

JAPAN PERSPECTIVES

No. 11

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Voices from the Sylff Community

*How the Leopard
Got Its Spots: Gender
Dimensions of Land
Reform in Cambodia*

*A Disaster-Resilient,
“Frugal”
Information System*

*The Arts in Crisis
and Their Survival
in the Twenty-First
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*Cars and Capitalism
in Contemporary
Hanoi*

The Economics of Rapprochement

Can Japan and China Bury the Hatchet?

Japan's Energy Policy in a Post-3/11 World

*Juggling Safety, Sustainability and
Economics*

The Limits of Governability

**“Japan Is Back,”
Including a New
Defence Posture**

JAPAN PERSPECTIVES

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October 10, 2014

How the Leopard Got Its Spots

Gender Dimensions of Land Reform in Cambodia

Alice Beban

Large-scale land acquisitions by agribusinesses have negative social and environmental side effects, and many governments are exploring ways to balance commercial interests with those of individual residents. Alice Beban, a Sylff fellowship recipient at Massey University, conducted research in Cambodia, where the national government is advancing bold land reforms to attract agribusiness investments, using an SRA grant. In this article, she examines the socioeconomic implications of the land reforms for the country's smallholder farmers.

* * *

Land and food production has returned to the center of global development concerns in recent years, spurred by a dramatic rise in large-scale farmland investment for agribusiness and speculation (White et al., 2012). The Southeast Asian nation of Cambodia is a key site for farmland investment, with around 50% of the country's arable land reportedly awarded as "economic land concessions" (ELC) to agribusiness companies in recent years (Bickell & Lohr, 2011; Borras & Franco, 2011).

Now, with mounting concern over food security, public unrest, and the documented negative social and environmental consequences of large-scale land acquisitions (also known as "land grabbing" by some academics and activists), many governments are



A group of 16 rural villagers and representatives from the Forestry Administration patrol an area that was designated as a community forest in the land reform to check for illegal land clearing.

Alice Beban Sylff fellow, 2007, Massey University. Is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Development Sociology, Cornell University.

asking what can be done to balance a desire for agribusiness investment with environmental and social concerns.¹

One response is smallholder land reform. This was the approach taken by Cambodia in 2012, when the Cambodian government announced a bold new initiative to expand post-conflict land registration to households living on the ELCs. Thousands of student volunteers from Cambodia's capital began knocking on doors in remote areas of the country to survey land for redistribution to smallholders. This policy—dubbed the “leopard skin policy” by Prime Minister Hun Sen—envisages large scale agribusinesses and smallholders coexisting like animal spots on the landscape, with the plantations gaining a labor force and smallholders gain-



Rural people who had lost land to an agribusiness company meet to ask spirits to help them recover their land.

ing secure title to the land on which they live (Naren & Woods, 2012).

I was in Cambodia when this land reform was carried out, and I was fascinated with the scope and speed of the initiative and the potential it holds for shifting the trajectory of “land grabbing” across the country and offering lessons to many other countries struggling to develop a socially just agrarian policy.

It also challenges gender norms by promoting joint husband/wife land titling. My PhD research examines this land reform and the roles it plays in contemporary Cambodian politics, society, and ecology. I had the opportunity to explore this issue with my SRA award, with mentoring and support from my Cambodian SRA host, Professor Pou Sovachana of Pannyastra University, who is now research director at the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP).

I was a senior research fellow at CICP for six months during my SRA award. While at CICP, I was able to attend many conferences and seminars, meet researchers from around Cambodia and the world with similar interests to my own, and also give a lecture to Cambodian students and assist in CICP's research projects.

Most of my SRA award tenure was spent at a research site within Cambodia's largest agribusiness concession, one of the first sites where the new land reform was implemented. I interviewed 18 government officials at both the central government

¹ See for example the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), “Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure” and the country debate around this (<http://www.fao.org/nr/tenure/voluntary-guidelines/en/>).

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and local government levels and conducted over 60 semi-structured interviews to gain a variety of perspectives from people in communities where land titles were given out, as well as the views of the student volunteers and organizations working on land rights. I also attended land title award ceremonies, agricultural training sessions, and forest patrols in communities that had received titles under the land reform.

I investigated the politics of the land titling reform's implementation and the implications of the reform for people's perceptions of security, agricultural production, and relationships within the household. My initial findings suggest that the benefits women and men in farming communities received from the land reform policy were highly dependent upon local authorities' implementation.

Given Cambodia's "neo-patrimonial" political system, where political power works through networks connecting elite politicians and businesspeople with their supporters at all levels of government (Un & So, 2009), it is perhaps not a surprise that, in some cases, local authorities and powerful players were able to use the land reform to their advantage (for example, by titling common forest areas and selling land to outsiders for personal financial gain). This meant that poorer families, including female-headed households, often benefitted less than wealthier families, as they did not have the political connections necessary to take advantage of the reform.

My SRA grant enabled me to spend time in areas where this kind of elite capture was widespread and also areas where it was far less apparent. I found that even in areas with similar conditions, differences in the land reform process were apparent, in part due to the presence of supportive individuals in positions of authority and to strong community networks that were able to inform community members about correct process in the land reform and hold authorities more accountable.

My research also shows that assumptions of a simple causal relationship between a policy promoting joint title and women's land rights overlooks deeper, gendered power relations. During the policy implementation process, I found that local officials' understanding of gender roles had a large part to play in how joint land titles were awarded.



I am talking with a family and looking at the land title certificate they just received.

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For example, there was confusion among officials and community members as to how people's land should be titled when one partner was not present. This meant that some women I interviewed who had been abandoned by spouses were awarded joint title to their land with the spouse who had abandoned them. Flexibility in the law for local authorities to resolve specific cases can be a strength, as it recognizes that policies produced in the capital can never account fully for on-the-ground realities. But it can also mean that people with power and resources can use this flexibility for their own gain and that enduring gender constructs that view women as less capable of controlling household assets can guide the decisions of local authorities.

I expected that the award of property rights might reduce insecurity and enable farmers to increase production efficiency, but many people in my study with legal tenure security did not necessarily perceive their land to be secure. While land title recipients were usually happy to receive title and some people certainly felt more secure, a common theme that arose in interviews was people's ongoing fear that their land would be taken even after receiving land title. The main reasons given for this was that the court system is expensive and incomprehensible to many rural people, and it is difficult for people to accept that the new paper titles will carry much weight in a system that for years has been dominated by money and power.

I am now continuing to investigate this aspect of the land reform in my ongoing PhD research, through examining the cultural bases of men's and women's sense of security, including the various type of evidence people use to support their claims to land and the ways people settle disputes locally.

The SRA experience was extremely enriching for me as I continue with my PhD. It not only provided me the resources to undertake an extended period of research but also connected me with a whole new network of wonderful Cambodian and international scholars whom I am continuing to work with on several collaborative research projects.



Officials from the Ministry of Land hand out land titles to rural villagers at the local village temple.

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November 18, 2014

Why Do Some Organizations Perform Better Than Others?

Investigating the Importance of Context and Strategy Choices

Mirjam Goudsmit*

Mirjam Goudsmit, a Sylff fellow at the UNSW Australia Business School, used her Sylff Research Abroad award to investigate how organizations are affected by “turbulence,” or radical, unpredictable changes in the business environment. For the empirical phase of her project, she went to Israel, which has a long history of instability, conducting research at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and elsewhere. Her research aims to help organizations achieve their business objectives in various turbulent conditions. A summary of her research is presented below.

* * *

At the core of strategic management research is the explanation of performance differences among business organizations. I look at this question from the perspective that organizations are increasingly confronted with turbulence in their competitive contexts. The term *turbulence* is considered here as radical, unpredictable change in the environment. The situation is unstable, unsettled, and in turmoil. Instead of calm waters, imagine a turbulent sea that is choppy, bumpy, and at times violently rough. Instabilities are irregular. Organizations have to navigate such waters, that is, such competitive situations.

Triggers of turbulence in a business context include technology developments, political issues and conflicts, unsettled regulations, and ubiquity of information.

Mirjam Goudsmit Sylff fellow, 2013, and PhD candidate, UNSW Australia.

* For supporting this research abroad, my tremendous gratitude goes to the Ryoichi Sakakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund, the host institution Hebrew University and its academic community, home institution UNSW Australia and primary academic advisor Dr. George Shinkle, all intermediaries, including the Israel-Australia Chamber of Commerce, and organizations and people who participated in this research for their generous time, efforts, and insights.

Overall, these triggers change to different degrees; some changes are radical and transformative in nature—they disrupt the status quo in an environment and have the potential to alter expectations and what is considered valuable. Think of an unexpected and radically new product that profoundly alters the market. Existing products are afterwards considered dated and less valuable, the willingness to pay for those products decreases, and they are eventually perceived as largely useless and are displaced. A familiar case is the introduction of the iPhone with its significant impact on the nature of the mobile phone industry.

In today's unsettled times, destabilizing forces operate with increased frequency and impact and present significant difficulties for organizations. One important challenge is to effectively make strategy choices—choices that entail courses of action necessary for carrying out long-term organizational objectives. This challenge follows from the increased difficulty of predicting the future and reduced guidance from experience, that is, what worked in the past may no longer work in the future. Strategy choices can help explain performance differences among organizations. Specifically, ineffective choices may result in decreased performance or even threaten and undermine the survival of organizations. Understanding more about effective strategy choices in turbulent contexts, I believe, is therefore important.

In my research, I am curious about strategy choices that organizations make and how different turbulent conditions might influence the effect of these strategies on organizational performance. The empirical project consists of two sequenced and interconnected phases. In Phase One the aim is to *explore* and understand more about the research topics through interviews, while the aim of Phase Two is to *test* and provide statistically valid insights through a questionnaire. The first phase is designed to carefully further develop the research and ideas as a foundation for large-scale investigation in the second phase.

My Research Abroad

In the spring of 2014 I went to Israel for the first empirical research phase. This context represents a long history of instability. My research activity during this time included fieldwork, interviews with organizational decision-makers, and discussions with experts. The visiting institution, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, provided valuable support, such as office facilities and the opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss research with the faculty and graduate community. Findings from this research abroad provided insights into how decision-makers think about turbulence and strategy in the context of Israel. This exploration, based on the inter-

views I conducted with businesses, has led to several observations and preliminary insights that are being put to the test in the second empirical phase. I will hereafter touch on some interesting insights.

First, the findings suggest that turbulence and its consequences are more complex than previously assumed. Between and within organizations, decision-makers were found to recognize changes in their environment to different extents and in different ways. For example, one manager emphasized the importance of commodity prices and the natural environment, while another emphasized the importance of competition. In another example, one manager considered the environment, or an aspect in that environment, as relatively stable and predictable, while another considered it as relatively unstable and unpredictable.

Turbulence is thus not as universal as previously understood, that is, similar across all organizations and for all decision-makers. How dissimilar perspectives matter for strategy choices and their effectiveness need further investigation. Moreover, organizations were found managing simultaneous, sometimes contradictory changes. An illustration of such environmental factors is limited but major regulatory changes occurring at the same time as many, small changes in relevant technology. Organizations therefore have to attend to this complexity and take action that is possibly more systemic—and thereby more multifaceted.

Second, the unique geographical location in which organizations operate is pertinent. There are context-specific aspects of the situation in Israel, such as the sizeable power of labor unions in some sectors that organizations have to negotiate. Also there is a heightened risk of disruptive geopolitical issues with the potential of escalation and extreme consequences, such as hostility and conflict. These possible issues are revealed on the radar of some organizations to varying degrees, but they are indeed exceptional circumstances—infrequent and unforeseeable. As such, these issues resemble *forces majeure*, which cannot reasonably be known in advance, controlled, and prepared for.

Some organizations are more exposed to this category of issues, such as when facilities are located in areas of contention. When situations arise, organizations can sometimes only react, such as by closing retail stores or moving portable assets, including employees, to another site, with little room for further maneuvering. Often short-term, quick responses emerge when situations occur that are in conflict with long-term (planned) strategies. How to manage the conflict is exposed as a challenge for organizations.

Furthermore, amidst disruption many organizations aim to continue their business as much as possible. Conservative financial planning and contingency planning were found to be prudent strategic approaches for some organizations to

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continue achieving outcomes in such a situation, such as by reducing risk and preparing for scenarios. An additional observation is that the local country and organization context more frequently *extend* across borders. The above geopolitical issues are examples of this observation. Another is that many industries and products were found to be fundamentally global in nature so that competition is essentially global.

Organizations were also impacted by rulings from other countries' regulators, at distant locations. An example is the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act that requires foreign financial institutions to report directly to the US government all clients who are "US persons." This is a big change that is having a big impact on financial institutions worldwide. Crucially, my findings have uncovered the fact that global issues of turbulence can

rapidly become local issues and, conversely, local issues can rapidly become global ones for organizations. Organizations therefore have to navigate this increasingly interconnected world that might call for different strategies.

Finally, the findings suggest numerous different strategy choices for organizations, like the several already mentioned above. Some strategies are specific to a particular industry or organization, while others are more general in nature. For example, several managers indicated that their organizations faced persistent constraints from their environment through unions, interest groups, or regulatory bodies. Organizations differed in their responses to these constraints, however. Some adopted a more reactive approach and largely responded to changes after they occurred. Others adopted a more proactive approach and largely anticipated changes before they occurred. Which type of strategy is more effective under what circumstances needs to be further understood.

In sum, in these increasingly turbulent times, I believe this research is meaningful and relevant for both academics and practitioners. As an important foundation and next step for further research, the findings provide more understanding of the important topics of strategy choices and turbulence. The overriding intent of this project is to support organizations achieve organizational objectives in different turbulent conditions. With this research I aspire to benefit organizations worldwide and, ultimately, contribute to the future prosperity of society at large.



The author at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

September 26, 2014

A Disaster-Resilient, “Frugal” Information System

Mihoko Sakurai

In March 2011, the Tohoku region of Japan suffered the worst earthquake and tsunami disaster to ever hit the country. Hampering rescue and relief activities in the immediate aftermath of the quake was the serious damage to the communications infrastructure. How can an information system be built that is more resilient to major disasters? Mihoko Sakurai, a Sylff fellow at Keio University, believes that the key to such a system is “frugality.”

* * *

My current research on disaster-resilient information systems (IS) was prompted by the March 11, 2011, earthquake in northern Japan—the largest quake the country ever experienced. The Great East Japan Earthquake measured 9.0 on the Richter scale, making it one of the most powerful earthquakes in recorded history. The tsunami caused by the quake reached 40 meters in height and hit Tohoku’s eastern coastline, severely damaging a very wide area and triggering great confusion. Japan’s Fire and Disaster Management Agency reports that 18,958 people died, 6,219 were injured, and 2,655 are missing as of March 2014; 127,291 houses were totally lost, and more than 1,000,000 were partially destroyed.

Field Survey in Japan

The earthquake and tsunami exposed the vulnerability of Japan’s information communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, as the loss of communication greatly hampered rescue and relief efforts and more than likely increased the death toll.

From November 2011 to February 2012, eight months after the earthquake, I

Mihoko Sakurai Sylff fellow, 2013, Keio University. Is currently a PhD student at Keio University’s Graduate School of Media and Governance.

and other members of our research team conducted structured interviews with 13 municipal governments in the areas hardest hit by the earthquake. The objective of the survey was to ascertain how ICT systems inside municipal offices were affected by the earthquake. We visited Miyako, Otsuchi, Kamaishi, Rikuzentakata, Kesenuma, Minamisanriku, Ishinomaki, Higashimatsushima, Sendai, Minamisoma, and Iwaki, as well as evacuation centers in Namie and Futaba.

These municipalities are located in the prefectures of Iwate, Miyagi, and Fukushima. Under the administrative structure of the Japanese government, municipalities occupy the third rung. At the top of the ladder is the national government; this is followed by the 47 prefectural governments and 1,742 municipal governments (as of May 1, 2013) at the local level. The size of municipal governments varies enormously; while big cities like Osaka and Yokohama have a few million residents, some small villages have a population of less than 1,000.

There are several types of municipalities in Japan, namely, *shi* (cities with a population of over 50,000), *cho* or *machi* (towns variously defined by each prefecture), *son* or *mura* (villages), and *tokubetu-ku* (the 23 special wards of Tokyo). The populations of the municipalities we visited varied from 2,000 to 70,000. Almost all of them were small cities. Legally speaking, the role of municipal governments is to provide public services to citizens and, perhaps most importantly, to maintain a registry of all residents—the data that serves as the foundation of government. Prefectures are defined more loosely as wide-area governments.

Our survey included questions on preparedness, the level of damage, and the recovery process of ICT equipment, including power supply, network connectivity, information systems, and related facilities.

Need for Disaster-Resilient Systems

Analyses of these cases led us to conclude that building a robust system that never fails is impossible and to recognize that creative field responses are of crucial importance. The immediate problem after the March 2011 earthquake was the failure



The Arch, the University of Georgia's academic symbol.

of the supporting infrastructure needed to run the information systems. The physical destruction of servers also meant that residential records were lost in some areas. The survey also revealed that a uniform plan across all municipalities would not have been appropriate, since the situation in various towns and cities—and the necessary responses—were continually changing. Government buildings were generally sturdy, and most survived the tsunami. But this did not mean that the ICT system survived intact. Some municipal offices did not recover their information systems for four months.

This should prompt a rethinking of ICT system design to ensure that communication can be maintained, especially in the immediate aftermath of a major disaster. Resilient systems are needed that can maintain or recover their core functions flexibly and quickly. Flexibility is required to enable creative responses in a disaster situation using minimal resources. Such systems are particularly important for municipal governments, which need to embark on rescue and life-saving activities immediately after a disaster.

This is a totally different approach from that required during normal times. The national government has tried to create robust and special systems for disaster situations, but they have not always had the required resilience in the face of actual severe situations. Once they are destroyed, moreover, they cannot be restored quickly.

“Frugality” as an Essential Concept

The “frugal information system” concept can be useful in building such a resilient system. This is an information system that is “developed and deployed with minimal resources to meet the preeminent goal of the client.” Such a system would be important under disaster situations, when people have limited access to resources. A frugal system is characterized by the four U’s: “universality,” the drive to overcome the friction of information systems’ incompatibilities; “ubiquity,” the drive to access information unconstrained by time and space; “uniqueness,” the drive to know precisely the characteristics and location of a person or entity; and “unison,” the drive for information consistency.

Mobile devices can serve as a standard platform to meet these “4U” requirements.

They were indeed the most widely used means of communication by individuals in the wake of the 3.11 disaster. The mobile infrastructure was restored with greater ease than other systems (ubiquitous network). They have open interfaces (universality). The phone number or SIM ID can be used for the identification of

individuals (uniqueness). And as soon as the networks are restored, data can be backed up on cloud data storage (unison). There is the additional benefit that power can be easily supplied to the handsets.

Smartphones can be particularly useful devices in a disaster situation. People are gaining familiarity with these phones through daily use, which is very important under panic situations. Following a disaster, people are unlikely to use tools with which they are unfamiliar.

Future Research

I am currently working on a project to build a prototype smartphone application that employs the principles of resilient design. A test will be conducted in October 2014 at Tome, Miyagi, which was one of the cities heavily affected by the disaster. The initial test will involve the use of smartphones as part of an evacuation center's operations during the first week. Three key functions will be tested, namely, (1) the identification and registration of people at the center using their phone numbers or SIM IDs, (2) recording people's arrival and departure, and (3) creating an evacuee database. Using the smartphone's number, the application can enable the transmission of information on such required items as medicine and milk for infants.

Smartphone applications designed to support disaster victims already exist. But none are suitable for municipal disaster relief operations. If municipal officials use the same applications as residents, the sharing of information can be greatly facilitated, enabling a smoother delivery of relief supplies. What we need to do is to make sure such applications are operational and widely used before they are needed and are quickly made available after a disaster.



The University of Georgia's Terry College of Business.

The Great East Japan Earthquake posed what might have been the biggest possible challenge to an information society, making us acutely aware that our daily life—as well as government operations to help people in need—rely heavily on the ICT infrastructure. The performance of nearly all activities in advanced economies has become dependent on ICT, and disasters illustrate the fragility of this dependence. The earthquake shook our confidence in technology, and a study

of its effects indicates the importance of designing systems with a recovery model in mind.

Massive disasters are likely to become more common around the world in the years to come¹, as suggested by the fact that there were three times as many natural disasters between 2000 and 2009 as between 1980 and 1989². I believe that a correct understanding of resilience and the development of information systems designed to withstand severe conditions can make the world a safer plain which to live. This research is certainly not over.

In closing, I would like to express my gratitude to the Tokyo Foundation for supporting my research abroad. Thanks to an SRA award, I was able to conduct research at the University of Georgia, where my ideas were greatly enhanced under the supervision Dr. Richard Watson—regents professor and J. Rex Fuqua distinguished chair for Internet strategy in the Department of Management Information Systems at the University of Georgia's Terry College of Business—who advocates the notion of a frugal information system.

¹ <http://www.emdat.be/natural-disasters-trends>, last accessed June 8 2014.

² <http://www.accuweather.com/en/weather-blogs/climatechange/steady-increase-in-climate-rel/19974069>, last accessed June 8 2014.

May 12, 2014

Music Connects Us All

Gretchen Amussen

The seventh Sylff chamber music program, “New York-Paris-Vienna,” was held recently in Paris with a grant from the Tokyo Foundation. Here, Paris Sylff steering committee member Gretchen Amussen introduces some of the enthusiastic comments by the participating fellows and professors.

* * *

From January 16 to 24, 2014, the Paris Conservatoire hosted eight Sylff musicians from Vienna’s University of Music and Performing Arts and New York’s Juilliard School, who joined forces with four professors and six Paris Sylff fellows for a week of chamber music, culminating in a magnificent concert in the Invalides Army Museum’s historic seventeenth-century Grand Salon. The musicians, representing eight nationalities, performed works by Tomasi, Ravel, Jolivet, De Falla, Villa-Lobos, and Mozart.

“Playing music with new people is always a challenge,” said French fellow and flutist Mathilde Calderini of the experience, “because first you have to ‘find’ each other. But in the end it’s worth it!”

For French fellows Lomic Lamoureux and Carl-Emmanuel Fisbach, who participated in last year’s Viennese encounter, as well as pianist Antoine Alerini, who had gone to New York several years ago, being the hosts meant taking responsibility for sharing French culture. For Lomic, “The human aspect is



Gretchen Amussen Sylff Steering Committee Member and Director for External Affairs and International Relations, Paris Conservatoire.

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essential, which is why I wanted to spend time with other fellows so they could better understand our country, our art, and who we are, much as had been the case for me when I went to Vienna.” In fact, for all involved, the cultural dimension proved as important as the music making.

For Juilliard’s Francesca dePasquale, “It’s one thing to speak about the French



sound for French composers and completely another to be in France, see the incredible architecture, art, museums, and learn about the kind of sound here. For me, this was very valuable as an artist.” Vienna’s Georgina Oakes agreed, saying “I can’t get over the beauty of the city, which I’m sure will continue to inspire my artistry.”

The cultural aspect of the week got off to a vibrant start with an after-

noon tour of the city, followed by dinner at the Auberge des Pyrénées-Cévennes. Traditional French cooking from the Southwest and from Lyon was featured, allowing for new culinary discoveries. Georgina Oakes, doubtless the most adventurous, chose a dish featuring pig’s feet, which she joyfully shared with those sitting close to her. For Georgina, “tasting” a culture seemed as important as hearing a new language and visiting historic monuments.

The project began weeks earlier with the sending of hard-to-find scores and parts to the visiting fellows. Upon their arrival, complex rehearsal schedules were distributed, and students were taken on a tour of the Invalides Army Museum. Of particular interest to the visitors was Paris’s system of reserving time and space for personal practice at the Conservatoire: something that the French students take for granted but that others felt could be incorporated in their home schools. Rehearsals began shortly thereafter, with the sounds of music, animated discussion in multiple languages, laughter, and music-making reverberating late into the night.



One feature of the Paris Sylff project is that students and teachers perform together. For oboist and chamber music professor David Walter, when you “play a program with students, their minds are fresh and full of hope regarding the music. They are ready to jump in if you invite them to do so. You must participate in much

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the same way they do, and expect from yourself what you expect from them—which is quite demanding and not always comfortable.”

Guitar professor Jean-Marc Zwellenreuther mused that the Brazilian composer Hector Villa-Lobos, “himself a great traveller and lover of Paris, would have been happy to see and hear these young musicians who were so enthusiastic, generous, and kind.” Cellist and professor Diana Ligeti commented, “Speaking and understanding the differences in musical pedagogy in our respective countries made us stronger and more able to give a personal, authentic interpretation.” Flute professor Vincent Lucas noted there were “many exchanges in which each musician listened to one another and engaged with real complicity and intelligence—just as one does with professional musicians.” And French harpist and fellow Maureen Thiébaud said, “For several days, we worked, played, discussed, and almost lived together—doubtless the best way to build both the human and musical cohesion of the ensemble.”

What did the different styles and cultures bring to the music? For Lomic, “The difference in styles was not a break in creativity but just the opposite: What can be



better than trying to find a common way of playing, thinking, and sounding, despite individual, cultural, or stylistic differences? The concert was a perfect illustration of these riches: Many different sounds, styles, and nationalities . . . and in the end, a united sound and performance.” Juilliard’s oboist Max Blair found the experience a more interactive one in terms of teaching and rehearsing. “It made

me think about the process of collaboration in a new way: striving to find a cohesive interpretation of a piece in which each one knows when to lead and when to follow.”

The presence of unusual instruments—especially the Viennese oboe and French bassoon—was treasured by Juilliard’s Anton Rist: “I have learned about different playing and detaching styles as well as different instruments, and these have helped me to develop my ear for timbre and blend.” Above and beyond this, as Carl-Emmanuel suggested, coming together constituted an opportunity to develop a “healthy distance from one’s own culture, to listen, communicate, and interact fully.”

What did each learn from the other? For Juilliard’s Trevor Nuckols, “from my

VOICES FROM THE SYLFF COMMUNITY

colleagues in Paris and Vienna, an incredible regard for exchanging ideas both musically and nonmusically, gaining thus a much more open-minded and wordly perspective.” For Lithuanian musicians Gleb Pysniak and Dalia Dedinskaite studying in Vienna, “from the Americans, friendship, care, precision in music; from the French: freedom, optimism, inspiration in music.” Or as French violist Marina Capstick put it, “the language of music is universal, and I could see this clearly during the seminar.” Anton Rist felt he developed his skills as a chamber musician, whereas Mathilde Calderini felt the experience provided an excellent opportunity to build her international professional network. As Georgina Oakes noted, “Music connects us all!”

The seminar experience led to enthusiastic suggestions for the future, such as adding a second concert or even a mini-tour. Vienna’s Julia Zulus suggested finding a work that would allow all members of the group to perform together. . . . All thoughts to take into consideration for future sessions!

As Vincent Lucas said, the “souvenir of this music-making is a lovely one,” and speaking for all the fellows, American Trevor Nuckols waxed eloquent: “Thank you for everything! I’d love to participate in another such international exchange opportunity. It has been a magical and life-changing experience!”



May 1, 2014

Cars and Capitalism in Contemporary Hanoi

Arve Hansen

Streets clogged with motorbikes in Hanoi have become familiar sights, as images are frequently featured in posters and magazines. Is there any room in this city now for automobiles, whose numbers are on the rise? Arve Hansen, a Sylff fellow at the University of Oslo in Norway, explores the socioeconomic transformation taking place in Vietnam through the lens of the nascent transition in the prevailing mode of personal transport from motorbikes to cars.

* * *

Vietnam has undergone a radical socioeconomic transformation during the last three decades under a program of economic reforms known as Doi Moi (“renovation”), officially adopted in 1986. Vietnam has grown from being one of the poorest countries in the world into to a middle-income, emerging economy, and the country is now frequently cited as a success story in economic development. Vietnam has moved from a planned to a market economy under a model described by the Vietnamese government as a “market economy with a socialist orientation.”

These changes make Vietnam an extremely interesting case in the study of both development and consumption. My PhD research into this topic in Vietnam focuses on what appears to be an ongoing transition away from motorbikes as the principal form of transport toward four-wheel automobiles in Hanoi. (It was thanks to Sylff Research Abroad that I was able to conduct long-term fieldwork in Hanoi, something absolutely vital to my project.)

My research approaches the trend as seen from the perspective, respectively, of the government, industry, car dealerships, and consumers. I have particularly emphasized the view of the consumer, using the car both to illustrate the ongoing

Arve Hansen Sylff Fellow, 2012, Research Fellow, and PhD candidate, University of Oslo.

changes in the capital of Hanoi as well as to analyze consumption trends more generally.

“Land of the Honda”

Vietnam used to be a country of bicycles but quickly became the “land of the Honda” during the 1990s following the start of the Doi Moi reforms. Today, in a country of 88 million people, there are around 35 million motorbikes. The sea of motorbikes in Vietnamese cities is now an iconic image of the country and one of the most popular motives for photographs by tourists. It has also created a highly individual transport situation, in contrast to the collective ideals of socialism.



Motorbikes in downtown Hanoi.

Now, the passenger car is increasingly making its way into the streets, in the process clogging up traffic and making the motorbike more dangerous. My interest in Vietnamese automobility started several years ago while riding around the narrow streets of Hanoi on a motorbike and seeing how automobiles, struggling to make their way through traffic, were unfit for those streets. I asked myself why anyone would choose to drive a car there.

The answer is, of course, quite complex. It can also be very interesting as a starting point for understanding the socioeconomic changes and development challenges Vietnam is facing. The automobile is still a very expensive luxury; in fact, Vietnam is one of the most expensive places to buy a car due to high taxes. This, at the same time, makes the car a powerful expression of the inequalities embedded in the new economic system. The limited availability of the car also strengthens its position as a potent status symbol. A striking sight in the narrow streets of Hanoi is the frequency of very big luxury cars. This is a sharp break with the country's socialist past, when displays of personal wealth were frowned upon and could lead to serious trouble.

In post-Doi Moi Vietnam, the automobile is one of the most obvious symbols of the new reality, in which getting rich is considered glorious and displaying personal wealth has become normal. In contemporary Hanoi, expensive cars are used actively to display wealth—sometimes strategically to show business partners that you are successful.

Advantages and Drawbacks

Although the car is very much a status symbol, this is not the only reason that people buy them. Most of the purchasers with whom I talked report they were motivated more by safety and family reasons, as transporting one's family on a small motorbike can be dangerous. The car also allows you to stay cool (and white!) under the scorching sun and dry during the frequent periods of heavy rain. There is also a paradoxical relationship between air pollution and car consumption: riding in a car allows you to temporarily escape the dangerously deteriorating urban air quality. The car is thus both a powerful agent in causing air pollution and a means of escaping from it.

The private car has had a central place in capitalist (and sometimes socialist) development and industrialization around the world. In Vietnam, the car in many

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The new traffic in Hanoi.

ways represents a development dilemma. The car industry is targeted to play a leading role in scaling up Vietnam's industrialization, with foreign investment (particularly from Japan) leading to positive linkages with, and technological diffusion to, the rest of the Vietnamese economy.

Among many other things, this requires a larger domestic market for cars. Studies have shown, however,

that the streets of Vietnam's cities cannot accommodate a transition to private cars as a predominant means of transportation. In Hanoi, the growing number of cars is already significantly increasing the frequency of traffic jams and further deteriorating the toxic air quality. Greener cars, though, are part of neither the transportation nor industrial plans of Vietnam.

In global discourse, the automobile is frequently (and deservedly) attacked as being one of the most environmentally destructive aspects of private consumption. In Hanoi I spoke with foreign environmentalists who argued that Vietnam needs to realize that the car belongs to the past.

The Car as the Future

Moving beyond private car consumption may be a worthy ideal, but the argument that the car is history fundamentally fails to understand the position of the car in

an emerging economy like Vietnam. In this context, the car represents the future. From the government side, moreover, the car industry and private car ownership are symbols of economic success. And for the growing ranks of the middle class, replacing the motorbike with a car is emerging as one of their main aspirations.

The motorbike is still king in the streets of Hanoi, although it is increasingly being forced into an interesting coexistence with four-wheel vehicles. Most car

owners keep their motorbikes as well and choose their mode of transport in a flexible manner, with motorbikes being used for shorter distances and to go downtown, while the car is used for travelling with the family, attending important meetings, or leaving the city. In this way the car also supports the creation of new practices among the middle class, such as travelling outside the city for a weekend holiday.

While people often heap blame on

the motorbike for all traffic problems in Hanoi, in a city with very limited public transport options and lack of infrastructure, the motorbike is the main reason why mobility is still fairly good. The government has decided that it will limit the number of motorbikes in the future. Given the lack of alternatives, this may pave the way for the car. It will be interesting to see what the future holds for the two-wheeled icon of contemporary Hanoi.



Traffic and street vendor in Hanoi.

April 6, 2014

Response of Indian Industries to Global Environmental Sustainability

Shyamasree Dasgupta

How does the response of one industrial sector affect other sectors of an economy? To gain insights into this question, Shyamasree Dasgupta, a Sylff fellow at Jadavpur University in India, has been analyzing the response over the past four decades of India's industry to the country's climate change action plan. In this article, she reports on her research conducted in the United States with an SRA grant has broadened her perspective.

* * *

As a student of social science I always wondered how the response of an individual decision maker shapes up in conjunction with the responses of the bigger community to which the decision maker belongs. It became more interesting to me as I initiated my doctoral research to explore the responses of Indian industries to climate change mitigation goals.

As reduction of carbon emissions is a “global goal,” the most aggregated pledges are taken at the international level (such as the Kyoto Protocol, Copenhagen Accord). Specific climate change mitigation policies are, however, mostly formulated and implemented by the national government or a set of national governments in line with such global pledges. Finally, different economic sectors take their decisions with regard to the pattern of their operations to curb energy use and emissions in line with the pledge and policies.

The response of a particular economic sector (such as the industrial sector) is not a stand-alone phenomenon. The responses are triggered by the actions of other sectors of the economy and at the same time have an impact on the rest of the economy. In fact, the aggregate impact of the decisions taken by one economic sector depends on its relation with the rest of the economy. For example, if an industry substitutes coal by electricity as an energy input, then emissions from that

Shyamasree Dasgupta Sylff Fellow, 2011–13, and PhD candidate, Jadavpur University.

particular industry will come down, but from a macro perspective, aggregate emissions will be reduced only when electricity is produced with a fuel that is less carbon intensive than coal.

My doctoral research seeks to understand how Indian industries have responded during the past four decades under various domestic policy domains, with a special emphasis on the country's recent climate change mitigation policies. Having estimated such response parameters (for example, price elasticity of energy demand—the change in industrial energy demand when energy price changes), I wanted to explore how the same industrial sector can be expected to behave in a future time horizon while interacting with other sectors in the global economy if some global emission reduction pledge becomes binding.

I got the opportunity to explore this issue with my SRA award along with mentoring and support from my home institute, Jadavpur University in India, and my SRA host institute, the Joint Global Change Research Institute (JGCRI, a collaborative institute of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory and the University of Maryland in the United States).

An Integrated Assessment Model for India

JGCRI has developed the Global Change Assessment Model (GCAM), an integrated assessment model representing the world economy that explores the links between energy, land use, water resource sectors, and a climate model. It incorporates both energy producing (such as electric power) and energy consuming sectors (such as industry). It creates a market where all the sectors are recursively solved for price and quantity, and the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases emitted are estimated. The model could be used to explore responses of these sectors to several climate change mitigation pledges and policies.

GCAM divides the world into 14 regions, and India is one of them. The existing model employed the aggregated data for the Indian industry sector. Hence the responses towards any mitigation policy—can be so far analyzed only for the aggregate industry sector for India. My aim was to further develop the model with disaggregated industrial sectors for India, breaking up the industry sector into subsectors such as iron and steel, chemicals, and cement, along with a residual subsector



The author working on the Global Change Assessment Model at JGCRI.

named “other industries.” This would enable the user to analyze responses not only at the aggregate level but also for different subsectors in the context of Indian industry. The challenge was to break up the aggregate industry sector in an appropriate manner supported by authentic data so that the model would offer plausible solutions for years up to 2100 for all sectors and regions.

Being new to integrated assessment models, this was a true learning experience for me requiring several trials with different adjustments to obtain valid results! It was a stimulating experience solving the unforeseen errors cropping up during each trial run until I succeeded. I was greatly supported by my mentors and other colleagues at JGCRI in the process. In the course of my research, I came across fellow visiting scholars who were working on or had worked on several other sectors in other countries, including China and Brazil.

The model also used average values regarding how demand changes in response to changes in price in different industrial sectors. I substituted the average



The research was greatly supported by the mentors and other colleagues at JGCRI.

values for those specific to India that I had estimated prior to my SRA. Data were derived from the “Energy Statistics” and “Annual Survey of Industries,” published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. The scenario demands a sharp decline in emissions from nonenergy-intensive industries, the phasing out of coal,

and a significant increase in the use of clean electricity in industrial production. The use of biofuel emerged as one of the most effective medium-term solutions for Indian industries to meet the mitigation target.

Case Study in Climate Mitigation

Another objective of my SRA was to visit an energy-intensive industrial unit in the United States in order to compare its production and mitigation practices with its Indian counterparts. I was put in touch with the US Department of Energy through my mentor at the home institution, enabling me to visit such a facility. Things shaped up well, and I got a chance to accompany members of the American Forest and Paper Association on a visit to a pulp and paper company in Virginia. The day-long visit to the paper mill and discussions with the managers provided insights into their production processes and mitigation practices.

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The mill was established in 1914 and has gone through changes in ownership and technology. It mainly produces corrugated paper from both raw wood and recycled paper. The pattern of energy utilization became a major issue of concern, as a result of which the mill became more energy efficient with greater emphasis on recycling and enhanced use of renewable energy. Over 80% of the electricity used by the mill is generated internally using multiple fuels, including black liquor, wood waste, and sludge. According to the company, it was the rise in fuel prices, rather than any particular energy or climate policy at the federal or state level, that drove it to reduce its dependence on purchased energy.

The SRA experience was extremely enriching for me. It not only helped me to augment my doctoral dissertation, which I am aiming to finalize in the coming few months, but at the same time provided me with an opportunity to work in the multidisciplinary and multiethnic environment of my globally renowned host institution.



Visiting a paper mill with the members of the American Forest and Paper Association.

March 27, 2014

The Arts in Crisis and their Survival in the Twenty First Century

A View from Sociolinguistics

Christopher Lees

Can the liberal arts maintain its value in society despite losing both popularity and funding to such practical disciplines as the sciences, engineering, and business administration? Christopher Lees, a Sylff fellow while at National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, offers steps that can be taken by arts scholars to maintain the relevance of their discipline in society, using examples from Greece and sociolinguistics.

* * *

Introduction

At last year's anniversary marking Sylff's 20-year presence at the University of Athens in Greece, I was given the opportunity to speak about the crisis the liberal arts face today in the context of the economic crisis. Ever increasingly, the arts are



The author delivering a speech at a Sylff ceremony at the University of Athens.

brushed to the sidelines, considered of secondary importance compared to the sciences, technology, and business studies. This is apparent the world over with numerous departments being merged, reduced, or even threatened with closure. In Greece too, the infamous and narrowly averted *Athina Plan* proposed by the Ministry of Education saw it fit to heap foreign language departments together so as to create one giant "Department of Foreign Languages," apparently with no regard for the academic

Christopher Lees Sylff Fellow, 2011, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; PhD student in sociolinguistics at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

integrity and significance of each department's work and research as a separate entity.

In part, this stance towards the arts and their subjects is borne out of today's predominant philosophy that only visibly practical things are worth people's time, money and investment. As far as degree courses are concerned, this is often translated to mean that students tend to select a course that they see to be directly linked to the job market. This perhaps explains the popularity of business management and finance-related courses, which, according to David Williams (n.d.), are the most popular among Greek students (but not only Greek students) pursuing post-graduate education.

While students themselves cannot be blamed for choosing a degree course that they envisage will provide them with good employment prospects, this devaluation of arts subjects runs the risk of creating a sense that they are simply not worth studying. I myself, as a former undergraduate student in the UK, was frequently met with bewildered expressions on the faces of those who learned of my intention to study foreign languages at university.

Furthermore, this ever increasing lack of appreciation for the arts also poses the threat of subjects not being given the funding they deserve to carry out important research projects, and this is something which is being increasingly felt on an international level, where students find it difficult to get scholarships, and academic staff face increasing hurdles in publishing their work.

Arts subjects cannot, however, be entirely absolved from blame in relation to the regard in which they are held in society. While a doctor may not need to convince society about the importance of medicine and medical research, and an economist may not need to validate his work by highlighting the significance of sound finance, the arts scholar needs to and should take it upon him- or herself to inform society of the relevance of his/her subject. Quite often, knowledge generated by the arts subjects is confined and recycled within the academic circles of universities, which in turn are often treated as monasteries of knowledge and, indeed, even referred to as not being "the real world."

Arts subjects and their scholars should, therefore, make the extra effort to share the knowledge they generate with the wider circles of society so that they too may benefit from what these subjects have to teach and offer us. This, I believe, is a general principle by which universities should operate: not to exclude nonmembers of what sometimes resembles the academic elite but to involve them in the work being carried out and to show them how this work is relevant to our lives. In this article, I intend to show how the arts are relevant to society and how scholars may make their work more accessible. I shall do this from the perspective of my own

field, sociolinguistics, and then show how the arts can be made more accessible to ordinary members of society.

Sociolinguistics and Society

The relationship between language and society is well documented in linguistics. Just as language reflects social structures, ideologies, and stances, so too does language have the ability to influence and shape society, its structures, and its perceptions (Dittmar 1976, Lucy 1992, Wardhaugh 1992). That is to say that, while the speakers of a language coin or adopt phrases to express themselves linguistically, these same linguistic expressions, through repeated contextualized instances of usage, subsequently contribute to the way speakers think and view the world around them, evidenced by the fact that many linguistic expressions, proverbs, and idioms are unique to specific languages and reflect and form the mentalities of their speakers. Consequently, it is possible for us to refer to the relationship between language and society as being a two-way one: society depends on language to express itself, and language depends on society in order to develop and lexically reflect social structures and values.

According to Kakridi-Ferrari (2005: 53), many sociolinguists feel the need to use their specialized knowledge in order to offer something of practical use to society. As such, one of the main aims of sociolinguistic scholarship is to highlight what language can show us about society, its issues and problems, and how this can then be applied for practical purposes in various areas, from solving issues of inequality and prejudice to better understanding social norms and improving education.

Linguistic sexism, for instance, is an example of how social inequality is mirrored and redistributed linguistically. Sociolinguistic researchers, especially during the US feminist movement of the 1970s, have attempted to highlight some of the features of language that undermine or even exclude the role of women in society. In inflected languages such as Greek, where gender is morphologically marked, this is a particularly problematic issue, especially apparent in nouns denoting professions, for which many still only use a masculine noun ending.

In addition to this, generic references to groups comprising more than one person also, by and large, use exclusively masculine noun endings, thus linguistically excluding women from many sectors of society and creating a sense of a need to adopt male values and practices imposed on them by society and reflected and redistributed linguistically (see Pavlidou 2002). Sociolinguistics is therefore in a position to use its findings to highlight aspects of how language demonstrates sex-

ism in society and to attempt to suggest, at least from a linguistic point of view, how this may be resolved. Once this has been done, both findings and suggestions can be forwarded to the relevant government departments, who may in turn make changes to the existing legislation.

Another area of social inequality visible through language is that of racism. Van Dijk's (1993) seminal study of how elite discourse, notably that of the press, constructs and disseminates racial prejudice, shows us both how language mirrors a society's mindset and also how this is then negotiated and propagated through a process of social cognition, that is to say, repeated exposure to expressions of racial sentiment, which then becomes etched in the minds of speakers.

I myself have researched the ways in which Greek newspapers make use of intricate linguistic strategies so as, on the one hand, to represent what they view as mainstream Greek public opinion and, on the other, to fuel feelings of racial tension (Lees 2012). This latter instance serves as a very good example of how the two-way relationship between language and society can be viewed in action against the background of political change in Greece, where older perceptions are being constantly challenged, thus creating a dynamic mix of opinion represented in the language of the press.

As was the case for linguistic sexism, sociolinguistics can again here uncover the linguistic practices of journalists and raise awareness of how these may not always be as objective as one might be inclined to think but are directly related to political and social ideology. Again, by highlighting this, pressure can be brought to bear on the government of the day to make changes to policies concerning racism.

Another important area to which sociolinguistics can contribute is that of education. The foundations of how the social aspects of language interact with education were laid by Basil Bernstein (1971) and his theory of restricted and elaborated codes. Despite the criticism he received, Bernstein was the first to draw attention to the fact that a child's success at school is directly linked to the linguistic interaction he or she engages in at home. The logical consequence of this is that those children who engage in linguistic interaction at home that closely resembles that of the language taught in schools will be in a better position to do well in education.

It is worth noting that there is often a marked difference between the language taught in schools and the varieties spoken in even a small local community. The emphasis in education should, therefore, be placed on assisting speakers of regional and social varieties to adapt to the standardized language used in schools for the purpose of education, while acknowledging and respecting language rights. This

was clearly shown by Labov (1972) in his influential work on the language of the African American community, known then as BEV (Black English Vernacular) and now called African American Vernacular English (AAVE). He concluded that schools should not treat AAVE as substandard, as was often the case, thus placing its speakers at a distinct disadvantage in comparison to those who at home speak the standard form of English taught in schools, but as a distinct social variety of English with its own grammatical rules.

Due to the fact that sociolinguistics, by nature of its subject, is in a position to research and highlight social aspects of language and because language is a social phenomenon, its role in education is particularly crucial. Just as is the case with social prejudice reflected and propagated through language, so is there linguistic prejudice against language varieties. Sociolinguists can work with education policymakers to assure that—while a standard language form is necessary for education and indeed for communication purposes—regional and social varieties of a language are respected and even taught, especially when used by pupils.

A case in point is the research I am currently involved in regarding the language used by Greek teenagers on Facebook (Lees et al. 2014). Since computer mediated language practices have become an inseparable part of teenagers' lives, and since these computer mediated language practices have their own unique features, we feel that they needed to be treated as a variety of Greek and incorporated into the school curriculum. This is not to say that computer mediated language practices should be taught as standard, merely that it can be used to increase pupils' critical awareness of the social aspects of language and how, why, and in which contexts these differ from the language taught as standard in schools.

In sum, the role that sociolinguistics does and can play in society is apparent and the benefits clear. As previously noted, these benefits need not (and should not) be confined to within the walls of universities and research centers but practically applied to all areas of society where language has an impact. This will ensure that the values and significance of sociolinguistics are known on a much wider scale. The same logic can and, in my opinion, must be applied to all arts subjects so that they may regain some of the prestige and deference lost in the wake of the economic crisis and so that the notion that the arts are not practical subjects and,



A group of Greek teenagers the author works with.

therefore, not worth investing in can be dismissed. In the next section, some ways in which this can be done are briefly outlined and discussed.

Bringing the Arts Home

There are several ways in which the significance of the arts can be shared with the wider community. For example, scholars may choose to write their research findings in popular newspapers and magazines. Quite different from an academic journal, such mediums allow the scholar to target a much wider audience with various interests. Of course, the style of writing and content must be simplified and even, perhaps, popularized. However, publishing through the popular media allows the scholar to present, discuss, and share their research with a variety of people, many of whom may not even know that fields like sociolinguistics exist, let alone what they do.

Aside from showcasing research, the arts scholar may also use the media of newspapers and magazines to highlight, even on a regular basis by means of a column, the relevance of their topic. For the sociolinguist, this could involve the social aspects of language, including anything from language minority issues to language policy and even street art and graffiti, much of which, especially in Greece, is of a highly political nature. Writing in newspapers and magazines also serves the purpose of dispelling many of the myths concerning language that are often written by nonlinguists who lack the appropriate background to offer academically informed opinions.

Another area in which the arts can be promoted is through the organization of talks in local communities. This can be done either through local community centers or local education authorities. Informal in nature, such talks provide a good opportunity for local community members to come together and learn of the work and research being carried out in any given field. As with the use of the media, talks also allow disadvantaged members of the community to participate in learning in ways that may have previously been inaccessible to them.

Depending on the research interests of the scholar, it may even be possible for local members of the community to actively participate in a research project. In terms of sociolinguistics, a valuable aspect of having community members participate in such projects is that it will enable them to better understand the value of their cultural and linguistic attributes, which in many cases are highly stigmatized.

Finally, another way in which the arts and their subjects can be shared with the local community is through reading groups and free seminars. More formal in nature compared with local talks, such groups generally target people with an ac-

ademic interest in the field. They may be offered on a volunteer basis and could be integrated into a wider context of volunteer work to provide free education for disadvantaged members of the public or anyone with an interest in the areas discussed. Such groups have been recently introduced in Greece and have so far proved to be a great success.

In conclusion, the fate of the arts and the prestige and respect they deserve largely depends on what we, as scholars, make of them ourselves. It would seem apparent that knowledge and research carried out at universities around the world should be made more transparent and accessible to all members of society, rather than belonging to a select few, especially since such members are the ones who, more often than not, fund such research.

In this article, I have outlined several ways in which this can happen. As opposed to merely complaining about the diminishing regard for arts subjects, those of us in these disciplines should first ask ourselves why this is the case and what we can do both individually and collectively to reverse this trend.

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March 5, 2014

Narratives of “Change” and “Freedom” in Early Modern Almanacs

Kujtesë Bejtullahu

One important source of information in examining the social history of the United States and Europe in the early modern era is the almanac. Using an SRA award, Kujtesë Bejtullahu, a Sylff fellow at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, explored the rich collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century almanacs at the American Antiquarian Society to undertake an in-depth study of how early modern society conceived of two precious and finite values—political freedom and the passage of time.

* * *

Time and politics are two basic categories of life. How do we think them together? How do different societies incorporate them into broader narratives of orientation in a changing world? This puzzles me intellectually, and in my dissertation, I explore the affinity between the notion of political liberty and the way in which modern societies think about their relations and change.

I am particularly intrigued with the revolutions of the late eighteenth century—specifically, the American and the French Revolutions—as two significant events in early modern history that witnessed a struggle to not only reconfigure political values and loyalties but also bring about a temporal reorientation through which such changes could better resonate. By the late eighteenth century, not only were political relations recalibrated and wrapped with the notion of “liberty” from various ends, but the political visions and institutional designs emerging from this realignment were also more boldly projected into the distant future, reaching into peoples, places, and times not present. Thus while the notion of political liberty took center stage, at stake was also the concept of change itself, namely, qualifying

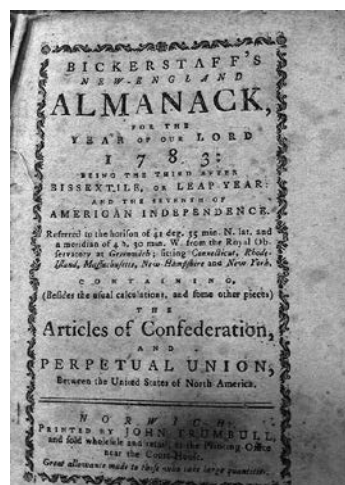
Kujtesë Bejtullahu Sylff Fellow, 2005, and doctoral candidate in Political Science, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Switzerland.

the ways in which societies and their social relations could change from the ways in which they could not.

To explore this double recalibration of political values and temporal expectations in socio-historic context, I turned to a medium that was particularly popular in early modern society: the almanac. With the support of the Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (Sylff), the American Antiquarian Society, and the Library Company of Philadelphia, I examined if and how this transition was recorded, described, or contested in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century almanacs published in the New World.¹

The Almanac

The early modern almanac has been described among others as a "miniature encyclopedia," a village library, or the iPhone of early America.² It has been reported as being second only to the Bible in popularity and among the earliest works published following the invention of the printing press.³ While the late eighteenth century almanac was rarely without basic astral and meteorological information⁴ and a calendar to mark the passing of time and the "remarkable" days,⁵ it also contained information deemed useful or entertaining: medical and agricultural advice, proverbs, moral instruction through essays and anecdotes, excerpts from famous books, historical and geographical narratives, social satire, poetry, scientific articles and practical information, such as schedules of fairs, meetings of courts, and currency tables. The astral and practical informa-



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Bickerstaff's New-England Almanack for 1783 (published by John Trumbull). With Britain close to recognizing American independence, this 1783 New England almanac marked the event by printing the Articles of Confederation. A few years later the Constitutional Convention was held to draft the US Constitution and found the United States of America.

¹ Mostly almanacs from the American colonies and the United States, and some from Canada, Haiti, and Jamaica.

² See Molly McCarthy, "Redeeming the Almanac: Learning to Appreciate the iPhone of Early America," in *Common-Place*, Vol.11, No. 1 (October 2010).

³ Together with the printing of the Bible in Latin in the 1450s, Gutenberg also printed an almanac in 1457 in Mainz.

⁴ Such as eclipses, tides, lunations, weather prognostications, the influence of stars and planets, and the zodiac.

⁵ "Holy" days, historical events, etc.

tion in the almanacs was no doubt important, yet some of the most popular, early modern almanacs were ones that included social commentary, political speculation, or entertainment.

The almanac, broadly speaking, was a miscellany, filling a variety of roles in a concise and affordable manner.⁶ But in another sense, it was a window onto a world of relations and how these varied and mattered for ordinary people. It helped instruct people on how to orient themselves in relation to nature and society, adjust to the changes taking place and live better⁷. It is not unusual to find among the surviving early modern almanacs people's inscriptions of important events in their lives and changes in the environment⁸ or interleaved almanacs that also served as personal diaries.

Not surprisingly, then, early modern almanacs were sensitive to changes in politics and society, often advocating a particular view of politics and social values over others. During the American Revolution, almanacs began to carry more explicit political content such as political prefaces or engravings, politically charged verse, calendars marking critical political events or purposefully omitting previously celebrated historical dates,⁹ excerpts from political tracts and formal political documents, such as state constitutions, articles of confederation, or treaties.¹⁰ The almanac was similarly mobilized

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The American Anti-Slavery Almanac for 1843 (*published by the American Anti-Slavery Society*). Almanacs addressed such political questions as slavery, with most advocating its abolition and a few endorsing it. Through verse and imagery, the cover of this pre-Civil War almanac draws attention to the persistence of slavery in a country that had declared itself free and was portrayed as the "cradle land of Liberty."

⁶ See Marion Barber Stowell, *Early American Almanacs: The Colonial Weekday Bible* (New York: Burt Franklin & Company, 1977) ix; Bernard Capp, *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500–1800*, (London: Faber & Faber, 1979), 23; Louis K. Wechsler, *The Common People of Colonial America As Glimpsed Through the Dusty Windows of the Old Almanacs, Chiefly of New-York* (New York: Vantage Press, 1978).

⁷ See the preface to Geneviève Bollème, *Les Almanachs Populaires aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles* (Paris : Mouton & Com, 1969).

⁸ Births, deaths, marriages, wars, harvest failures, etc.

⁹ For example, marking events like the Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution and omitting coronations and birthdays of royalty.

¹⁰ The French alliance of 1778, for example.

during the French Revolution.¹¹ Particularly keen at using the almanac propagandistically were the Jacobins, who in 1791 organized a contest for an almanac that would best instruct the people about the revolution. The winner, *L'Almanach du Père Gérard*—written by Jean-Marie Collot d'Herbois,¹² a revolutionary—became a bestseller.¹³ Moreover, many of the maxims that Benjamin Franklin popularized in his almanac *Poor Richard* (later compiled in *The Way to Wealth*) circulated on both sides of the Atlantic. Translated into French shortly before the French Revolution, *La Science du Bonhomme Richard* was often praised for its good moeurs and appeal to the common man, while revolutionaries like Jacques Pierre Brissot proclaimed, “Behold how Poor Richard and Franklin were always friends of the people.”¹⁴ If some of the French revolutionaries saw in Franklin’s almanac a philosophy for the people, well over a century later, Max Weber also turned to almanac wisdom to discuss the emergence of the spirit of capitalism.¹⁵

Time and Freedom as Finite Qualities

What is unique about the almanac is that it was also a finite medium, published annually in rather compact form and with a limited geographic reach as regards its astronomical calculations. Though it contained a miscellany of information, the late eighteenth century American almanac was still a circumscribed window onto the broader world and one offering a finite perspective on the “good life”. At a basic level, what made life good were two gifts from God—time and freedom. These two were frequently invoked and highly valorized, but also described in finite terms: subject to loss when taken for granted or not vigilantly guarded. As a gift in the form of life, time is irredeemable and can be made meaningful,¹⁶ while

¹¹ See Lise Andries, “Almanacs: Revolutionizing a traditional genre” in eds. Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, *Revolution in Print: The Press in France 1775-1800* (University of California Press, 1989), pp. 203-222.

¹² Jean-Marie Collot d'Herbois participated in the Paris Commune and the National Convention of 1792, but is more commonly known for his involvement with the Committee for Public Safety, in particular the 1793 Reign of Terror in Lyon.

¹³ See Michel Biard, “L'Almanach du Père Gérard, un exemple de diffusion des idées jacobines,” *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*; No. 283 (1990) pp. 19-29.

¹⁴ See Alfred Owen Aldridge, *Franklin and His French Contemporaries* (New York: NYU Press, 1957) 46.

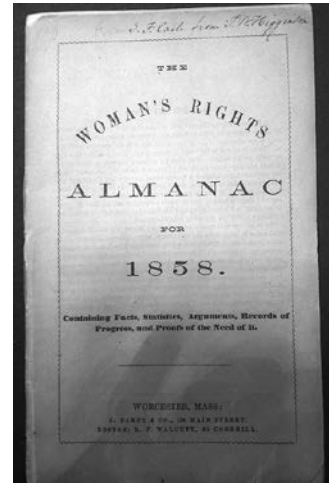
¹⁵ See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T. Parsons (1930), Ch. 2.

¹⁶ Almanacs provided much instruction on temporal values and discipline, such as how to make the best use of time.

freedom is something that those who are virtuous can revive or safeguard from being lost.

Generally speaking, there is in many late-eighteenth-century American almanacs a distinct sensitivity to loss and an appreciation of finitude as not merely a condition of life but of the life worth living: the free life. This preoccupation with finitude in its political dimension—that, for example, the freedom acquired by republics is fragile, fugitive, and finite—becomes less noticeable by the early nineteenth century. Increasingly, freedom is projected in more futuristic terms and portrayed as being infinitely resilient under better, enduring laws (such as by being enshrined in the constitution) or with the advent of historical progress.¹⁷ As the American colonies declared themselves independent and changed the terms of their political association to constitute the United States, there also arose an eagerness to project their conception of freedom in much more expansive terms, spatial as well as temporal. In retrospect, the American Revolution may well have been the last moment when we thought freedom with finitude.

Early modern almanacs can shed some light on how through familiar notions of liberty and the republic, the articulation of a new experience of “political presence” was coupled with projections of a future in which societies and social relations would advance. This is partly revealed in the transformation of the medium itself. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the almanac began losing its general feel and became more specialized and theme oriented; by the late nineteenth century, it was becoming somewhat obsolete as other mediums—the clock, newspaper, and thematic books—gained new relevance for people’s temporal orientation and for keeping up to date with the faster-production of useful knowledge. It became necessary for people to take bearings more frequently and from a variety of sources, a phenomenon even more prevalent today, as it is ever more necessary to keep updating one’s skills and expectations.



The Woman's Rights Almanac for 1858 (published by Z. Baker & Co.). This nineteenth century almanac on women's rights contains speeches, historical narratives, and statistics that speak to the efforts and struggles of what was later described as the “first wave of feminism.”

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¹⁷ Or as Proudhon later articulated, “the theory of Progress is the railway of liberty.” See the Foreword to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *The Philosophy of Progress* (1853).

Giving Finitude Political Expression

Insofar as the almanac helped people orient themselves and relate to changes in society and their surroundings by reminding them often of conditions of finitude, the story of how the medium became politicized in revolutionary times and later driven into obsolescence is revealing of how the very concept of change was, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, being transformed in ways that remain difficult to comprehend. While the tale of the almanac may be thought of as a story of outgrowing finitude through modern technology, the political aspect should not be overlooked. Seen in a revolutionary context, where ideas of how societies can and should change were being recast and when political freedom was increasingly projected as becoming more resilient, this tale is also one of how modern discourses on emancipation became much more concerned with the production of new and different futures than with giving finitude a more meaningful political form.

At a time when we have capabilities to produce conditions of finitude on a much more radical scale and at a much faster rate,¹⁸ it seems relevant to once again consider giving finitude meaningful political expression. As we are confronted with it in more intense, accelerated, and unpredictable forms, we nevertheless rarely consider that political freedom is not so much about the negation or overcoming of finitude but a more meaningful affirmation of it. We struggle, more generally, to articulate and experience “political presence” in an increasingly interdependent world, where different people



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Annuaire Français ou Manuel Du Colon, à l'usage de Saint-Domingue pour l'An X [1801] (published by Port-Républicain). To mark their break from the ancien régime, the French revolutionaries instituted calendrical reforms that almanacs were compelled to adopt and promote. This almanac for the tenth year of the French Republic informs that the law of 23 Fructidor of year 6 forbids using the calendar of the old era and requires conformity with the law's spirit, which is "to not leave any trace of the old yearbook". Published for the colony of St. Domingo (now the Republic of Haiti), this almanac has a unique transatlantic revolutionary feel, recording the insurrections of slaves in the colony, celebrating the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, and printing the constitution of St. Domingo that he promulgated. Controversial and short-lived, this constitution was nevertheless an autonomous act that challenged French colonial policy, prompting Napoleon to secure the capture and deportation of L'Ouverture. L'Ouverture died in prison in Jura, France, in 1803, Haiti achieved its independence in 1804, and Napoleon revoked the French revolutionary calendar in 1806.

¹⁸ Such as through nuclear weapons and environmental degradation.

and societies are drawn into relations but often in ways that they cannot be consciously and considerately be present for one another. Indeed, narratives of temporal differentiation—between the developed and developing, the advanced and lagging—and the governance of expectations of change can also obscure our very sense of contemporaneity and appreciation of what is, can, and must be shared and jointly preserved. It is my concern, in other words, that without engaging more meaningfully with the experience of finitude, contemporary international politics will continue to struggle to make relations between different others meaningful in finite time and to make finite time in relationships meaningful.

Given a dynamic and interdependent modern context that we describe as “international” or “global,” it seems relevant to imagine and recast the experience of “political presence” in a different analytical key, not merely scale. History provides no blueprints in this respect. Yet it seems helpful to convoke it for stimulating insight on how much of what is absent is remembered and projected as present and how much of what is or feels present our discourses still keep absent.

October 16, 2014

The Economics of Rapprochement

Can Japan and China Bury the Hatchet?

Takashi Sekiyama

Why hasn't the second Abe cabinet placed higher priority on repairing relations with China? And why has Beijing suddenly begun signaling an openness to rapprochement? Research Fellow Takashi Sekiyama explores the economic dynamics of Japan-China relations with the Beijing APEC summit coming up in November.

* * *

With the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit just weeks away, Beijing has begun to show signs of softening its hardline stance toward Japan.

When Prime Minister Shinzo Abe first called for top-level bilateral talks to be held during the upcoming Beijing APEC summit, scheduled for November, his suggestion appeared to fall on deaf ears. Then, in late July, former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda flew to Beijing and met secretly with President Xi Jinping in an effort to broker a rapprochement behind the scenes. The effort appears to have paid off.

On August 9, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida on the sidelines of the ASEAN+3 ministerial meeting in Naypyidaw, Myanmar. It was the first conference between the two countries' top diplomatic officials since September 2012, shortly before Abe took office a second time. On August 18, in a meeting with a nonpartisan delegation of young Japanese politicians, Chinese Vice-President Li Yuanchao expressed a desire to improve bilateral ties, "using history as a mirror while moving ahead toward the future" (Xinhuanet, August 19, 2018).

Such developments have raised hopes for a long-awaited thaw in Japan-China relations. But will Xi Jinping follow up on these preliminary advances?

Takashi Sekiyama Research Fellow, Tokyo Foundation; Director, Sasakawa Japan-China Friendship Fund; Adjunct Assistant Professor, Meiji University.

Analysts have adduced a variety of factors to account for this apparent shift. Some have traced the change in attitude to developments in the Chinese political arena, including the corruption investigation of Zhou Yongkang. Others have stressed such international factors as the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In this article, I would like to assess the prospects for rapprochement primarily from the standpoint of economic circumstances, focusing on foreign direct investment by Japanese businesses in China.

As many Japanese companies increasingly see Southeast Asia as their most promising market, Beijing appears interested in improving diplomatic ties in order to stem the slide in investment from Japan. Tokyo, though, does not seem to be reciprocating the enthusiasm. It remains to be seen whether the benefits of closer ties for China will outweigh the political costs Xi Jinping may wind up paying to achieve a thaw.

The Economics of Rapprochement

A key factor behind the change in Xi's attitude, I believe, is the dramatic decline in Japanese foreign direct investment in China. In the first half of 2014, the FDI flow from Japan to China was just \$2.4 billion, down 48.8% from the same period the previous year.

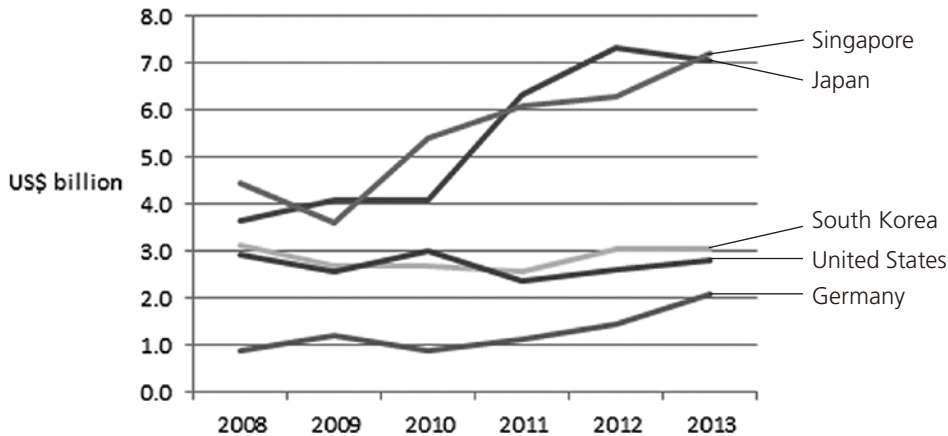
Rising labor costs have been cited as the biggest reason for this trend, but there is little doubt that heightened bilateral tensions have further dampened Japanese industry's enthusiasm for doing business in China. In a 2014 survey of Japanese manufacturers by Mizuho Research Institute, Japan-China relations were identified by 63.8% of respondents (multiple response) as a cause of concern when it came to doing business in China, second only to "rising labor costs" (78%).¹

Because Japan has been an important source of external investment in China in recent years (see Figure 1), a sharp decline in Japanese investment could spell trouble for the Chinese economy. It would be especially devastating for China's regions, which have been counting on the expansion of Japanese business operations to create jobs and fuel growth.

In fact, where economic relations are concerned, China began showing signs of greater openness toward Japan late spring, right around the time the recent falloff

¹ Mizuho Research Institute, Questionnaire Survey of Japanese Corporate Enterprises Regarding Business in Asia as of February 2014. <http://www.mizuho-ri.co.jp/publication/research/pdf/report/report14-0515.pdf>. (English summary: <http://www.mizuho-ri.co.jp/publication/research/pdf/eo/MEA140724.pdf>)

Figure 1. Top Five Sources of Foreign Direct Investment in China, 2013 (excluding Hong Kong, Taiwan, British Virgin Islands, and Cayman Islands)



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China.

in Japanese investment was becoming apparent. In May, then Chairman of Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) Hiromasa Yonekura visited Beijing and was able to meet directly with Vice-President Li Yuanchao, who stressed that “business must go on” despite differences over historical issues and sovereignty over the Senkaku (Ch: Diaoyu) Islands. This might be seen as a harbinger of Beijing’s recent diplomatic shift toward Japan.

Thus far, there are no signs of a rebound in Japanese investment in China. To be sure, it takes more than a year for a shift in business strategy to show up in government statistics, but even at the anecdotal level, one hears almost nothing about further plans for expansion. It seems likely that one key motive behind Xi’s new openness toward rapprochement is rekindling Japanese industry’s enthusiasm for China.

Abe’s Shifting Priorities

Conversely, Japanese business’s flagging interest in China appears to have caused Prime Minister Abe to become less eager—not more so—to build stronger ties with China, particularly in comparison with the policies of his first administration.

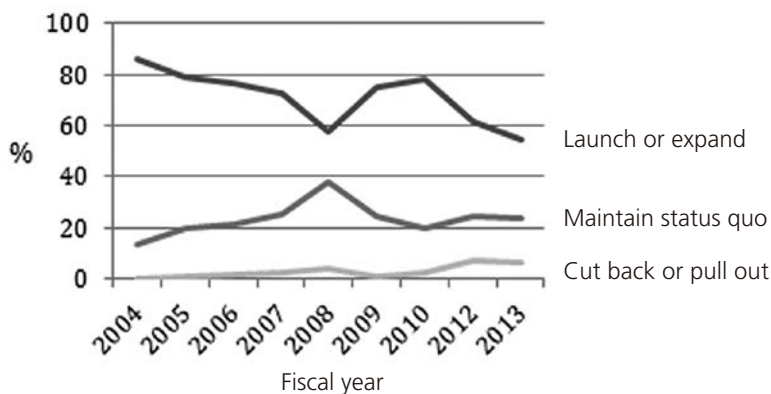
The first Abe cabinet, inaugurated in September 2006, placed high priority on improving ties with China. Abe arrived in Beijing just two weeks after entering office, before visiting any other foreign country, and this was credited with break-

ing the ice after the deep chill that set in during the administration of Jun'ichiro Koizumi. Yet since taking office for a second time in December 2012, Abe has done little—apart from reiterating that “the door to dialogue is always open”—to repair the relationship.

What accounts for Abe's change in attitude? As I see it, one explanation is the shift in Japanese industry's overseas focus.

A questionnaire survey conducted by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) found that in 2005, a full 80% of Japanese businesses were considering expanding or launching business operations in China. By 2013, the ratio had dropped to about 50% (Figure 2).²

Figure 2. Japanese Plans for Business Investment in China (JETRO Survey)



Note: The survey was not conducted in 2011.

Source: Japan External Trade Organization.

Moreover, in the previously mentioned Mizuho survey of Japanese manufacturers, only 10% revealed plans to set up new bases of operation in China, while more than 30% said they planned to to keep new investment to a minimum and work on boosting the profitability of existing operations, as by rationalizing production processes.

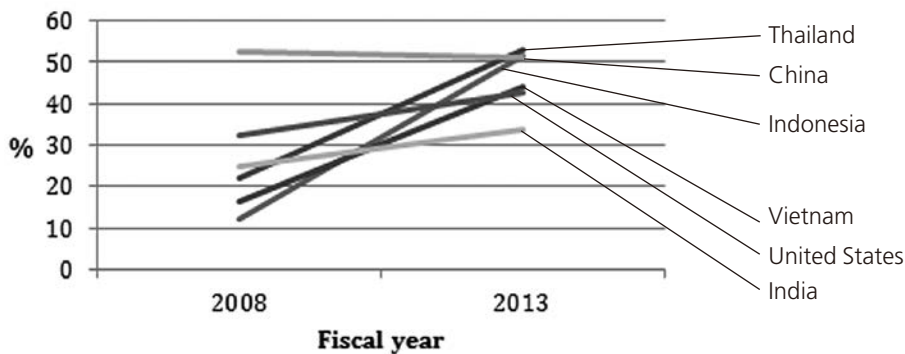
Consistently Attuned to Business

The fact is that the focus of Japanese industry's overseas ambitions is rapidly shift-

² Japan External Trade Organization, Survey of Japanese-Affiliated Companies in Asia and Oceania. http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/survey/pdf/2013_12_27_biz.pdf

ing to Southeast Asia, especially Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam. The JETRO survey asked respondents to identify the most promising export markets for their companies over the next three years. Figure 3 shows the difference between the 2008 and 2013 responses. Although China is still highly ranked, it no longer dwarfs other destinations, as it did in the past.

Figure 3. Most Promising Markets as Identified by Japanese Businesses, 2008 and 2013 (JETRO survey)



Source: Japan External Trade Organization.

The comparison helps to place Abe's China policy in perspective. During the first Abe administration, Japanese industry was fixated on China as the most promising export market by far, placing the administration under considerable pressure to break the diplomatic deadlock that threatened to hinder business expansion. I believe Prime Minister Abe's active bid to improve relations with Beijing at that time was largely a response to this pro-China enthusiasm within the business community, which extended to the public at large.

Now, with many Japanese businesses shifting their focus from China to Southeast Asia, Abe's diplomatic emphasis has shifted as well. After becoming prime minister for the second time in December 2012, his first overseas destinations were Vietnam, Thailand, and Indonesia. By October 2013, less than a year later, he had visited every member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, becoming the first Japanese prime minister to visit all 10 ASEAN countries while in office.

Of course, Japanese businesses still hope for a political rapprochement with China. Asked what they seek from the Abe administration, 46.6% of the respondents in the Mizuho survey replied "improvement in Japan-China relations." This sentiment, though, has yet to spread broadly enough to the general public to influ-

ence the administration's policy. (Note that "improvement in Japan-ASEAN relations" was not among the choices in the survey question.)

Seen in this light, Abe's foreign policy has actually been quite consistent in terms of cultivating the markets Japanese business regards as most promising. What has changed is not Abe's basic policy but the focus of Japanese business.

Xi's Move: Weighing the Pros and Cons

From an economic viewpoint, then, it would appear that China currently has more to gain from mending the bilateral relationship than Japan.

To the extent that rising labor costs in China are driving the shift in Japanese industry's overseas focus, a thaw in bilateral ties is unlikely to have a significant impact on investment trends over the short term. Still, China remains a key export market, and there is no question that the cooling of diplomatic relations has been a secondary factor inhibiting additional investment by Japanese business. If Abe and Xi, meeting on the sidelines of the November APEC summit, were to send a message affirming their mutual commitment to restoring diplomatic trust and rebuilding the "mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests" agreed on in 2008, it would doubtless have a positive effect on economic exchange and business interaction between the two nations.

Whether such a meeting comes to pass will hinge on whether Xi decides that the merits outweigh the dangers. In China, any leader seen as adopting a pro-Japanese stance is courting political disaster. And Xi's current anti-corruption campaign makes him a prime target for political revenge by disgruntled rivals. Especially with bilateral tensions running high over the Senkaku Islands and the history issue, Xi could run a serious risk by appearing too conciliatory.

The APEC summit is still some time off, and since Abe will be in Beijing for the conference in any case, Xi can afford to wait until the last minute to make a decision on one-on-one talks. In the meantime, he will be weighing the pluses and minuses of such a meeting, gauging the potential for a domestic backlash while keeping a close watch on the words and actions of Japan's political leadership—above, all, Abe himself.

November 4, 2014

The Limits of Governability

Masahiro Akiyama

Existing multilateral institutions are becoming increasingly unable to deal with the stepped-up violence of nonstate actors and other security threats. While global governability is showing its limits, this does not mean there is a need to overhaul the rules of the world order, notes Tokyo Foundation President Masahiro Akiyama. The global order should continue to be based on established international laws and the nation-state system, and steps should be taken to prevent another Cold War.

The following are comments made at the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club, held on October 22–24, 2014, in Sochi, Russia, on the theme of “The World Order: New Rules or a Game without Rules.”

* * *

We face many security challenges around the world today, such as the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the Ukraine crisis, political instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the discouraging aftermath of the Arab Spring, territorial conflicts in the South China Sea, the unresolved nuclear arms threat from North Korea, and violence in many parts of Africa.

If we think of security in a broader sense, moreover, there are also such threats as global warming, AIDS/HIV, Ebola fever, and bird flu.

As a backdrop to these developments, there are the recently stepped-up violence of nonstate actors—particularly religious fundamentalist groups—territorial conflicts involving military force, a potential new “Cold War” between Russia and the West, the difficulty of ethnic and religious reconciliation, a dysfunctional democracy in some countries, and transnational threats that cannot be addressed by individual states and that could undermine the Westphalian world order.

Some argue that these threats have emerged all at once and cannot be managed by existing world institutions. American political scientist Ian Bremmer is very

Masahiro Akiyama President and Senior Fellow, Tokyo Foundation.

pessimistic about the present situation, which has not been managed well by the leading global power and its allies, and reference is often made to the need for a new global order. My impression is that the Valdai Discussion Club, too, tends to side with this view. I agree that global governability is showing its limits, particularly in the field of international security. There is no denying that the power of the United States—the world’s sole superpower—has declined, with the result that it has not been able to deter many security crises around in the world. The United Nations, G8, G20, and other multilateral institutions have not functioned effectively either.



An aerial view of Sochi.

© ANDREY BABUSHKIN/RIA NOVOSTI (CC BY-SA 3.0)

* * *

Introducing a new global order, however, is much easier said than done. The very task of coming up with a viable concept for a new order is quite daunting.

That said, the United States appears to be making a return as a global cop after pulling back its military engagement in many international crises. The United Nations has bolstered its functions compared to the past, and Western engagement has recovered, although in the shape of ad-hoc cooperation. Russia and China are also very concerned about terrorist activities.

Each security crisis mentioned at the outset has its own unique features and process of development. Instability in Pakistan and Afghanistan would be overcome over time. Ethnic and religious enmity can be resolved if the nation-state framework remains strong and intact. Causes for concern, on the other hand, are the activities of transnational terrorist groups and weaknesses in democracy. The United States and the United Nations will continue to be engaged, and Pakistan should be prevented from breaking away through its close ties with China.

Territorial disputes in the South China Sea present difficulties from the viewpoint of international law. The effective control of islands, reefs, and rocks in the sea is a basic premise for territorial claims, but past conditions cannot always be clearly ascertained. China’s recent assertiveness in the South China Sea is a major concern for the international community. It is not impossible, though, for coastal states to find ways of resolving their disputes in a peaceful manner. I expect China

to seek a resolution through negotiation based on its aspirations to become a responsible global power. The US rebalancing policy and the international community's interest in this issue and its insistence on maintaining the rule of law will be very helpful.

Violence in many areas in Africa would subside if the activities of extremist Islamic terrorist groups can be successfully contained. This will require the strong cooperation of the international community, particularly of West bloc nations. Far more serious humanitarian threats for Africa at the moment are AIDS/HIV and Ebola.

* * *

The Ukrainian crisis and the rise of the Islamic State are serious threats that could undermine the world order that is premised on the concept of the nation-state. There are no viable alternatives to the existing order at present, so the task at hand would seem to be to find effective measures to maintain this order.

The crisis in Ukraine is a special case. While it appears on the surface to be a breach of territorial sovereignty by the military forces of a foreign country, there is a need to consider the historical factors behind the formation of Ukraine, the strong ethnic and religious split within the country, and its unique ties to Russia. I suspect that the Ukraine agenda has been mishandled by Western nations, particularly those in Europe, over the past several years while the country was being poorly administered by ineffective governments. US President Barack Obama may have unnecessarily turned Russia into a political enemy, moreover, with the result that Russia and China are now more closely aligned, giving rise to a possible new Cold War.

At the same time, Russia could have opted not to intervene militarily, for it has lost a lot of credibility in the international community by doing so. Changing the status quo by force is simply unacceptable. The current crisis in east Ukraine should be resolved premised on the concept of nation-states and the rule of law. A Ukraine-Russia summit could provide the impetus to end the crisis, for the two leaders are most familiar with the special status of Ukraine and its geopolitical significance.

An even bigger problem at the moment is the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. ISIS has made tremendous advances owing to independent financial resources and weapon stockpiles, acquired while the United States had lowered its profile in the region and owing to the failure of post-Saddam Hussein administrations to control all of Iraq. The rise of ISIS has demonstrated that religious reconciliation is very

difficult and that the democracy introduced in Iraq has not functioned well. The Islamic State is a violent, fundamentalist group that ignores the rules of the nation-state.

While the decision by the United States and its Western allies to deter further advances by ISIS with military force may have been slow, it is better late than never, and the important thing is that they have now made a commitment to fight the group. When the rule of law and the nation-state system are attacked by armed insurgents, there is no choice but to use military power to meet the challenge. Many such threats require the united response of the international community, particularly under US leadership. Russia and China, too, should consider offering their support as responsible global powers, as was the case following 9/11.

* * *

We are now confronted with the limits of global governability in the security field, but this does not mean there is a need to overhaul the rules of the global order. The order should continue to be based on established international laws and the nation-state system. I do not think Russia and China would disagree.

We must be ready to use force if necessary when the order comes under attack from armed groups. The problem is that nonstate actors have dramatically increased their influence while the United States—although still a superpower—is in decline and no other country has stepped up to replace it. Any weaknesses can be met, though, through a unified response by not only Western countries but also Russia and China, which also have an interest in containing fundamentalist and terrorist groups.

Greater attention should be given to enhancing the functions of existing international institutions, particularly the United Nations Security Council. The Security Council is a natural arena for international cooperation, since the United States, Russia, and China are all members. The three big powers should start to discuss this agenda as the council has not always worked effectively.

At the same time, we must take steps to prevent another Cold War. A new rift in East-West relations would only weaken the governability of global security.

November 7, 2014

America's Midterm Elections: What Next?

Paul J. Saunders

The Republican victory in the November 4 midterm elections will have major implications for the strategies adopted in the 2016 presidential campaign. The central question for President Obama during the remainder of his term, notes Paul Saunders, is whether he will adopt a conciliatory approach to the Republicans in Congress to pass key legislation.

* * *

America's November 4 midterm elections produced a decisive win for the Republican Party. As of the morning of November 5, Republicans have won control of the Senate—prevailing in 10 of 13 contested Senate races—and will hold at least 52 of 100 seats.

At the same time, the GOP appears to have gained at least 10 seats in the House of Representatives as well as some surprising governors' mansions, including in Maryland and Massachusetts, both of which are heavily Democratic states. What comes next? That will depend on the dynamics inside the two parties and on some important decisions by President Barack Obama.

Lessons for Democrats

Democrats have faced a major defeat. But what lessons will they draw from the experience? The answer to that question will drive actions by Democrats in Congress during the final two years of Mr. Obama's term. It will also shape the conduct of the emerging Democratic candidates who hope to succeed him in the White House.

Thus far, many if not most Democrats appear tempted—not incorrectly—to blame their election losses on a combination of intense anger at the president

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among Republican voters and apathy or disillusionment with Mr. Obama among Democrats disappointed by his performance. The result will be a significantly weakened president for whom Democrats in Congress are unlikely to do things that might risk their jobs in the 2016 election. Mr. Obama's ability to influence who wins the Democratic nomination in 2016 will be similarly diminished.

At the same time, it may be dangerous for some leading Democrats, including Hillary Clinton, to assume that distance from Mr. Obama will solve their political problems. One aspect of the Maryland governor's race that was particularly striking for those in the Washington area was the extent to which the losing Democratic candidate, Lieutenant Governor Anthony Brown, was relying on television advertisements featuring a strong endorsement from former President Bill Clinton. While Brown appeared to have been too complacent about the threat from his Republican rival, Governor-Elect Larry Hogan, this also raises questions about the Clintons' continuing political appeal. Taking into account that Hillary Clinton already lost the Democratic nomination once—to President Obama—she does not look like a guaranteed winner in two years.

On the Republican side, many will likely also recognize that the president's unpopularity played an important part in their many victories. However, some will see other explanations, including the party's sharper message, on one hand, and its success in fielding establishment candidates who could win broad appeal, on the other. The tension between these two lessons reflects underlying tension between the establishment and Tea Party wings in the party, both of which may emerge emboldened after the election. Whether House Speaker John Boehner and presumptive Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell will be able to keep these two factions together will be a test.

For Mr. Obama, the central question is whether he will adopt a conciliatory approach to the new Republican Congress to pass significant legislation. Doing so could produce important accomplishments and strengthen the president's legacy, but it will not be easy—and it could make him even more unpopular among Democrats who might not appreciate the compromises he might be forced to make. Conversely, it would throw down a gauntlet to the Republicans, challenging a party that many perceive as doing little other than opposing the president to make its own compromises.

Immigration, Energy, and Trade

Either way, President Obama and the Republican Congress will not have more than a year to accomplish whatever they can together. By late 2015, with the 2016 pri-

maries approaching and new congressional campaigns beginning, each will have diminished flexibility. What can they accomplish during that year? Some of the biggest issues on the agenda are immigration, energy, and trade.

On immigration, both parties want to do something for a combination of practical and political reasons. While the issue is a complex one, a deal seems plausible. With respect to energy policy, the practical imperatives are probably stronger—America is missing significant opportunities for economic growth, greater energy security, and accelerated innovation—but there is less political pressure to act. Trade, and particularly the Trans-Pacific Partnership, could be another possibility if Republicans are prepared to give the administration greater negotiating authority combined with broad parameters of an acceptable deal.

Iran and Russia are also likely to be on the agenda. The November 24 deadline for an agreement with Tehran is approaching rapidly. If the P5+1 countries and Iran reach a deal, which appears unlikely but possible, President Obama will probably have to roll back some of the US sanctions on Iran that depend on either executive orders or, alternatively, executive branch certifications to Congress.

Similarly, if the P5+1 and Iran agree to extend the talks again, it will mean continuing current sanctions relief. If the GOP wants to make this a political issue, party leaders will have every opportunity to do so. But that will not make it any easier to do other business with the White House.

At the same time, the administration appears to be looking for a way out of a deeper confrontation with Russia. That will also require winding down sanctions (all of which are based on executive orders) if it is to succeed. This would be another political opportunity for Republicans if they choose to seize it.

The new Republican Congress will not convene until late January, so President Obama and Republican leaders have over two months to consider their options and begin making plans. Until then, they can signal their intent in public statements—Senator McConnell has already offered an olive branch to the White House—and in their actions during an expected lame duck session of the outgoing Congress before the end of 2014. The next few months will be an interesting time in Washington.

October 29, 2014

“Japan is Back,” Including a New Defence Posture

Ippeita Nishida

Prime Minister Abe has been forcefully advancing a foreign policy and security agenda, visiting a record 49 countries, creating a National Security Council, issuing a National Security Strategy, relaxing the ban on the transfer of defense equipment, and broadening the constitutional interpretation of the right of self-defense. These initiatives should expand the areas of cooperation between Japan and NATO. Maintaining this momentum, notes Research Fellow Ippeita Nishida, will hinge on the success of his Abenomics policy of economic growth. This article is reprinted with permission from the website of the Security and Defense Agenda, a Brussels-based think tank that, as of October 9, 2014, has become part of Friends of Europe.

* * *

Back in power again, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has pushed ahead with a more ambitious security agenda, and he has been remarkably effective during the less than two years he has been in office, thanks to a majority his ruling coalition enjoys in both houses of the Diet. He created the National Security Council, passed a law on the protection of state secrets, formulated Japan's first National Security Strategy, expanded the transfer of defence equipment to friendly countries, and most notably issued a new constitutional interpretation that broadens the scope of self-defence. Once amendments to relevant laws are made, this last point would greatly strengthen the Japan-US alliance and enable Japan's Self-Defence Forces to engage in a wider range of international peace missions.

On the diplomatic front, Abe has actively been calling on other countries, visiting an unprecedented 49 states during his current term, with the notable exception of China and South Korea. Security cooperation arrangements with countries like Australia, Britain, and France, as well as with NATO, are being stepped up. He

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is even reaching out to North Korea to achieve a breakthrough on the abduction issue. He confidently proclaims that “Japan is back,” implying that the country no longer fits the dull, declining power image and will firmly fulfill its role as a tier-one nation.

Renewing Defence Posture

Strengthening national defence is high on Abe’s agenda. Defence spending this year increased for the first time in over a decade. A clearer priority is being given to maritime security and the defence of the southwest islands, where China has been playing a dangerous game. Force posture and structure are being reconfigured, and the Joint Staff is gaining more authority over operations. Spending has picked up in such areas as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), inter-operability, ballistic missile defence systems, and amphibious capability. Building a credible deterrence to complement US strategic plans while fostering a multilayered security architecture in the western Pacific is Abe’s ultimate objective.

Some in the West have voiced concerns that Japan is taking too militaristic a path. But the truth is that the current administration’s defence posture has little to do with Abe’s conservative leanings. There was a dire need to upgrade the operational capability of Japan’s Self-Defence Forces (SDF) to adapt to a new security environment, regardless who was prime minister. Japan’s fiscal situation, moreover, does not allow significant increases in defence spending, which is maintained at around 1% of gross national income.

Personnel costs made up most of the budget increase, so it is more of a reallocation issue. In addition, under the current interpretation of the Constitution, Japan cannot have capacity beyond what is needed for self-defence. Offensive arsenals and operational capabilities—including doctrines premised on them—are not allowed. Although his statements and conduct have produced a strong nationalistic image, Abe is in fact taking a relatively modest path.

There remains the possibility, though, of uninvited accidents if China continues its provocations, sending vessels and planes to the waters and airspace around the Senkaku Islands. In January 2013 for example, a Chinese frigate directed fire-control radar on an SDF destroyer, a violation of international codes of conduct. If wrongly managed, the incident could have escalated into open conflict. The Chinese leadership needs to contain such ill-considered tactics, and both governments are urged to install confidence-building measure and escalation-control mechanisms. In order to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents in the future, Japan must establish a clear legal basis for self-defence—both individual and collective, while strengthening the capacity of its Coast Guard.

Commitment under “Proactive Contribution to Peace”

Abe’s National Security Strategy advocates the new principle of a “proactive contribution to peace” based on international cooperation. While this has a diplomatic element, the focus is on expanding the role of the SDF in peace missions. The strategy has been formulated in a way to gain domestic acceptance and to deflect “remilitarisation” charges from China.

Currently, the SDF is engaged in two international missions: UNMISS (an engineering unit) and antipiracy operations off the coast of Somalia (two destroyers at sea and two P-3C surveillance aircraft based in Djibouti). While areas of SDF activity are expected to expand in the future, Abe himself has affirmed that it will not take on a combat role. We may see more dispatches for short-term humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, especially in Asia, and perhaps some minesweepers in the Persian Gulf, but it is difficult to foresee how many large force deployments can be made for long-term peace missions, given the tight security situation at home.

Rather, there might be more potential for new military assistance packages. Since 2011, the SDF have provided technical assistance to other forces in such noncombat areas as logistics, engineering, and medical care to support their “capacity-building.” Also, the new government policy on the transfer of defence equipment allows contributions to peace missions. Britain, France, the EU and NATO might well find it useful to coordinate their activities in Africa or Afghanistan with Japan. Japan, for its part, should expand its scope of activities and broaden its foreign aid portfolio, pursuing a comprehensive approach in contributing to peace and stability. If used effectively, these new tools can make a great contribution to peace operations.

The Road Ahead

In order to further his security and defence agenda, Abe needs to maintain public support and close working relations with the Liberal Democratic Party’s pacifist coalition partner, Komeito. These should keep Abe’s conservative ambitions in check, and observers thus think there is less chance of him revisiting Yasukuni Shrine in the near future.

It is, after all, about the economy: the political sustainability of the Abe administration depends much on the success of “Abenomics.” The initial two arrows—monetary easing and fiscal stimulation—have worked. But the third arrow—structural reforms—will take longer to yield results. Already, such factors as the sales

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tax hike, the depreciation of the yen, and increased fossil fuel dependency after the Fukushima accident are slowing domestic consumption. The future is still uncertain.

Whether Abe succeeds in keeping the economy afloat will be the lynchpin. If growth flounders, Abe may be forced to step down. And there is no guarantee that his successor would be as forceful and enthusiastic in advancing Japan's security and defence agenda. With such prospects in mind, Abe must seize the moment, institutionalize the changes he has initiated, and consolidate support for his commitments so that things are not left unfinished, as was the case during his first term in office.

October 15, 2014

Japan's Energy Policy in a Post-3/11 World

Juggling Safety, Sustainability and Economics

Hikaru Hiranuma

*The Fukushima nuclear accident has thrown into sharp relief problem areas in Japan's energy policy that had escaped scrutiny before the disaster. Electricity system reform is indispensable to rebuilding Japan's energy policy and ensuring the success of Abenomics. This article by Research Fellow Hikaru Hiranuma was uploaded in September 2014 on the website of the Center for Asian Studies, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (Ifri), as part of its *Asie.Visions* series of electronic publications. The Executive Summary and Conclusion of the article are reprinted here with Ifri's permission.*

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Executive Summary

The March 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station turned Japan's energy policy on its head, shedding a harsh new light on Japan's energy policy and power supply system, and throwing into relief six major problem areas that had largely escaped scrutiny before the disaster.

- (1) Fragmentation of the power grid under the regional monopolies of Japan's 10 "general electric utilities" and the resulting failure to develop the kind of wide-area transmission system needed to transfer electricity from regions with a surplus to those suffering shortages. (There are two incompatible transmission systems: a 50-hertz grid operating in the east and a 60 Hz grid in the west.)
- (2) The low electric supply capacity of entities other than the 10 regional utilities, making procurement of electric power from other sources difficult.

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- (3) The lack of effective mechanisms for curtailing demand at times when a reliable electric supply is jeopardized.
- (4) The inability of customers to choose a power source or supplier.
- (5) The failure to manage the energy risks associated with a shutdown of Japan's nuclear power plants.
- (6) The urgent need to confront the risk of severe accidents and other hazards associated with nuclear power facilities.

The pre-quake Strategic Energy Plan announced by the Democratic Party (DPJ) in 2010 put an emphasis on nuclear power as the mainstay of Japan's energy supply and offered little guidance for addressing these issues. The plan was subsequently rejected, and a new policy was announced by the DPJ to eliminate nuclear power from Japan's energy mix before 2040. The coalition agreement between the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito Party, which defeated the DPJ in the December 2012 general election, backtracked from the "zero nuclear power" policy, which constituted an important shift from the nuclear-dependent policies of the pre-Fukushima era.

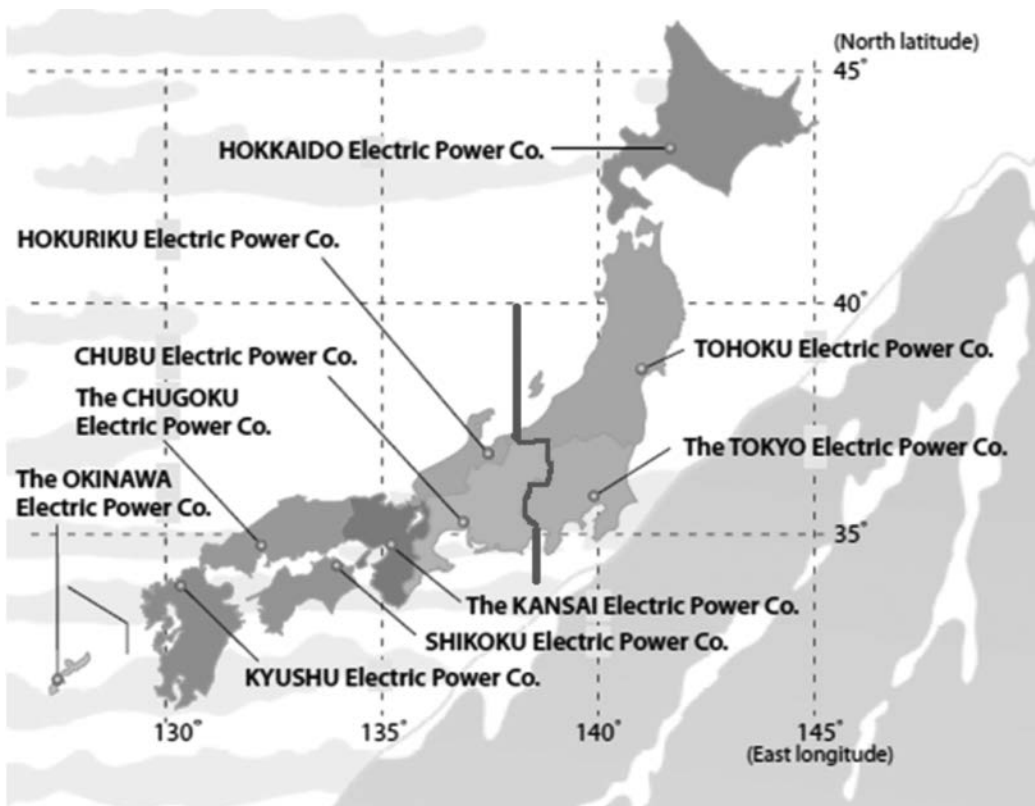
In April 2013, the LDP government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved a document titled *Policy on Electricity System Reform* emphasizing the need to make use of a wider range of energy sources, and in April this year, the cabinet adopted an updated *Strategic Energy Plan* aimed at reducing reliance on nuclear power as much as possible and building a flexible, diversified, multilevel supply-and-demand structure.

Many challenges remain to be overcome, however, such as accelerating the use of renewable energy, securing stable and lower-cost sources of fossil fuels, holding down rising electricity costs, and overcoming opposition to restarting nuclear power plants. Challenges related to the liberalization and unbundling of Japan's power sector are also a lingering cause for concern.

The problems that emerged in the aftermath of 3/11 exposed the existing electricity system's deep vulnerability. Sweeping reforms will be needed to overhaul this system and reduce reliance on nuclear power by diversifying energy sources.

Electricity system reform will thus be of vital importance. Such reforms will be advanced in a three-stage process under the April 2013 *Policy on Electricity System Reform*. However this scheme seems imperfect at best and a number of lingering concerns remain regarding its consistency and efficiency. Electricity system reform is indispensable to rebuilding Japan's post-Fukushima energy policy and ensuring the success of the Abenomics program of economic growth. Japan must thus carry out drastic electricity system reforms, without being swayed by vested interests.

Japan's 10 Regional Power Companies by Service Area



Source: The Federation of Electric Power Companies of Japan (FEPC)

Conclusion: Electricity System Reform Crucial to the Success of Japan's Post-Fukushima Energy Policy

Opening up the power grid through electricity system reform to separate the power generation and transmission functions should enable more renewable energy companies to connect to the grid and help boost the share of renewable sources in Japan's energy mix. Such diversification can reduce the risks associated with an over-dependence on nuclear power. Fairer access to the grid should boost the market share of new energy sources and increase the number of energy providers.

Once the Organization for Cross-Regional Coordination of Transmission Operators, being set up during stage one of electricity system reform, launches operations, it will be possible to address shortages in the power supply on a cross-re-

gional basis, facilitating the introduction of renewable energy sources that are prone to weather-induced supply fluctuations.

If the unbundling of electricity generation and transmission is accompanied by liberalization of the retail market, new power providers can be expected to enter the market, promoting competition and lowering prices.

There is good evidence suggesting that opening up the retail market does drive prices down. Increasing numbers of local governments are inviting companies to bid for the right to provide electricity, and in one such case, the price paid by the Tokyo metropolitan government to the winning contractor is now reportedly 6% cheaper than that charged by TEPCO. TEPCO itself established a new energy provider in May 2014 in preparation for market liberalization to sell electricity throughout the country—beyond TEPCO's traditional area of operations—with the aim of keeping energy costs to a minimum and developing a competitive business.²⁴

Greater competition in a more open market will incentivize electricity companies to procure fuel more cheaply and hold down rising costs for fossil fuels since the Fukushima accident. For example, the Chubu Electric Power Company reduced fuel costs by ¥35 billion in fiscal 2011, ¥15 billion in fiscal 2012, and ¥17 billion in fiscal 2013 (projection as of October 9, 2013).²⁵ Chubu Electric also signed a joint-purchase contract with the Korea Gas Corporation (KOGAS), the world's largest purchaser of liquid natural gas, to acquire LNG from the Italian energy company ENI. The contract is running for five years, from May 2013 to December 2017. Liberalization of the market should provide additional incentives for electricity companies to reduce costs. At the same time it should encourage the diversification of fuel sources and the methods by which the fuel is acquired. This should have a positive effect on Japan's energy security.

Advancing electricity system reform in these ways will contribute to the achievement of the goals of Abenomics through the development of innovative renewable energy technologies and high-efficiency thermal-fuel technologies, the emergence of new energy providers and renewable energy companies, and the creation of new domestic energy markets to support them. This will have the potential boosting economic growth and the competitiveness of Japanese industry. But this will happen only if the reforms are successfully implemented.

Whether Japan's post-Fukushima energy policy can be successfully rebuilt and

²⁴ TEPCO press release, May 22, 2014.

²⁵ According to figures released by Chubu Electric on October 29, 2013. <www.chuden.co.jp/ryokin/onegai/houjin/hou_naiyou1029/hou_gaiyou/>.

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whether the Abenomics strategy for growth can produce hoped-for results therefore depend on replacing the system that had been in place for decades with a new, flexible, and innovative system in tune with current realities.

July 23, 2014

Working with Nigeria's Change Makers

(2) Valuable Lessons in New York

Suzuka Kobayakawa

In September 2013 Suzuka Kobayakawa began her 12-month fellowship under the Tokyo Foundation–Acumen Global Fellows Program. In her second report, she describes some of the personal lessons she learned during the intensive leadership training program in New York before embarking on an assignment at Pagatech, an innovative startup delivering universal access to financial services in Nigeria.

* * *

I was attending a two-night, three-day workshop on the qualities essential for a fair and just society when Acumen founder Jacqueline Novogratz turned to me and asked about my deepest motives for when I decide to do something.

Love or Fear: From the “Good Society” Workshop

“Is it love or fear that strongly moves you?” When I heard this question, what instantly came to my mind was, “Fear is what moves me.” This, though, was something that I never wanted to say in front of Jacqueline and the global fellows. As I recalled my experiences, I muttered to myself, “Suzuka, find examples to prove it wasn’t fear.” What were my driving motives? And what brought me here to the Acumen global fellowship program? I lapsed into silence while keeping up with the thoughts swirling in my mind.

A variety of reasons for my past actions—such as my work in Nepal before I joined Acumen—crossed my mind. What prompted me to go to Nepal? Surely, I wanted to offer hope to Nepalese women who were discouraged by the caste system or had resigned themselves to fate, believing that nothing would ever change.

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I was driven by the desire to show them that this need not necessarily be so, that every human life was precious. I wanted to provide experiences that would help them recognize their own importance and to see the joy in their eyes when they discovered hope and their own potential—these motivations, I thought, could be categorized as “love.”

But I also had to admit that these were not my only motives. In fact, the thing that pushed me more than anything else was fear. As I wrote in my first report, fear had been the major force behind many of my decisions. It pushed me to make myself strong. Without fear, I realized, I wouldn’t be sitting there with Jacqueline.

While I was thinking, everybody kindly and patiently waited for my answer. Awkwardly, I sputtered out a reply. “I wish I could say it was love, but that wouldn’t be true. I don’t want to admit it, but the thing that drives me most is fear.”

This was a moment when I came face-to-face with my weakness, forcing me to reexamine my underlying assumptions and motives. Although I hated to own up to it, the answer I discovered deep within me—and which I shared with others—was that I was here because I was afraid. That didn’t sound like the kind of leader I wished to be.

In the workshop, we discussed such concepts as rights and responsibilities, freedom and the social order, the pursuit of equality and social justice, productivity and prosperity, and the community and personal identity. We examined the principles underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and analyzed the rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr. We compared the political approaches of Lee Kwan Yew and Aung San Suu Kyi and discussed the struggle between liberty and authority in *Leviathan*.

It was following these discussions that Jacqueline asked me the “love or fear” question. The discussion suddenly turned from detached analysis of the political use of emotions—fear, affection, anger, and sympathy—to something much more personal. I was being pressed to consider these issues from a different perspective, as something intimate and personal. I began to realize that I’d have to go back and redefine the way I thought about many things.

Many of the books we read in the workshop were familiar to me from high school and university. But they struck me quite differently now, after my experi-



ences in the corporate world and my work in Nepal. I perceived a kind of universality in the way people grappled with major issues, and the workshop convinced me of the value of taking a step back. As I listened to the experiences of other fellows, I realized how valuable it can be to return to the classics and learn from the great thinkers of the past.

The reading list for the workshop included important works of political philosophy, and we discussed them in the light of our own experiences. On the list for the 2013 workshop were:

- *Human Rights*, Aung San Suu Kyi
- “A Conversation with Lee Kwan Yew,” Fareed Zakaria
- *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes
- *The Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau
- “Categorical Imperative,” Immanuel Kant
- *Utilitarianism*, John Stuart Mill
- *The Republic*, Plato
- *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle
- *The Muqaddimah*, Ibn Khaldun
- *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen
- *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff*, Arthur Okun
- *In the Name of Identity*, Amin Maalouf

“Lean Launchpad”

The week following our “Good Society” workshop, we were introduced to a stripped down, minimalistic approach to setting up a new business called Lean Launchpad, which is the brainchild of Steve Blank of Stanford University. One reason many new businesses fail is that they invest too much money, time, and labor on things customers do not need. Lean Launchpad seeks to eliminate this kind of waste and obtain the biggest effect in the shortest time.

For many startups, allocating resources is a difficult task, particularly in the early stages. The Lean Launchpad approach offers a way of creating competitive products that customers truly demand without requiring an abundance of resources. It does so by actively incorporating feedback from users to eliminate superfluous features. Details are available through video lectures on Steve Blank’s website. (Once you register, you will have free access to many of the high-quality lectures he gives to his students at Stanford.)

PARTNERSHIP WITH ACUMEN

We divided into groups of three and were given a week to come up with a business model for a Lean Launchpad startup that would address a social problem and also generate enough profit to be sustainable as a business. It was the beginning of a dizzying week: coming up with a hypothesis, specifying our product and service, developing strategies for pricing, sales channels, and marketing approach, then implementing improvements based on feedback from customers. We also gave daily presentations to “sharks” looking for the best businesses in which to invest at shark tank sessions. We went through this process every day.

The two other fellows in my group were both highly talented: one from Ireland and the other from the United States. They had MBAs and were already quite familiar with Lean Launchpad. Since we all shared an interest in education, we chose to focus on improving the quality of school education in low-income communities. We came up with the idea of marketing an education program with technologies that could be customized to the learning requirements of individual students.

My colleagues worked quickly and efficiently. It took them no time to come up with market research data available on the web and from acquaintances they could call up. I used to pride myself on being able to create PowerPoint slides quickly, but these guys were even better. They came up with impressive-looking and crisply written presentation materials in a snap: the documents made perfect sense and were backed up by solid data. But as we discussed the project I started to feel that something wasn't quite right. All the decisions we were making were based on our own assumptions, and little effort was made to actually speak with the target users of our services.

In Japan, I worked in a culture that encouraged meeting with the customers directly whenever we ran into a problem; we believed that the customers had the solution. So I instinctively felt that our project would be incomplete if we didn't go see where and how our target audience lived. I wanted to meet these people, see their faces and facial expressions, learn how they spoke and what they wore, and gain insights into the values that drove their education decisions. Our model, in terms of logic, seemed flawless. But I had little direct knowledge of American children attending public schools in low-income areas or their parents, so I had no gut feelings that it would work well.

So I went to the Bronx. I approached kids and their parents in front of schools and in the public library and asked them to talk to me about the educational issues they felt needed addressing. I wanted to talk to people face-to-face, to hear their nonverbal message. I also met several people who had experience teaching. The week flashed by. I was frantically busy interviewing people, writing up my notes, preparing our daily presentations, and planning and taking part in the discussions.

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A week wasn't nearly enough time to obtain a quantitatively adequate sample. All I could get were several pertinent opinions. While I went about pursuing my "inefficient" research, my teammates were busily gathering solid statistical data.

Our different data sets led my colleagues and me to think about the education issue quite differently. Our opinions were at odds on everything from the target age group to the content of our value proposition. Whenever we had a difference of opinion, I always lost the debate. Not only was I outnumbered, I simply wasn't persuasive enough. My instincts and my sales experience told me that these young MBAs—despite their impressive academic backgrounds and native English skills—could be underestimating the importance of on-the-ground evidence. But of course, no amount of sweat on my brow was going to change their cool, analytical minds.



I became frustrated that I couldn't express myself better in English and was stymied by how little I knew about the American education system and its problems. I felt guilty, too: Because I wasn't persuasive enough, our value proposition was not going to reflect the needs of the people who had taken the time to speak to me.

My colleagues listened patiently to what I had to say. They were nice to me. But I started to feel that I was just extra baggage dragging the team down. It was then that I had a sudden revelation: How would I have reacted if I were in their shoes? Pushed for time and lumbered with someone who didn't seem to get the picture, who worked inefficiently (I didn't think that traveling to the schools was an inefficient use of time, but my teammates might have thought so), and who couldn't instantly find the right words, would I have been able to maintain my respect for that person and pay attention to them? Or would I just think of them as a burden? Suddenly, I saw myself as I was in Japan: a fluent and persuasive speaker with knowledge and confidence who never questioned her own beliefs. I had become so obsessed with making myself strong that I never really considered how it was like to be in a position of weakness. Looking back on my own past, I was shocked and horrified by the arrogance I found within me.

Learning to Accept Myself

As the Lean Launchpad week came to a close, a cold spell suddenly swept through

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New York. Life was as hectic as ever. As the date of our departure for the field drew near, we busily prepared for our trips, sorting visas and other paperwork. We also helped organize the annual Investor Gathering, which Acumen partners attend for a report on the performance of their social business investments over the past year.

All this time, though, I was frustrated and disappointed by the cowardice and arrogance I found in myself and by my failure to live up to the person I wanted to become. I also made the unpleasant discovery that I had a tendency to despise the weakness, arrogance, and cowardice in other people that were similar to my own.

My Real World House roommates noticed that something was on my mind. Eventually, I couldn't hide my weaknesses anymore, and I decided to speak up honestly about what was bothering me.

I still vividly remember a comment made by one of my roommates: "We all carry things we'd rather not show. No one is perfect. You have so many wonderful qualities, Suzuka. I'm not saying this because you are an Acumen fellow. I am telling this as a friend. Don't be harsh on yourself. If you can't accept yourself, how you can accept others? Love yourself. You are loved by us as you are." She then gave me a hug. The most precious things I gained from my time in New York were the people I met there and the opportunity they gave me to see myself in a new light.

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