwon, a rather sinister

⁴¹ *Parasite*, directed by Joon-ho Bong (Curzon Artificial Eye, 2019) <https://www.hulu.com/movie/parasite-2fd691a0-f66b-467f-8635-00d7f151f3d4>.

⁴² *Parasite*.

⁴³ Jung, “Comparative Cross-sectional Study,” 753.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 752.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Kim and Yoo, “Perceived Health Problems,” 2.

⁴⁸ Jung, “Comparative Cross-sectional Study,” 753.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 758.

representation of *goshiwon*.⁵⁰ The series is a psychological thriller. The *goshiwon* it takes place in is an extreme version of the reality of this housing, but regardless, it shows the basics of this type of dwelling: a small room, lack of privacy, and collective kitchens and bathrooms.

Over recent decades, alternatives to living alone have appeared, whether by suggestion of the government or by economic need. The Seoul Metropolitan Government has suggested, that in order to decrease housing cost burden among young people, having one or two roommates in one apartment together could be a possible solution.⁵¹ For some, even this is still too much. With the severity of housing and job instability, young Koreans who lived independently are having to move back into their parent's homes, or they are never moving out of their parent's homes in the first place.⁵² These alternatives can be difficult to accept for the younger generation. One of the aspects of life the N-Po generation has given up is a social life, so attempting to live with roommates in a small place may prove to be awkward. The process of moving back home is likely difficult because there is a certain pride in being able to live on one's own, and when they are forced to move back in with their parents or never leave their parents in the first place, it can harm their pride.

The Housing Situation's Impact on Quality of Life

The present housing conditions young Koreans live through, whether it be high costs or the housing itself, are negatively impacting both their mental and physical health.⁵³ The World Health Organization (WHO) has set standards for what is to be considered "healthy housing," defining it as "shelter that supports a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being."⁵⁴ South Korea has its own standards for housing, known as the Minimum Housing Standard, which addresses room size, private kitchens and bathrooms, proper lighting, heating, and other amenities.⁵⁵ Koreans

⁵⁰ *Strangers From Hell*, directed by Chang-hee Lee (OCN, 2019) ,(<https://www.netflix.com/search?q=strangers&jbv=81267632>).

⁵¹ Yu, "Policy measures," 13.

⁵² Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 1.

⁵³ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁵ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 2.

living below the Minimum Housing Standard or spending more than 30% of their income on housing are considered to be in housing poverty.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for the younger generation to live in housing with conditions set far below the standards for “healthy housing” or which place them in housing poverty. The housing poverty rate for youth residing in Seoul reached 37.2% in 2015.⁵⁷

One aspect of the state of housing which impacts the health of young Koreans is the cost of housing itself. Because living in decent housing is unaffordable for many youths, living in substandard housing is one of the only viable options, but it is difficult to pay rent for even this housing due to the unstable job market. The uncertainty of economic well-being and of the ability to pay rent causes anxiety in tenants, which can become a serious mental illness when left untreated.⁵⁸ Health conditions and other basic needs tend to be neglected as young tenants struggle with high housing costs, reflecting how quality of life for the youth today is lower than previous generations.⁵⁹ Living in substandard housing was supposed to be a temporary situation for young students, but high housing costs make it incredibly difficult to escape and tenants end up living in this housing for longer periods than expected.⁶⁰ Because of this, young renters tend to feel as if they can never escape substandard housing and have very bleak expectations for their future.⁶¹

The physical conditions of substandard housing units are another element that negatively impact the mental and physical health of the younger generation. The small size of *goshiwon* can lead renters to develop depression and affect their fitness as there is not enough room to move around for home workouts.⁶² Mental health can also be impacted due to the thinness of *goshiwon* walls. Tenants struggle with anxiety over privacy and security.⁶³ Physical

⁵⁶ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁹ Kim and Nam, "Changing Influence Factors," 156; Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 1.

⁶⁰ Jung, "Comparative Cross-sectional Study," 757.

⁶¹ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 12; Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 2.

⁶² Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 11.

⁶³ Jung, "Comparative Cross-sectional Study," 758.

health can be negatively impacted when substandard housing units have high levels of dust and humidity, creating a perfect environment for harmful mold and mildew.⁶⁴ The harmful impacts on body and mind caused by substandard housing conditions are clear dilemmas for the disproportionately affected younger generation. According to Seo and Joon, the Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) claims to be aware of the increasing number of young people in substandard housing, but policies addressing this issue have been largely inexistant until recent years because of persisting beliefs that the responsibility of covering a child's expenses lies with the parents.⁶⁵

Government Policies Targeting the Youth

As awareness has spread of the increasingly severe issue of youth struggling with housing instability, the government has introduced several different measures specifically targeting the younger generation, in an attempt to alleviate some of the burden. These measures come in the form of financial subsidies and affordable housing for youth. In 2019, the SMG implemented a rental subsidy for young single households, promising 200,000 won per month for up to ten months.⁶⁶ While this is a respectable initiative, the government only plans to help 45,000 people by 2022, a number much smaller than the large number of young people in housing poverty in Seoul.⁶⁷ Another recent financial initiative that started in 2021 allows unmarried children (aged 19-29) living independently from their parents to receive benefits if their parents are themselves National Basic Living Security Program benefit recipients.⁶⁸

Since 2015, two different public and semi-public housing projects have been announced by the SMG, Haengbok House and the 2030 Housing Project for Young People (2030 Housing Project). The Haengbok House is a public rental housing initiative targeted towards young people who are in college, are early in their careers,

⁶⁴ Jung, "Comparative Cross-sectional Study," 753; Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 11.

⁶⁵ Yu, "Policy measures," 9; Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 2.

⁶⁶ Jung, "Comparative Cross-sectional Study," 91.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 6.

or are newlyweds.⁶⁹ Units through this program are rented at 60-80% of the market rate for the property, making them more affordable.⁷⁰ The issue surrounding this initiative is that the supply of units under Haengbok House are increasing at too slow to keep up with demand due to push back from local residents who believe the presence of these units will decrease their own property values.⁷¹ Another issue regarding the Haengbok House project is that the eligibility requirements are reportedly too strict, leading many youths who need affordable housing to be rejected.⁷²

The second housing project, the 2030 Housing Project, was announced in March of 2016 and was targeted towards people in their 20s and 30s, hence the project's name.⁷³ The 2030 Housing Project's aim is to provide affordable housing units in areas near subway stations for young people to give them access to transportation.⁷⁴ Because this project is both private and public, the government has to incentivize private developers to construct the units through tax incentives, additional financial support, and changes in regulations to make the process less burdensome.⁷⁵ In 2018, the government announced its plan to extend the length of the project to 2022, increasing the targeted number of units from 50,000 to 80,000. One issue with this project is that after the initial tenancy period, landlords are able to raise the rent to market rates or to repossess the units and sell them off, making this project a more temporary solution to the unstable housing situation for youths.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Housing insecurity in Seoul is an issue that has existed for generations, but is now disproportionately impacting the current younger generation, dubbed the N-Po Generation. A combination of job insecurity, high housing prices, insufficient supply of housing,

⁶⁹ Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Kim and Nam, "Changing Influence Factors," 170.

⁷³ Yu, "Policy measures," 10; Leo Nam, "Seoul's revitalization of youth housing," *RETalk Asia*, October 30, 2017. <https://www.retalkasia.com/news/2017/10/30/seoul's-revitalisation-youth-housing/1509329098>.

⁷⁴ Yu, "Policy measures," 10.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 15.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 13.

and poor housing conditions all come together to influence the youth to lose hope of ever residing in proper housing, making it one of the things the N-Po Generation gives up. Current housing conditions are negatively impacting the younger generation's physical and mental health, and government policies have proven to be insufficient in affectively easing the youth's burdens.

Suggestions by Kim & Yoo for future policy are to expand housing policies to consider the health needs of the youth, loosen eligibility requirements and lower initial deposit costs for public housing in order to properly address the needs of young Koreans.⁷⁷ Another measure that should be taken is to increase the frequency of rent support from the government specifically for young people, as chances for receiving such support are currently 7:1.⁷⁸ Increasing the supply of affordable housing is essential, but Kim & Nam argue that the quality of this housing should be a top priority for developers.⁷⁹ In South Korea there is a lack of policy catering to households whose RIR exceeds 30%, while many foreign countries have such policies in place for households whose RIR ranges from 25-30%.⁸⁰ The youth are disproportionately affected by high housing cost burdens and their RIR typically exceeds 30%, so not only should financial aid policies specifically addressing RIR be implemented, but the government should consider the youth while creating these policies. If these issues are not addressed in future government policy, the N-Po Generation's fears of not being able to have a brighter and more stable future may be inevitable, especially for less privileged youths.

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⁷⁷ Kim and Yoo, "Perceived Health Problems," 12, 14.

⁷⁸ Kim and Nam, "Changing Influence Factors," 170.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Lee and Hwang, "Housing Cost Burdens," 4-5.

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Shanghai Re(defined): Puxi through the Centuries

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Along the west bank of the Huangpu River, Old Shanghai meets its unfurling present.

Streams of tourists, families, and joggers pass through here. An American couple begins to vlog their journey, switching between panoramic shots of the river and their grins. A small child swallowed by her yellow puffer jacket trudges along with her grandparents until she convinces them to stop at a Coca-Cola truck. Students take photos in front of the Neoclassical, Renaissance, and Art Deco architecture lining the bank, discussing their final history project. Nearby, a wedding is about to take place.

This is Puxi, famous for its iconic stretch of protected waterfront called the Bund, or *waitan* in Chinese, meaning embankment.

Traffic slows as a small crowd forms to watch a trio of youngsters equipped with bionic boots, some hybrid of trampoline shoes and roller-skates. They launch upwards with arms outstretched,

suspended in air against the backdrop of skyscrapers.^{5/1} The moment passes, and they land on their sleek metal blades.



Three young people wearing bionic boots on the Shanghai Bund jump in the air while bystanders observe. In the background, the Pudong skyline is visible. Unknown photographer, image published in an article from China Today magazine, January 2008.

One teenager, facing away from the others, leans towards water. Behind her is the Bund, its European aesthetic once considered the beating heart of Shanghai. Her eyes, however, cast forward to Pudong, where commerce, entertainment, and finance advance at brisk pace.

The American couple pauses in their survey of the Bund to snap a selfie. Centered in their frame is the star of Pudong—the 468 meter tall Orient Pearl TV Tower.² One of the top attractions at the Bund is getting to “appreciate high rises across the Huangpu River,” according to the popular tourism site Travel China Guide.³ The appearance of the Bund has not notably changed since its heydays,

¹ *Bionic boots youngsters enjoy the view from a sightseeing platform along the Bund*, 2008, in Xiwen Zhang, “Shanghai--China’s Most Internationalized Metropolis,” *China Today*, January 2008, 58.

² “Oriental Pearl Radio & TV Tower,” Travel guides, *Shanghai Highlights* (blog), n.d., <https://www.shanghaihighlights.com/shanghai-sightseeing/oriental-pearl-tv-tower.htm>.

³ “The Bund Shanghai,” Travel guides, *Travel China Guide* (blog), June 29, 2020, <https://www.travelchinaguide.com/attraction/shanghai/bund.htm>.

but this former “billion-dollar skyline”⁴ is now eclipsed by its steel counterpart.

Pudong represents Shanghai of today, while Puxi remembers its colonial past.

In the early 20th century, the Bund swung onto the Western stage as fashionable, modern yet romantic—a must-see destination. As early as 1904, foreign handbooks promoted the Bund as the first spot for anyone arriving in the city, describing it as “one of the most interesting, famous, and handsome thoroughfares in the world.”⁵ As the reputation of the Bund grew to mythical heights, so did Shanghai.

By the 1930s, Shanghai earned monikers such as “Paris of the East,” and “New York of the West,” deemed the “most cosmopolitan city in the world.”⁶ This vision of Shanghai seemed to be everywhere—beautiful women in faux-traditional Chinese qipaos accompanied their husbands dressed in Western suits,⁷ perfect blends of exotic and contemporary. Jazz drifted through the lobbies of luxurious hotels situated on the Bund, catering to an ever-expanding clientele in a city oozing with wealth. At the Renaissance-style Palace Hotel, guests welcomed at the “for men-only” bar were promised “no Parisian lenience here, for the female of the species.”⁸

Even for those who could not afford the expenses of an evening out on the Bund, they could admire its cosmopolitanism in the many

⁴ California Directory Association, ed., *Tourist Guide to Shanghai - North China*, 1930th ed. (The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Ltd., n.d.), 15.

⁵ Rev. C. E. Darwent, *Shanghai: A Handbook for Travellers and Residents to the Chief Objects of Interest In and Around the Foreign Settlements and Native City* (London and Aylesbury, England: Hazell, Watson and Viney LD, 1904), 1.

⁶ *All About Shanghai and Environs: A Standard Guide Book*, 1934th–35th ed. (160 Avenue Edward VII - Shanghai: The University Press, 1934), 1.

⁷ *Shanghai Deco*, Documentary, 2017, https://fod-infobase-com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=154806.

⁸ California Directory Association, *Tourist Guide to Shanghai*, 15.

advertisements that employed its image. In one poster,⁹ a young Chinese woman wearing a floral printed qipao reclines in her seat with a lit cigarette poised in her left hand. To her right are horses on the track, combining two tokens of pleasure: gambling and drugs. In the background is the Bund waterfront, distinguished by its Custom House bell tower—listen closely to hear “Big Ching” chiming out Western melodies on quarter hours.¹⁰



A Chinese woman donning a qipao holds a cigarette in front of the Bund promenade. Horses gallop to her right. Unknown artist, image listed as a 1930s cigarette advertisement in David Koren’s biography of Shanghai.

The amenities that Europeans and Americans delighted in at the Bund were chiseled out over decades, beginning in the 1840s when

⁹ *Cigarette Advertisement from the 1930s*, 1930s, in David Koren, “Shanghai: The Biography of a City,” in *Landscape Biographies*, ed. Jan Kolen, Johannes Renes, and Rita Hermans (Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 253–82, 270, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt15r3x99.14>.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Wasserstrom, “A Big Ben with Chinese Characteristics: The Customs House as Urban Icon in Old and New Shanghai,” *Urban History* 33, no. 1 (2006): 65–84, 68.

Britain took over Shanghai during the First Opium War. China signed the Treaty of Nanking to end the war, opening up five harbors to trade with Western victors, who had long desired China's lucrative market.¹¹ At the Shanghai harbor, implementation of "extraterritoriality" allowed foreigners to live according to their own rules, a legal principle that became literal in Shanghai's International Settlement, where its British, American, and French inhabitants constructed a miniature town that looked like home.¹² It is unsurprising that the later Europeans arriving at the Bund found its aesthetic so pleasant—they made enormous efforts to shape Puxi in their own image.

While Westerners trumpeted the Bund as successful colonial intervention— "the muddy towpath of fifty years ago which has magically become one of the most striking and civic entrances in the world,"¹³ Chinese people living in "the greatest city of all the Orient"¹⁴ witnessed a less miraculous reality.

The 1933 silent film *Daybreak* (天明), directed by Sun Yu, begins with a young woman and her husband moving to Shanghai from a small village. Introduced to the city nightlife, Lingling¹⁵ initially marvels at the bright lights of the Bund before seeing a group of Chinese prostitutes. Later on, Lingling's cousin meets with the silk factory boss—a powerful Shanghai warlord who has repeatedly raped her. After pleading with him to not assault her cousin, saying she would rather be fired, the factory boss replies that starvation...is the worst way to die! It is a slow, slow death!" In the next scene, he drugs and rapes Lingling in a gaudy hotel suite.¹⁶

¹¹ Koren, "Shanghai," 259.

¹² Daniel Brook, "Once upon a Time in Shanghai: Is History Repeating Itself in China's Glittering Global City?," *Foreign Policy*, October 2012, 75.

¹³ *All About Shanghai and Environs: A Standard Guide Book*, 51.

¹⁴ California Directory Association, *Tourist Guide to Shanghai*, 11.

¹⁵ Translated in the English subtitles as Caltrop.

¹⁶ Sun Yun, *Tianming* 天明 (*Daybreak*), Chinese Silent Film (United Photoplay Services (Lianhua), 1933), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cE4ZBIHNL3E&list=PLhA05Qf-09xBaz_t_ynYbyZ-Porcj7bui&index=3&t=38s.

Foreigners fetishized this sexual violence and poverty in the packaging of “Shanghai the bizarre, cinematographic presentation of humanity, its vices and virtues,”¹⁷ feeding seductive narratives of metropolitan sin and thrill. In David Koren’s biography of the city, he argues that from the perspective of the fetishized, Shanghai was not an oasis but “mostly a disgrace, forced submission to the immoral west, the ‘whore of Asia.’”¹⁸ Shanghai, as a symbol of modernity, was contingent on being a playground for the West.

At the end of the 30s, this period of Shanghai was coming to a close. Japanese invasion spread to the eastern coast, then full civil war broke out between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party. Arriving at the Huangpu river, the Red Army transformed Westminster chimes of the “Big Ching” into a Maoist folk anthem, “The East is Red.”¹⁹ Amid revolution, the glittering music and fashion of the Bund faded into oblivion.²⁰

Half a century later, the 1990s ushered in quite another vision of Shanghai.

Under the emblem of Deng Xiaoping’s proclaimed return to normalcy, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) shifted its gaze to Puxi. Plans for preservation launched in 1984 with the Bureau of Urban Planning defining portions of the Bund for protection and classifying seventeen of its buildings as historical landmarks.²¹

Simultaneous to the revival of “Old Shanghai” was the construction of its future. Standing in front of a miniature model, three men in suits considered plans for a new town along the Huangpu river.²²

¹⁷ *All About Shanghai and Environs: A Standard Guide Book*, 51.

¹⁸ Koren, “Shanghai,” 278.

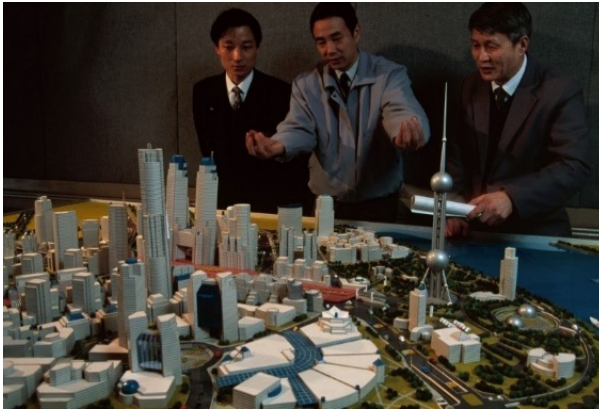
¹⁹ Wasserstrom, “A Big Ben with Chinese Characteristics,” 68.

²⁰ Christian Henriot, “The Shanghai Bund in Myth and History: An Essay through Textual and Visual Sources,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 4, no. 1 (May 26, 2010): 1–27, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17535651003779400>, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²² Stuart Franklin, *CHINA, Shanghai. Visitors View a Model for Development in the Pudong New Area of Shanghai, 1993*, 1993, Photograph, Magnum Photos, https://library-artstor-org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/#/asset/AMAGNUMIG_10311500214.

This time, it was not French, American, or British inhabitants, but Chinese urban planners tasked with building a “New Shanghai.” The government hoped that the carefully scripted development of Pudong would center Shanghai as China’s contemporary metropolis, not just the “rebirth of a colonial city.”²³ This was of utmost importance for Chinese leaders in legitimizing its position as a rising superpower.



Three Chinese men discuss a model of Pudong New Development, which features the newly constructed Oriental Pearl TV Tower. Captured in Shanghai, 1993. (Magnum Photos/Stuart Franklin).

As Pudong progressed into a free trade district for high-technology, finance, and trading industries,²⁴ Puxi and the era it symbolized returned to prominence through processes of commercialization and nostalgia. In search of an identity freed from the trauma of colonial trespass and Mao’s Cultural Revolution, Shanghai began to embrace and rewrite its own past. Old calendars, advertisements, and cigarette boxes of the 1930s were reprinted and sold as classics.²⁵ Shanghai could profit from its complicated history, and in turn the

²³ Koren, “Shanghai,” 276-277.

²⁴ Julie Lee, “The Role of Landscape Architects in China,” *Landscape Australia* 16, no. 2 (1994): 133–38, <https://doi.org/10.2307/45144898>, 125.

²⁵ Xudong Zhang, “Shanghai Nostalgia: Postrevolutionary Allegories in Wang Anyi’s Literary Production in the 1990s,” *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* no. 2 (September 1, 2000): 349–87, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10679847-8-2-349>, 355.

recommodification of those saturated images made the city's former humiliation more palatable.

This wave of nostalgia also led to the return of elegant, qipao-gowned women in popular media, notably present in the films of Wong Kar Wei. In Gina Marchetti's analysis, the Shanghai women written by Wong Kar Wei represent the historical tension of the city, an economic stronghold ravaged by Western imperialism—despite being absent, the memory of Shanghai and its colors, smells, and sounds permeates his films.²⁶ Late 20th century commemoration of Shanghai's "sensuous glamour" as an artifice of time became part of the depoliticization of colonialism and imperialism, integrated into Shanghai's development as a capitalist, postmodern icon.²⁷

Accompanying the explicit cultural reclamation of the 1990s, Shanghai also started to challenge the Bund's origin story as a product of Western innovation. In a 2006 documentary produced by the China Intercontinental Communication Center, interviewees argue that even though European settlers proposed their designs for the Bund, it was the gifted Chinese contractors and laborers who built them; the Bund is their legacy. Remarking upon the role of native Shanghai residents in the 1920s, the documentary's narrator states that "they were never simply onlookers of development."²⁸ Accentuating the nature of Puxi's construction is one way for Shanghai to present the Bund as an extension of itself, rather than the outcome of extraterritoriality.

Considering its legacy, Christian Henriot writes that the Bund became heritage in a "quasi UNESCO fashion," stripped of any historical substance but instrumental for Shanghai's journey towards a contemporary identity on the global stage.²⁹ Henriot's

²⁶ Gina Marchetti, "Wong's Ladies from Shanghai," in *A Companion to Wong Kar-wai* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2015), 205–31, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118425589.ch8>, 210.

²⁷ Zhang, "Shanghai Nostalgia," 353–354.

²⁸ Li Mian and Chen Qin, *Shanghai Waitan 上海外滩 (The Bund in Shanghai)*, Documentary (China Intercontinental Communication Center, 2006), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHPgKRDM0Fw&feature=youtu.be>.

²⁹ Henriot, "The Shanghai Bund in Myth and History," 25.

characterization of the Bund resembling a World Heritage Site is apt—Puxi has always had “outstanding universal value” in the imagination of Westerners, and more for those outside of China than within.

At the turn of the new millennium, Shanghai contemplated what its future identity could be. At the Bund’s promenade, residents looked out over the newly minted Pudong, now home to some of the tallest buildings in the world. White banners with bold Chinese characters covered buildings still under construction. A Coca-Cola billboard stood at the tip of a glass skyscraper, in the distance, a Samsung advertisement.³⁰



Seven people stand at the edge of the Bund waterfront, looking towards the Pudong bank. Advertisements are visible on some completed buildings, while other structures remain under construction. Captured on the Huangpu River, Shanghai, 1999. (Magnum Photos/Harry Gruyaert).

“The old gateway to China has rolled out its red carpet once again.”³¹

³⁰ Harry Gruyaert, *CHINA, Town of Shanghai*. 1999. *CHINA. Shanghai* "View from the Bund of the New Pudong Area with the Pearl Television Tower, 1999, Photograph, Magnum Photos, https://library-artstor-org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/asset/AMAGNUMIG_10311546560.

³¹ Koren, “Shanghai,” 254.

Returning to the Bund, it is now nighttime. Puxi's buildings are illuminated to passing visitors;³² Shanghai took elaborate efforts to light the base of the waterfront. People standing on both sides of the river take photos of the spectacular view. The LED strobes start flashing, and a child pulls away to cover her eyes—it is too bright.

Shanghai's struggle for political and cultural modernity is visible here. Pudong is not a particularly cohesive skyline compared with other metropolises, but it is impossible to ignore. In one European architect's opinion, Pudong is not meant to be stylish; its goal is to stand out, or as an American critic crudely put it, to lift a "middle finger to the West."³³

A more nuanced interpretation of Pudong is that it attempts to redefine Shanghai in China's terms. That project is working—the Renaissance, Neoclassical, and Art Deco buildings of the Bund look tiny in opposition. On the travel blog *Tripsavvy*, Sarah Naumann comments that while "Puxi is somewhat of a blast of Shanghai's past, Pudong is a glimpse into its future."³⁴ This relegation of the Bund to historic relic, when it had been the symbol of urban modernity and cosmopolitanism less than a century ago, reveals the fluidity of time in collective memory. Facing each other, Puxi and Pudong mold perceptions of old and new.

Far more people are ambling along the Bund than earlier in the day. There is a traffic jam when a large crowd forms around a group of young people readying their bionic boots. The one in the center leaps forward, propelling high above the pavement. He lands. The crowd keeps moving.

³² NBBJ. *The Bund; Long View of the Bund at Night with the Monument to the People's Heroes in the Foreground*. October 1, 2010. Photograph. Contemporary Architecture, Urban Design and Public Art (ART on FILE Collection). https://library-artstor-org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/#!/asset/ARTONFILE_DB_10313254103.

³³ Brook, "Once upon a Time in Shanghai," 76.

³⁴ Sara Naumann, "Choosing Between Shanghai's Puxi and Pudong Neighborhoods," Travel guides, *Tripsavvy* (blog), February 24, 2020, <https://www.tripsavvy.com/two-sides-of-shanghai-pudong-puxi-1495288>.



At night, the Bund's buildings are brightly lit. On the left side are the historical structures of the Bund, to the right are people walking along the waterfront. Captured on the Huangpu River, Shanghai, October 1st, 2010. (Photo/NBBJ).

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The Tale of the Conqueror: Historical Memory and Its Impact on Sino-Vietnamese Relations

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"The people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history."

Mao Zedong

"Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom."

Ho Chi Minh

Introduction

A respected Vietnamese historian, Duong Trang Quoc, once said, "China thinks it is at the center. The conqueror. It wants to turn everybody else into its subordinates."¹ This is the tale of the conqueror that Vietnam tells about its northern neighbor; it is a cornerstone of the small Southeast Asian country's collective memory, bolstered by a strong sense of history that claims not decades of conflict with China, but *centuries*, even millennia. It is also a dominant reason why relations between the two have long suffered; there is a surfeit of historical memory that each country carries into the relationship, predisposing them to conflict. As

¹ Michael Sullivan, "Ask the Vietnamese About War, and They Think China, Not the U.S.," NPR, 2015.

Duong says, “the Vietnamese have had too much experience with the Chinese. The Vietnamese can’t trust the Chinese. We’ve had too much practice.”² When asking why relations are so adversarial, there is little better answer than the full breadth of history that is woven into each of their interactions.

China, Vietnam, and their relationship with each other is a fantastic case study for how historical memory can play a key role in politics, particularly given the advent of China’s rise. While China does claim to seek a peaceful rise, this has not assured those skeptical of the Asian power, especially ones historically primed to be suspicious, like Vietnam. Thus, examining the roots of Sino-Vietnamese relations’ long-standing difficulty can provide valuable lessons for the Southeast Asian conflicts to come. My hypothesis is that Sino-Vietnamese relations are so difficult because of historical memories which influence them both and how Chinese methods of influence only serve to deepen Vietnam’s historical prejudice towards China. Throughout this paper, I will examine this hypothesis through the historical memory paradigms of both China and Vietnam, their inability to smoothly incorporate the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese war into their state narratives, and how the South China Sea is a hotbed of historical tension waiting to flare up.

Variables and Definitions

Before the paper begins, each variable of the hypothesis should be explicitly defined since notions of history, influence, and relations have many definitions. For historical memory, I will be using the research of Zheng Wang, a foremost scholar in the field. He states in his article “National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China” that historical memory is a ‘historical myth’ that is “at the root of conflicts, prejudice, nationalism, and cultural identities.”³ Historical memory is a collective memory that is formed and negotiated by a society, often in conversation with the political needs of that society at the time. Thus, through the lens of collective memory, “the past is reconstructed with regard to the

² Sullivan, “Ask the Vietnamese About War.”

³ Zheng Wang, “National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China,” *International Studies Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (2008), 783–806: 785.

concerns and needs of the present.”⁴ This appears to suggest that historical memory is inherently constructivist and therefore created by elites of the state, but Wang contends that memory can also be the result of “primordial ties of blood, kinship, language, and common history.”⁵ The two lenses need not be mutually exclusive, but instead laid on top of each other, intermingling and at times even challenging each other. Societies create themselves from the memories of their citizens as well as the curated narrative put forward by the state.

Indeed, historical memory is not objective at all, but subject to the subjective needs, be they elite or everyman, of the present. Moreover, it consists of a “‘chosen trauma’ (the horrors of the past that cast shadows onto the future) and a ‘chosen glory’ (myths about a glorious future, often seen as a reenactment of a glorious past).”⁶ These two halves help to visualize how historical memory becomes a key factor in society. However, it should be mentioned that memory studies have not been explicitly applied to the Sino-Vietnamese relationship in a meaningful way, but this is no surprise, since historical memory in international relations remains a developing field.⁷ This paper, through its operationalization of historical memory as a variable, hopes to encourage further discussion.

Then, there is the concept of influence. I take my definition from Evelyn Goh’s work, “The Modes of China’s Influence: Cases from Southeast Asia.” In it, she defines “influence [as] the act of modifying or otherwise having an impact upon another actor’s preferences or behavior in favor of one’s own aims.”⁸ China’s method of influence has three main categories: preference multiplier, where preferences are aligned, often in the economic sense; persuasion, wherein preexisting preferences are debated as China attempts to sway a country’s position; and ability to prevail, which occurs when China possesses opposing preferences with a certain country.⁹ The tools that China uses to meet its influence

⁴ Wang, “National Humiliation,” 785-6.

⁵ Ibid., 785.

⁶ Ibid., 785.

⁷ Ibid., 784.

⁸ Evelyn Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence: Cases from Southeast Asia,” *Asian Survey* 54, no. 5 (2014), 825-48: 824.

⁹ Ibid., 827.

goals (namely coercion, inducement, and persuasion) are prevalent in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship,¹⁰ though they usually fail to achieve their ends.

Possible Explanations: Asymmetry or Escape

Though the Sino-Vietnamese relationship offers many meditations on the topic of historical memory and influence, not every scholar attributes the issues between the two countries to the burden of memory. Rather, the prevailing Western literature on the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, sparse though it is, often states that the imbalance between the two emanates from asymmetry, not instilled collective consciousness. Asymmetry is characterized by Brantly Womack, a noted American political observer of China, as “the larger power always looms more importantly to the weaker than the reverse... weaker states are ‘prone to paranoia.’” Conversely, the stronger power is less attentive to the details of the bilateral relationship with a weaker state. These contrasting views often lead to misperception.”¹¹ This concept of asymmetry is even hinted at in Goh’s work when she comments that “in contrast to China’s relations with the major Asian powers, Sino-Southeast Asian relationships are more asymmetrical, because many of these states are smaller, less developed, and more dependent upon China.”¹² It is from this state that tension in the relationship arises, but that tension does not always spark hostilities.

In fact, Carlyle Thayer in his article, “Vietnam and Rising China: The Structural Dynamics of Mature Asymmetry,” contends that China and Vietnam are poised to avoid outright military conflict because they have moved from a period of ‘hostile asymmetry’ to ‘mature asymmetry.’¹³ Mature asymmetry is when the power imbalance, like that observed in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship, is perceived as ‘normal’ and maintained through various diplomatic means.¹⁴ Thayer is the proponent of a school of thought which claims that a state of mature asymmetry is simply how Sino-Vietnamese relations function and how, if they are both

¹⁰ Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence,” 828.

¹¹ Carlyle A. Thayer, “Vietnam and Rising China: The Structural Dynamics of Mature Asymmetry,” *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2010, 392–409: 392.

¹² Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence,” 827.

¹³ Thayer, “Vietnam and Rising China,” 394.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 393.

smart, they will both continue to act within. He states that “both have too much at stake to allow the present period of mature asymmetry to revert to hostile asymmetry. For Vietnam, the weaker party, the ‘tyranny of geography’ dictates that it judiciously apply the levers of cooperation and struggle through various party, state, military, and multilateral structures in order to manage its relations with China under conditions of mature asymmetry.”¹⁵ Simply put, Vietnam has too much to lose, so it will not push China too far or allow relations to break down too much. This has historically been the conclusion of political theorists when contemplating the Sino-Vietnamese relationship.

However, there is a second school of thought which has become more popular recently. It holds that Sino-Vietnamese relations are more fragile than they seem, and, in fact, mature asymmetry cannot be sustainably maintained. This perspective finds voice in Huong Lee Thu, who wrote that while Vietnam has endeavored to ‘compartmentalize’ its disputes with China over maritime interests and land borders so that the two countries can engage in other areas like economic development, this position has grown increasingly difficult to uphold.¹⁶ The quarrel over the South China Sea has begun to dominate the relations of the two, eliminating the policy of compartmentalization that had worked so well.¹⁷ The viewpoint professed by Thu has the benefit of public opinion as well, since anti-Chinese sentiment in Vietnam has spawned the so-called *Thoát Trung* or Escape from China movement, which is a fixture in modern Vietnamese political discourse.¹⁸ This attitude is also reflected in a study by the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in 2020 which found that 88.2% of Vietnamese respondents chose “increased military tensions arising from flashpoints such as the South China Sea as their highest security priority.”¹⁹ Though asymmetry can be stable, facts like this offer the crucial observation that it is not the reality for the Sino-

¹⁵ Thayer, “Vietnam and Rising China,” 406.

¹⁶ Huong Lee Thu, “Rough Waters Ahead for Vietnam-China Relations,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Nguyen Manh Hung, “Vietnam in 2017: Power Consolidation, Domestic Reforms, and Coping with New Geopolitical Challenges,” *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2018, 407–28: 424.

¹⁹ ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, “The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey Report,” ASEAN Studies Centre, 2020: 7.

Vietnamese relationship at the moment. It is this school of thought which points out the weakness of asymmetry that my paper will seek to add to via the incorporation of historical memory as a valuable variable.

Whose Memory?

In order for the confluence of asymmetry, relations, historical memory, and influence in the Sino-Vietnamese relationship to be considered, the content of the collective memory which binds each country together should be discussed. Sino-Vietnamese history reaches back centuries; modern versions of their history usually begin with, as the Vietnamese call it, “the advent of national independence (in 938)” when the Vietnamese broke away from China (which had ruled them since 179 BCE) to become their own country.²⁰ For Vietnam, the historical narrative has always been one of ‘repeated wars,’ many of them involving China.²¹ The Vietnamese insist that their national consciousness has taken root as a direct *result* of foreign invasion and the need for independence.²² This historical evidence often drives Vietnamese collective memory to perceive China as a quintessential enemy. Tellingly, in the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute study, absolutely no Vietnamese respondents said that their “country’s political culture and worldview are compatible with China’s” or that they “respect China and admire its civilisation and culture.”²³ It was the only country surveyed that did not agree with these statements in any amount. In return, the Chinese government and state media has claimed Vietnam is a ‘troublemaker.’²⁴

China has long harbored a sense of cultural superiority towards its southern counterpart that dominates the relationship.²⁵ Though communist ideology did unite them for a time, Sino-Vietnamese insistence that they are “good neighbors, good

²⁰ Phạm Minh Hạc, *Vietnam’s Education: The Current Position and Future Prospects*, (Hanoi: Thế Giới Publishers, 1998): 2.

²¹ Ibid., viii.

²² Ibid., vii.

²³ ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, “The State of Southeast Asia,” 44.

²⁴ Thu, “Rough Waters Ahead.”

²⁵ Xiaoming Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War: The Military Conflict Between China and Vietnam, 1979-1991*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015): 30.

comrades, good friends, and good partners” to each other has often been an empty sentiment.²⁶ This embattled history demonstrates how, of all the categories of influence available to China, it must often use ability to prevail when interacting with Vietnam. In this category, China attempts to influence countries to change their political preferences and goals because they conflict with its own. This typically means taking a ‘tough stance’ that results in military stand-offs and tense, terse political exchanges.²⁷ However, Goh notes in her piece that ability to prevail is also China’s least successful strategy of influence due to its confrontational nature.²⁸ Thus, as a result of their historical memories of conflict and struggle, both China and Vietnam find that this tactic of ability to prevail, with all its coercion and inducement, does more harm than good.

The Chinese Approach: Changing the Narrative

The Chinese approach to historical memory went through a massive shift in recent history that has only served to cement their political tactics of influence. In 1991, as a result of the Soviet Union’s breakup and the demonstrated fallibility of the communist historical mythos as well as lingering animosity emanating from the Chinese Communist Party’s brutal repression of the 1989 Tiananmen Square democratic movement,²⁹ a new narrative had to be drafted in order to validate the CCP. No longer could it be a ‘class struggle’ narrative; it was now a ‘patriotic’ one.³⁰ In addition, the CCP began to emphasize that it was not a ‘victor’ that had won its wars easily, but an avatar of all China, which was itself a ‘victim,’ demoralized by the century of humiliation (1839-1949).³¹ This was a radical reimagining of how Chinese history should be viewed and it was an immense undertaking. A key element of this reorientation was the modification of the state education system. This was a natural step to take since education is a time-honored

²⁶ Thu, “Rough Waters Ahead.”

²⁷ Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence,” 844.

²⁸ Ibid., 846.

²⁹ Alessandro Uras, “The South China Sea and the Building of a National Maritime Culture: A New Chinese Province in the Making,” *Asian Survey* 57, no. 6 (2017), 1008–31: 1014.

³⁰ Wang, “National Humiliation,” 791.

³¹ Ibid., 789, 792.

method of encouraging the public to incorporate a state's 'essential values.'³² It teaches a new generation how to behave and approach situations, often using the history of the country as a guiding force. Its textbooks 'chronicle relations with others' as much as they describe internal history,³³ so it is an essential progenitor of historical memory that has deep political ramifications. Part and parcel with the redesign of textbooks was the cultivation of 'patriotic education bases,' museums and public monuments meant to educate the Chinese people on events that contribute somehow to the chosen glory or trauma of the state.³⁴ That historical memory was inherently patriotic and deeply nationalist under China's new system.³⁵ By extensively describing the experience of China under Western and Japanese imperialism and playing into the concept of chosen trauma, the patriotic education system reconditioned children to see the CCP as identifiable with China as a whole and therefore take on an identity as a sympathetic victim that should not be questioned.³⁶ Thus, uprisings like Tiananmen Square at home and the ones abroad which toppled the Soviet system would be forestalled before their leaders even grew up.

The other half of historical memory that China encouraged in its education, the chosen glory element, envisioned a China in the past, one which was a global power and will be again. The tributary system, which China used to uphold strict regional order for thousands of years by requiring neighbors (who could more accurately be termed vassals) to show hierarchical deference to the 'center' of the system, China, is the glorious historical memory that has proven most enthralling.³⁷ It has encouraged the Chinese populace to support the CCP as they continue to extend China's regional reach into the South China Sea, to commit human rights atrocities in Xinjiang, and to challenge the status quo of the world. Historical memory is intoxicating. When it is used effectively, a collective consciousness can give the government unprecedented power. This is part of why it is a core element of nationalism; it

³² Wang, "National Humiliation," 786.

³³ *Ibid.*, 787.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 794.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 790.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 791.

³⁷ Michael Schuman, "China's Inexorable Rise to Superpower Is History Repeating Itself," Bloomberg, 2020.

binds a group together like no other as they devote themselves to their perceptions of particular chosen traumas and glories. However, this rise in state-encouraged nationalism is also dangerous, because while it allows “authorities to consolidate its power and promote political solidarity,” the state also struggles at times “to retain control over the nationalist discourse.”³⁸ Thus, the CCP has often found itself at the whim of ‘a more demanding citizenry’ that calls on the government to be increasingly ‘assertive.’³⁹ Historical memory can be a political motivator all its own, not just a tool. A further complication remains in how China does not always perceive how its actions will be interpreted outside its own borders. For instance, though it views the return to the tributary system to be a good thing, as China exerts influence in the manner Goh outlines and in the pursuit of its own ends, it invokes intense memories of past confrontations that leave Vietnam continually assured that the moniker of ‘conqueror’ is well earned.

The Vietnamese Approach: Generational Traumas

Historically resonant memories are embedded in Vietnamese collective consciousness by using the same techniques as China. The Vietnamese educational system is a mirror of the Chinese one. Like China, Vietnam’s government controls and directs its educational system.⁴⁰ There was a similar dramatic shift in 1991 when all students began to be taught from “a single program and with a single set of textbooks.”⁴¹ However, the essential core of Vietnamese history education has long remained the same, as is outlined by a survey of the Vietnamese education system authored by Phạm Minh Hạc in 1998 after his stint as the Minister of Education of Vietnam, called *Vietnam’s Education: The Current Education and Future Prospects*. A cornerstone of the attitudes that the Vietnamese government wished to promote in its people was always ‘national and traditional values,’⁴² the greatest of these being “patriotism (loyalty to the country, piety to the people), national spirit and national pride... a high will of self-reliance, independence,

³⁸ Wang, “National Humiliation,” 800.

³⁹ Uras, “The South China Sea,” 1030.

⁴⁰ Phạm Minh Hạc, *Vietnam’s Education*, 49.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ix.

sovereignty, integration without merging, self-development.”⁴³ It is imperative that every secondary student be able “to understand the history of national foundation and defense, the national and cultural identity, the fine traditions of the nation and the revolution.”⁴⁴ Those ‘fine traditions’ often revolve around resistance, independence, and freedom. Chosen trauma and glory go hand in hand; the trauma is the invasion of foreigners, while the glory is the successful banishment of those would-be conquerors.

Outside of schooling, communal commemorative narratives often involve some element of heroism to further tie the chosen trauma and glory together. An emphasis on heroism is a long-standing tradition of Vietnamese history; specific figures, like the Trung Sisters (who fought against Chinese domination in 40 CE) or Ho Chi Minh himself, are practically deified for the patriotism they exhibit in their fight for independence from foreign incursion.⁴⁵ The memory of these heroes has immense power to sway public perception on an issue. For example, Ho Chi Minh, though communist like his Chinese counterparts, “...never gave up on the idea that China posed a potential threat to Vietnam’s independence and freedom.”⁴⁶ Thus, he has allowed the citizens of Vietnam to remember him fondly and be suspicious of China all at once. The historical memories do not clash but support each other. Heroes, through their culturally resonant narratives, pave the way for this possibility.

Vietnam is an example of how a historical memory intensifies over time with the repeated application of similar events, like heroes resisting subjugation, with all its different faces, over the millennia. Vietnamese history is truly a recitation of foreign invasions, and they know it; it has become a key element of their cultural identity, deeper than communist ideology or other momentary political movements. It is their shared trauma, never far from their minds. In the 1990s, twenty percent of all foreign imported books were about history; of these, many were about war, particularly with China (contrast the 17 books on China with the 7

⁴³ Phạm Minh Hạc, *Vietnam’s Education*, 199.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 118.

⁴⁵ Edyta Roszko, “Commemoration and the State: Memory and Legitimacy in Vietnam,” *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 25, no. 1 (2010), 1–28; 5, 17.

⁴⁶ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War*, 16.

books on the American War).⁴⁷ Monuments express “...long-standing traditions of ‘protecting ancestral land’ dating back to the very origins of Vietnam.”⁴⁸ History has become a common defense for the Vietnamese collective consciousness to use, particularly when they feel threatened on the international stage. This comes as no surprise once one acknowledges that a traumatic event can be incorporated into group consciousness, creating a historical memory that fosters the “intergenerational transmission of historical enmity.”⁴⁹ This association is made stronger when the trauma is repeated, so a collective narrative begins to take root. Thus, as Vietnam continually pays homage to the traumas it has suffered under conquering aggression and deifies the glories of the heroes who resisted it, it ritually reincorporates the idea of resistance and the pursuit of independence at all costs. This becomes a potent historical memory that, when tapped into, can motivate the populace like nothing else.

The 1979 War: Memory Run Amok

The 1979 war and the sentiments its memory evokes in the citizenry is a case study in how both China and Vietnam are subject to the power of historical memory, even though it can at times prove inconvenient. The war, called variably the Third Indochina War or the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, though unremarked upon in most Western analysis of Southeast Asian recent history, is a powerful nexus for Sino-Vietnamese historical memory. In fact, the war was so impactful that it led to a protracted conflict; throughout the 1980s, the border of China and Vietnam saw many skirmishes as relations between the two countries suffered.⁵⁰ Relations were not normalized until 1991.⁵¹ It is both the Chinese military’s last great engagement and Vietnamese military’s last grand attempt to assert the country’s unified boundaries.

⁴⁷ David G. Marr, “History and Memory in Vietnam Today: The Journal ‘Xu’a & Nay,’” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 31, no. 1 (2000), 1–25: 1. N.b. The ‘American War’ is the Vietnamese term for what Americans call the ‘Vietnam War.’

⁴⁸ Roszko, “Commemoration and the State,” 2.

⁴⁹ Wang, “National Humiliation,” 785.

⁵⁰ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War*, 141.

⁵¹ Thayer, “Vietnam and Rising China,” 392.

The war and its consequences are little mentioned in official Chinese or Vietnamese documents, but this actually belies its importance. For example, wars are faithfully remembered on their anniversaries in China. “The anti-Japanese war, the liberation war against the Nationalists, and the war assisting North Korea against America and its UN allies” are all commemorated, but not the 1979 war.⁵² It is, in fact, “the least commemorated and memorialized of all conflicts in modern Chinese history, mentioned only in terms of the bloodshed, loss, and suffering that it caused.”⁵³ It is not listed as having any kind of patriotic education base in China, as all the other wars do.⁵⁴ It therefore offers nothing to the narrative of chosen glory and likewise nothing to that of chosen trauma, since it is easy to cast China in the role of imperialist aggressor, not colonized victim. China, wary of Vietnam’s ‘imperial dreams’ to pursue hegemony in Southeast Asia,⁵⁵ undertook the 1979 war to “‘teach’ Hanoi to take Chinese warnings seriously or pay a heavy price.”⁵⁶ This sense of pedagogy taken to the point of violence pervades Sino-Vietnamese history and likely will continue to. It is even alluded to by Goh, who defines coercion, a tool of influence within the Chinese purview, as an “action designed to compel another actor to do something by credibly signaling the costly consequences of his failure to comply.”⁵⁷ It is the pedagogic, coercive history that the Vietnamese choose to remember best when considering the impact of China on their country, so it is the one that most directly informs their politics. In contrast, on the Chinese side, old fears can easily appear validated once more as Vietnam pursues its goals that are separate from China’s. CCP leaders believed in 1979 that letting Vietnam challenge it unfettered would deprive China of the ‘safe, reliable environment’ it needed to pursue the Four Modernizations.⁵⁸ As China now rises and seeks to reassert its historical control over Southeast Asia and as Vietnam continues to subvert that control, it is easy to see how military confrontation may occur, supported by the instilled memory of the 1979 war.

⁵² Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War*, 192.

⁵³ Ibid., 211.

⁵⁴ Wang, “National Humiliation,” 796.

⁵⁵ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War*, 2.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 66.

⁵⁷ Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence,” 828.

⁵⁸ Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War*, 55.

The major obstacle to this caustic reassociation of the war with current conflicts is the behavior of the states themselves. As discussed, China has failed to incorporate the border disputes into their state narrative of victimization, so they have left the war unremarked upon. In turn, the elites of Vietnam have also tried to maintain historical distance, despite how easily the 1979 war fits into their own narrative of foreign incursion and the heroic repelling of it. Vietnamese scholars remain reticent to discuss the 1979 war publicly; commentary on it is noticeably absent from prominent publications.⁵⁹ Furthermore, in official Vietnamese documents, the war is not called the Third Indochina War or the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, but simply ‘the war to defend the border,’⁶⁰ a title chosen to be obliquely nondescript in order to avoid the political tension still surrounding the event. This lack of rapprochement on the subject of past wars is not the default in Vietnam; in fact, the United States and Vietnam have made reconciliation over the American War a key cornerstone of their path towards normalization since 1995,⁶¹ a feat all the more notable since the two have an obviously asymmetric relationship. The reason for this failure is simple: China and Vietnam have never been able to integrate their historical memories of the war in any meaningful sense, so they have both attempted to remove it from public discourse. There has simply been no opportunity for true, thoughtful reconciliation. The Soviet Union’s collapse was the major impetus behind Sino-Vietnamese normalization; with no clear communist ally to hedge against China with, Vietnam was forced to admit that it could not endure protracted military conflict for much longer.⁶²

However, the manner in which the war and its subsequent skirmishes ended does not lend itself naturally to long-term peaceable relations. Rather, the unceremonious end to hostilities after thirteen years has simply been laid into the foundation of Vietnamese historical memory, strengthening the sense of China as a natural enemy that is already so strong. Intriguingly, this has all developed without much elite support. Though collective memory has long been recognized as a tool for focusing public sentiment in

⁵⁹ Marr, “History and Memory in Vietnam Today,” 17.

⁶⁰ Phạm Minh Hạc, *Vietnam’s Education*, viii.

⁶¹ Le Hong Hiep, “US-Vietnam Relations: From Reconciliation to a Relationship of Substance,” *The Diplomat*, 2021.

⁶² Zhang, *Deng Xiaoping’s Long War*, 210.

Vietnam, its use is still subdued on the national level, particularly when discussing Sino-Vietnamese events, because of the state's 'self-consciousness' about its history and its capability.⁶³ Collective memory buttressed by history (real or imagined) is a powerful political weapon that can even harm the government that uses it; Vietnamese elites know this, so they hesitate to exercise its full reach. However, they cannot stop public opinion completely, so the everyday citizen remains steadfastly against China, seeking to escape it.⁶⁴ The specter of the 1979 war hangs over the Sino-Vietnamese relations, influencing it even as the two governments refuse to acknowledge it. It remains a painful reminder for both that while historical memory is influenced by the state, it is not wholly dictated by it.

The South China Sea: Inventing a History

A more recent conflict that has borne the weight of Sino-Vietnamese historical memory is the series of territorial disputes in the South China Sea over the Paracel and Spratly Islands. This geopolitical struggle has come to dominate Southeast Asian politics. In contrast with the 1979 war, in which memory developed irrespective of elite direction, the conflict in the South China Sea has been primarily motivated by Chinese elites who have chosen to emphasize that the sea is a part of China's chosen glory. A reclamation of the South China Sea has been folded into the state mandate that Chinese citizens must achieve "the great revitalization of the Chinese nation."⁶⁵ The time that China is referencing with its claims of 'revitalization' is one when "...the Chinese Empire viewed itself as the center of a universal state which 'oversaw a hierarchy of tributary states.'"⁶⁶ The equation is simple: if China wants a return to the glory days of the tributary system, it needs to enact broad influence over the South China Sea.

However, as previously discussed, not many Southeast Asian countries are keen to return to this imperial vision. For them, it can easily be remembered as less of a golden age and more as an era of ruthless control. Still, China will not abate in its insistence.

⁶³ Roszko, "Commemoration and the State," 2-3.

⁶⁴ Sullivan, "Ask the Vietnamese About the War."

⁶⁵ Uras, "The South China Sea," 1016.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 1019.

The islands of the South China Sea have been folded into China's narrative of recovery from the trauma of the anti-Japanese war since 1951, when Minister Zhou Enlai claimed that "The Paracel Islands and the Spratly Islands are inherently Chinese territory, just like the whole of the Pratas Islands and Macclesfield Bank. They fell during the war of aggression waged by Japanese imperialists but were fully recovered by the then Chinese Government upon Japan's surrender."⁶⁷ Through claims like these, the South China Sea has been successfully installed as a remedy to China's chosen trauma. It has been recast as a territory lost during the century of humiliation that must be returned. China cannot be whole and recovered from its losses without it.

The sea also has a distinct chosen glory aspect to it. In discussions on the dispute, China will often pull from the history of Zheng He, an early fifteenth century admiral who made historic voyages across the world, to claim a maritime culture.⁶⁸ However, Zheng He's journeys were more aberration than norm in the history of China, for "the eunuch admiral's expeditions were China's only attempt at sea power..."⁶⁹ However, Zheng He is a powerful and politically innovative symbol for China to cultivate, since his voyages were not made in the spirit of colonization, but peaceful exchange and 'harmony'.⁷⁰ Thus, Zheng He fits nicely into the CCP's chosen glory of a harmonious, powerful China long past that is going to come again as China reestablishes itself on the world stage. The narrative is clear: the character of Chinese maritime influence is pacific, not rapacious. The fact that Zheng He is an outlier and not the standard of Chinese maritime history does not matter. This is an important point: not every historical memory must be entirely truthful. Sometimes, it is assembled from half-truth and legend, collated for a specific purpose. This purpose is usually meant to encourage group cohesion and 'galvanize' the people to support a political end,⁷¹ which is exactly the process occurring in the midst of the very real conflicts in the South China Sea.

For Vietnam, the South China Sea has become a geopolitical dilemma that brings forth questions of national defense,

⁶⁷ Uras, "The South China Sea," 1020.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1009.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1012.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1026.

⁷¹ Wang, "National Humiliation," 787.

strategy, and the ever-present influence of historical memory. Vietnam has used a ‘hedging’ strategy against China since the Cold War, but its ability to use other international actors, like the United States, to keep China at bay has waned.⁷² The United States has been noticeably distracted and difficult to predict since President Trump’s election in 2016, so Vietnam has been forced to rely on itself more than ever, an uncomfortable position for it.⁷³ Concerns over Chinese expansion can no longer be deferred. Vietnam’s strategy of hedging has transformed into one of ‘cooperating and struggling.’⁷⁴ Though Vietnamese elites remain wary of challenging China outright, they have seen their options to counter China rapidly decrease. This entire situation is complicated by how there is precedence for a maritime conflict; in 1988, during the last period of intense Sino-Vietnamese confrontation, there was a bloody battle over the Gạc Ma Reef in the South China Sea, resulting in dozens of Vietnamese casualties.⁷⁵ This remains one of the few times China has physically clashed with a country over the South China Sea dispute and the bitter taste of it lingers in Vietnamese mouths.

Moreover, from Vietnam’s perspective, the islands of the South China Sea have fallen under its purview since their exploration by the Vietnamese in the sixteenth century; their presence on the islands was rudely interrupted by French colonization, during which time China began to show interest.⁷⁶ Indeed, this is the period in which China experiences its first formal act of sovereignty over the islands; in 1876, China’s ambassador to the UK marked the Paracels islands as within Chinese territory.⁷⁷ It is easy to see how, under this historical narrative, Vietnam has come to stringently oppose China’s claims of sovereignty. To the Vietnamese, the Chinese moved in while Vietnam was weak to wrest control of the islands from them; the tale of the conqueror writes itself.

Not only has the South China Sea come to consume Vietnamese political discourse on China, but also public perception. When asked how China could improve its standing with Vietnam,

⁷² Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence,” 841.

⁷³ Hung, “Vietnam in 2017,” 418.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 423.

⁷⁵ Thu, “Rough Waters Ahead.”

⁷⁶ Roszko, “Commemoration and the State,” 9.

⁷⁷ Uras, “The South China Sea,” 1020.

the Vietnamese respondents in the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute study stated that two policies should be enforced: first, “China should resolve all territorial and maritime disputes with regional states peacefully in accordance with international law,” and second, “China should respect my country’s sovereignty and not constrain my country’s foreign policy choices.”⁷⁸ Obviously, China’s current implementation of ability to prevail (seen in weeklong stand-offs between Vietnamese and Chinese crafts in disputed areas in 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2019),⁷⁹ meant to press Vietnam to reconsider its choices by taking a hard line on territorial conflicts, has in reality only deepened opposition to China on the issue. Vo Cao Loi, a Vietnamese citizen living in Đà Nẵng on the Vietnamese coast, had these succinct words to say on the South China Sea controversy, “They want to spread their control. They will never give back what they took. Vietnam wants to take it back, but the Chinese are strong. So our struggle will last a long time. How long? I can’t tell.”⁸⁰ Indeed, in the South China Sea, there is perhaps no time in which China has failed more to alter a state’s behavior; instead, it has played into the narrative written for it by Vietnam, because the tactics of ability to prevail can be easily perceived as more evidence of the tale of the conqueror, so that ordinary citizens like Vo Cao Loi and even hesitant Vietnamese politicians are encouraged to more strongly oppose Chinese objectives.

Conclusion

No history is independent or self-contained. Every country builds its identity from historical memory that is itself formed from interactions with other countries as much as it is gleaned from the country’s essential values. In China, that memory is built upon a foundation of a fondly remembered imperial past and a carefully vilified era of victimization. In Vietnam, it is constructed from a long history of foreign incursion resisted and the ever-present tale of the conqueror. However, historical memory is not inescapable, though the 1979 war demonstrates how embedded it can become; memory can be manipulated, twisted by elites to meet their political goals, as we have seen with the South China Sea disputes.

⁷⁸ ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, “The State of Southeast Asia,” 38.

⁷⁹ Goh, “The Modes of China’s Influence,” 844.

⁸⁰ Sullivan, “Ask the Vietnamese About the War.”

Therefore, if China and Vietnam did recognize how their historical memories encourage conflict and not reconciliation, there might be hope for the two to reconfigure their collective thinking to allow for a truly amicable relationship not based on platitudes, but this has not been the case. The modes of influence which China uses to achieve its ends serve only to remind Vietnam of China's worst characteristics; cooperation is stifled because of an intimate association with history in every one of their interactions. The past complicates the future, since they have not truly changed their behavior towards each other, not after independence in 938, the advent of colonialism, the incorporation of communist philosophy, or the 1979 war. Historical memory remains a guiding force, now often institutionalized by the state in monuments, textbooks, and grandiose commemoration. It has grown so powerful that it sometimes runs amok, detached from the elites that sought to control it. It is a fickle political tool, but the pervasive tale of the conqueror that dictates the rhythms of the Sino-Vietnamese relationship reveals just how powerful it is.

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Sharp Power: China's Solution to Maintaining the Legitimacy of its Non-Interference Policy

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Senéad was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and moved with her family to the United States when she was young. Senéad graduated with honors from the University of Iowa in 2018 with a major in International Relations and a minor in French. After graduation, she worked with the Mennonite Central Committee in Beirut, Lebanon assisting Syrian refugees. She subsequently accepted a teaching position in Fuzhou, China, where she threw herself into learning Mandarin. The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 interrupted her stay. She then received a Fulbright to teach in Taiwan in January 2021. In the three months before a train accident in route from Taipei City to Hualien tragically claimed her life, she built many meaningful relationships with her peers and students. With aspirations of contributing to China-Taiwan diplomacy, Senéad had intended to pursue a graduate degree in International Relations. Remembered as a true humanitarian who valued all people, her vibrancy and compassion continue to inspire her family, friends and colleagues.

Introduction

Since the time of Mao Zedong, Chinese officials have promoted a foreign policy of non-interference. China has used its policy of non-interference to gain influence in Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. China, as most states do, seeks power within the international community. Power is the “means

¹ A longer version of this essay was submitted in 2018 as an honors thesis in International Studies at the University of Iowa under the supervision of Dr. Michael A. Žmolek, who edited this draft.

of obtaining desired outcomes.”² In the past, to obtain power internationally, Chinese officials coupled non-interference with soft power mechanisms. Soft power is influence through attraction. However, with the onset of the 21st century the stance of the international community concerning non-interference shifted. Non-interference is no longer a sacrosanct policy which exclusively dictates interactions between states. There are instances in which the international community has recognized the limits of non-interference and sacrificed it in favor of protecting and promoting human rights. China, however, has held firm to its policy of non-interference. As such, it has been criticized by Western nations as favoring non-interference at the expense of human rights. China’s stance in opposition to the international community has meant that its influence globally has lessened. However, it has not renounced its policy of non-interference but neither has it been willing to accept diminished influence in the world. Therefore, China’s solution, to maintaining its policy of non-interference while strengthening its influence in the world, is sharp power. Sharp power, coined by the National Endowment for Democracy, describes the way in which authoritarian regimes, specifically China and Russia, perforate the media and political spheres of other nations to manipulate and influence public and governmental perceptions.³

Before outlining the sections of this paper, I will give a brief example of sharp power to contextualize what I will later be exploring within Australia and Argentina. One instance of the use of sharp power is the case of self-censorship by Cambridge University Press and Springer Nature, both major international publishing companies. In 2017, these two companies removed and censored content, at the behest of Chinese agencies, from subscribers in the People’s Republic of

² Joseph Nye, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 119, No. 2 (2004).

³ Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, “From ‘Soft Power’ to ‘Sharp Power’: Rising Authoritarian Influence in the Democratic World,” Introduction to *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, Washington, DC: National Endowment for Democracy, 2017.

China. After negative publicity, Cambridge University Press restored the content to its China Quarterly journal and Journal of Asian Studies. However, Springer Nature stood by its removal of 1,000 titles claiming that it was merely the price of doing business in China.⁴ While the censorship in these circumstances only affected subscribers in China, it does show how the Chinese agents are able to influence independent international actors. William Callahan, professor of international relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science said that China's "increased power means that the debate has shifted from Westerners being concerned about censorship in China to all of us being concerned about how China is censoring what we're doing all around the world."⁵ With this statement, Professor Callahan speaks to the importance of recognizing China's increased power within the world.

Firstly, in this paper I will analyze China's policy of non-interference in foreign affairs. Next, I will detail how the change within the international community has threatened China's influence in the world and thereby caused Chinese officials to develop new methods of influence. In the second part of this paper, I explain how China's use of sharp power has been manifested in the political spheres of Australia and Argentina. I have chosen Australia because the evidence of the Chinese Communist Party's influence in Australia's politics is undisputed and because it has caused much controversy within the country and internationally. Secondly, I have chosen Argentina because the CCP's influence there is in its beginning stages and therefore provides an interesting case to follow and monitor for future research. This paper does not address the numerous instances of sharp power used by the CCP in other nations of the world simply because the scope is too broad. I

⁴ Glenn Tiffert, "The Long Arm of China: Exporting Authoritarianism with Chinese Characteristics," Washington DC: Congressional-Executive Commission on China (December 13, 2017).

⁵ Ellie Bothwell, "Chinese power 'may lead to global academic censorship crisis'," *Times Higher Education* (December 7, 2017).

argue that China has developed sharp power methods of influence because it seeks to bolster its power in the world, while still maintaining its policy of non-interference.

Numerous scholars argue that China's foreign policy is defined by certain events and key leaders from its past. These authors provide a clear picture of the development of the non-interference policy in the China of the past and in the China of the present. Aidoo and Hess outline the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and their importance in China's development initiatives, particularly in Africa.⁶ Mu emphasizes the ways in which China's years of national humiliation have re-enforced its policy of non-interference.⁷ These authors also provide evidence for the apparent contradiction within China's policy of non-interference and how it is manifested in relations with the international community. Concerning soft power techniques used by the CCP, other scholars address the different tactics by which the CCP engages countries to influence international perspectives abroad. To speak to the importance of overseas Chinese in helping to propagate the CCP's foreign policy initiatives whether that be through direct or indirect influence.⁸ Marie-Brady,⁹ and de la Beaumelle,¹⁰ identify the specific departments and groups in the CCP which are involved in foreign propaganda work. They also specify the ways in which their agendas come to fruition all over the world. Jian (Jay) Wang speaks to the recent change by the CCP in utilizing different forms of communication to influence the

⁶ Richard Aidoo and Steve Hess, "Non-Interference 2.0: China's Evolving Foreign Policy towards a Changing Africa," Vol. 44, no. 1 (2015): 107–139.

⁷ Mu Ren, "An Analysis on the Contradiction Between China's Non-intervention Policy and Intervention Activities," *Ritsumeikan Annual Review of International Studies*, vol. 13 (2013): 127–155.

⁸ James Jiann Hua To, *Qiaowu: Extra-Territorial Policies for the Overseas Chinese*, Leiden: Brill (2014).

⁹ Anne Marie-Brady, "Magic Weapons: China's political influence activities under Xi Jinping," The Wilson Center (2015).

¹⁰ Marcel Anglivièl de la Beaumelle, "The United Front Work Department: 'Magic Weapon' at Home and Abroad," The Jamestown Foundation (July 2017).

outside world.¹¹ Edney discusses how the CCP's international power is linked to domestic political cohesion. He links the latter's success to the former through his many examples of the CCP's diverse approaches to propaganda.¹² Finally, Walker and Ludwig as well as Cardenal introduce the notion of sharp power. Walker and Ludwig provide a basic definition of this recently identified phenomenon in foreign relations,¹³ while Cardenal traces the CCP's use of sharp power in Argentina.¹⁴ Since sharp power was only coined as a term in December 2017, very few authors have tackled the way in which the CCP uses sharp power. None have yet linked China's foreign policy of non-interference to its current use of sharp power. To address this lacuna, this essay traces China's foreign policy rhetoric and action in the international community to discover the contradictory and clandestine nature of its current foreign policy, which uses non-interference as a guide to carry out increasing methods of sharp power to shape and sway international political policies.

A Brief History of China and Non-interference

Non-interference is not a principle exclusive to the CCP. On the contrary, the notion of non-interference comes first and foremost from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia. The first instance of China's stance on non-interference on paper came from article five of the Treaty of Friendship Alliance and Mutual Assistance between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union in February 1950. Under the treaty, China and the USSR agreed to assist each other in the event of a future Japanese invasion in their territories. Article five stipulates that

¹¹ Jian Wang, "Introduction" to *China's Search of Soft Power in Soft Power in China: Public Diplomacy through Communication*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2011).

¹² Kingsley Edney, *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda: International Power and Domestic Political Cohesion*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2014).

¹³ Walker and Ludwig, "From 'Soft Power' to 'Sharp Power.'"

¹⁴ Juan Pablo Cardenal, "Navigating Political Change in Argentina," Ch. 2 in *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*. Washington, DC: National Endowment for Democracy (2017).

each party will cooperate economically in the spirit of “mutual respect for the national sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of the contracting parties.”¹⁵ The principle of non-interference was later expanded in a joint statement between the People’s Republic of China and India in 1954. It concerned border disputes between the countries. Within the document, China laid out the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. These principles would guide all future bilateral treaties and agreements between China and its partners in the world. The five principles include: non-interference, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and mutual benefit, mutual non-aggression, and peaceful coexistence.¹⁶ According to the CCP, non-interference in internal affairs means not partaking or influencing a country in regard to “the overall situation of the people’s livelihood, such as political system, security arrangement and governance, and leadership selection.”¹⁷ Non-interference has guided China’s actions, or lack thereof, in international affairs up to the present day.

While the UN and China both held the principle of non-intervention as sacrosanct in the years after the adoption of the UN Charter, the UN has sacrificed it in cases when humanitarian crises have called for greater leniency. There is a growing “transition from a culture of sovereign impunity to a culture of national and international accountability” in the UN.¹⁸ In essence, there has been a shift from absolute protection of national sovereignty to a push for international accountability when a nation fails to protect its people. This is manifested in the ways in which the UN tries to balance the instances necessitating a breach of national sovereignty with the sovereign rights of the state; for example, the creation of the International Criminal Court, the non-binding Responsibility to

¹⁵ CIA, “The Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance Between the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union.” Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency (February 1950).

¹⁶ Aidoo and Hess, “Non-Interference 2.0.”

¹⁷ Yizhou Wang, *Creative Involvement: The Evolution of China’s Global Role*. London: Routledge, 2017.

¹⁸ Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, “Responsibility to Protect,” International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, Ottawa: International Development Research Center, 2001.

Protect commitment, the Convention on the Protection and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the growing use of UN peacekeeping troops in the world. Consider the Responsibility to Protect, a non-binding political commitment by UN members.¹⁹ With its endorsement in 2005, UN members agreed to react to a state's inability or unwillingness to stop widespread violations of human rights, "by imposing sanctions, initiating international prosecutions and, in extreme cases, intervening with military force."²⁰ The Responsibility to Protect report states that "it is only when national systems of justice either cannot or will not act to judge crimes against humanity that universal jurisdiction and other international options should come into play."²¹ In essence, UN member states acknowledge that there exist circumstances, albeit few, in which international action is necessary to stop intrastate atrocities. While the international community is more willing to consider action and possibly intervention in the case of humanitarian crises, it does not follow that it accepts intervention. Certainly, military intervention is the last resort and for the most part such a sentiment is shared by most states. Therefore, the steps taken by the UN to outline criteria for action, when a state cannot or will not protect its people, are not justifications for intervention. Rather, these steps are designed to protect vulnerable people within nations from grave human rights abuses perpetuated by their own governments. The principles of national sovereignty and non-interference will continue to be guiding principles of the international community in part because they are at the foundation of modern international relations theory and practice and in part because they assist in maintaining international stability and peace.

Compared to the United Nations, Chinese officials have been firmer in maintaining their principle of non-interference. In fact, China's stance on non-interference has remained relatively unchanged throughout its history. The century of humiliation at the hands of international aggressors has shaped China's foreign policy doctrine. This period, from 1839 to

¹⁹ Evans and Sahnoun, "Reprehensibility to Protect."

²⁰ Sarah Teitt, "The Responsibility to Protect and China's Peacekeeping Policy," *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 18, no. 33 (2011): 298-312.

²¹ Evans and Sahnoun, "Responsibility to Protect."

1949, was a time in which imperialist powers from the West and Japan sought to control China. During the Mao Zedong era, Chinese rulers saw the principle of non-intervention as a safeguard against colonial and imperialistic agendas consistently imposed upon the country from the outside world. The struggle for sovereignty and state independence became the dominate diplomatic strategy for China.²² Mao cast China as a victim of international aggression and so used China's plight to bolster nationalistic fervor.²³ In this way, non-interference became a vital part of China's identity. In 1949, Mao Zedong said at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, "Ours will no longer be a nation subject to insult and humiliation. We have stood up."²⁴ Since then, while China no longer presents itself as a victim, the basic principle has been kept alive and used to justify its distrust of the international community and its overall stance on sovereignty.²⁵

In speeches and discussions at the UN, Chinese officials have maintained sovereignty and non-interference as firm principles. For instance, Chinese representative Li Yongsheng, stressed the importance of sovereignty at the 8132nd meeting of the UN Security Council in 2017. In his statement, he made it clear that despite international consensus to intervene in the domestic affairs of Sudan, the CCP first and foremost supported sovereignty: "China believes that the international community should fully respect the... sovereignty of the Sudan."²⁶ Chinese officials argue that China has the right, as a permanent UN Security Council member, "to safeguard its [state sovereignty] legitimacy, justice, and effectiveness in the

²² Ren, "An Analysis on the Contradiction."

²³ Allen Carlson, *Unifying China, integrating with the World: Securing Chinese Sovereignty in the Reform Era*, Stanford University Press, 2005.

²⁴ Mao Zedong, "Opening address at the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," September 21, 1949, Beijing, China, *Marxists.org*.

²⁵ Ruben Gonzalez-Vicente, "The Limits to China's Non-Interference Foreign Policy: pro-State Interventionism and the Rescaling of Economic Governance," *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 69, no. 2 (2015): 205–223.

²⁶ UNSC, "United Nations Security Council 8132nd meeting," United Nations Security Council Report (December 2017).

international community.”²⁷ In addition, China’s century of humiliation has cultivated the commonly held belief in China that intervention is synonymous with immorality.²⁸ This period in history has contributed to China’s strong stance on non-interference. Western powers preying upon weaker powers is characteristic of Western imperialism and Chinese officials have consistently directed policy in order to separate themselves from the aggressive, interventionist stance of the Western world, most notably that of the USA. In fact, at the nineteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China, in October 2017, Xi Jinping stated that China will “oppose acts that...interfere in the internal affairs of others as well as the practice of the strong bullying the weak.”²⁹ In addition, defense of sovereignty has become a way in which China can separate its domestic and foreign policies. Chinese officials label international criticism of China’s internal affairs as interference, and this stance is legitimized by its policy of non-interference. Therefore, the emphasis on sovereignty provides a shield behind which the CCP does not experience the need to justify its internal affairs to the international community.

While non-interference has garnered domestic support in China, it has also been attractive to many developing nations, because it serves as an alternative to Western conditional investment. The Beijing Consensus, an informal term for the political and economic policies of the People’s Republic of China being replicated abroad, does not imply withholding investment or trade partnerships from nations which lack democratic political governance. China’s commitment to non-interference has facilitated the proliferation of Chinese business ventures and influence in less developed nations all over the world. Dr. Jorge Malena, the director of Contemporary Chinese studies at the Universidad del Salvador, echoes the sentiments of many within his country when he explains that the Chinese

²⁷ Wang, *Creative Involvement*.

²⁸ Ren, “An Analysis on the Contradiction.”

²⁹ Jinping Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” Speech at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. Beijing, China (October 18, 2017).

model is “an alternative superior to the Western model in cultural, political and economic matters.”³⁰ Thereby, non-interference, by virtue of itself, has allowed China to enter the economic markets of many nations in Africa and Latin America. This is because states prefer signing onto non-conditional trade and investment deals with China rather than agreements with nations of the West laden with conditionalities. China’s increased involvement in these regions places it in the perfect position to exert present and future influence.

As China under the leadership of the CCP continues to do business with Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia, it also seeks to become a respected and responsible power in the world. To gain this status, China needs to bolster its influence. Domestically, Chinese officials see China as a responsible power as evidence by Xi Jinping’s speech at the 19th National Congress in 2017: “China will continue to play its part as a major and responsible country.”³¹ However, internationally, many nations are yet to consider China a responsible nation because of China’s hesitancy to alter its policy of non-interference, especially when instances of humanitarian crises call for the safeguarding of human rights over national sovereignty. Due to the changing perspective on non-interference within the international community, China’s soft power efforts have been less effective. Chinese officials, therefore, have the task of bolstering China’s image through greater influence within the world. However, by virtue of non-interference, Chinese officials must tread carefully in seeking influence because such overt efforts would contradict China’s policy of non-interference. Therein lies the task of Chinese officials and China’s foreign propaganda departments—to increase China’s influence in the world without undermining its policy of non-interference. Therefore, to appear faithful to its policy, China has within the last fifteen years used silent mechanisms of intervention to influence nations within the

³⁰ Andrés Schelp and Andrés Saravia, “The role of Chinese academics in the decision-making process,” Buenos Aires: Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (May 2016).

³¹ Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory.”

international community.³² These silent mechanisms of intervention have become known as sharp power.

Evolution from Soft Power to Sharp Power in China

China's foreign policy evolution from employing soft power to sharp power has been one of seamless transition. In 2007, President Hu Jintao gave an important address at the 17th annual Party of the Congress. In his speech, he accepted Joseph Nye's term of soft power, stressing the importance of increasing China's soft power efforts abroad.³³ His speech signaled the beginning of a new phase of foreign policy, emphasizing Chinese propaganda on a larger scale. Before proceeding, it is important to contextualize soft power, a term coined by Joseph Nye in 1990.³⁴ Nye claims that with the "growing erosion of state sovereignty, the economic interdependence of states, creation of new communication channels and technologies, and the importance of non-state actors, the effectiveness of hard power has decreased."³⁵ Hard power is the use of coercive, often military force by a state against another state for some intended outcome, Soft power on the other hand, which Nye argues is more apparent and applicable in post-World War Two international relations, is persuasion in the form of values or cultural mechanisms.

According to Nye, a state relies in part on the attractiveness of its culture and values to influence or change perceptions in other states.³⁶ He has been critical of both the Chinese and Russian manifestations of soft power. His definition of soft power centers on the efforts of civil society, the private sector, and individuals as the main proponents. The

³² Qiao, Shitong, "Whither China's Non-Interference Principle?" Tallinn, Estonia: European Society of International Law, Fourth Research Forum, 2011.

³³ Hu Jintao, "Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive for New Victories in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All," Report to the 17th Party Congress (15 October 2007).

³⁴ Joseph Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York: Basic Books (1990).

³⁵ Nye, "Soft Power and American Foreign Policy."

³⁶ Ibid.

CCP's use of soft power mechanisms are directly overseen and promoted by government agencies, most notable of which is the State Council Information Office.³⁷ In 2007, Hu Jintao's China began to invest in China's broader definition of soft power mechanisms to strengthen its national power. However, as specified by Nye, the Chinese method of promoting soft power is exclusively controlled by the government. When Xi Jinping took over as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2012, he broadened further China's use of international propaganda and soft power. Xi, unlike Jintao, has sought not only to enhance China's national power, but also to promote China as a new global power. It is only in the era of Xi that the CCP has overtly espoused its desire to be a strong global power, something which Hu never publicly asserted.

Wang stresses that the credibility of China's international soft power efforts are undermined by the lack of freedom enjoyed by its domestic citizenry.³⁸ This is similar to Nye's acknowledgement of the lack of soft power coming from the private sector. Zhao and Tiao claim that China's soft power efforts to increase its international influence are unlikely to succeed if the CCP does not get rid of its "centrally-supplied ideas and societal values and entrainment" and focus upon the trends being created at the grassroots levels.³⁹ China's domestic control is linked to its policy of non-interference because non-interference means that outside nations have little claim to intervene in the domestic affairs of China. Not only has the international community's move away from non-interference diminished China's influence in the world but domestic restrictions within China have also caused many states to question China's claim of being a major responsible power. Thereby, China's soft power efforts have become less effective because nations are unable to reconcile a highly controlled and censored society with the qualities of a responsible power.

When Xi Jinping came to power, he sought to increase China's power internationally. However, this caused a dilemma

³⁷ Joseph Nye, "The Limits of Chinese Soft Power," Prague: Project Syndicate (July 2015).

³⁸ Wang, *Creative Involvement*.

³⁹ Zhao Litao and Tiao Soon, "China's Cultural Rise: Visions and Challenges," *China: An International Journal* (2007).

for Chinese officials. Either they had to accept the reality that influencing an international audience to perceive China positively was lessened by China's domestic policies, or they had to allow for greater transparency in China's domestic sphere. China has accepted neither outcome. Instead, Chinese officials have taken steps to ensure control domestically while seeking to legitimize China's voice internationally. However, the actions of Chinese officials in seeking influence cannot be allowed to be perceived by the international community as a violation of China's long policy of non-interference. Therefore, these actions have taken shape in the form of sharp power. The intended and often actual result is that nations deal favorably with China in terms of trade, diplomatic favors, international support and the like. China's use of sharp power allows it to covertly shape public and governmental perceptions for greater influence. China need not focus on enhancing the credibility of its domestic media when its use of sharp power hides its role in shaping international media and politics. Its use of sharp power also allows it to appear as though independent international actors support its policies. It is important to note, however, that not every attempt by the CCP to change global perceptions are mechanisms of sharp power. For instance, China employs soft power when it helps sponsor a Chinese New Year's celebration in Argentina and invites political leaders to attend. This and many other examples of soft power by China are legitimate and should be welcomed by other nations. However, when an 'independent' businessman, actually an affiliate of the CCP, bribes a politician into supporting its stance in the South China Sea, then that is a form of sharp power.⁴⁰ In the previous instance, there is no visible or direct link from the independent businessman to the CCP, and so information is manipulated.

Chinese officials use sharp power mechanisms for three reasons. Firstly, Chinese officials use sharp power to safeguard domestic stability. Domestic stability is highly important to the CCP especially with its large population of 1.3 billion people. Dissidents within only serve to undermine its power and threaten China's growth and stability. It is an undisputed fact

⁴⁰ Nick McKenzie and Richard Baker, "China's Operations in Australia: Payments, Power, and our Politicians," *The Sydney Morning Herald* (2017).

that the CCP has extensive control over the flow of ideas within China, as reflected by the recent statistical categorization of China as a 'not free' nation, or a score of 14/100 (lower numbers indicating greater suppression of freedom by the state) by Freedom House.⁴¹ The report details how the CCP has tightened its control on media, online speech, religious groups, and civil society associations within the country. However, Chinese citizens are not completely barred from communicating with the international community or traveling abroad, where they are likely to encounter negative opinions of CCP rule. Dialogues contrary to CCP official propaganda have the potential to threaten the legitimacy of the CCP. If, however, the CCP is able to influence and effect control of dialogues abroad, it is better able to ensure domestic approval and thereby domestic stability. In addition, China does not need to focus on enhancing the credibility of its domestic media to ensure the credibility of its international media if so-called independents, who are actually backed by the CCP, support its rule. Clandestine investments and negotiations with international media organizations and governmental officials by Chinese officials are key to China becoming more powerful globally.

Secondly, it uses sharp power to enhance the way the international community views it, ultimately hoping to be viewed as a prosperous and responsible nation. It uses methods of indirect association with individuals and organizations in the international community to legitimize its role and efforts in the world.

Lastly, the CCP seeks to silence negative views of China through covert influence. Not only does China seek to appear benevolent through the eyes of the international community, it also seeks to squash potentially harmful views of itself coming from the West. Negative portrayals of the CCP within media and governmental spheres threaten China's rise to becoming a major responsible power. As astutely stated by Joseph Nye, "a strong narrative is a source of power."⁴² Certainly, there are many other factors, economic prowess

⁴¹ Freedom House, *Freedom in the World 2018*, New York and Washington, DC: Freedom House (2018).

⁴² Joseph Nye, "China's soft and sharp power," Prague: Project Syndicate (January 4, 2018).

among them, which must be taken into account when defining a major global power. However, for China to become a leading responsible power in this world it must focus primarily upon its image, as it has already attained economic legitimacy. Therefore, if China is able to increase the dissemination of its own narrative to the international community, it can very easily become a major responsible power. Lessening the competing stories surrounding its initiatives and policies will go a long way to ensure this future success.

Argument

Sharp power is the new method used by Chinese officials to influence perspectives abroad while preventing contradictions to its non-interference policy. It maintains this policy more as a warning to the international community to stay out of its internal affairs than as a pillar of its foreign policy. The question then becomes, why does the CCP hold onto this policy and create new methods of influence, in the form of sharp power, when it could instead influence more overtly? There exist two possible reasons for China's adherence to its policy of non-interference.

Firstly, the principle of non-interference is the major foundation for its relations with developing nations. Non-interference distinguishes the Beijing model from the Western model of international investment and development. Developing nations are more likely to deal with China because China forms bilateral partnerships as opposed to conditional and top-down deals offered by many Western nations. Thereby, non-interference bolsters the view that China is a reliable bilateral partner. Sacrificing this policy would only undermine its international development efforts.

Secondly, it legitimizes China's claim to attaining the position of a responsible major power. It is able to use sharp power techniques without much fear of international condemnation, at least initially, because its non-interference policy negates the possibility that it would engage in other nations affairs. It silences those claiming Chinese interference in their states by swiftly reminding the world of its policy of non-interference. In addition, if China is consistently viewed as

a nation which does not force itself into the domestic affairs of other nations, then it is more likely to be seen as a peaceful and non-imperialistic power, in direct contrast to the image of the United States.

It is important, however, to not over-react in the face of China's changing use from soft power into sharp power. Nations should not restrict all of China's efforts to spread influence in their countries, because soft power techniques are beneficial in maintaining peace. Cultural exchanges, festivals, language courses, *et cetera*. are important ways for open dialogue to take place between China and other nations. The international community would be doing itself and China a disservice by cutting off every form of influence from China. In fact, in today's globalized society it is impossible to prevent China from influencing other nations' societies. However, governments and leaders must be more aware of the changing methods in China's soft power mechanisms. They must consider whether a certain form of influence is a tactic of soft power or more a method of sharp power. Openness and transparency in media and political spheres are the tools necessary to identify methods of sharp power. In this way, as Nye mentions, democracies have the advantage.⁴³ Greater access to information will serve to expose instances in which the CCP manipulates information and pushes its policy agenda in a clandestine manner as opposed to those instances of genuine soft power.

Chinese Communist Party's Methods of Sharp Power

China perforates political spheres to promote policy outcomes favorable to itself. China benefits from the openness of the International community, specifically the openness found in many emerging democracies. China uses the democratic platforms of other countries, in which diverse narratives and views are not restricted, to influence policy. Its membership in international organizations, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization allow Chinese officials to access markets and

⁴³ Nye, "China's soft and sharp power."

people while at the same time restricting and monitor the flow of information domestically. China participates in the international community but creates its own set of rules with which to sway outcomes. Granted, other nations do the same, but the methods which China is able to use in influencing narratives is distinct. These methods being sharp power. In addition, unlike the vast majority of nations in the international community, China has a very controlled domestic society. Therefore, the eagerness of Chinese officials to engage in and influence the domestic affairs of other nations is contrary to the way in which it restricts other nations from influencing its domestic sphere.

China's influence in the political spheres of other nations begins with the oversight committee known as the CCP Central Office of Propaganda (OFP), more broadly known as the State Council Information Office (SCIO).⁴⁴ The SCIO oversees the work of the CCP's international propaganda organization known as the United Front Work Department (UFWD). The UFWD plays an essential part in promoting the agenda of the CCP. It serves to reach out and guide key individuals and groups within and outside of China to "accept CCP rule, endorse its legitimacy, and help achieve key party aims."⁴⁵ The UFWD is made up of offices, bureaus, and subordinate units. The nine bureaus specialize in a particular geographical location or subject area abroad. Xi Jinping himself oversees the Leading Small Group of the United Front Work Department, the highest level of UFWD work. The UFWD extends its influence via overseas Chinese nationals and influential leaders in business and politics, who have become known as 'friends of China,' and encourages them to promote CCP agendas and policies within their own countries.

The work of the UFWD has been revitalized under Xi Jinping.⁴⁶ In September 2014, at the 65th birthday of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Xi Jinping gave a speech stressing the growing importance of the work of the UFWD. He referred to the organization's work as a "magic

⁴⁴ Marie-Brady, "Magic Weapons."

⁴⁵ Mercy Kuo, "China's United Front Work: Propaganda as Policy," *The Diplomat* (February 2018).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

weapon” for the rejuvenation of China. At that same conference a year later, Xi Jinping spoke about the significant changes in China’s situation and mission, saying “the larger the change, the more the United Front under the ‘new situation’ needs to be developed, the more the United Front work needs to be carried out.” Lastly, he equated the work of the UFWD to that of the CCP by saying, “united front work is party work.”⁴⁷ Xi has substantially increased the attention and resources given to the UFWD as its work is now central to the aims of the CCP. Precise figures for the amount of money invested in foreign propaganda work are difficult to come by, however, international reports have put estimates at around \$7 billion to \$10 billion for the year of 2015.⁴⁸ However, these figures are only representative of the money spent on soft power efforts abroad. They do not account for the money invested in sharp power activities. In comparison, the United States spent around \$666 million on soft power efforts in 2015.⁴⁹ While the United States relies more on its allure through cultural mechanisms, it still spends conservatively six billion three hundred and thirty-four million dollars less on public diplomacy than China. Despite clear knowledge of the exact amount of money spent by the CCP on foreign propaganda efforts, it is clear the CCP is investing heavily in the development of foreign propaganda, more so than any other country in the world.

One of the many ways in which CCP officials increase China’s influence in the world arena is through Chinese nationals and ‘friends’ of China. These individuals help propagate narratives favorable to the CCP. Chinese nationals, which have emigrated from China in the last 30 years, are of particular interest to the CCP’s goal of promoting China abroad. Many within this group, which in 2015 was around 10 million people, have a sense of loyalty to the CCP and therefore provide an efficient way for it to influence people and leaders in other countries.⁵⁰ One instance of the CCP actively supporting Chinese nationals in influencing relations abroad is the speech made by politburo member Wang Zhaoguo in 2009

⁴⁷ Xi Jinping as quoted in de la Beaumelle, 2017.

⁴⁸ Marie-Brady, “Magic Weapons.”

⁴⁹ Nye, “The Limits of Chinese Soft Power.”

⁵⁰ Marie-Brady, “Magic Weapons.”

at the Eighth National Congress on Returned Overseas Chinese. He urged his audience of overseas Chinese to “unite closely with the CCP in advancing China’s national interests under the banner of socialism with Chinese characteristics.”⁵¹

The CCP does not apply overt force upon Chinese nationals, rather it prefers to ‘guide’ in lieu of leading. It encourages the overseas Chinese communities to think of their roles abroad as service to the Motherland but also as a mutually beneficial arrangement, whereby positive outcomes are assured their communities while at the same time the CCP is able to promote its agenda internationally. The goal is to have overseas Chinese assist the CCP by creating a “friendly environment in which Beijing can pursue its international interests, moderate anti-CCP activity, and promote pro-CCP goals.”⁵² In some cases, overseas Chinese have been known to participate in espionage activity at the behest of the CCP. For instance, in 2007 the Royal Dutch Shell company uncovered a “special interest group” of Chinese nationals gathering after work hours. These Chinese nationals were encouraged by the CCP to obtain confidential pricing information for Royal Dutch Shell’s operations in Africa. According to the source, these individuals were compelled to help for what they claimed was the “good of the Motherland.”⁵³ Espionage is still a tool employed by the CCP, but it is lessening in importance as sharp power methods are becoming more prevalent. The ultimate goal for engaging overseas Chinese nationals is that they will inadvertently and even proactively engage in activities and discussions which promote the CCP’s foreign policy goals.⁵⁴ Therefore, these Chinese nationals as well as ‘friends of China’ provide a necessary tie between the CCP and the outside world.

The efforts of the UFWF in conjunction with the CCP may not sound so dis-similar to the actions of other nations. However, the ways in which the UFWF works to influence, subvert, and manipulate political, media, and academic spheres in countries across the globe, in particularly that of New

⁵¹ To, *Qiaowu*.

⁵² To, *Qiaowu*, 39.

⁵³ James Rossiter, “Chinese hackers target rolls-royce and shell,” *The Press* (December 2007).

⁵⁴ Marie-Brady, “Magic Weapons.”

Zealand, Australia, Germany, and Argentina, is unique as China's influence is growing. Certain efforts of the UFWD undermine the sovereignty and governance of countries and should demand further attention.

Evidence of Sharp Power in Australia and Argentina

The Australia political system had been perforated by Chinese influence. In June 2017, Duncan Lewis, head of Australia's Security Investigation Organization (ASIO) warned: "Espionage and foreign interference are occurring here [Australia] on an unprecedented scale, with the potential to cause serious harm to this nation's sovereignty, its security, and . . . the integrity of our political system."⁵⁵ Polling undertaken in 2017 showed that 64% of Australians polled held a favorable view of China, up from 57% two years prior.⁵⁶ China's sharp power investments would appear to have paid off, at least initially. Since 2000, nearly 80% of foreign donations made to political parties in Australia were linked to China.⁵⁷ Certain key political and well-connected Chinese nationals, living in Australia, have through these political donations and favors influenced actors and have served to undermine the sovereignty of Australia's political system.

In 2012, Huang Xiangmo, a Chinese businessman with close connections to the CPP, began donating money to both the Liberal and Labor parties of Australia and since then has donated upwards of \$2,692,960. He began to ask for favors in 2013 in return for his donations. For instance, when in late 2012 he donated \$500,000 to the Labor Party, he implicitly requested that his friend Ernest Wong, a member of the Australian Chinese Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China, be placed in the vacant seat in Australia's upper house.⁵⁸ This, among

⁵⁵ June Teufel Dreyer, "A Weapon Without War: China's United Front Strategy," *South Asia Journal* (February 6, 2018).

⁵⁶ Margaret Vice, "In global popularity contest, U.S. and China – not Russia – vie for first," Washington, DC: Pew Research Center (August 2017).

⁵⁷ Joshua Kurlantzick, "Australia, New Zealand Face China's Influence," New York: Council on Foreign Relations (2017).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

other requests, was accepted. Australian Labor Party Senator Sam Dastyari publicly supported Huang's bid for Australian citizenship and had attempted to secure a \$400,000 donation to the party from Huang. However, when Dastyari spoke in support of China's claims to the South China Sea in 2017, he was forced to step down as labor secretary after the scandal of his financial ties with Huang came to light.

Another noteworthy case of the CCP's influence in Australian politics is that of Sheri Yan, former chief executive of the Global Sustainability Foundation. In October 2015, the Australian Security Intelligence Organization, ASIO, raided the apartment of Roger Uren and Sheri Yen.⁵⁹ It soon came to light, that Mrs. Yan had paid kickbacks to the president of the UN General Assembly, John Ashe. In return Ashe provided Yan with diplomatic appointments. As an affiliate of the CCP she was able to promote China's agendas through these appointments. Prosecutors estimate that General Assembly president Ashe took over \$1.3 million in bribes from Chinese businessmen, in exchange for Ashe promoting their interests at the UN. \$800,000 worth of those bribes were paid to Ashe through Yan's foundation, when she served as the liaison between Ashe and the Chinese businesspeople.⁶⁰ In light of these developments surrounding the CCP's influence in the political system of Australia, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and his government have passed legislation which, among other things, bans donations from foreign bank accounts, non-citizens, and foreign entities to Australian political parties and candidates.⁶¹

Another step taken by Australia along with India, Japan, and the United States is the the revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, more commonly known as the Quad, initiated in 2007 and dissolved in 2010, in part because of the negative response from China. This time around Australia is undeterred by the reaction of China. It is

⁵⁹ McKenzie and Baker, "China's Operations in Australia."

⁶⁰ Nate Raymond, "N.Y. Foundation's ex-chief gets 20 months in prison in U.N. brief case," *Reuters* (July 29, 2016).

⁶¹ Katharine Murphy, "Coalition to ban foreign donations to political parties and activist groups," *The Guardian* (December 5, 2017).

taking a more cautious approach because of its recent encounter with China and its use of sharp power in the Australian political system. As mentioned in the Foreign Policy White Papers, Australia seeks to diversify its trade and investment portfolio, which this alliance would offer, because it no longer sees reason in remaining so dependent on China.⁶²

One of the defining features of sharp power influence is the use of deception and the manipulation of information to change narratives. Through trips to China and CCP supported political organizations, the CCP has accomplished this aim of censoring certain information to ensure that an overall positive image of itself is propagated to important visitors. One such example of the direct impact that this tactic has on the Argentinian population is that of the intersection of people-to-people diplomacy and think tank sponsorship. China has begun to develop its relations with think tanks in Argentina as well as internationally.⁶³ The CCP uses think tanks to help disseminate views favorable to the CCP. Two notable think tanks in Argentina which have good relations with the CCP are the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI) and the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies for Equity and Growth (CIPPEC). Members of the CARI think tank view China not as an authoritarian regime but instead as a consultative democracy.⁶⁴ The term consultative democracy was coined by Xi Jinping in 2014 to describe China's form of governing. It allows for the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference members, comprised of communist and non-communist affiliated politicians, to take part in the critique of party policies.⁶⁵ In essence, it is a way for only a small group of Chinese elites to provide feedback. However, the views of these individuals are almost always in-line with the

⁶² Grant Wyeth, "Why Has Australia Shifted Back to the Quad?" *The Diplomat* (November 16, 2017).

⁶³ Jérôme Doyon, "A Hundred Think Tanks Bloom in China," Berlin: European Council on Foreign Relations (August 2016).

⁶⁴ Cardenal, 2017.

⁶⁵ Li Changyu, "Consultative Democracy China's latest political buzzword," *China Global Times* (March 2015).

party ideology. It is worth noting that while leaders from Western countries see China as authoritarian, certain Argentinian leaders see China as a consultative democracy.

Another case of the CCP's indirect influence in Argentina is that of Gustavo Giradom. Giradon has been quoted as favoring China's position in the South China Sea dispute. He stated that the actions of the Philippines to involve the court of arbitration is "an inappropriate approach" to solving the problem, adding that "it is reasonable that China does not accept the arbitration."⁶⁶ He portrays a consistently positive view of China and its policy initiatives when informing Argentinian leaders and people.⁶⁷ Since 2015, he has been quoted in a number of articles from *Xinhua News* as well as the *People's Daily*, online news sources directly under the control of the CCP.⁶⁸ Both News sources use Gustavo Girado as a mouthpiece, directed at English, Spanish, and Chinese audiences, for legitimizing CCP policies. Therefore, Girado is an example of how the CCP uses 'friends of China' to propagate and advocate on its behalf within other countries. However, since Girado is not directly affiliated with the CCP he provides independent legitimacy to the CCP which someone such as Huang from Australia cannot. While these efforts may on the surface seem an extension of effective diplomatic policy by China, there exists an underlining concern: that China's soft power efforts are moving into the territory of sharp power. Manipulation of information and one-sided narratives from the CCP are influencing political and academic elites in Argentina. Argentinian politics have not reached the same stage of CCP influence as that of Australia, however, with time Argentina's relationship with China may sour to a similar fate.

⁶⁶ Yao Jianing, "Argentina expert: Reasonable for China not to accept South China Sea arbitration," *China Military News* (June 2016).

⁶⁷ Carlos Liascovich, "Pymes, claves para exportar a China," *Clarín* (January 2016).

⁶⁸ Marie-Brady, "Magic Weapons."

China's Response to Sharp Power Allegations

China has denounced the very idea that it is manipulating public and political perceptions abroad. With regard to Australia, criticism of how Australia has handled the situation has been quite apparent from Chinese media. In the *Global Times*, a CCP affiliated online news source, an op-ed was published in December 2017 which called the claims of China's interference in Australian politics as "disgraceful" and "symptoms of McCarthyism."⁶⁹ By equating the accusations to those of McCarthyism, the *Global Times* is attempting to erode the credibility of Australian news. The initial attempts by the Chinese media are to undermine Australian accusers while at the same time asserting China as a peaceful and non-interfering nation. After the revelation of the CCP's influence in Australia, Nick Bisley, Professor of International Relations at La Trobe University, went to China for an academic conference. He spent a week in China in December 2017 speaking with Chinese scholars, analysts, and commentators at an academic conference hosted by the CCP. At the conference, he noted that Chinese elites had reactions ranging from "puzzlement to outright hostility" for Australia's reaction towards China.⁷⁰ Bisley commented that many of the individuals had studied in Australia, sent their children there, and generally had a good disposition toward Australia. However, many were discouraged by the sinister tone and sensationalizing the situation by Australian media. However, Bisley made a point of noting that at these types of conferences, hosted by the CCP, Chinese elites must show they are on the same page as Xi Jinping.⁷¹ Therefore, it is possible these individuals were constricted from expressing their full opinions. However, it is clear that CCP proponents are discouraged by Australia's portrayal of China's policies

⁶⁹ *Global Times*, "West Suspicion of China infiltration absurd," *Global Times* (December 12, 2017).

⁷⁰ Nick Bisley, "Mistrust of Australia is growing in China," *The Interpreter* (December 4, 2017).

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

abroad.

Australia's steps to curb CCP influence in their political system have affected Chinese citizens living in China, as evidenced by a 2017 poll by the Chinese state-owned news portal *huanqiu.com* rating Australia as the least friendly country towards China. The poll asked Chinese citizens to choose the least friendly country to China and Australia received 60% of the votes or 8,589 votes.⁷² The CCP disapproval of Australia's reaction is now manifest in the population of China who perceive Australia as being less friendly to China and Chinese citizens. China's state media has advised students not to enroll in Australian higher education and PRC delegations have cancelled visits to Australia.⁷³ As a result, less Chinese citizens are sending their children to colleges in Australia, preferring to send their children to America or Europe instead.

Other Chinese scholars have attempted to clarify the CCP's new role of increasingly clandestine soft power. According to senior propaganda official Hu Xiaohan, "The struggle for and against infiltration in the ideological sphere has become intense and complex. Hostile forces have whipped up successive waves of public opinion against China, and the international struggle for public opinion grows fiercer by the day."⁷⁴ Indeed, in Australia Chinese-Australians are experiencing the most criticism. Many Chinese-Australians who speak with a moderate or positive view of China are labelled as "CCP sympathizers", "Beijing trolls", and "panda huggers." These individuals are reluctant to share their opinions publicly because of the sentiments expressed by Australians against them. On the other side, Chinese-Australians who oppose the way the CCP has been involved in Australia are hesitant to speak publicly because they fear retaliation from the CCP.⁷⁵ As a result, Chinese-Australians are experiencing most of the negative

⁷² Kayla Wong, "Australia voted as the least friendly country to China in 2017 by Chinese netizens," *Mothership* (January 2018).

⁷³ Jieh-Yung Lo, "Just because I have a moderate view on China doesn't make me a Beijing stooge," *The Guardian* (April 5, 2018).

⁷⁴ Edney, *The Globalization of Chinese Propaganda*, 77.

⁷⁵ Lo, "Just because."

reciprocation of the CCP's influence in Australia. The way in which Chinese-Australians have been excluded from the dialogue in Australia will only hinder relations and cause more paranoia. Individuals cannot disregard certain Chinese nationals simply because they have opposing views. Open dialogue must be encouraged, more than ever, because unaddressed resentment will only serve to divide the nation further.

Conclusion

China seeks to be a responsible international power, but its domestic situation must not be forgotten. It is misguided to assume that China will uphold the values on the world stage which it does not uphold domestically. Why would the CCP support independent media abroad when it restricts and controls its domestic media? Therefore, nations must consider more carefully the situations in which CCP narratives are propagated through independent international media because it is possible that sharp power mechanisms are at play. The potential ramifications of China's influence in other countries should draw the attention of politicians and leaders because there is a possibility for their national sovereignty to be at risk. It is not necessarily the specific instances of sharp power which should cause alarm but rather the culmination of sharp power efforts which becomes problematic. Or perhaps sharp power is the way of the future and a world in which narratives are tailored and demented by governments is the reality we must all expect.

Perhaps transparency will no longer be a desired quality of nations and rather the manipulation of the truth which reasserts a nation's dominance in the world is the likely eventuality. Perhaps, in order to outsmart China, playing by the rules of its game is the only possibility. Perhaps it is as Orwell wrote in *1984*: "Who controls the past controls the future, who controls the present controls the past". By that logic whoever controls the narrative of the present controls the future. Sharp power has the potential to do just that. If China and other authoritarian regimes are able to control the present narrative so much so that public and

governmental perceptions of the past are changed, then they have the potential to control the future. I, however, do not accept that possibility. The only way to identify CCP influence, or for that matter any nations sharp power efforts, is through increased transparency and dialogue. Building barriers instead of constructing pathways of open communication will only increase the likelihood of the CCP and other nations involvement in covert influence.

It is important, however, to expose CCP sharp power methods without causing increased paranoia or aggression. This is particularly true in the case of Chinese nationals who have taken no part in China's sharp power methods. Chinese nationals will turn to the nation which accepts them and not the nation which blames them for actions they themselves have not committed. That is why bringing this issue to the forefront of public dialogue is the only way to strengthen security and ensure all sides of the debate are heard. Nations should not fall into the same pattern as China, silencing differing perspectives because that will only seek to divide. Rather, nations must continue to encourage research, the search for truth, and continue to value the democratic system. As Nye writes, "openness is a key source of democracies' ability to attract and persuade."⁷⁶ Relinquishing that openness from democracies would be to give up our most important asset, because the possibility of a future without transparency and open dialogue is not a future any of us should wish to see.

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⁷⁶ Joseph Nye, "How sharp power threatens soft power," *Foreign Affairs* (January 24, 2018).

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中美贸易合作与竞争对美国制造业和普通人生活的影响

The Impact of Sino-US trade cooperation and competition on American manufacturing and everyday citizens

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Brianna Richards is a current undergraduate student studying Business, Entrepreneurship, and Organizations (BEO) and East Asian Studies (EAS) at Brown University, class of 2023. Her first formal educational experience with the Chinese language (Mandarin) came when she was granted a scholarship with NSLI-Y China for the summer of 2018 to study abroad at Northwest University (西北大学) in Xi'an, China. Continuing her formal Chinese language education at Brown University (2019~present) and CET's virtual Chinese summer program (2021), she hopes to return to China to study or work abroad following graduation.

Summary: This piece describes how Sino-US trade relations and a growing economic interdependency have affected the US manufacturing industry and the lives of everyday citizens. A general introduction to the development of Sino-US trade relations is followed with a brief discussion on some of the mutual co-benefits of trade cooperation as well as the potential consequences of economic competition and its accompanying high tariffs. There are many reasons for the growing economic tensions between the US and China. However, rather than simply attributing this growing economic competition to the domestic political and cultural environment or language barriers between the two countries, this piece argues that such tensions stem from the growing Sino-US trade deficit, severely impacting the US manufacturing industry and its accompanying job market. In order to revive the U.S. economy and increase U.S. manufacturing jobs, but also to curb China's development and the strengthening of China's hard power, the U.S. government has imposed increasingly higher tariffs on Chinese-made products. To further protect and advance its own global economic position, China has taken a similar position in its own

institution of tariffs on U.S. manufactured goods. This economic competition, however, has only hurt the lives of everyday citizens. Looking ahead, we don't know yet whether the U.S.-China economic relationship will improve or deteriorate further. It will be interesting to follow the future development of these global superpowers and see if China and the United States can finally put the greater interests of the world and everyday people over their own national ambitions.

Author's Note: This piece was written in the summer of 2021 and does not account for major changes in trade relations due to the pandemic. Although the ongoing pandemic is sure to impact the state of Sino-US trade relations, I believe much of which is argued in this piece can still be relevant today.

今天，中国和美国都是世界上最强大的国家。美国的军事力量和中国经济实力是这两个国家硬实力非常强大的最好的证明。改革开放以后，中国不再是一个欠发达的国家，而是一个经济发展突飞猛进的国家。中国加入世界贸易组织以后变得越来越更强大，对其它的国家有越来越多的影响。

现在，中国与别的国家的经贸关系让世界各国经济更加紧密地联系在一起。显然，这种所谓的国家间的亲密关系可以带来深远的影响。一方面，经济合作可以让多个国家互利共赢，但另一方面经济竞争导致很多国家设置关税壁垒。高额的关税会减缓经济发展，减少贸易往来，影响国际关系，甚至于影响老百姓的日常生活。

因为经济竞争带来的负面影响，现在的中美关系日趋紧张。这种紧张局势是由很多原因造成的。然而，在我看来，这些原因不包括中美的国内政治、文化环境和语言障碍，最重要的原因是中国经济的发展给美国、特别是美国的制造业带来的影响。中国加入世界贸易组织以来，美国对中国的贸易逆差大

大增加。所谓的“贸易逆差”就是美国对中国的出口比进口低得多（USTR, 2021）。美国贸易逆差的增加导致美国失去了 370 万个工作岗位，其中四分之三的工作岗位都是制造业的（Scott and Mokhiber, 2020）。对这个数据的一种解释是中国制造业越来越发达，创造了很多新的就业机会；但也有人认为美国制造业的工作机会都转移到了中国。

除了中国有大量人口，劳动力资源充足以外，中国也有其他方面的条件让中国制造业具有竞争优势。比方说中国公司的决策成本效益是一个很重要的方面。为了保持低成本，有些中国公司不按照健康标准和环保规定来制造产品。另外，很多从农村移民到城市的务工人员愿意从事收入比较低的工作，公司也因此可以节省更多钱。这些情况使中国制造业企业可以降低产品的价格（Bajpai, 2021）。这反过来也吸引了更多的跨国公司和客户考虑在中国进行投资。一个很好的例子就是苹果公司（AAPL）等美国公司利用中国供应链的效率来保持低成本和高利润率（Racoma, 2012）。

随着越来越多的公司决定在中国制造他们的产品，中美经贸关系也跟着变得更加紧张。这些情况导致了更高的关税，特别是针对美国和中国制造的产品。为了恢复美国经济的发展，增加美国制造业的工作机会，同时也为了抑制中国的发展和增强中国硬实力的增强，美国政府对中国制造的产品征收越来越更高的关税（Craig, 2020）。这个行动也让中国对美国产品征收更高的关税。这些竞争激烈的经贸政策不仅进一步损害中美关系，而且对美国和中国老百姓有很深远的影响。比方说，高额的关税对普通人有多方面的影响。第一是运费比较贵和关税比较高导致商品价格上涨。在中国，美国制造的品牌产品比中国制造的产品贵十倍。在美国，中国制造的商品已经不知不觉中成了

美国人日常生活的一部分。这是因为中国商品比美国本土生产的商品便宜。几乎什么商品都是从中国来的，玩具、游戏、建筑，甚至于衣服都是中国制造的。虽然中美经贸合作有很多好处，但是美国媒体和政府平常只考虑这个关系对美国的制造业有什么坏处，这样造成美国老百姓对中国政府，甚至中国人，持反对的态度。一方面中国制造业的发展造成美国失去制造业的工作是真的，但另一方面政府和媒体造成了舆论变得更偏颇。更重要的是美国竞争政策和关税并不会给增加美国制造业的工作机会带来那么大的影响。这是因为很大公司还想省钱，所以他们只想把制造业的工厂从中国转移到亚洲其他发展中国家制造他们的产品（Craig, 2020）。这就证明增加关税并不是解决贸易争端的最佳方案。也有人认为，如果中国不接受美国制造业的工作，就会出现自动化（Alden, 2020）。那为什么美国应该与中国抗争，当国际大公司造成这些问题的时候？美中紧张关系带来的影响是巨大的，也是深远的。我希望将来这两个强大的国家和他们的政府可以考虑双方制定的政策带来的后果，还要考虑竞争对世界利益共同体有什么样的影响。

展望未来，中美经济关系是否会改善还是会进一步恶化，我们还不知道。我只希望中国和美国能够将国际各国更大的利益置于自己国家的雄心之上。

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Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal

The purpose of the *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal* is to encourage undergraduates to pursue scholarly inquiry into East Asian topics, ranging from political analyses to calligraphy samples. One of only a few journals in the United States devoted to undergraduates which accepts national and international submissions, the *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal* seeks to recognize works of high academic quality. The Journal seeks not only to draw attention to the Wittenberg University East Asian Studies program, but also to maintain an integral role in the program itself, seeking to broaden scholarly and popular perspectives on East Asia. It is read by the local and international community.

The *Wittenberg University East Asian Studies Journal* was initiated by a group of students in 1975 and is issued annually. From its beginning, students have directed all creative and managerial processes related to publication. Funded by the Wittenberg University Student Senate, the Journal is an entirely student-initiated and student-directed endeavor, the major goal of which is to afford students the opportunity to participate in the rich scholarly dialogue of those interested in East Asia. As such, all decisions regarding the Journal, including the use of its name, will be made by the student editors in conjunction with the support provided by Student Senate and current advisor.

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