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A 'Rump' Statehood and the Polish Liberalism

Abstract

This article is revised version of speech that was given at Oxford University. It deals with the origins of polish liberalism. Author states that there are two sources of liberalism that look like globular clusters. The first one sprung from a tradition of ancient feudal liberties. And the second source: liberalism stemmed from an opposition both to a practice of absolutist state and to the political ideology of absolutism. Finally, article tracks down the intellectual history of Polish liberalism.

Keywords: *Poland, liberalism, political philosophy, political theory*

Introduction

Let's take a glimpse on the Polish Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita) in 18th Century. It is worth recalling that the 1st Republic was a vast country, having embraced territories of contemporary Poland, save for provinces of Pomerania and Silesia, three-fourth of Ukraine, all Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Latvian lands, significant parts of Estonia, Moldavia, and Slovakia. In 1618 the Commonwealth reached its maximal growth that accounted for almost 1 mln. square kilometers. More than two weeks were needed to wander on horse about the country. 14 million population inhabited multinational and multicultural Poland just before the first partition. The Polish nobles being of 8-10% of the population enjoyed civil rights and political freedom. Thanks to the Cassovia Privilege of 1374 Louis called the Great, Hungarian and Polish king sanctioned rights of nobles and contributed to the development of the law, the parliament, and a functioning system of taxation. The political system worked quite smoothly till the second half of 17th century.

But, during 18th C. the 1st Republic went gradually into decline due to the anarchic political system and numberless invasions, and after three partitions in 1772, 1792, 1795 lost her independence. The last two took place after an awakening of the civic spirit that resulted in the proclamation of the Constitution of 3rd May, 1791 and the Kosciuszko's insurrection. In the age of absolutism the Polish Commonwealth disappeared from political maps.. The cartographic skills could have been mastered in delineating new contours of the continental Europe. If we, by art of *anamorphosis*, imagine Central-Eastern European territories *à la perspective curieuse*, in a way the map of Central Europe had Charles V commissioned in 1560 showed up, it enabled us to see that this part of Europe could be literally converted into emblems of monarchical power as rivers, plateaux, mountains, and towns recomposed the body of three eagles: the heraldic emblems of the Habsburg emperors, Russian tsars, and Prussian kings. The white eagle being the cartographic

representation of the Polish Republic almost disappeared for 123 years. The emblematic sign of subservience could be perceived in the coat-of-arms that represented the Polish Kingdom. The black double-headed eagle of the Romanov dynasty dominated over the shield with the white eagle. But in 1870, as a result of the January Uprising of 1863, even this small representation of the Polish nation was erased.

Political culture of the Polish Commonwealth had, however, remained after some proto-liberal ideas that rendered services as a matter for forming a spiral arm of liberal galaxy. It was like *Scutum Sobiecianum* that had some open clusters of ideas that referred to the nobles' comprehension of liberty as political freedom linked to personal rights; specific noble individualism warranted by the *liberum veto*, *liberum peto* rule and the "free election" of the king; the constitutional monarchy based upon the Diet (bicameral parliament) and regional councils (*sejmiki ziemskie*). The noble democracy as a form of government that recalled to *aequalitas* left open a question of a role the Polish nobility played in the political and constitutional history.

One step back – the “Rump” Statehood

The first constellation can be explained as ‘a lexicographic turn’ that occurred at the beginning of the 19th century. And eventually, the lexical breakthrough put a ‘doctrine’ into shape, gathering later on a circle of Polish ‘doctrinaires’.

Generally speaking there are two sources of liberalism that look like globular clusters. The first one sprung from a tradition of ancient feudal liberties. And, at least, this remark made by Mme de Staël: “In France, liberty is ancient; despotism is modern”, is applicable to other parts of Europe. But in

the Polish case, it opened a path for the specific form of government: the noble republic. Economic and political strength of Polish nobility was so great that it was, as turned out in the 18th and 19th centuries, detrimental to a rise of middle classes.

Thus, there are several elements that can be considered as 'proto-liberal'. After liberty had become the first political value, it fostered individual liberties as well as a participation in the public life. However, its extreme forms impeded a development of the idea of national sovereignty and the modern state generally. As a consequence, the executive branch of the government was obsolete in the Polish Commonwealth. However, an idea of two king's bodies was institutionalized in the political practice of the *Polonia regnum*. Liberties could be still regarded as privileges of the first estate, but they also promoted establishing very acute sense of citizenship. It was the Polish noble that became a social carrier of liberal values in early 19th century.

And the second source: liberalism stemmed from an opposition both to a practice of absolutist state and to the political ideology of absolutism. In Poland "the King" was "in the Parliament". Polish nobles succeeded in resisting any effort for establishing the *absolutum dominium*. Liberties, however, went off limits and turned into political anarchy. Absolutism was to be experienced, but after partitions, as of the foreign origins. A specific tradition of liberty was both strong and pathologically enhanced. Montesquieu in his *Spirit of Laws* put it into a famous sentence: "the independence of individuals is the end aimed at by the laws of Poland, thence results the oppression of the whole".¹

¹ Ch. Montesquieu, *Spirit of Laws*, Book XI. *Of the Laws Which Establish Political Liberty, with Regard to the Constitution*, ch. 5

But before explaining Polish liberalism its initial state, we need to look into political circumstances of Poland that remained in a political condition properly described as the 'rump statehood'.

After the destruction of the old Polish Republic in 1795, the Republic's former citizens found themselves in a politically alien world. Although several attempts were made in the consecutive years to restore Polish statehood, none of the ephemeral creations of Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic diplomacy was endowed with true sovereignty. Neither the Duchy of Warsaw (1807-1815), nor the Congress Kingdom (1815-1864) could be rated "higher than autonomous dependencies of foreign government" (Norman Davies). The most crucifying experience for all Poles during five generations was one of political oppression by foreign rulers. Thus a fear of Prince – that most decisive ingredient in fertilizing the soil for liberalism – took a distinct trait under Polish political conditions.

Polish history in the nineteenth century cannot be approached in the same way as the state histories of Britain, France, or the histories of more fortunate countries like Germany and Italy, that actually won their statehood, or even Spain defending victoriously its independence during the Napoleon's invasion.

"For most of the period, 'Poland' was just an idea – a memory from the past, or a hope for the future." Hence, the essential sources of its history have to be sought uppermost in the realm of culture, literature, and religion – "in short, in the world of the Polish spirit." Poles lived their lives in spite of the established political order, and often in defiance of the law.² It means, that the next distinctive feature of the 'liberal halo': the rule of law, had a very specific tint.

² N. Davies, *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988, pp. 158-9.

The Russian victory spelt disaster for the Polish cause. At the Congress of Vienna the tsar was to rule over a separate Polish kingdom endowed with a modern, strikingly liberal constitution. The Parliament became the very school of political skills and ideas. But, on the other hand, in the age of Metternich the Polish nation was suspected of being among main carriers of contagion by heralding civil liberties and the liberal constitution. Of some import was a fact that Poles had been almost 'natural' allies to the Napoleonic cause, prone to receive new ideas emanating from France. Thus, when Napoleon created the Warsaw Duchy with its own administration, its own parliamentary constitution, hopes burst into enthusiasm. Moreover, the Napoleonic Code framed the civil order in the Polish society.

The Congress of Vienna obliged Emperor Alexander I of Russia, in his role as King of Poland, to issue a constitution to the newly recreated Polish state. It was a 'charte octroyée' signed by tsar on November 27, 1815. The new state would be one of the smallest Polish states ever. Because it was the Congress of Vienna which *de facto* created the Kingdom of Poland, it became unofficially known as the Congress Poland.

Although the text was edited by the Emperor himself and his advisors, Prince Adam Czartoryski, an intimate friend of Alexander I, was a good mentor for the Polish cause. The constitution was considered to be among the most liberal in contemporary Europe, reflecting much of the European Enlightenment (e.g. political rights were given to 100 000 men in the country with 3 mln population). It is worth recalling that France was after a hot dispute on the Charter of Constitution in which Benjamin Constant took decisive role. A liberal mood was in the air.

No wonder, that a tide of optimism, even enthusiasm, after enacting of the constitution warmed hearts. One of its reviewers symptomatically

expressed joy and excitement: “By now our existence is none of ideality, but by now it shall not depend on whiff of hateful fate [...]”³ Some most acute observers were, however, skeptic about the personal union with Russia. „As a little star revolving around the fiery ball, our tiny Poland soon devolves and fuses in this fire. All is bound to it”, noted Julian U. Niemcewicz in his *Memoirs*.

Alexander I, this ‘man of riddle’, once a supporter of limited liberalism, at the end of the year 1818 began to change his views. A revolutionary conspiracy among the officers of the guard, a foolish plot to kidnap him might have shaken the foundations of his liberal view. Yet, he ceased his flirtation with image of the enlightened king after the apparent triumph of the principles of disorder in the revolutions of Naples and Piedmont, combined with increasingly disquieting symptoms of discontent in France, Germany, and among his own people. The ascendancy of Metternich over the mind of the Russian Emperor became obvious. Thus, in the years 1819-21 a fundamental turn occurred in the Russian policy.

The parliament was supposed to have been called into session every two years, but in fact had only four sessions (1818, 1820, 1826, and 1830; the last two sessions being kept in secrecy, closed to the public). This disregard for the promised rights, among other factors, led to increasing discontent within Poland, eventually culminating in the failed November Uprising of 1830.

One may say with Wilhelm von Humboldt that the Polish public, after Four Years’ Parliament well into 19th century has been gradually losing political opportunities for finding *Ideen zu einen Versuch, die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen*. And the reason was simple: the statehood became an alien experience. There emerged a clear distinction

³ *Uwagi obywatela polskiego nad Konstytucyją tegoż Królestwa (Remarks of a Polish Citizen on a Constitution of the Kingdom)*, „Pamiętnik Warszawski”, Jan.-April 1816, vol. IV, p. 208.

between the nation and the state. Instead to concentrate on essential political questions – e.g. the civil government, Polish thinkers were forced to think in terms of the independent nation.

The political reality brings forth some consequences. The rump statehood culminates in a feeble, ‘rump’ doctrine. Of particular import was a relative lack of debates on the state, constitution and rule of law. The basic dilemma of liberalism, as J.S.Mills put it, a relation between liberty and the political power, was poorly expressed in Polish political circumstances instead of focusing on establishing the liberal state, the Polish intelligentsia primarily had to consider a question of nation. So, ‘the liberalism of fear’ (J. Shklar) took a completely different shape.

It is an intriguing case that these men of reason and cold calculation let themselves be infatuated with revolutionary zeal. Independence was closely linked to political freedom and became more important than civil and political rights. What is more, the quest for independence was identified with the political freedom. And so, the political goal overshadowed core liberal issues.

It will have been of serious consequence for intellectual climate of the public debate in the late twenties of the 19th century. One of the most common metaphors, that was much loved by Polish writers, depicted Poland as a the country that has been crucified, and its body descended into the Tomb, awaiting the Resurrection. Whereas most European countries basked in the Age of Improvement, of Expansion, and of Empire, the nineteenth century for Poland was the era of effacement – ‘the Babylonian Captivity’, ‘the Sojourn in the Wilderness’, ‘the Journey through Hell’, ‘the Time on the Cross’.⁴ The nation’s sufferings were a fertile soil for viewing history in terms of the collective victimology.

⁴ P. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland, 1795-1918*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975, p. 59.

To digress to Humboldt is purposefully to put the anachronistic remark. Written in 1792, the Humboldt's masterpiece was published as early as in 1851. In the world of the arts, sciences and political ideas, the first three decades of the 19th century saw the culmination of the Polish Enlightenment. Most of the leading figures in Warsaw during the Napoleonic period and in the early years of Congress Kingdom was deeply impressed by political, social and economic reforms brought about in the age of revolutions, though appalled by fanaticism and violence of revolutionary movements.

Among them most influential were Stanisław Staszic, the president of the Friends of Society, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, Princes Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki and Adam Czartoryski. All of them were sons the Age of Reason. In politics, they were moderates, compromisers; in religious matters, skeptics; in artistic taste, classicists. Their main concerns, like those of the *philosophes*, were with scientific knowledge, secular education, and social and economic improvement. Liberal view were widely shared in this circle in which Polish nobles set the tone. Modernity brought forth the Polish liberalism by linking it directly with the Enlightenment project.

They regarded any form of social vortex: turmoil, upheavals, revolutions, with disdain, which, interestingly enough, could have an impact upon their artistic taste. They opted for classicist liking of restraint and balance. Wincenty Niemojowski, one of the most outstanding liberal thinkers, launched a campaign against Romanticism. He directed fiery attack against Romantic writers' predilection for "the beauty of chaos" (Polish equivalent for '*Sturm und Drang*'). He blamed Shakespeare for infatuating young people to such extent that they became "firebrands". A political dispute, just as in Britain and other countries, entered into the esthetic dimension.⁵

⁵ W.Niemojowski, *Myśli dorywcze o romantyczności i romantykach*. Kalisz 1830, s. 26-34.

Liberalism – as a ‘thing’ and an ‘idea’

Thanks to classic studies on history of liberalism written by Guido de Ruggiero and Harold Laski, we know that liberalism as a ‘thing’ (*res*) has had a long, over 400 years tradition in the Western world. Locke, Blackstone, Montesquieu, Madison, Stanisław Leszczyński regarded liberalism for a ‘rule of law’ and the constitution based upon political liberty.⁶ Liberalism, as a word, and later on as a term, or even a label, was of fresher date. We know that a term “liberal” was in Spain coined c. 1810-1811 during the Napoleonic wars. In its French or Spanish version (*liberaux, liberals*) it begun to be revolved around Europe during the second decade of the century. Liberalism had its own ‘Machiavellian moment’: the Peninsular War. Of particular import for creating liberal constellations was a discussion concerning Don Pedro Caballos’ mission and republican overtones expressed in the ‘Edinburgh Review’. As a result, the “Quarterly Review” was set up; primarily to counter its influence on the public opinion. Soon the clash of ideas gave birth to the institutionalization of bipartisan system.

But the nineteenth century witnessed a development of the public space not without the initial impetus given by hot debates of the Enlightenment period. The press fastened a fluid flow of ideas across borders. A liberal platform presented by the “Edinburgh Review” found admirers across Europe having also set a pattern for the “Warsaw Memoir”, the most important liberal journal at Polish territories. Journals and magazines contributed to creating a halo around the new doctrine.

If one wanted to move about series of pictures that depict a process of formulating a doctrine, then an ideology, he cannot resist an impression that it resembles a formation of spiral galaxy. And the process of formulation the Spanish debates on constitution constituted a breaking point. Clouds of dust,

⁶ G. de Ruggiero, *The History of European Liberalism*. Boston 1959, Beacon Press, p. 1-2; H. Laski, *The Rise of European Liberalism*. London 1936, Allen and Unwin, p. 9.

raised in the air by Napoleonic wars, were also carrying ideas. Like freely circulating bodies and objects: words, terms, conceptions, hopes, beliefs, arguments, presuppositions, suppositions, hypotheses, theses, proprieties (in the Lockean sense); debates in societies, clubs, free-masonry circles, parties - that shall have been soon named 'liberal' - became components of new constellations of ideas. In the Polish case the Napoleonic Code (*Code civil*) led even to setting up a new university: Warsaw University.

While clusters of liberal ideas have been floating in the sky ever since Roman times, not until the 19th century they received a proper name. In the Western culture a tradition of liberty found the expression in Greek *eleutheria*. However, for Romans the term - in opposition to *libertas* - unbridles human desires and as the *hubris* may have led to anarchy. It is easy to forget, Sartori notices, that liberalism from the Roman times till the 18th century took pains at defending 'proprieties' as the undivided entirety. It took over 2000 years to work out liberalism in the semiotic landscape of *libertas* and liberties.⁷

And it became obvious that what was happening in the Cortes of 1810-1812 might have not led to conclusion, if liberal deputies had not the implicit support of the British who were protecting the city. Thus, the Machiavellian moment of liberalism run in the English manner. Even though Benjamin Constant, Mme de Staël, founding fathers of the 'La Pepa', Stanisław Kostka Potocki expressed it in their own language, the clusters of ideas were of the English origin. We can only note a constant inspiration and influence of England in case of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Stanisław August Poniatowski, French Ideologists, Mme de Staël, Constant, Spanish *liberales*, Stanisław Kostka Potocki. The time of the Anglicized mode of political thinking came eventually. An opening co-incidence took place in several countries, social

⁷ G. Sartori, *The Theory of Democracy*, p. 466

circles, and multidimensional space, but it was the British political system that set it in motion. It is very intriguing that not before midcentury the adjective “liberal” was taken up on British Isles as the English term with positive meaning. The term ‘liberal’ was not widely circulating in England in spite of her liberal political culture. Liberal proprieties formed a kind of nebula that waited for a strict expression that was first popularized in other countries.

To be ‘liberal’

But a new rising political galaxy needed a name. Inventing the term ‘liberal’ signified a lexicographic turn: *Liberales* commenced the debate on a constitution. Then, the second lexicographic turn was taking place: existing ideas, proprieties, and conceptions circumscribed a new conception of how to be ‘liberal’ and ‘a liberal’. It highlighted a doctrine in a process of making that several people were prone to take part of. It swung from proprieties and ideas forwards into a term; from the term to a name. The next, third lexicographic turn happened to be, when a name of ‘liberalism’ appeared. A semiotic history of the idea is tightly linked with lexicographic turns: the political ideology emerged, when ‘ism’ was added to adjective. The name (an abstract noun) was created some three centuries after the object/thing (*res*) had appeared. Liberalism produced the new world of interpreting the politics.⁸

We can take for granted that the abstract noun with an ending ‘ism’ as a semantic complement opens a process of building-up the political ideology. But one is obliged to ask a question when and under what political or social conditions a political ideology would be petrified. As a rule, it does not stand still. It is like a bulge with a black hole, that revolves and rotate, absorbing new ideas and men. Thus, ‘liberalism’ as the political ideology refers to object/structure, and gradually went beyond history of men into objectified reality that appears even prior to human experience. It looks like ‘liberalism’ is

⁸ G.Sartori, *op. cit.*, the Polish ed., p. 453.

flying away from its founders to becoming a distinct set of ideas. It does not suffice to be a liberal, one needs to have liberalism. When liberalism internalize democratic values, and some conservative and socialist ideas, the next lexicographic and semantic stage shall come. As a result, specific new liberal constellations appear: social liberalism, conservative liberalism, neoliberalism, democratic liberalism, libertarianism.

The Polish liberalism

Yet a following question remains: at what stage do we locate beginnings of the Polish liberalism? An article published in the first issue of “Warsaw Memoir” of 1816 shed lights upon impetuous and spiral forces of ideas. It is legitimate to treat the article written by Stanisław Kostka Potocki *What do liberal conceptions mean?* as an emblematic event in the history of ideas. And it signifies the lexicographic turn that eventually led to the formation of a ‘doctrine’, and consequently, to the creation of a circle of Polish ‘doctrinaires’.

If we want to depict a rise of liberalism, we can do it with a distinct understanding that its components may be rotating in other direction than the main galaxy. If globular clusters of proto-liberal ideas became comprehensible only after forming constellations, some of them became peculiar against their national background.

Prince Stanisław Kostka-Potocki (1755-1821) was one of the most brilliant minds at the turn of 18 and 19th century. He participated in enacting the Constitution of 3rd May; got famous as a prolific writer and columnist; as bibliophile and generous Maecenas helped to set up Society of Friends of Science, collected enormous sample of pieces of arts in his palace in Wilanów; he was an architect, a minister of education, president of the Senate. Freemason. In his stature he resembled Thomas Jefferson.

He has begun his deliberation in typical way by revoking that Sartori called the 'metaphysical liberalism'. Before he put political freedom under scrutiny, he alludes to the Latin origin: *liberalis* is construed as "dignified of free man". With this word he linked another term: '*studia liberalia*,' for describing these fields of knowledge, that "for their lovers show up more noble goal of life than the personal interest." Such *studies* were blossoming "all but there, as in nations more or less civil and political freedom is tasted."⁹

He used up adjective 'liberal' in all meanings: social, ethical and political. He mentioned liberal arts, and a 'liberal' as a noun. He insisted that it was more than a French expression 'liberale'; otherwise, it can only be parallel to Latin word *munificus*. He coined a term 'liberalność' (liberality), resorted to a word of 'gentleman' and even invented a term 'liberal soul' to emphasize a distinct representative character. Liberal souls subdued Narcissist drives for the public good with no regret, were prone for acts of charity, he wrote. Their distinctive trait was magnanimity.

An unnamed was to rest unknown. The unnamed, thrown out of the public space, ceased to draw public attention. It was very interesting that, according to Potocki, a form of the political order was closely related to a semantic order. At the very beginning of his article he stressed the importance of finding a proper word for new opinions, at its end he cried for using univocal expressions. To be unequivocal, so to say, presupposes political order. He simply referred to that we call the symbolic order of the political domain. At the same time he warned out against slippery of meanings, since men of power were inclined to use up synonymous terms for protecting their position of power. It is worth of noticing that this cry for unity of lexicographic expressions turned back to the "metaphysical liberalism". Although he differentiated between political freedom and liberties, he firmly stated that liberal conceptions flew from "very nature of reason and righteous heart." Thus, the political power was also a *forma mentis*. As a fruits of righteous man, the liberal conceptions

⁹ One is tempted to compare his disquisitions with Leo Strauss' remarks on *liberal education*.

were hallmark of the “sound and mature political community.” And finished the paragraph crying: „What a happy nation! In which a constitution is a collection of liberal conceptions, and habits are their gage.”¹⁰

Once liberal conceptions had been named, Potocki commenced to line them up like ‘beads on a string’. Gravitationally aligned orbits of meanings with their axis of rotation started dragging in signs, words, terms, men, circles, journals, and public opinion. And strings of political thought, otherwise called political currents, were transformed by thinkers into alignments of spin axis that bring about new constellations. Once the term ‘liberal’ was adopted to Polish political conditions, eddy forces began to work. The Potocki’s article appeared in 1816, two years later during the first meeting of the Parliament (27 of March, 1818) the political club (Kaliszanie – from the Calisia province) got entangled in intellectual and political controversy. The new galaxy gave also birth to a constellation of the Polish liberalism.

Besides liberal education, that led to the moral philosophy: “more noble goal of life than the personal interest,” Potocki pointed out three other interesting motives. The esthetic one turns out to have had ethic overtones: liberals were ready to bear a beautiful, but modest garb; he obviously stood against an ostentatious consumption: “a stratification by wealth demeans all life values.” The next line of arguments was one of the Kantian provenance: a liberal man had to possess a good judgment based upon assumption that the man was a goal in himself. “Reason is in relation to the *liberal* spirit, as the grammar brings about in relation to oratory art.” He was almost ready to outline a grammar of politics.

The last motive brought forth the political aspects of the liberal doctrine. Potocki was deeply convinced that liberalism carried on both the theory and

¹⁰ St. K. Potocki, *Co znaczą wyobrażenia liberalne* (What do liberal conceptions mean?), „Pamiętnik Warszawski”, Jan.-April 1816, vol. IV, pp. 30-42.

practice of legal defense. And as individual political liberty was implanted in the constitutional state. He simply states: „a constitution transforms liberal conceptions into law”. He means that „the *liberal* constitution not only grants freedom to a nation, which its level of civilization allows for, but it also turns over liberty under the guard of glorious and noble sentiments. Main conditions for the *liberal* constitution are: mutual trust between government and the people, esteem for virtue and talent, good will for other nations.”

But liberal conceptions did not solely pose a question of language. Creating a new semantic landscape had, also, ontological and political consequences. The latter ones were easily to follow by making taxonomy of liberal organizations. But the ontological effects run as deep as beliefs or patterns of the political culture. The constitution transformed liberal concepts such as ‘the rule of law’ into legal order. Liberals, such as Potocki, deeply believed that a progress of liberal conceptions had set unstoppable pace.

The next consequence for the ontology of politics, Potocki argued, was a presence of opposition. Its influence radiated into rhetorical realm, since it provided civility in a manner of speaking, composure and reasonableness in a process of deliberation. But, it was a very essence of political obligation to spring from the opposition. This was the first political force that legitimized the government. The liberal opposition rendered services for the political system by “gaining for the government hearts of the people as well as an applause of the audience.”

But, Polish liberals were facing insurmountable dilemma that led to unavoidable split due to incoherence of their programme. They attempted to fuse modest political and social demands with radical postulates concerning habits of the heart. Those, who totally negated the Polish past: tradition and *moeurs* (an antagonism against the Polish Church was the most illuminating),

were gradually pushed into a corner. And it was not a case of the splendid isolation as Potocki was soon to find out.

It is a vocation of historian of ideas to defend men against ideational vertigo produced as an unavoidable cognitive effect by setting into motion the political ideology. Without vortex and spinning, one cannot perceive a process of its formation. The Polish liberalism, getting involved men and institutions, enlarged the public space. Yet this was ideas and concepts - these celestial bodies - that have formed a pattern or picture in the sky. A primary task of historian of ideas is to map them out to offer a credible map of ideational constellations.

We know for sure that after the lexicographic turn in 1816 a liberal constellation flashed highlighted by political treatises, disquisitions on political economy, moral philosophy, art and by the press: the "Warsaw Memoir", "Everyday Gazette", the "White Eagle". A. Smith's and Constant's ideas were discussed in the Lecture Society (1820); the liberal club in parliament took the bench of opposition. As a result, four basic constellations of Polish social thought appeared: those proposed by liberal landed aristocracy and gentry, by liberal democrats, conservatives and revolutionary democrats.¹¹

* * *

Even in hard times, ever since 1816 modes of thinking to be called 'liberal' have been lingering on the Polish soil. The communist régime, by violating political freedom, tried to destroy them. The very paradox of the contemporary intellectual and political life in Poland is that former communists pretend to be the most sincere liberals. And it provides the best comment to a presence and persistence of the liberal constellation in Poland.

¹¹ J. Jedlicki, *Obozy ideowe Królestwa wobec zmian społecznych, w: Przemiany społeczne w Królestwie Polskim 1815-1864 (Social Transformations in the Polish Kingdom, 1815-1864)*, [eds] W. Kula i K. Leskiewiczowa. Wrocław 1979, p. 464.

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China's Soft Power in Mekong: A Documentary Perspective.
Case Study by "Nourished by the Same River"

Abstract

One of the most dramatic changes in the international arena in the post cold war era counted for China's rising and attractive growth, which led the community described it as a "cause célèbre" and also witnessed the most strategic regional transformation in the history of humanity within only three decades since its opening to the world. China has dramatically increased its global presence, which requested China to take further steps to wield soft power more responsibly. In this paper, I will seek to explain the China's Mekong River diplomacy and how the evolution of China's foreign policy towards the Mekong river sub-region since 2008 from a media perspective.

Keywords: *China, Soft Power. Mekong River, Media*

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One of the most dramatic changes in the international arena in the post cold war era counted for China's rising and attractive growth, which led the community described it as a "cause célèbre" and also witnessed the most strategic regional transformation in the history of humanity within only a three decades since its opening to the world. China has dramatically increased its global presence, which requested China to take further steps to wield soft power more responsibly, such as taking part in the peacekeeping overseas as well as promoting culture and language across the continents .As China exercises its newfound diplomatic, economic and military power it is also important to understand the country's growing cultural power especially in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁴

China shared long borders with dozen of neighboring countries, and it was described as the geographic pivot of history for a long time since westerners came to Asia. Among those neighboring countries, the ones located in the Mekong River (including China itself) displayed a unique feature from the other border-sharing countries. China identified itself a developing country abreast as its about the Mekong river neighbors and China is trying to forge a new image of the great power which was made of an array of factors. One of them was labeled soft power as a potential weapon of Beijing's foreign policy.

In this paper, I will seek to explain the China's Mekong River diplomacy and how the evolution of China's foreign policy towards Mekong river sub-region since 2008 from a media perspective. The case is documentary series filmed by all the six Mekong river countries national television stations (namely China, Thailand, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam), which was the first time within the regional history where the professionals from these six countries shot such a huge documentary work –"Nourished by the same river". (Tongyin Yijiangshui) .Its premiere was put on the screen of CCTV 1 in the

¹⁴ Sheng Ding and Robert A.Saunders.2006. Talking up China: An analysis of China's rising cultural power and global promotion of Chinese language. East Asia, Summer Volume 23.

early year of 2008 and then repeatedly broadcasted on CCTV 4 (the international Channel of CCTV being able to broadcast widely overseas including the Mekong river countries) and dubbing with English subtitles.

Introduction: China's cultural power and foreign policy

In Joseph Nye's definition of soft power, he excluded contents like formal diplomacy, trade and aid. As he put "Soft power is not merely the same as influence". "After all, influence can also rest on the hard power of threats or payments". He concentrated absolutely on the attractiveness of a nation's brand, of its values, ideas and norms.¹⁵

Cultural power as a salient part of soft power is heavily influenced by the host country's economic development and internal stability. Throughout the history China's cultural power frequently "conquered" neighboring regions through osmosis rather than military victory. As early as in the Han Dynasty period some 2000 years ago China's capital Chang'an was one of the two largest cities in the ancient times. During this period, lasting commercial and cultural contacts were established with Central and Southwestern Asia. China now is using "soft power" remedies to nurture alliances with many developing countries to solidify its position and flex its muscles on the world stage as well as in Asia, where governments and business welcome Chinese investments and cooperation as an alternative to Washington's overwhelming obsession with security and "hard power"-related issues. As an old lodestone in Asia, China's soft power arises from the attractiveness of its culture, political ideas and politics.

¹⁵ Joseph S Nye, Jr. 2004 *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs,

Prior to dredge the documentary itself further, the natural question to ask was why the Mekong River was so unique in China's soft power and how it can be filmed?

As one of the most important components of a country's soft power, culture attractiveness not only influences various aspects of people's lives and play a vital part in social development within a country, but also has a direct impact on the relations between countries and helps a country to achieve important foreign policy goals. Within this process, the factor of "image" plays a crucial role. In international politics, the practices of policy makers are frequently girded by their own national self-images and the images they associate with other nations or cultures.

China's soft power has been overwhelming since 1990s, for example the Thailand former Prime Minister Thaksin publicly announced that China was one of the two "most important" countries to Thailand's diplomacy.¹⁶ Most Southeast Asia countries are willing to treat China as a constructive actor as well as a regional great power (though some of them have territory disputes with China). Moreover, countries alongside the Mekong river were sharing common borders with China and the cross border trade was being for century-long.

It is in Southeast Asia where one can most easily notice the Beijing's new soft power. Beijing first concentrated its charm on the region before broadening its efforts to Africa, Latin America and the Middle East. Such a strategy makes sense. China's nearest neighborhood boasts nearly twenty million ethnic Chinese and has long historical, economical and cultural ties to China. Perhaps China could make the region its own—a Chinese Monroe

¹⁶ Melinda Liu. 2005. Divide and Conquer. Newsweek, 7 March 2005.

Doctrine for Southeast Asia, would make Beijing the major influence over regional affairs.¹⁷

China has signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. Beijing also committed to creating a code of conduct on South China Sea; besides, China also enthusiastically signed cooperative agreement and strategic partnerships with several Asian states at the bilateral level and a range of economic and strategic issues. By engaging with bilateral and multilateral organizations like ASEAN and fostering more interactions between foreign and China officials, China can reduce fears of Beijing's , giving time to itself to gain more influence without troubling other countries about its rise.¹⁸ Moreover, China offered an overwhelming equal treatment to smaller countries (for example when Laos leaders visited Beijing) who received a great deference from Beijing, which naturally deepens the mutual trust with the small Mekong river countries. In his bully's eye monograph "*China's Strategic Engagement With the New ASEAN: An Exploratory Study of China's Post-Cold war Political, Strategic and Economic Relations with Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam*", IDSS Monograph No.2, Singapore, Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, 2002, the famous India scholar S.D.Muni has envisioned China's strategic engagement into the Mekong river by a very insightful analysis. However, he probed into the tools such as political support, economic cooperation with no research nor discussion of how China projected the soft power at that time, he admitted that "ASEAN occupies an important place in China's calculations in the region .The ASEEAN countries are geographically close, historically linked, culturally contiguous and economically vital to China".

China's neighbor countries varied largely in terms of geography, ethnic groups, religions and languages, moreover whether China's cultural power can

¹⁷ Marvin C Ott.2005. China's Strategic Reach into Southeast Asia". Presentation to US-China Economy and Security Review Commission, 22,July.

¹⁸ Susan Shirk.2004.China's Multilateral Diplomacy in the Asia Pacific. Testimony before the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission.

be fully implemented. Let's take its northeast neighbors for example. There is also a border river called the Tumen River influencing North Korea, China and Mongolia so much. However, due to the unstable internal situation in North Korea, though China and North Korea belong to the Confucius sphere, they couldn't form an identity of "sharing the common". Similarly, Russian and Central Asia states are also in the same line. (See Table 1 below)

Table 1

Direction	Countries/Regions	Obstacles for China's Cultural Power Project
Northeast	DPRK/ROK/Japan	Disputed Islands, Unstable Korea Peninsular history issues Prestigious feeling of Japan and South Korea
West	Central Asia	Terrorism, Separatism, Culture alienation (?)
Southwest	India	Dragon VS Elephant, Unsettled border Tibet Issue
Southeast	ASEAN	South China Sea Sino-phobia

From the table 1, it seems for all the China's adjacent states that there does not exist any obvious prestige for China to promote its cultural power, not alone put these power on screen and educate the audience. However in my perspective, the Mekong river sub-region owns a unique feature to project China's cultural power. The Mekong river countries like to ride the Chinese wave as far as they can. In their perceptions, Beijing's main objective in Southeast Asia is to preserve regional stability, as this will be conducive to its

domestic economic development. Besides, the development levels of the so-called Mekong river countries were quite different from the old ASEAN countries (except Thailand). In a traditional manner, China was quite generous to these countries and welcomed them into the ASEAN family and due to the common borders (except Cambodia) they earned a special focus on China's foreign policy towards ASEAN. Moreover, China's positive and effective contribution to the Great Mekong River project closely links the economic development in Yunnan and Guangxi provinces/regions with continental Southeast Asia, which has not just boosted sub-regional economic integration and cooperation, but also promoted China's overall relations with ASEAN.¹⁹

Table 2

Country	Main Advantage for China Cultural Power Project	Disadvantage for China Cultural Power Project	Remarks
Vietnam	Land and River Shared, Dynamic commercial by Chinese diaspora The same ideology of the leader party	South China Sea	Seen as the next "China" due to the following pace of reforms and opening policy Visa friendly to Chinese
Laos	Land and River Shared, quiet, the same ideology of the leader party	No obvious	Visa friendly to Chinese
Thailand	Traditional China's support country, China's diaspora dynamics	Unstable internal situation and its influence to Chinese diaspora	Visa friendly to Chinese China's coordinating country to

¹⁹ Zha Daojiong and Hu Weixing.2006.Building a neighborly community, Post-Cold War China, Japan, and Southeast Asia. Manchester University Press.

			ASEAN
Myanmar	Land and river shared, Traditional China's support country, ideology and human rights same-liner	America, EU Japan's investment flow-in and Aung San Suu Kyi's global influence	Visa friendly to Chinese Deep Fraternity with China
Cambodia	Traditional China's supporter	No obvious appearance	Visa friendly to Chinese people King Sihanouk as an icon to both country

From Table 2 above, the soft power scenario changed better to China in the Mekong river sub-region, even though all these five countries are currently the member states of ASEAN.

First, the influence of South China Sea to the Mekong river sub-region, within which only Vietnam claimed as a related country and sometimes strongly behaved an offensive voice against China together with the Philippines. This is seen as an advantage that China can temporarily not mention this headache word in the region. Besides, for most the mainland Southeast Asia, China looms as the primary external force and influence. Geography, culture, poverty, and authoritarian governments in mainland Southeast Asia all play a role in explaining China's influence, and China's most fundamental security interest in Southeast Asia is to have friendly regimes on its southern borders.²⁰

Second, geographically besides land connection (except Cambodia), all the five countries shared the same river and relied on it largely (the word "shared" doesn't certainly refer to the land shared, which also contained river shared, take Cambodia for example, which doesn't geographically land connected with China, but when it comes to Mekong river, Cambodia and China are still in a sense of connection). The Mekong river, thus offered an ideal image for all six countries to forge a "community", which will go to more detail statement in the line with the documentary.

²⁰ Bronson Percival.2007.The Dragon Looks South, China and Southeast Asia in the new century. Braeger International Security.

Third, all the five countries visa policies are quite friendly to Chinese people. The friendly visa regime helped to boom the tourism industry in the Mekong river sub-region. As more and more Chinese tourists visited the region and have already begun to overwhelm the tourist traffic, the service sector response will be tailored to Chinese tastes and customs. This will inevitably result in a revival of Chinese culture and language in local communities once believed to be/have been assimilated.²¹ For the entire Mekong river sub-region countries, the tourism resources are abundant and populated with Chinese tourists at such places as Bangkok, Angkor Wat etc., which meant the communication of person-in-person, are rather active in this region compared to other places in Asia. This kinds of tour-focus dynamics are likely to be the most advantageous during the projection of China's soft power.

Another point is that in recent years, China has expanded the international coverage of its media .It has upgraded the Chinese newswire Xinhua, created new overseas editions of the *People's Daily* newspaper, established a formal press system as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that foreign journalists can do interviews and raise their questions. China also expanded and professionalized the international broadcasting of CCTV, the Chinese state television. This expansion included hiring western anchors and making CCTV news look more polished. Satellite television subscribers in Asia now can receive a package of Chinese channels.²²

As a twenty episode-long documentary²³, "Nourished by the same river" offered plenty of information from the perspective of anthropology, geography, tourism as well as the implications of the international relations for the media analysis.

The chart of the documentary main topics covered:

²¹ Vatikiotis M.2003.Catching the dragon's tail: China and Southeast Asia in the 21st Century" Contemporary Southeast Asia 25 (1).

²² Vivien Cui, "CCTV Tries to Shed its Mouthpiece Image," South China Morning Post, 6 Apr. 2004; "People's Daily Overseas Edition Issued in ROK," People's Daily, 1 July 2004. See also Aoyama, "Chinese Public Diplomacy." "China Launches Satellite TV Service in Asian egion," Xinhua, 1Feb. 2005. Also, Eanna O'Brogain, "China's Troubled TV Star," South China Morning Post, 15 Mar. 2006.

²³ The 20 episodes are: colorful water; human being and elephant; life on the water; treasure land; rain forest story; fruit pool; harvest of the rice; forever festival; loyalty of the religion; dragon boat; flower kingdom; man-made on the river; smile of Angkor; unraveling charming; maturity hand-in-hand; dynamic market; common history; water transportation; alternation of Golden Triangle; shared family.



China soft power projection at Mekong: content analysis and its connotation

From the name of each episode we can undoubtedly say that the series covers all the aspects (significant) in the region: land and water transportation, water marketing, environment, world heritage, variety of religions and so on. Through those “agencies”, China’s context displayed the most important topics: shared of community and a big family, common experiences and problems in the process of development, cooperation in managing the international and cross-border crime commitment (the alternation of golden triangle).

The following table mainly framed the basic referred elements and topics that China’s cultural projection on the Mekong river. At the very beginning of the first episode, the documentary stated that the “Mekong river and the residents along it were the people who shared the common cultural background, peace-loving, traditional –keeping and pursue the new development and fulfill their common dream.” Such positive words made all the twenty episodes a fundamental stance: harmony of people –to- nature, and harmony of people-to-people.

Table 3

Image/word in the episode	China's connotation behind image/word
Headstream of Mekong river (1 st episode)	China's absolute sovereignty to Tibet China's important position as an upper-stream country
Dragon ²⁴ (1 st and 10 th episode)	Persuasive to the other five neighbors dragon stands for auspicious, thanksgiving, not refer to fearful and evoke of harmful development
Infrastructure Construction (15 th , 17 th and 18 th episode)	Willingly to help other Mekong countries to develop the inner-land infrastructure construction, improve the existence of China's investments in those countries
Market Dynamics (6 th and 7 th episode)	Cross-Border trade, stable and developing province/region like Yunnan and Guangxi
Shared Festival (8 th and 10 th episode)	Remind those countries to keep "We" feeling, Spring festival and dragon boat festival were mentioned several times, the contribution of Chinese diaspora.
Language (18 th episode)	Language discourse and the commence of Chinese to be a "lingua franca" in Mekong river sub-region and the establishment of Confucius Institute as well as Chinese diaspora mentioned again
Religion (1 st , 2 nd and 9 th episode)	Tibetan matters again, to convince the world China's religion policy to Tibet is harmonious and prosperous, Tibet area (Xizang and Yunnan) mentioned several times in the documentary
Maturity hand-in-hand (1 st , 17 th and 20 th episode)	Attempt to make "Mekong river" sub-region a unique sub-framework within ASEAN framework
Alternation in Golden triangle (19 th episode)	Decisive measurement to keep the border stable and safe, economic transit of local residents

²⁴ "Dragon" is mentioned in the documentary very often in several episodes and in the tenth episode, dragon was claimed as both good and bad, which is auspicious versus vicious, thanksgiving versus fear.

From the above table, we can reach a brief conclusion of the images and words with an insight what's behind them. Among these words, "dragon", "language", "maturity hand-in-hand" could be seen as the source of "common of destinies" proposed by President Xi Jinping when he did state-visited to ASEAN and "China-Thailand as one family" proposed by China's prime minister Li Keqiang during a state visit to Thailand.

First, how to explain and comprehend the image of dragon that China encompassed to the whole world. Dragon was a totem of Chinese nationality and overseas Chinese (who were seen as the offspring of the dragon), and the position of the dragon was not a fixed one, it is movable, therefore some historians when describing the Great Wall, they linked it with dragon. For Chinese living in China and the Chinese overseas, dragon was a good sign and totem for the most of the time, and always psychologically connected with certain festivals and rituals, which was the same in the Mekong river countries, the "dragon boat festival", "dragon dance" and even the Mekong river in Vietnam was called the "Nine-Dragon river". Thus a deeper connotation was delivered to the role of the Chinese diaspora being played in the current Mekong river region. Chinese Diaspora have become vital to Beijing's global charm. In recent years, Beijing has re-established relations with ethnic Chinese organizations around the globe - groups ranging from cultural association to clan organizations or business chambers and directly called (by the Chinese diaspora) to help boosting relations between China and the other nations.²⁵

From the above, two points can be indicated. On one hand, dragon -the image itself in each Mekong river countries was all seen as a good promise and totem, like Vietnamese, Laotian, Thais and Chinese. On the other hand ironically, the other five countries often see the dragon in China as a controversial and contradicted symbol: harmful rising, squeeze of natural

²⁵ William A Callahan.2002"Diaspora, Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism. Overseas Chinese and Neo-Nationalism in China and Thailand." City University of Hong Kong Southeast Asia Research Center Working Paper.

resources and cheap commodities pouring. Thus the documentary shouldered a function to persuade the local residents alongside the river that the Chinese dragon was also a good promise for them, and the way it conveyed such a persuasive information was just to use very straightforward words to exhibit the daily life (through the vivid individual cases in each country and everyday common feeling alongside the river).

Second, the image of dragon was used to compare with other countries in the process of regionalization and globalization. Plenty of archives in international relations termed the phenomenon of “China’s peaceful rising or developing” with other countries such as “Dragon VS Elephant “,”When Dragon encountered Bear”,” Dragon and Eagle”, etc. ²⁶ Therefore China employed the image of dragon which shared with all the Mekong river countries to convince these people that China was still as the previous daily life style in the region –peaceful, rely on the river, even though developed fast in the region, China will not be a threat to the Mekong river neighbors.

The documentary presented that in line with the image of dragon, the Chinese language became another salient element that China projected its soft power with . China’s charm is reflected in a symbolic success. Chinese language and culture studies have skyrocketed in popularity in the Mekong river region. As common people realize it might be a key of the success of their business as well as providing a kind of popular cachet. Language and power are twined inextricably, promoting of Chinese culture and Chinese language studies is a major component of China’s soft power. As Hu Youqing, a deputy to the National People’s Congress claimed the promotion of the usage of the Chinese language would contribute to spreading Chinese culture and

²⁶ These metaphors respectively referred to the relations between China and India, China and Russian, and China and the United States.

increasing China's global influence. "It can build up our national strength and should be taken as a way to develop our country's soft power."²⁷

By referring to the Chinese language influence over the Mekong river countries, lingua franca of Chinese was a spectacular case. Lingua franca, which means any language that served as a common medium for communication between speakers of different languages/origins. Throughout human history, various languages have served as media for the transmission of cultural knowledge, assisted in the formation of global-local power structures and functioned as shibboleths for determining friend from foe.²⁸

On the one hand, Chinese mandarin nowadays was spreading as a "lingua franca" very quickly particularly in commercial area. Beijing has opened its market to those overseas ethnic Chinese businessmen and sent them an invitation to invest in mainland China with confidence and continence .As one Canadian newspaper put, "From Jakarta to Vancouver and on to New Delhi and Chicago, surging interest in studying the Chinese language is just one gauge of the greater magnetic pull that China exerts after two decades of galloping economic growth."²⁹ In the episode, language was showed as establishment of the Confucius Institute in Mekong river neighbors and some Chinese overseas companies organized the staff to learn the local language (in the documentary China-Vietnam was filmed learning each other's language). Behind the phenomenon there was the activeness of Chinese commercials and interaction among the countries. The Confucius Institute, a state-owned establishment was not only a Chinese language promotion "machine", while it took great responsibility to strengthen the "understanding, opportunities and

²⁷ Xing Zhigang.2006."NPC Deputy calls for Promoting Chinese." *China Daily*, 10, March 2006.

²⁸ Sheng Ding and Robert A.Saunders.2006. Talking Up China: An Analysis of China's Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language. *East Asia*, Summer Vol.23, No.2.

²⁹ Tim Johnson.2005. "China muscles in: From trade to diplomacy to language, the U.S.is being challenged," *The Gazette (Montreal)*, 30 October.

bonds between individuals, enterprises communities and institutions” in their home country with China and the global Chinese diaspora.³⁰

The Confucius Institute unabashedly served as a global-local keystone for China’s commercial, cultural, and linguistic proselytization, with aims to:

- Form a focal point for China-related activities in the local community;
- Forge strategic alliances with business, industry, government and other institutions with an interest in closer and more productive ties with China and the global Chinese diaspora;
- Work with the academic faculties in encouraging students to develop a sound knowledge of China;
- Promote an awareness of the Chinese language and culture amongst the wider community;
- Offer Chinese language learning courses;
- Provide cross-cultural communication seminars and workshops for the business community and all levers of government;
- Enhance pedagogical skills of Chinese language teachers
- Develop Chinese Studies programs and promote research about China within local universities;
- Host scholars, researchers and language teachers from China.

Such undertakings represented a clear step in developing the “soft architecture” necessary to become a global player. The above-mentioned goals can be easily recognized in the relevant documentary episode. There is one view interested in stating that “despite their neutral scholarly appearance, the new network of the Confucius Institutes does have a political agenda...the institutes will teach Beijing’s preferred version of Chinese, with simplified Chinese characters, rather than the traditional Chinese characters that are used

³⁰ The website of Western Australia’s Confucius Institute located at <http://www.confuciusinstitute.com.au/>. Accessed on 14/11/2013.

in Taiwan. That would help to advance Beijing's goal of marginalizing Taiwan in the battle for global influence."³¹ However my arguments are as following: For the language itself, there is no such a version with the political purpose, language has its own evolution process and it is just two kinds of Chinese, simplified and traditional, I admitted that the usage of simplified Chinese was a battle of domestic affair, but it imposed least on international affairs. Besides, the learners target group matters. If their targeted group are Mainland Chinese, then the ideal language they should pick up is simplified Chinese.

Third is that the "use simplified Character to marginalize Taiwan", if it is justified, then China is also doing the same policy to marginalize Hong Kong and Macau and some places in Guangdong province. From the documentary, it also conveyed that the remarkable developing of China was growing as a cultural lodestone in the early 21st century again. (It gained the peak of cultural influence in the Tang Dynasty.) Geographically and demographically, the other five Mekong river countries has no comparison to China, and here in the documentary, Chinese overseas spontaneously learned the local languages., The documentary conveyed another positive information: although China's size was/is destined for being a big country, Chinese also respected other neighbors for their languages and cultures.

On the other hand, Chinese language functioned as a tool of forging and displaying "China's national character" when other Mekong riparian countries learned it. The new migrants flew into the Mekong river neighbors, the growth of Chinese business as well as the language studies in a context of modern Chinese urban culture, were booming in Mekong cities like Mandalay, Bangkok, Vientiane and Hanoi .All the above mentioned displayed China's achievements in soft power projection in the region.

³¹ Beijing uses Confucius to lead charm offensive.2005. The Globe and Mail, 9,September.

As an economic, political and cultural power house, China has been adept at overtaking the U.S. in what American political scientist Joseph Nye has dubbed the soft power approach in influencing foreign societies public opinions and achieve sympathy.³²

In classic realism, “national character” was regarded as an important component of national cultural power and associated with the anthropological concept of “cultural pattern”. Such kind of cultural pattern helped condition a nation toward establishing its perception of self as well as creating a coherent image in the eyes of other nations, as well as unifying its approaches to pursuing certain political goals. Thus culture has broad determinant impacts on the achievements of a nation by playing a seminal role in providing the spiritual, ethical and economic conditions for human life.³³ The Confucius Institute established in Mekong river neighbors undoubtedly played such an important role, as via learning Chinese, these neighbors can further understand Chinese culture and the reason why China behaved in a certain way of its own when making the foreign policy and implementing the diplomacy in the region. Taking Thailand for example, which has asked for support from Beijing to train more Thai Chinese language teachers, send native speakers to work in Thai schools and provide free teaching materials. Whether this has implications for the Thai population’s view of China is difficult to discern, but according to one poll in 2003, 76 percent of Thais said that China was Thailand’s closest friend as opposed to 9 percent who named the United States.³⁴ Some other Southeast Asia countries, private language schools in Malaysia and Indonesia reporting rising enrolment in Chinese classes, also welcome Chinese.³⁵

³² Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt.2008. China’s Soft Power Diplomacy in Southeast Asia. The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies.

³³ Sheng Ding and Robert A.Saunders.2006.Talking Up China: An Analysis of China’s Rising Cultural Power and Global Promotion of the Chinese Language. East Asia, Summer Vol.23, No.2, pp.3-33.

³⁴ Vaughn B. 2008. China-Southeast Asia Relations: Trends, Issues, and Implications for the United State, CRS Report for Congress.

³⁵ Montlake,S..2006. In Asia, English is useful but Mandarin is rising. The Christian Science Monitor, 12 Jan.

In short, China will not be a “cultural hegemony” to these countries termed by Gramsci, it would be like a “cultural influence” but not a hegemonic characteristics. As the former President Hu Jintao put, “The Chinese culture belongs not only to the Chinese but also to the whole world. It has flourished not only through mutual emulation and assimilation among its various ethnic groups but also through interactions and mutual learning with the other countries...we stand ready to step up cultural exchanges with the rest of the world in a joint promotion of cultural prosperity.”³⁶

Moreover, as Sheng Ding and Robert A.Saunders put, “throughout Southeast Asia, new Chinese schools are springing up, and once scorned ethnic Chinese communities are celebrated. However the dominance of the Western culture- especially American culture-in the flows of cultural goods means that any effort to expand China’s cultural influence cannot ignore the spread of Americanization whether in its popular forms (Big Macs, Mickey Mouse and Michael Jackson) or in its loftier manifestations (the Anglo-American work ethic, the ethos of rugged individualism, and ideas on gender relations and other social issues). However, Chinese cultural power need not compete directly with Americanization/Westernization .If nothing else, we need to realize that globalization is not a zero-sum game; Chinese values can exist side-by-side with Western norms in today’s world and the same can be said of language as well.³⁷ China’s cultural projection is a public diplomacy which a process of cultivating by governments of public opinion in other nations. Applied as a tool, states can more effectively pursue the national interest as well as reinforcing the conceptualization of China’s peaceful rise or development.

Then it comes to the “maturity hand-in-hand” which was the title of the 15th episode. One of the principal means by which a state perpetuates itself is

³⁶ Hu Jintao gave the speech to a Joint Sitting of the Australian Parliament on 24 October 2003.

³⁷ Ibid.

through its identification with a national cultural tradition that enhances its historical and psychological legitimacy, differentiated “us” from “them,” and anchors loyalties.³⁸

And in the episode, the documentary reached a brief conclusion about the achievements gained by all the six countries. And it tried to forge an identity of “Mekong river residents”, to shrug off the traditional differentiation of “us” and “them “. The documentary attempted to convey that the Mekong river neighbors were seen as the “Common of Community”, in my argument, it can be seen also the best –cased expression of “Shared of Destiny” proposed by President Xi Jinping. Further, the documentary also justified why China’s national television station chose such a big filming plan to make this documentary for the first time in region’s history.

The first reason was under the common identity of developing countries. All the six countries were the developing countries, which was familiar to the people and will not generate a negative image of “harmful dragon”.

Second, the improvement of China’s image in the region is welcomed by other states, which lied in greatly with China’s new concept soft power, as Heginbotham and Twomey put, “Yet, without China’s active engagement of multilateral institutions, its growing bulk might provoke more fear than admiration, much as it did during the early and mid-1990s. Beijing’s multilateral engagement has enabled it to improve its material position and its image simultaneously. The fact that this engagement furthers Chinese interests does not make it any less welcome in the region”.³⁹ Among all the neighbors of China, the Mekong river countries have its own feature, ideologically; Vietnam and Laos were in the same line with China. Economically, all the six countries

³⁸ David Harvey. 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge.MA: Blackwell.

³⁹ Heginbotham, E. And C.P. Twomey. 2005 *America Bismarckian Asia Policy*, *Current History* 104, September 2005.

were developing quite fast and promising, and culturally and socially, China's influence was a great presence in Mekong region.

The third reason is that statistics from academia and social functional departments cited frequently that China's development and its foreign policy to eye more on the other Mekong river countries are successful, fruitful and effectively. However, data or numbers are just for the reference of academia or officials, it cannot directly and vividly convey these dramatic achievements gained by the regional states, any analysis of China's present oversea economic expansion and foreign policy interest must also consider Chinese realpolitik and the underlying forces that shape these interest ⁴⁰. However the documentary ,which in a "daily-life" and "all-dimension" filmed the description of the six countries can be a visual method and possess an persuasive emotional message to the other Mekong countries that China's development is not a "threat" or "hegemonic power house" to the neighbors.

Generally speaking, the use of culture as a tool of diplomacy highlights the sense that China skillfully deploys to exaggerate kin, ethnicity and national bonds between the motherland and the diaspora .It also reflects an increased appreciation by the Chinese government of the importance of norms and soft power in diplomacy. Chinese print media, television, music, food and popular culture are spreading around the region as never before.

China's Cultural Power Development Since 2008

After the broadcasting of the documentary, different views of points on the influence of China's soft power projection in the Mekong River and even the whole ASEAN were heard. Among those, some thought the establishment of China's Confucius Institute a Trojan Horse, which means the Institute

⁴⁰ Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt. 2008. China's Soft Power Diplomacy in Southeast Asia, The Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies.

shouldered the political responsibility more than the cultural one. In my own opinion, after the documentary's broadcasting, the interaction of China and Mekong river region was dramatically enhanced witnessed by the two sharply improvements.

For the first point, more and more Confucius Institutes were established. Interestingly before the screening of the documentary, in the whole Mekong River region, China only signed the agreement with Thailand for the establishment of Confucius Institute. However after the broadcasting, all of the Mekong river countries signed the (same) agreement with China. (See the APPENDIX 1 and 2)

Moreover, analyzed from the APPENDIX 2, it was explicitly witnessed that the Confucius Institutes and Classrooms were booming in the Mekong area since 2008. On the one hand, the establishment of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms expanded from university-level to high-school level, which could take in more junior students to the charm of Chinese language and culture, another apparent improvement was that the Classrooms were more than Confucius Institutes in the Mekong river area. Primarily due to the lack of infrastructure and premises, China has to fasten the establishment of Confucius classroom instead of Institutes. Hereby I assumed the documentary with the quick expansion of the Confucius Institutes and Classrooms in a high co-related relation.

Coming with the line above-mentioned, in the year of 2008, the documentary "Nourished by the same river" were put on CCTV screen. As the first documentary related to the Mekong river, it conveyed the plenty of positive information about the Lancang-Mekong river sub-region. The social and cultural influence imposed on the future relations of Lancang-Mekong river sub-region by the documentary is salient and great guide for the coming forth China's soft power in this region and the entire ASEAN. China attempts to

reassure its neighbors by claiming that its growing regional importance is a win-win situation for all. Cultural events such as the regional famous “Nanning Folk Song Festival” were enlarged greatly after 2008; besides, new types of cooperation and interactions between China and other Mekong river countries are springing up fast and fruitfully. Undoubtedly, the improving of the cultural and social interaction among Mekong river countries can also facilitate the regionalism and enhance the identity of “Mekong river residents”, which would be returned with huge economic cooperation and political mutual trust.

Table 4 Main Cultural Interactions of China and Other Five 2009-2013

Year	Cultural Interaction of China and other Mekong five countries
2009	4 th China-Thailand “As One Family” Concert
2010	Annual Nanning Folk Song Art Festival
2011	1 st Lancang-Mekong River Country Art Festival
2012	2 nd Lancang-Mekong River Country Art Festival
2012	The Decease of Sihanouk in Beijing
2012	1 st China-Thailand Spring Festival Concert in Bangkok
2012	ASEAN Youth Dancer Festival in Yunnan
2012	Chinese Film “Lost in Thailand” premiered
2013	5 th China-Thailand “As One Family” Concert
2013	President Xi Jinping “Community of Common Destiny”
2013	Li Keqiang China -Thailand As One Family and High Speed Train Diplomacy

The above table implied the following points.

First, Thailand was a very active targeted country in the region that China would like to forge a closer tie as the above paragraph mentioned. From the table, like the China-Thailand As One Family Concert and the miracle-like Chinese film “Lost in Thailand”, which profited dramatically for the Director Xu Zheng, brought a plenty amount of Chinese tourists to Thailand. Besides, due to the visa friendly policy to Chinese passport holders, more and more Chinese tourists visited the region and even began to dominate the tourist trade; the service sector response will be to tailor to Chinese taste and custom.

This will inevitably result in a revival of Chinese culture and language in local communities once believed to have (been) assimilated.

Another feature of these events after 2008 is that Mekong river countries are more likely to utilize ASEAN as a stage, which can offer those weaker states transit from bilateralism to multilateralism. This fact was presented by the President Xi and Prime minister Li, in their speech which implied that the “Community of Common Destiny” and “China-Thai As One Family” are just the different display levels of the cultural power that China can generate and navigate currently. Moreover, China’s cultural power to the other Mekong river countries is also served as a systematical and comprehensive foreign policy to the entire ASEAN institution.

Conclusion

Since the end of the Cold War, a new series of literature in international relations have explained and developed enormous theories about culture, soft power and the national interest, which can impose cultural values on states or ethnic groups by other bearer of the culture parameter. The most unavoidable one was the “cultural hegemony “ put forward by Antonio Gramsci in the 1930s, which revealed the “super-political veil” of the traditional concept of culture. With the unraveling projects of China’s soft power in the Mekong river sub-region, suspicious words like “cultural imperialism”, “cultural colonialism”. Thus how to eliminate the upset or anxiety generated by the fast economic growth and the “negative image of the dragon” on the Mekong neighbors is an urgent question to be answered. Paid more attention that China’s influence in Mekong river never disappeared or gone since the ancient times. Thus, the documentary was a good try for China to show its “soft power” attitude to the Mekong river countries and the cultural power reversely was proven to be a political and economic turn to China’s foreign policy. Elizabeth Economy notes

the important point that, China's rise to date appears to be less about the inevitable conflict of rising power theory, Chinese thinkers, themselves, have recognized that international community including Mekong neighbors is concerned by the potential implications of China's rise and have taken pains to ensure that it will be perceived as a non-threatening. Li Junru, the former Vice-President of the Central Party School of CCP, also confirmed the similar idea "China's rise will not damage the interests of other Asian countries. That is because as China rises, it provides a huge market for its neighbors. At the same time, the achievements of China's development will allow it to support the progress of others in the region."⁴¹ Moreover, by focusing on soft power, the former intelligence officer Robert Sutter noted in his book *"China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils"*: Beijing could avoid directly, confronting the United States, the unrivaled global hard power, while possibly weakening America's soft power in the longer term.⁴² Moreover, Robert Ross elaborated in one of his articles published in 1999, he contended that China was the dominant land power while the United States was the primary maritime power in the Asia-Pacific region.⁴³ The then-predictable words seem accordance with the reality on recent Southeast Asia screen. As a great power, China might even shift influence away from the United States, creating its own sphere of influence for regions like Southeast Asia, where China's power is stronger/the strongest, precisely speaking, China exerted more influence in most of mainland Southeast Asia, than the United States. In the periphery, countries would subordinate to China's and think twice about supporting the United States should there be any conflict in the region.⁴⁴

The policy China employed toward Mekong river has been soft and sophisticated, using a combination of both bilateral and multilateral approaches. The cultural power project would be a long-term task for China under the

⁴¹ Economy Elizabeth, 2005. China's Rise in Southeast Asia: Implications for Japan and the United States. Japan Focus.

⁴² Robert G. Sutter. 2005. China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005, 12-16.

⁴³ Robert Ross, 1999. The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-First Century. International Security,

⁴⁴ Evan. S Medeiros and M Taylor Fravel. 2003. China's New Diplomacy. Foreign Affairs.

umbrella of the good neighbor policy .As one of the senior Chinese diplomatic put, as the “China threat theory” still haunted the region and it was still a questionable stance given by the Mekong river people of China’s future, China’s good neighborliness policy would facilitate a fair and friendlier understanding of what China is doing and what it intends to do .In the same line ,China’s rise can be realized only with the understanding and support of the Asian nations.

APPENDIX 1

Country	Confucius Institute	Established or Agreement Signed on
Thailand	Chulalongkorn Univ	As of September 23,2007
	Kasetsart Univ	
	Khon Kaen Univ	
	Mae Fah Luang Univ	
	Chiang Mai Univ	
	Prince of Songkla Univ	
	Maharakham Univ	
	Bansondejchaopraya Rajabhat	
	Suan Dusit Rajabhat	
	Betong Municipality	
	Burapha Univ	
	Class at Traimit Wittayalai High School	
	Phuket ,Songkla Univ	

Source: The Office of Chinese Language Council International, cited from James F.Paradise, *China and International Harmony: the Role of Confucius Institutes in Bolstering Beijing's Soft Power*, Asian Survey, Vol.XLIX, No,4 July/August 2009. The table showed the establishment of the Confucius Institute before the documentary screening was only in Thailand.

APPENDIX 2

Country	Confucius Institute or Classroom	Established or Agreement Signed on
Myanmar	Fuxing Language Classroom	2008/02/15
	Fuqing Language and Computer School	2008/02/03
Cambodia	Royal Academy of Cambodia	2009/08/12
	Classroom at Angkor High School	2013/03/13
	Classroom at 70 th Bridge	2013/03/13
	Classroom at Police Academy of Cambodia	2013/03/13
Laos	Institute at National University of Laos	2010/03/23
Vietnam	Institute at University of Hanoi	There is no longer the information about the Confucius Institute in details on the official website of the office of the Chinese Language Council International

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Japan's Role in Security of The Asia-Pacific Region

Abstract

This paper examines Japan's present and future international security role in the light of changes affecting the Asia-Pacific Region. Japan always had a major impact on this region despite of its post-World War II uncomfortable geopolitical position. In this paper the author concludes that Japan is now more favorably disposed to play a "comprehensive international role" in the field of regional security. Tokyo seems to be eager to go on with security co-operation with Washington D.C., however at the same time gradually increasing self-responsibility for its defense and the security of its surrounding environment. Although Japan with no doubt has its strategic interests in Asia-Pacific, nowadays it is likely to play more than only a supportive role in this region. From the political point of view, the author tries to prove, that Japan is well prepared to play a role of regional stabilizer, but to do this Japan requires to choose carefully its independent path without undermining strategic relations with the United States.

Keywords: *Japan, United States, defense, security, international relations.*

Introduction

Japan's international position in geopolitical world had been always attracting attention since its great victories over Qing's China (1894-1895) and Tsar's Russia (1904-1905). After its "national seclusion" period in Tokugawa Era (1603-1868) the Japanese made such fast progress in every field, that nobody has expected during first decades of re-opening its borders to the outside world, especially for the occidental powers. Before and after World War I Japan had already confirmed its position as a regional power with more ambitious plans... After surrounding to the Allies in 1945 Japan has become an occupied state with newly introduced constitution, in which it is forbidden to maintain the army and thus, practically, not to play any significant role in even regional security system. It was obvious, that Japan will not participate in shaping military security even on its own territory. But soon when the Cold War broke down, it became natural that country with such industrial and economic potential should play more comprehensive role in the regional security system.

However, the details of Japan's post-war security role in the said region still remains the subject of intense debate among the international community and of course in Japan itself. Although Japan is now politically and economically independent state with its top scientific and technological potential, the burden of lost Pacific War (1937-1945) is still, for some states, overshadowing its non-aggressive image. After the fall of the Berlin Wall (1990), which symbolized the end of the Cold War, an increasing number of Japanese top politicians seems to adopt very quickly to new conditions. On the other hand, Japanese society expresses great uncertainty to new geopolitical situation.

In 1992, it was great responsibility for all Japanese cabinets facing both, internal and external, critical reactions on dispatching Japanese Self Defense

Forces (JSDF) abroad for the first time after World War Two. As Muthiah Algappa mentioned: “Post-World War II Japan's international orientation has been governed by three main factors: impressive economic growth (...); the U.S. connection; and a pacifist tendency with an apolitical orientation arising from the negative reaction in Japan to its experiences in the Pacific war.”

Despite on above, it seems that Japanese government plays with the diversity of many opinions using the lack of consensus as an excuse to maintain its military profile for self-defense. The limitations of using troops included in Article 9 of post-war Constitution of Japan still determines the politicians to deal with tight security collaboration with the United States as the only way to survive in not friendly entourage. Paradoxically, it gives Japan green light for focusing on other measures (mainly economic) to maintain the stability in Asia-Pacific Region.

Breaking up with pacifism?

Until the end of 20th century Japan's security policy can be described as rather passive. Still relying on U.S. security alliance Japan could concentrate on soft-power measures, such as development assistance, direct and indirect foreign investments, cultural promotion. Taking into consideration significant changes in the Asia-Pacific Region, which took place after Cold War, Japan has undertaken steps to redefine its security policy. In new reality, aspiring to take over the role of regional leader, Japanese authorities are exposed to new type of threats – growing economic and military power of China, nuclear threat of North Korea and nowadays even “active” foreign policy of Russia.

December 2013 marked an important turning point in Japan's evolving security and defense policies. While the debate about Japan's so-called security ‘normalisation’ has been going on now for more than a decade, by releasing three national security-related documents the conservative

government led by Shinzo Abe since 2012 has dissipated any doubts that may still linger regarding the 'why, what and how' of Japan's national security. The Abe administration adopted the first ever National Security Strategy (NSS) of Japan – together with the country's new national security doctrine, namely the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), as well as the Mid-Term Defense Program for 2014-2019. The last two documents replace the 2010 NDPG and the Mid-Term Defense Program adopted by the previous, centre-left government of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Centred on a policy of 'proactive contribution to peace', the NSS sets out the main guidelines for Japan's national security for the next decade, including for the areas of sea, outer space and energy. It also seeks to promote, both domestically and internationally, a better understanding of the country's strategic objectives and responses.

Japan's national security policy is driven, first of all, by a strong perception of a shifting balance of power at the global level since the start of the twenty-first century. In this regard, the documents make reference to the emerging countries, especially to China's increasing international presence, as well as to the changing relative influence of the US. Specific threats to Japan's security at the global level include international terrorism as well as the threats stemming from the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery, such as ballistic missiles (BM). The Abe administration further underscores the problems related to maintaining 'open and stable seas', which include piracy, maritime disasters and, generally, the safety of sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). What stands out here, in particular, is the reference to the growing risk of incidents at sea, not least as a result of competition between states over natural resources and unresolved sovereignty issues. Specifically, the South China Sea disputes are provided as an example in the NSS.

At regional level, in the Asia-Pacific, the shifting balance of power is said to give rise to regional tensions. Northeast Asia is singled out as an Asian subregion with a large concentration of military power and where countries have diverse security views (as well as different political systems). There is also an explicit concern about escalation of the so-called 'grey zone' disputes over territorial sovereignty and interests – which, in Japan's view, further complicates the Asia-Pacific strategic environment.

Shinzo Abe as a participant of 13th Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, describing changes in security environment in 21st Century, stated that the Asia Pacific Region has experienced huge development changes merely in one generation. Unfortunately, significant part of this growth is spent for military purposes and arms' dealing. However, the ASEAN members are increasing their defense budgets and modernizing their armed forces as a challenge for rising regional power – Peoples' Republic of China. Also the US allies in the Far East – Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, do not remain calm and are adjusting their budgets to new challenges in the field of national security.

Specific regional security challenges to Japan's national security discussed in the NSS and the NDPG are not new, and include North Korea's Ballistic Missile (BM) and nuclear developments as well as China's military modernisation and its intensified activities in the seas and airspace around Japan. However, it is the increasing concern about maintaining the rule of law at sea that appears to be of primary importance for the Abe administration. The perception that Beijing is attempting to unilaterally change the *status quo* 'by coercion', disregarding international law and infringing upon the freedom of navigation, refers to Japan's dispute with China over the Senkaku (Diayou) Islands in the East China Sea. The Abe government sees China's overall behaviour as an 'issue of concern for the international community, including

Japan'⁴⁵. The overall conclusion, therefore, is that the security environment surrounding Japan 'is becoming increasingly tense'.

The core principles of Japan's national security, as introduced in the post-war years, are said to remain unchanged. These include maintaining an exclusively defense-oriented policy, not becoming a military power that poses a threat to other countries, and adhering to the three non-nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing and not introducing nuclear weapons in the country. The main message that the Abe administration seeks to send is one of continuity: Japan remains 'a peace-loving nation'⁴⁶.

Based on this new national security principle and in line with its long-standing policy of international cooperation, Japan is expected to become a 'proactive contributor to peace'. The country's contribution to international security has been made primarily in the framework of the UN, including in humanitarian relief missions and peacekeeping operations. Japan has a self-imposed ban on exercising its right to collective self-defense based on the interpretation of Article 9 (also known as the 'peace clause') of its 1947 post-war Constitution.

As Abe has prioritised constitutional revision in order to allow Japan to enter into collective self-defense arrangements, the shift in the NSS towards proactive pacifism seeks to open up the way for Abe to move forward on this policy initiative. This shift has alarmed some of Japan's neighbours, notably China and South Korea. As both countries suffered under Japan's imperial rule in Asia in the first half of the twentieth century, they now warily watch Abe's every step aimed at expanding Japan's security role. The justification for Tokyo's move towards security activism, as discussed in the NSS, includes the

⁴⁵ E. Atassanova-Cornelis, *Japan's New Approach to National Security*, in: *Brief Issue of EU Institute of Security Studies*, January 2014

⁴⁶ Precisely, it is the content – namely the shift in the NSS from the 'one-country pacifism' to 'proactive pacifism' – that suggests new security aspirations. In: *Mid-term National Defense Program for 2014-2019*

'severe' security environment that Japan faces and the Abe administration's belief that the international community expects the country to become an active contributor to international peace. Furthermore, the successful pursuit of Tokyo's national interests – such as maintaining sovereignty and achieving prosperity – is seen to be directly linked to the country's efforts in the area of international cooperation. In line with this thinking, Abe's national security objectives stress – in addition to deterring threats from reaching Japan (national level) and improving the regional security situation in the Asia-Pacific (regional level) – Tokyo's role in global security and in building a stable international community (global level).⁴⁷

Japan's capabilities and roles

Although the NSS mentions the strengthening of Japan's diplomatic creativity and its 'soft' (or non-military) power as well as its role in international organisations, the weight of this strategic approach appears to be placed on enhancing the country's military capabilities, namely its 'hard' power. The document introduces the 'highly effective and joint defense force' concept, which emphasises collaborative operations among the three branches of the Self-defense Forces (SDF), i.e. Ground, Maritime and Air SDF. This new 'dynamic joint defense force' will be equipped with advanced technology and able to deter diverse threats, as well as respond in a swift and integrated manner to various contingencies. These can include, for example, a potential occupation by enemy forces of a remote island. Such a scenario has arguably been considered by the Abe government: in April 2013 it adopted a five-year blueprint for protecting the nation's maritime interests, partly as a response to Chinese claims in the East China Sea. In this regard, the NSS mentions that

⁴⁷ Japan's strategic approaches to national security may be divided into three major groups: strengthening Japan's own capabilities and roles; enhancing the US-Japan alliance; and cooperating for global peace and stability. The strategic thinking of the Abe administration reveals a comprehensive picture of diplomatic and defense policies as well as the utilisation of diverse resources designed to address challenges at the three levels mentioned above – the national, the regional and the global.

Japan will protect and develop remote islands near national borders as well as examine 'the situation of land ownership' in such areas.

The maritime dimension of Japan's national interests is underscored and well reflected in the nature of the capabilities to be enhanced and the specific contingencies to be tackled. The former include, for example, capabilities for maritime surveillance and law enforcement as well as the SDF development of 'full amphibious' capability that would be necessary – in the Abe administration's view – for the potential recapturing of an occupied island. Primary contingencies include ensuring the safety of sea and airspace surrounding Japan and responding to offshore island invasion, along with responses to BM attacks and threats in cyberspace. The NSS and the NDPG express Japan's determination to 'fully protect its territories' and 'not to tolerate any change in the status quo by coercion', thereby sending a quite unequivocal signal to China. The defense of the Nansei islands in Southwestern Japan, in particular, will be strengthened. To this end, 52 amphibious vehicles and 17 Osprey transport aircraft will be introduced, which will seek to provide the SDF with landing capabilities comparable to those of the US Marine Corps. Furthermore, the NSS calls on Tokyo to play a leading role in maintaining and developing 'open and stable seas', especially by seeking to ensure the safety of SLOCs.

Other capabilities that are to be strengthened include, among others, information-gathering and intelligence analysis as well as satellite manufacturing and dual-use technologies. The NSS further underscores Japan's participation in joint development and production of defense-related equipment, as well as its exports of weapons and military technology. By lifting restrictions on weapons exports and engaging in joint manufacturing of arms, it is hoped that Tokyo will enhance the international competitiveness of its defense industry.

The strengthening of Japan's defense capabilities goes hand in hand with changes in military spending. The current fiscal year, which started in April 2013, has marked an increase of 0.8 % from 2012 and the first increase in defense spending after 10 consecutive years of decline. Military spending is projected to rise by more than 2.5% (to A4.81 trillion) in FY 2014. In 2010, the DPJ-led administration earmarked A23.5 trillion (US\$227 billion) for the 2011-2016 five-year defense program. For its part, the Abe administration's Mid-term Defense Program for 2014-2019 projects a five-year defense spending of A24.7 trillion (US\$240 billion). This will constitute a 5% increase to the military budget over five years.

The US-Japan Alliance

In line with previous policies, the Abe administration sees the alliance with the US – based on common strategic interests and universal values – as 'the cornerstone of Japan's security', also playing an indispensable role in fostering peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. The NSS calls for enhancing the effectiveness of the bilateral security arrangements, for instance by revising the Guidelines for Japan-US defense Cooperation and strengthening bilateral ties in the areas of Ballistic Missile defense and maritime affairs. However, the 'hidden' message that the NSS seems to send is one of strategic uncertainty. This concerns the sustainability of the US commitments to Asian-Pacific security against the background of America's tight fiscal and economic situation and, especially, China's rise. Japan, therefore, appears to emphasise the strengthening of its own defense and deterrence capabilities as the best way of responding to a 'severe' regional environment while maintaining its alliance with the US.

Security Cooperation with ASEAN

Special attention in the NSS is also given to Tokyo's role in promoting multilateral cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, including in the framework of ASEAN+3, as well as trilateral dialogues, such as the Japan-China-Korea grouping. Concerning China, Abe's thinking is dominated by the long-standing Japanese objectives of encouraging Beijing to 'adhere to international norms of behaviour' and enhance its 'transparency' in military affairs. While constructing a 'mutually beneficial relationship' with China is the long-term goal, urging the PRC 'to exercise self-restraint' appears to be an urgent priority for Abe, indeed, reflecting Japan's concern about Chinese behavior in territorial disputes in the Asia-Pacific.

Other initiatives that Japan is expected to pursue largely represent continuity of previous policies. These range from contributing to UN peacekeeping operations and the international disarmament efforts, to promoting the rule of law and the free trade system, as well as the strategic use of foreign aid. Abe's policy approaches at the global level thus appear to emphasise Japan's 'soft' power, which stands in contrast with the focus on 'hard' power envisaged for Japan to deal with regional challenges in Asia.

In fact, the path that Japan has followed over the last 70 years is nothing short of extraordinary. After the war, Japan reinvented itself as a peaceful nation by going through a remarkable democratization and by promulgating a new constitution that included the famous Article 9 "peace clause." Japan built an egalitarian society, achieved rapid economic recovery to become the second largest economy in the world in less than 25 years, utilized its wealth to establish itself as a leader in technological innovation, and became one of the world's leading providers of official development assistance—all the while never firing a single bullet. Japan's peaceful identity and its contributions to global public goods have been recognized around the world, as evinced by its positive image in global opinion polls.

Abe's NSS is significant not because of the shifts it appears to introduce, but because it provides a clarification regarding Japan's path towards 'proactive pacifism' – a tangible trend in Japan's security policy since the start of the century. It now seems quite clear that, for Japan, there is no turning back...

Looking forward, Japan must make clear to the world that it is continuing to face up to its wartime conduct; that it recognizes the pivotal role of US support, which enabled Japan to reinvent itself; and that, based on its proud record over the past 70 years, it will continue to work for the peace and prosperity of the region in the future.

The Issue of Article 9

The domestic debate on Article 9 revision and the need for more international contributions, too, has been a major characteristic of the security debate in Japan in the past decade. What seems to be new is the (implicit) emphasis placed on Japan's own efforts, rather than on its alliance with the US, for responding to the changing security environment.

To best position itself for future regional cooperation, the Japanese government must pay more attention to how its foreign policy is perceived among its neighbors. Most critically, it must clarify where it is moving with the reinterpretation of Article 9 of the constitution, which it is undertaking in order to allow the Japan Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to engage in collective self-defense. While the contemporary security environment makes it important to move forward with a common-sense reinterpretation of Article 9 that will allow limited forms of collective self-defense, more rigorous explanation is required

to demonstrate that the reinterpretation set out in the cabinet's July 2014 decision will maintain the constitution's original spirit.

The Abe cabinet's reinterpretation names three new conditions for the use of force beyond cases where the Japanese homeland is under attack: "When an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan . . . threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn the [Japanese] people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness"; when there are "no other means to repel the attack"; and when the use of force is limited "to the minimum extent necessary."

These conditions appear restrictive, but since they do not come with any geographical limits, there is significant potential to push the envelope toward a more expansive interpretation. For instance, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) could theoretically be interpreted as posing a threat to the Japanese people's constitutional right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Some may argue that this would open the door for the SDF to participate in coalition air strikes against ISIL in Syria and Iraq, a scenario that goes well beyond the spirit of the constitution.

Thus, conservatives argue that Japan cannot isolate itself from the global phenomenon of terrorism and must be prepared to use the SDF to safeguard Japanese interests. While there are merits to both arguments, Japan's national security policy must be determined in a calm and rational manner. The danger now is that Japan's security policy and postwar identity may be shifted by a wave of emotional nationalism following these tragic deaths. In shaping new policy, a careful balance must be maintained between clarifying the legitimate roles of the SDF and maintaining Japan's identity as a pacifist nation.

Building Long-Term Cooperation with China

China is a rising star on the global stage, having achieved unprecedentedly rapid economic growth, hosting key international events such as the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2014 APEC Summit. From Japan's perspective, there is a risk that Chinese leaders might, for the sake of short-term domestic political gains, choose to escalate anti-Japan rhetoric, further politicize history, move unilaterally in the East and South China Seas, and pursue their version of a "new model of great power relations" with the US in a way that marginalizes Japan.

The meeting between Prime Minister Abe and Chinese President Xi Jinping at the APEC Summit was an important first step in repairing Japan-China relations, but further follow-through is needed. To this end, both countries need long-term, win-win strategies to deepen regional cooperation. China's continued portrayals of Japan as a present-day adversary undermine the long-term peace and prosperity of both China and the region by damaging not only Japan-China trade and investment relations but also, and more critically, the requisite regional stability needed for high-level regional cooperation aimed at managing the shifting balance of power and deepening regional economic integration.

Indeed, the need for investment in infrastructure in emerging and developing economies across the region is huge. But the manner in which China announced the establishment of the bank without prior consultations with other countries leaves uncertainty as to whether it will uphold international labor, environmental, and good governance standards, as well as concerns about equitable representation for all member nations. Japan, South Korea, the United States, the EU.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ H. Tanaka, Bolstering East Asian Cooperation 70 Years On, in: East Asia Insights, Feb. 2015

Repairing Japan–South Korea Relations

Japan-ROK relations have been frosty over the last few years, and Prime Minister Abe and President Park Geun-hye have yet to meet bilaterally despite both being in office for two years. The primary issue that is blocking not only a leaders' meeting but also bilateral cooperation on other fronts is the 'comfort women issue'. It is right for Japan to express its sincere apologies and remorse for the treatment of the comfort women, such as through the 1993 Kono Statement and the efforts of the Asian Women's Fund. But Seoul's preconditions, which essentially assume that Japan should do more unilaterally to resolve the issue despite the need for strong leadership from both sides, have been disappointing. In order to realize a mutually acceptable resolution, Japan and South Korea must enhance bilateral communication channels at all levels of government and find a way to work together.

As the two most economically advanced East Asian democracies, Japan and South Korea share overlapping strategic interests. They both have a stake in coordinating joint contingency planning vis-à-vis North Korea, promoting a regional order based on liberal free market principles and open regionalism, and negotiating free trade pacts such as the China-Japan-ROK Free Trade Agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership with the ASEAN+6 countries. There is no time to waste in resolving the comfort women issue, but at the same time, discussions on critical shared interests cannot be postponed as a diplomatic bargaining chip. It is time for Japan and South Korea to reestablish a mindset of being regional partners with shared democratic values and an atmosphere that encourages collaborative work.

Solidifying US Engagement in Asia

While the US-Japan alliance remains strong 70 years after the war, a number of thorny issues must be tackled to ensure it remains a bedrock for regional stability. Two issues in particular that have the potential to damage alliance confidence if not properly managed are the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations and the Okinawa military base issue. With regard to the first issue, early agreement on the TPP is imperative not only for the further liberalization of markets but also because the TPP has the potential to be utilized as a vehicle to deepen cross-Pacific economic integration and establish rules needed for 21st-century economic relations.

However, the bigger issue at hand is the broader strategic context of how the US forward deployment can meet US objectives and the needs of the US-Japan alliance. The question of whether the concentration of bases in Okinawa might be gradually reduced needs to be periodically reviewed within the context of the overall American forward deployment throughout the region, advances in military technologies, the evolving roles and functions of the SDF, and the expanding military cooperation between the United States and other regional partners such as Australia, India, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

The United States has repeatedly insisted that it is committed to remaining deeply engaged in Asia, but doubts still persist around the region among those who have seen Washington's involvement ebb and flow over the years. Given the growing importance of the region, what is needed is a shift in the United States toward a mindset in which it feels comfortable viewing itself as a "resident political power" in East Asia. One way in which the United States could move toward that goal is by spearheading the establishment of a four-party China-Japan-ROK-US confidence-building mechanism. The US alliances with Japan and South Korea and the growing strategic weight of the US-China relationship place the United States in the best position to take the

lead in creating such a mechanism. It is an urgent task, given the need to manage the shifting balance of power in the region, not to mention the serious risk of accidental conflict if US-Japan and US-ROK joint military exercises are misinterpreted by China's increasingly active navy. A good first step would be to establish standardized protocols and permanent emergency hotlines to deal with any potential crises in the most efficient manner.

A Systematic Approach towards Security Policy

The Abe administration initiated a systematic approach towards national security policy, creating a mechanism to plan and execute it and developing a comprehensive strategy for it. The administration established the National Security Council (NSC) and its staff, National Security Secretariat, located at the Prime Minister's Office in December 2013. The core of the NSC is the four ministers meeting consisting of the prime minister, the foreign and defense ministers, and the chief cabinet secretary, who meet regularly. The four ministers meeting is expected to serve as a control tower for foreign and defense policy related to national security, while larger meetings conduct discussions in a wider context.

The Abe administration announced the first NSS in Japanese history on December 17, 2013. The National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG 2013) for fiscal year 2014 and beyond and the Mid-term Defense Program (MTDP) for fiscal years 2014-2018 were released on the same day based on the NSS, covering a broader context encompassing the defense strategy. A defense strategy and policies to implement it fit into the wider NSS context. In the case of the United States, a national security strategy is issued at the presidential level, which leads to a national defense strategy at the level of the secretary of defense, following which the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff develops a national military strategy. This, in turn, sets the strategic context for

subordinate strategies such as those of service chiefs (army, navy, air force, marines) and unified commanders (Pacific Command, etc.). This change in the process of developing defense strategy and policy will ensure that they are consonant with all other aspects of Japan's security strategy such as those on diplomacy, commerce, and trade, while fitting precisely into a broader picture of NSS. The establishment of the NSC and a permanent staff for it reinforces the planning and execution of strategy in a comprehensive manner.

When Japan moves in the direction dictated by the new NSS as a "proactive contributor to peace," deliberations on constitutional restraints become more important. As the Cold War East-West confrontation disappeared, a cooperative approach towards international security became much more feasible. International peace activities, as UN PKO, have become more frequent—more common than traditional peacekeeping following the termination of armed conflict that includes "peace-building" operations.

Since 1992 when Japan sent its first peacekeepers to Cambodia, it has actively participated in international peace operations. The JSDF contingents in Cambodia in 1992 worked together with Korean peacekeepers in Timor le Este in 2002-2004 for reconstruction of the two countries. During the PKO in Cambodia in 1992-1993, in which Chinese and Japanese peacekeepers worked together, the Chinese contingents suffered from a mortar attack resulting in two fatalities and some dozen wounded. In the South Sudan there have been fatalities, including Indian peacekeepers, while Japanese have been safe. While UN PKOs are not intended for combat, they are not conducted under perfectly safe conditions. There may be cases where the Japanese contingent needs the assistance of the armed forces of other countries as well as where it is needed to assist units from other countries. In the worst case scenario, the Japanese contingent would be asked to protect other peacekeepers and not be able to do so due to constitutional restraints. If this meant intentional failure to save fellow peacekeepers from Asian countries such as Korea and China, it could

result in another history issue lasting for a number of decades ahead. Restraining from exercising the right of collective defense is obviously not sufficient to show Japan's determination to be a peace-loving nation.

Which Way Now? - Conclusion

Japan's choices are: to strengthen the alliance with the United States in order to assure its commitment to the region; and to build constructive relations with China through engagement while hedging to avoid a situation where Japan has to consider China as a hostile entity. For the alliance, it is important to revise the "Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation." The first guidelines, adopted in 1978, described operational cooperation between US forces and the SDF and were revised in 1997 to adapt the alliance to the post-Cold War environment. The ongoing efforts to revise the guidelines should be extended to include the bilateral response to "gray-zone" situations as well as bilateral cooperation for other peacetime activities such as counter-piracy, humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations, and to deal with issues related to new domains such as the open seas, outer space, and cyberspace.⁴⁹

Japan's own defense buildup is also important in the context of the Japan-US alliance because it shows the determination to take responsibility as an ally. In parallel to this effort, Japan must be keen about taking measures to reconstruct the legal basis for security that will strengthen the alliance, such as those for the protection of US naval vessels on the open seas and the interception of ballistic missiles that might be on their way to the United States. The two governments are currently working on the new "Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation," which will provide the two with a golden opportunity to coordinate their respective security policies and to share threat perceptions and security priorities.

⁴⁹ N. Yamaguchi, *Evolution of Japan's National Security Policy under the Abe Administration*, in: The Asian Forum, Jan.-Feb. 2015

Aware of the importance of building and maintaining good relations with Japan's neighbors, the Abe administration has been active diplomatically and successful in improving ties with many countries, notably the members of ASEAN. It remains an urgent task to rebuild constructive relations with Korea and China. For this reason, Japan will construct future-oriented and multilayered relations and strengthen the foundation for security cooperation – a key framework in realizing peace and stability in Asia-Pacific region.

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