FIRST ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

with a Foreword by President Jehuda Reinharz
Built about a century ago, this traditional Malay house, more commonly known as “Rumah Melayu,” is located in a serene suburb in Malaysia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Foreword by President Jehuda Reinharz</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Foreword by Vice President Jean Eddy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Foreword by Dean Elaine Wong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A Message from Monsoon’s Managing Editor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Day at Nanjing University in China</td>
<td>Mu ZHOU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>College Life in Beijing</td>
<td>Sharon XIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Democracy in China: A Comparison of Chinese and Western Perspectives</td>
<td>Kassian POLIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Waterloo of Hong Kong’s Pan-Democrats in a Democratic Election</td>
<td>Tak-Hin Benjamin NGAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>An Assessment of U.S. Policy in Asia</td>
<td>Herschel HARTZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Ballot and Democracy in Indonesia</td>
<td>Elliott VELOSO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>AIDS in Nepal</td>
<td>Charlotte BENHAM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>To Mangalagama and Back</td>
<td>Lisa KIM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Foreigners in Singapore</td>
<td>Qi Ying LOO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Parameswara and the Founding of Melaka (Melacca)</td>
<td>Yi Zheng TAN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>A Message from Professors Elaine Lai and Chandler Fulton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>How to Reach Us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am very pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the creation of Monsoon, a journal of high quality that since its initial issue in fall 2003 has made a valued contribution to our academic community. By providing a vehicle for students, faculty and others to contribute informational articles and opinion pieces, Monsoon enriches the process and the value of the intellectual conversation that is constantly underway at Brandeis.

The aim of liberal education is to develop in individuals the skills and abilities needed to reach agreements on matters of fact, theory and action through rational discourse. Essential to this is an understanding of the broader world beyond one’s individual experience. Monsoon gives insight into an area of the world that is rich in its diversity and perhaps not as well understood by many members of our community as it should be. It informs us about the experiences and special perspectives of those members of our community who trace their ancestry to the nations of Asia, as well as those whose knowledge of the world’s largest continent contributes to our own understanding of this increasingly influential area of the world.

Having had the pleasure and the opportunity to visit some of the nations of Asia, meeting with Brandeis alumni, prospective students and their families, and others, I especially value and appreciate the contribution that Monsoon makes to the richness of the Brandeis experience. The breadth of interests it reflects and topics it addresses are welcome additions to the range of opportunity that Brandeis offers its students, faculty and staff.

I congratulate the editors of Monsoon, and wish them every continued success in producing this fine publication.

* * * * * *

Jehuda Reinharz, Ph.D. ’72
President
Brandeis University
Dear Members of the Monsoon Editorial Board –

On behalf of the Brandeis Community, I congratulate you on a very successful 2003 inaugural year. Monsoon, the Asian Journal of Brandeis University, has provided our community with a very rich and important Asian perspective on the political, economic and cultural events of the world.

Your work in our community and your writings in the Monsoon journals have deepened the Brandeis commitment to sharing and learning. Your stories and research impart great knowledge and serve to promote mutual understanding of our very diverse and complex society. At Brandeis, we are fortunate to be surrounded by numerous individuals so rich in culture and background.

I compliment Monsoon on the creation of this inspiring publication and encourage the Monsoon Board and all members of the Brandeis family to contribute to and engage in this on-going education and discussion.

Have a great year!

* * * * * *

Sincerely,

Jean C. Eddy
Senior Vice President for Students and Enrollment, Brandeis University
Dear Readers,

Last year, I was one of several faculty and staff who were invited to write forewords for the first edition of *Monsoon*. Now, a year later, I write to salute the accomplishments of all who contributed to the success of the first four editions of the journal—its founders, editors, writers, and artists—and all who will contribute to future editions. The *Monsoon* founders set high goals for themselves, and have risen to the challenge of not only initiating, but also sustaining and continually improving their journal; they have also provided a forum for faculty and students to share their knowledge of Asian issues and topics with the wider community. We are grateful to you for this service, and for documenting the level of Brandeis interest and expertise in Asia in the year 2004.

But readers are also to be praised and congratulated. Perhaps by reading *Monsoon*, you have learned something new about a country or its people. Perhaps you are more curious about other parts of the world, not only Asia, but also Africa, Latin America and Oceania. Perhaps what you have read has encouraged you to learn more, by taking a class or attending an event, such as the very successful “Globalization and its Costs in Asia” panel of Brandeis faculty, organized last spring by *Monsoon* staff. As a representative of the Brandeis (formerly Hewlett) Pluralism Alliance, I know we are proud to have supported the launch of another student-initiated project, which now stands on its own, and contributes so greatly to the vibrancy and strength of our university. Perhaps the success of *Monsoon* will inspire its readers to initiate or contribute to their own projects to enrich the intellectual and social community of Brandeis. I know that *Monsoon* continues to inspire me.

* * * * *

*Elaine Wong*
Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences
A Message from Monsoon’s Managing Editor

We at Monsoon are proud to begin our second year of publication. To celebrate the occasion, we are featuring submissions by President Reinharz, Vice President Eddy, Dean Wong, and Professors Lai and Fulton. We are also delighted to offer a variety of articles by Brandeis students. These articles are at the heart of Monsoon’s mission to bring an Asian perspective to Brandeis. In our previous issue, our Senior Editor for Global Affairs raised an important question: What is an Asian perspective, and how does one qualify to present such a viewpoint? He approached the question as a Filipino American. Here I will consider the same topic from the viewpoint of a Caucasian Jewish American. Is it meaningful or sensible to ask for my “Asian” perspective? Can someone who is not Asian ever be qualified to contribute such a perspective?

Growing up in a small town in Connecticut, I was never exposed to a great amount of diversity. Although I was in the religious minority, there were many other Jewish families living nearby. Rarely did I feel different from my peers, nor did I perceive many differences in others. When I arrived at Brandeis, I met for the first time many people who were considered minorities.

One of these “minorities” was my roommate, Benjamin Ngan, a student from Hong Kong. When I met him, I knew little more about Hong Kong than its recent handover from Britain to China. Through many late-night discussions and participation in Asian cultural events, I awakened to a vast part of the world—huge in population and geography, rich in history, language and culture—that was barely on my radar screen as an American. Asian countries and people offer so much to the world that I had never considered. I was eager to learn more and to enrich myself with Asian ideas and cultures.

When Benjamin later co-founded Monsoon, I was excited to assume a leadership position. While I have always felt welcomed by my fellow Board members, others are often surprised to learn of my involvement. From a Jewish American perspective, if I am so concerned with diversity, shouldn’t I be active in the Jewish American community, in which I have a vested interest? From an Asian perspective, isn’t it presumptuous of me to think that I can promote an Asian viewpoint? I am not, and never will be, Asian. I will never experience what it’s like to walk in any of the many pairs of “Asian” shoes.

It might seem more sensible for me to get active in Hillel and, perhaps, read Monsoon as an outsider. But then I would remain just that: an outsider. If I were content to be a passive learner, reading from the sidelines might satisfy me. But I am an active learner, and I cannot learn actively unless I participate. In order to attain true understanding, I must immerse myself in what seems “foreign” until it becomes familiar. This does not mean sacrificing my Jewish American identity or identifying myself as Asian. It means embracing people whose ways of thinking, feeling and relating to the world differ from mine. It means celebrating philosophies, customs and attitudes that have influenced billions of lives over thousands of years. And through this learning process, I may even gain a unique “Asian” perspective to complement more “native” viewpoints.

In this spirit of openness and exploration, we bring you our latest issue. May we continue to learn from each other and to celebrate Asia at Brandeis.

Daniel Kaufman
A Day at Nanjing University in China

by Mu ZHOU

For a student who is used to getting up at 10:00 in the morning and running to class in five minutes, the academic life at Nanjing University is not that easy.

I received a phone call last night from my dean, who told me that my score for the German test was 69, barely enough to advance into the sophomore year of the German major. Before I had time to rejoice at my luck, I was told that I should attend classes the very next morning at 8:00. I received thorough information on how to get to my classes.

The campus of Nanjing University is split into two smaller ones: one in Nanjing City, which is close to where I was living, the other in Pukou district, on the other side of the Yangze River outside of Nanjing city. As a newcomer whose housing issue was not resolved, I was told to "sneak" on a bus that was only provided for the faculty at the campus in Nanjing city, and sit there for 40 minutes until it reached the campus in Pukou.

The alarm woke me up at 5:50 this morning, and I got prepared to leave at 6:25. Regretting that I was too lazy to fix the stained bicycle in the garage the other day, I had to walk my way to campus.

The traffic was not yet busy at this time of day, and even the newspaper sellers wouldn't bother to shout for customers, but dozens of middle- and old-aged people wandered about the streets with their white vests and pajamas on.

As I approached one of the gates of the University, I saw a crowd inside who broke the morning's stillness. Middle- and old-aged people were doing all sorts of morning exercises in groups and singles on open grounds. Amazed, I watched how they made rhythms out of their simple footsteps and other body movements, and started to understand the remarkably high longevity rate of China, whose GDP per capita matches only one fiftieth that of America's.

Nanjing University was founded in 1902 and has always been one of the most prestigious universities in China. Most of the old architectural buildings are well preserved, and continue to serve their purpose. The Chinese characters carved on top of the broken glass doorframes emerged in my vision, as I walked by the old, dusty wooden foreign language buildings. The traditional way of differentiating buildings was to carve characters of the Chinese zodiac instead of numbers or the alphabet on top of door frames. The grass field next to me glowed with reflected sunrays, as it was constantly watered by the sprinklers. On the contrary, the trees next to the main path were not well pruned, and the flowers showed a clear sign of decay.

I had a few minutes before the bus arrived. I stood next to the chemistry building and watched the people in front of me dancing. Musical accompaniment was being provided from the art building behind them. I could never imagine public schools in China providing such welfare to nearby inhabitants.

The bus arrived five minutes before 7:00, and departed three seconds before the 7:00 radio news started. This punctuality was quite incongruent with the general lack of timeliness of public transportation, and for this reason, I was told by my dean last night not to be late. "Good grief," I said to myself, for the bus was fully loaded. If there had been more faculty members who needed to board the bus as did happen later on in the afternoon I would have had to relinquish my seat and take the public transportation, which would have taken at least twice as long. I would definitely have missed the 8:00 class.

Before entering the classroom, I could already hear the buzzing inside. The overwhelming majority of the students were reading their German textbooks aloud. I went into the classroom and settled myself in the back row. The classroom was quite typical of Chinese schools above the elementary level. A platform stands in front of a big blackboard, and rows of tables and chairs sit behind the platform. The lecturer needs to walk down the platform, through the condensed tables and chairs to reach a student, whereas students in the front need to
turn their heads 180 degrees back to see who is talking behind them.

I learned from the student beside me that there were 26 students registered for the class, all of whom shall sit in the same German classes for another three years, unless, of course, they change majors or drop their bachelor degree. Everyone was dressed in casual clothes, as they do in Chinese secondary schools. Female students took the front and middle rows, whereas the male students mainly stayed in the back. I hardly heard any conversation between the two sexes. Traditionally, it was a virtue for Chinese men to refrain from any form of physical contact with women other than close family members. Shaking hands in public meant marriage; kissing and hugging was blasphemous; having sex was a crime. This norm, however, has loosened recently. Kissing and hugging on campus has become more common, but school authorities still cannot tolerate sex. Rumor has it that in terms of "moral conduct," Nanjing University sets a "good example" for other Chinese universities, where female students are beginning to have abortions.

The bell rang and our Chinese lecturer walked in. From her teaching, I could see that she was an experienced teacher who preferred lecturing to discussion. Very few people interrupted her and asked questions. She talked about some grammar, and made us read through the vocabulary out loud. The class ended after two hours.

We spent our next two hours with our new German lecturer, Monika Schwabbauer. She walked into the classroom with a somewhat modest smile, stood on the platform, and didn't say a word until the bell rang. She couldn't speak Chinese, so she spoke German the entire time. After a long introduction, she made us introduce ourselves one by one. It took us 45 minutes for a class this large to finish. During this period, I learned that our class was a mixture of students from different regions and family backgrounds. It consisted of students from more than ten different provinces, including five from Tibet. The cost of studying at Nanjing University is around 6500 yuan (approx. $800) a year, of which 4600 yuan is the tuition. Although considered high for many low-income families, most students who are admitted could still afford the tuition, with scholarships or financial aid from the government when needed.

After four hours of class, I was already done for the day, and ready to head home for a nap. My fellow classmates told me that they didn't have time for naps, since their entire afternoon was occupied with classes. When I asked them how many hours of class they take each week, they replied with a shrug: 33. They told me that they felt lucky to be in the German department, since the physics and chemistry majors spend more than 40 hours in class.

On my way back home, I began to ponder: as a reflection of the rapidly modernizing Chinese society, the university is a blend of the past and present. The new white buildings, the old wooden foreign language department buildings, the multimedia classrooms and the old-fashioned lecture rooms coexist with one another. But, have things changed much in the interior? Do people really think differently than before? I might be able to find that out after I stay a bit longer here.

Mu ZHOU ('06) is a third year student at Brandeis University majoring in Economics and History. This semester, he is studying abroad in Nanjing, China.

College Life in Beijing

- by Sharon XIA

When a new semester begins, perhaps the most important thing for a college student is to check the grades from last semester's examinations. Every year at this time, you can always see a large number of the students waiting outside the door of the computer room in our teaching building, blocking the entire corridor. The reason why our biggest computer room cannot be used is that our library is always under construction. I really do not understand why it is necessary for the university to make our library look like a construction site, instead of proposing a thorough plan to finish the work once and for all. In addition, network restrictions bar students from accessing their accounts and grades from off-campus computers. All these inconveniences explain the big crowd outside the computer room.

After a long time waiting in line, I fidgeted in front of an old computer and stared at the screen. The grades were not as bad as I expected. It was a nightmare and torture for all of us sophomores last semester. Students from our department had to take courses such as "Marxist Political and Economic Theory," aside from a large number of other courses. But the nightmare is
Monsoon

far from over. When all my classmates learned that our politics teacher is Professor Li, who is going to teach us three politics courses this semester, they all lamented that they would soon fail. On the one hand, perhaps they have dawdled too much lately, and would not be able to get away with it again this semester. But on the other hand, Mr. Li is one of those extremely strict teachers in our college, whom we often called “one of the four major arrestors.” This is a very common name that you can find in nearly every university in Beijing, where students select 4 of the strictest teachers who will make the majority of students fail the class, so as to maintain their outfit of strictness. This might not be a fair evaluation of Mr. Li, since an equal majority of the students was often absent in person or absentminded in class. However, given Professor Li’s unpredictable temperament and harsh measures, it was an arduous task for me to take his class.

Senior students who “suffered” from Mr. Li spread the news that professor Li gives a large amount of homework everyday that merely entails writing or coping from the textbook. If you don’t copy enough and meet his standards, you will likely be engraved in his mind. After several times, you will automatically fail the course. By then, there are two choices in front of you: either resort to rote learning and try out your luck, or pass the course with an F. “Marxist Political and Economic Theory” is one of those core courses that a student must pass in order to obtain a Chinese bachelor degree. To repeat the course, the student must repay the tuition for the course, which is 210 yuan (approx. $26). I personally find Professor Li discriminative of girls from Beijing. He often makes comments of us in class, and we seem to always get unfair treatments. I have a friend, a girl also from Beijing, whom he has failed for 3 times in one subject within 2 years. Roughly estimated, about half of the students in our class failed in “Marxist Political and Economic Theory” last year, and one third of the students failed in the “The Three Representatives of Jiang Zemin” and “Deng Xiaoping Thought.” I guess I’m just the lucky one among all those who failed.

Having passed the National Entrance Examination, undergraduate students still seem to be concerned about their future. Students study hard in grade school just for the sake of getting into a good university, since it is nigh impossible to obtain a well-paid job, let alone reach a high social position, without a diploma from a good university. Education from teachers and parents is all one thing: a high score to reach a good grade school, and later on to a good university. From my perspective, most students in my university clearly exhibit idleness, and show no motivation to learn. They do anything but study, just to name a few: play computer games, play basketball and sleep all day. When a student is absent for class for some reason, the first thing that he asks is whether the teacher called his name in the class, rather than what he missed in class.

There is no cooperation between the teacher and the student in my university. Students refuse to study and teachers resort to harsh measures, instead of trying to make the learning process more interesting. Our “four famous arrestors” would gladly have us believe that these strict measures are aimed at keeping every nerve of an indolent student strained during study. Under such an environment, it would not be so easy for a student to be academically well educated and well behaved.

Sharon XIA is a third year student at Beijing Materials Institute, majoring in Commercial English.

Did you know......

Beijing was known as Peking by Westerners before 1949, when the People’s Republic of China was founded.

*Source: http://www.beijingpage.com/#general*

Democracy in China: A Comparison of Chinese and Western Perspectives - by Kassian POLIN

With the eminent scholar Samuel Huntington’s three great “waves of democratization” that have swept the world in the past two centuries, many pro-democracy observers worldwide are irritated by China’s slow progress towards Western-style democratization. They are keen to see political reforms that would put an end to the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) monopoly of power, and there is widespread agreement – including
those in Party circles – that this ought to happen. The major point of contention, however, is the nature of such reforms. Many Western scholars, such as Bruce Gilley, believe that the implementation of democracy is the only panacea to the country’s mounting social problems. But a prominent group of Chinese intellectuals, including Wei Pan, suggest otherwise. This paper will analyze the two contrasting viewpoints – with a focus on the CCP – and attempt to draw some conclusions on the future of democracy in China.

In his new book China’s Democratic Future, Gilley lists four well-known reasons why China needs democracy, defined as a system of governance that allows a country’s citizens to regularly and fairly elect the executive and legislature by direct and universal suffrage. First of all, he believes that the growing disconnect between state and society threatens social stability. He thinks that authoritarian regimes such as the CCP’s are inherently weak because feedback from society is scarce, society’s role in checking state power is weak, and the norms of elite conduct are unstable. The CCP, being ideologically and politically separate from society, serves only to protect its monopoly of power and privilege by cultivating special interests through certain individuals and groups and repressing others who seek equality. Society is constrained and misgoverned by a corrupt and unrestrained central authority that places itself above the law. As a result, chaos ensues among the populace – especially in the rural areas – as daily riots erupt against severe governance shortcomings. Gilley points out that half of the arable land lost to desertification since 1949 and the national banking crisis are caused by policy mistakes, while mass protests over urban housing reforms stem from a lack of consultation. Democracy would allow civil and political liberties to flourish in society as it gains the ability to check the power of the state by voting malfeasant and incompetent officials out of office.

Secondly, the need to maintain economic growth necessitates the implementation of democracy. Gilley debunks the argument that the CCP can claim credit for the country’s vast material advances since 1978. The Party, he argues, has done nothing more than to rectify the numerous policy mistakes that it made since 1949. Decentralization of central power following economic liberalization and the withdrawal of the state from the country’s economic sphere have little to do with the supposed benefits of strong authoritarian rule. Gilley also illustrates the huge social costs of economic corruption and income inequalities caused by an uninhibited central government that does not receive input from society at large. In addition, he believes that with the lack of open political systems and information sources in the midst of widespread corruption, China’s ability to sustain its impressive economic growth in areas such as innovation, regulation and financial health is seriously jeopardized. Democracy would allow for the creation of a more robust and sustainable economy by encouraging the free flow of ideas and the realization of the worth of the individual.

Thirdly, the existence of pervasive social malaise and the unraveling of the social fabric require an end to the CCP’s authoritarian rule, Gilley contends. Despite tremendous economic growth, arbitrary state interference into the lives of ordinary Chinese limits their space for self-realization. Gilley describes how Nobel Literature laureate Gao Xingjian bemoans the suffocation of Chinese literature in the 20th century under CCP rule, as well as the deficiency of moral and cultural resources for self-critique and self-betterment. With ineffective social policy and debased social capital, popular resistance to state initiatives in areas such as health, housing and population control cause serious erosion in the legitimacy of the CCP. In turn, the disintegration of the top-down ideology and the failure to empower society to forge its own replacement create a disconcerting situation in which individual choice is expanded but no social norms are provided. Crime is rampant in China today, and people lie and steal in their daily lives. Democracy would provide the open channels to allow the restoration of the social glue, as individuals can freely associate with one another and to be treated as moral equals by the state.

Finally, the deepening political dysfunction of the CCP can only be rectified by the introduction of democracy. With rampant factionalism, corruption and regionalism within the CCP, the state’s internal cohesion is severely compromised. Gilley acknowledges that factionalism also exists in democracies, but notes that elected leaders there are accountable to voters and subject to opposition scrutiny. By contrast, the CCP asserts that promotions are based on merit alone, which is quite untrue. Incompetent officials are frequently promoted as policymaking is constrained by factional struggles for turf and power. During the Jiang Zemin years (1989 to 2002), no fewer than six Politburo members were purged in factional battles, while only two out of the nine new members of the Politburo Standing Committee in 2002 reached their positions on merit alone. At the local levels, cadres attach more emphasis to the cultivation of personal connections with higher authorities than to governance work.

Corruption, which introduces extreme dysfunction into governance, pervades the political landscape. From unenforced safety standards to the frequent sidetracking of corruption investigations, the current political system is thoroughly rotten, argues Gilley. Regionalism, which refers to the ad hoc responses
by local authorities to Beijing’s erratic and opportunistic use of its near-absolute powers, creates unnecessary tension between the political center and periphery as each tries to maneuver past the other to maximize their own gain. In the absence of a federalist system, in which shared powers are institutionalized in constitutional provisions, Beijing has unclear ideas about what exactly it governs. Meantime, local cadres guard and manipulate information to further their own interests at the expense of the central government. Being unaccountable, Beijing is not willing to create a federal structure in the interests of good governance. Democracy, Gilley argues, is the solution for these daunting problems.

Many Chinese scholars, such as Pan, offer an alternative way out. While they agree with their Western counterparts on the need for political reform, they are not proposing to democratize the polity but to make the one-party rule of the CCP more efficient or to provide it with a more solid legal base. They look upon political liberalization without democratization as an alternative solution to many of China’s problems related to the existing authoritarian system. Democracy, which is a polity featuring periodic elections of top leaders by electorates, institutionalizes the principle of majority rule. While the legitimacy of this system is generally accepted by Western societies at large, Pan questions the extent to which the principle of majority rule should be universally accepted, especially in China. The Chinese word for “politics” – zheng zhi – is written like “governance of righteousness,” which does not necessarily represent majority rule. Such a principle is not only alien to the Chinese civilization, but problematic.

Democracy, according to Pan, justifies an internalization of power politics. Under such a system, the minority segment of the population is repressed and has to seek solutions through non-democratic means. The conflict of the minority with the democratic principle of majority rule leads to easy politicization of social issues and enlarges social cleavages by linking political issues to the need to win the next round of elections. The harm is especially pronounced in developing countries, when the absence of a strong middle class encourages local politicians to exploit explosive issues such as religious, ethnic and historical hatred among the populace. Even with a stable middle class, Pan believes that it was the equality before law instead of electoral politics that has created and maintained social consensus and harmony between Singapore’s 70% Chinese and 30% ethnic minorities. Other rule of law regimes, such as Hong Kong, emphasize the supremacy of law through the separation of personal power to form checks and balances, based on non-elected officials that explain laws, enforce laws and are held accountable to laws. It is this system of government, rather than democracy, which would suit China best, says Pan.

The scholar also points out that while Western democracies are built on strong legalistic foundations, the new democracies of developing countries are not. Politicians in the latter, having obtained the tremendous power of “representation,” frequently manipulate the non-elected judiciary and civil service for their own convenience to the detriment of society at large. What really differentiates the developed and developing countries in terms of modernization and nation-building is not whether they are democratic, but whether they are “liberal” – the establishment of an effective rule of law. The sequence of political reform, therefore, is crucial to success. Pan asserts that many people in the West take the liberal element of their democracies for granted and believe that the backwardness of developing countries is due solely to the lack of democracy. As a result, representatives in power have the legitimacy of being popularly elected, effectively winning the praise of zealous Western preachers of global democracy. It is conceivable that Pan would place Gilley under this camp as well.

This marks the creation of a vicious cycle in which “illiberal” representatives centralize state power in the name of the people, while the public falsely believe that their elected officials will work for their best interests. Lenin’s comment that democracy is about how the people choose their dictator every few years, as well as Tocqueville’s about how democracy may become the “tyranny of the majority,” hold true for democratizing nations that take wrong turns on the road to full democracy. Given the lack of a legalistic tradition, the building of the authority of law should be the priority in today’s China. Pan provides a concrete agenda and complete timetable for his rule-based political order based on five pillars. They include a neutral civil service; an autonomous judiciary; extensive social consultative institutions; an anti-corruption body similar to Hong Kong’s Independent Commission Against Corruption; and introduction of the freedoms of speech, press, assembly and association.

Pan stresses that there are four reasons
democracy is not a viable solution for China in its embrace of modernity. First, he says China is not a strong breeding ground for civil societies, which are considered by many in the West to be a vital ingredient in the establishment of democracy. In current Chinese industrial markets, the traditional small-farmer society has evolved into a network of family-based small and medium enterprises, which form the backbone of today’s vibrant Chinese economy. Their interests are as scattered as the small farmer families in the past, despite a popular perception that plural economic interests lead to political pluralism. As a result, they do not feel the need to form large interest groups as people do in the West to promote their interests. Pan points out the fallacies of assuming interest groups to be opposition groups, as generally perceived by Western scholars. He also notes that truly independent civil societies (which do not include Chinese NGOs since they are mostly state-sponsored) capable of checking central government power have been absent throughout Chinese history, due to the lack of such a need. The democratic hurdles caused by the lack of civil societies in newly democratizing Eastern Europe validate Pan’s arguments, and cast doubts over the promise of their growth in China.

Secondly, Pan emphasizes that the Chinese people traditionally distrust politics and the socially corrosive partisanship elements that naturally follow in a democratic system. Instead, the Chinese believe in justice delivered by a government through fair law enforcement by a neutral civil service that acts in accordance with social norms. While acknowledging that the democratic principle of majority rule is entrenched in a significant portion of Chinese intelligentsia, Pan observes that those who claim to be democrats often abuse election rules and engage in massive fraud, slander and corruption, as seen in U.S.-based Chinese organizations for democracy, a non-democratic Japan (until the ruling conservative party, the LDP, lost power in 1993) and in Taiwan today. The potential for governance shortcomings and voter disillusionment in a democratic China can be quite real indeed.

Thirdly, democracy is inadequate in resolving the complex governance issues that result from decentralization of power following economic liberalization. With the establishment of a national market economy as Beijing’s chief imperative, local officials are “commercialized” to outcompete one another for trade and investment. This renders communist ideology and traditional Chinese moral principles ineffective in promoting good governance, and is a prime cause of widespread corruption at all levels of the administration – traditionally a most legitimate reason for the Chinese to overthrow their government. Democracy, which requires the periodic election of leaders, solves the problem of who controls government power but not how the government should be run, which when not adequately addressed by the institution of rule of law, could lead to further corruption, as seen in Taiwan today. The political systems of Hong Kong and Singapore, which limit government power by law-based checks and balances, represent a workable solution for China. This might not appear as a “politically correct” solution in the eyes of many in Western countries, particularly the U.S., Pan adds.

Finally, a rule of law regime is more feasible to implement than a democratic option in today’s China, according to Pan. The former is a more direct and effective approach to deal with corruption and help the CCP regain much-needed legitimacy. It offers reliable social stability, with a long-cherished link between law and order. It is more acceptable to the CCP leadership, which must extensively support any such law-based political reforms, as it would not eliminate de facto one-party rule, but only alter the role of the CCP from a revolutionary mass party to a conservative ruling party. The proposed political structure would not deviate too much from the current system, though Pan acknowledges that some major changes are needed to allow genuine independence for the five pillars. The rule of law is a realistic sign of modernity, and the polities of Hong Kong and Singapore provide valuable experiences to construct such a regime.

As seen above, the nature of political reforms suggested by Gilley and Pan serve to reinforce and refute various arguments made by the two schools of thought. Both agree that political reforms have to be state-led. Gilley explains that the CCP, though in serious decline by the turn of the millennium, remains powerful enough to force major political breakthroughs from the inside rather than the outside. The enduring clientelist bonds of many social groups to the CCP since the 1990s; the successful clamping down on potential democratic opposition by the Party; the lack of a strong civil society; the military’s loyalty in protecting the state in the ideal of public order; and state monopolization of national infrastructure such as telecoms, transport and utilities will continue to empower Beijing. Opposition forces, both within and outside the CCP, will continue to influence the decision-making processes of state actors and create the conditions for initiative within the higher echelons of the Party. The final call for a political breakthrough rests with the state, though.

Pan’s proposal of political liberalization without democratization is validated by both Western and Chinese field research, which suggest there is little public opinion pressure for democracy in the immediate future, especially in comparison with other values. In the wake of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown, students’
democratic idealism changed into a non-ideological kind of technocratic pragmatism. Utility, efficiency and feasibility were key factors considered. Indeed, this is a phenomenon that Gilley would readily agree with, as he states that if full-scale democracy were to be introduced, it would result not from popular pro-democratic sentiments but from pragmatic concerns within the Beijing leadership to solve existing problems.

The agreement on political reform between the two schools of thought ends here. Western scholars point out that although rule of law is possible without democracy, the latter’s absence creates certain obstacles to its implementation and raises accountability issues. Law can bestow popular legitimacy upon authoritarian regimes – which can then better resist meaningful political reforms. Given China’s current repressive laws that allow for the punishment of dissidents under broadly defined state secrets regulations and laws against endangering the state, it remains to be seen if the law alone could ensure good governance. Also, with the increasing pluralism in views on fundamental moral issues due to economic modernization – especially with the rising inequality gap between the rural and urban areas – Pan’s idea that a neutral civil service could simply draft laws from “generally-accepted moral principles” is questionable.

Moreover, one of the biggest challenges facing administrative law reformers in China has been to surmount the prevailing attitudes of government officials, who are a major source of corruption, and create a culture of legality. The CCP’s rule since 1949 preserved fundamentally conservative, Confucian beliefs about the nature of governance and the relationship between the paternalistic government and the people. Today, many government officials are reluctant to accept the notion that rule of law requires their willingness to act in accordance with the law, for fear that this would decrease administrative efficiency. Chinese citizens, on the other hand, are just beginning to realize that they can challenge the decisions of officials. Such aspects of Chinese cultural determinism can change, as indicated by the success of Hong Kong and Singapore in establishing modern administrative systems, but such a process would take time. Other substantial obstacles to a law-based administrative system in China are systemic in nature. They include a legislative system in disarray; a weak judiciary; poorly trained judges and lawyers who are prone to corruption themselves; and fallout from the ongoing transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, which has resulted in a fragmentation of authority radiating from the center outwards.

Ultimately, as China’s citizens grow more affluent and have greater exposure to the West, society will likely become more pluralistic and diverse. To many Chinese observers, Pan’s assertions that the Chinese do not form political groups, as well as his belief that the resulting politics can be forgone in favor of technocratic civil servants and rule of law, may not stand up to close scrutiny. The 500,000-strong march in July 2003 in Hong Kong may have been primarily a protest against a national-security bill and bad governance, but voices for democracy were prominent too. However, given the very different historical and socio-economic circumstances of Hong Kong and the mainland, it may not be prudent to make similar assumptions about the democratic aspirations of the 1.3 billion people living north of the former British colony’s borders – a point that Pan must be given credit for. Indeed, Edward Friedman praises the Chinese scholar’s bold challenge to the Eurocentric assumption which idealizes the West as the only model for successful modernization, and for questioning “the egregious ploy of prominent scholars such as Samuel Huntington who will not probe the experience of the 1.5 billion citizens in democratic Asia for lessons about democracy.” When Hu Jintao, the president of China, has recently commented on the 50th anniversary of the National People’s Congress (the country’s top legislative body) that the introduction of Western-style democracy would be a “blind alley” for China, Western critics should take heed of his words before engaging in reflexive invective. In the end, Pan is not fundamentally opposed to democracy, but argues that successful democratization can only occur after the rule of law has been firmly established in China. This is a point that is readily agreed upon by many contemporary Western scholars, such as Fareed Zakaria and Randall Peerenboom.

It is entirely conceivable, however, that China, with its vast cultural and human resources, may in the end come up with a new form of democracy that will “surpass” the prevalent Western model in significant ways. If that is indeed the case, it will be a cause for global celebration as the potential for positive change would be immense. Zakaria has observed that “Eighty years ago, Woodrow Wilson (took up the) challenge to make the world safe for democracy. As we approach the next century, our task is to make democracy safe for the world.” As Gilley himself acknowledges, China might just be able to make a modest contribution towards this great endeavor, given its burning desire to reclaim its “rightful place as the dispenser of civilization to the world’s benighted peoples, especially the stubbornly dynamic West.”

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The Waterloo of Hong Kong’s Pan-Democrats in a Democratic Election

- by Tak-Hin Benjamin NGAN

Hong Kong’s massive anti-Article 23 street demonstration on July 1, 2003, according to Gordon Chang, “was only the triggering event” which awakens the Hong Kong people to their desires of democracy. As a result, the pro-democratic faction in Hong Kong, who named themselves the “Pan-Democrats,” entered the 2004 Legislative Council Election with much confidence that they were going to hand the pro-government faction a huge defeat.

During their election campaigns, the “Pan-Democrats” spent much of their effort to encourage registered voters to cast their votes on the Election Day. These “Pan-Democrats,” led by the Democratic Party (DP) headed by Chairman Yeung Sum, was holding a strong belief that a high participation rate by the public at the election is the key to a “Pan-Democratic” victory. They believed that the pro-government politicians, who then owned a majority of seats in the Legislative Council, were supported by what they called the “iron-votes” from some limited number of pro-Beijing voters, whereas the majority of the registered voters were all pro-democratic but lacked the incentive to actually cast their votes in the past Legislative Council Election, which was held four years ago. As a result, the “Pan-Democrats” believed, the reason why they failed to form a majority in the Legislative Council four years ago was not due to the lack of support but rather to the fact that their “supporters” failed to show up at the ballot stations.

The 2004 Legislative Council Election was going to be different – as far as the “Pan-Democratic” belief was concerned. They even advertised publicly throughout their campaigns that the more voters show up at the ballot stations, the more “Pan-Democratic” seats would be secured. Excluding the “iron-votes,” they assumed and reassured themselves, especially after the July 1 demonstration, that the rest of the voters would follow the “Pan-Democratic” waves to bring about a tectonic change in Hong Kong politics.

The Election turned out to be the most democratic one in the entire history of Hong Kong. A historical high of 1.78 million voters had their ballots cast, making up an impressive 55.6 per cent participation rate amongst the 3.2 million registered voters. This celebration of a successful democratic election, however, turned out to have worked against the interests of the “Pan-Democrats.” When the sun was set and the ballot stations closed, the “Pan-Democrats” began to realize that this democratic election was in fact their miserable Waterloo.

On September 12, 2004, the “Pan-Democrats” were granted their wish – millions of voters, other than those “iron-voters” and hard-core “Pan-Democrats,” participated in the biggest democratic election in the history of Hong Kong. Many ballots of those voters, however, favored the so-called pro-Beijing or pro-government parties like the Democratic Alliance for Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) and the more moderate Liberal Party (LP), which are both known for their constructivist and cooperative agendas. The “Pan-Democrats” ended up seizing only 25 seats out of 60 in the Legislative Council, while the rest of the seats went to the so-called pro-government faction or to politically moderate candidates like Ms. Rita Fan.

The most evident defeat of the “Pan-Democrats” came from the Eastern New Territories Election District, where seven “Pan-Democrats” from different political parties joined together to form a “Diamond List” expecting five of the seven on the list would make it to the Legislative Council and would drive the pro-Beijing parties out of their seats. Only three candidates on the “Diamond List” ended up securing enough votes to qualify for the Council, while the DAB, which originally was deemed to be in danger of losing their only seat in the area, surprisingly secured two seats with 22.14% of support. In the Hong Kong Island Election District, the “Pan-Democrats” expected themselves to win four seats while limiting the DAB to one. Much to their surprise, Choy So-yuk, the second candidate on the DAB list, ended up surpassing “Pan-Democrat” Cyd Ho Sau-lan and qualified for the DAB’s second seat in the area after DAB chairman Ma Lik.

“Democratic leaders,” according to Stephanie Wong of Agence France-Presse, “expressed disappointment at their performance” in the 2004 Legislative Council Election. The Democratic Party (DP)’s representatives in the Council was reduced from...
eleven to nine while their biggest rival, the so-called “pro-Beijing” DAB, experienced a 12.5% growth in votes received comparing to the 2000 election. Even the Liberal Party (LP), which never participated in the District Election category, was able to secure eleven seats in the upcoming four years of the Legislative Council, beating the DP by two seats.

The embarrassing results for the “Pan-Democrats” may seem contradictory at the surface. A historical high in terms of participation rate of registered voters indicates that more and more Hong Kong citizens opted to speak their minds through a democratic election. And yet this blossoming of democracy did not translate into a “Pan-Democratic” victory. Instead, this democratic election has driven the pro-democratic politicians further away from forming a majority in the Legislative Council. This seemingly contradictory phenomenon should in fact be not unexpected and can be explained by the destructivity of the “Pan-Democrats.”

As articulated in my previous article The Unproductive Political Culture of Hong Kong, the pro-democratic faction of Hong Kong comprises mostly of those who “oppose by default everything from the Chinese government” and that the “Pan-Democrats” have “provided less and less actual, solid, and positive contribution to the society” over the years. Their agendas focused on verbal attacks and meaningless oppositions to the Hong Kong government led by Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa. Removing Tung Chee Hwa or any government official has almost been a default “urgent solution” suggested by the pro-democratic councilors to every motion in the Legislative Council meeting regardless of the situation. They offered no ground to compromise with the government, and instead provided “the politics of Hong Kong with nothing but unproductive and annoying disturbances.” In retrospect, these so-called “Democrats” have in fact demonstrated more of their anarchistic and destructive tendencies than their true desire to serve the Hong Kong community.

The “Pan-Democrats” seemed to have believed that by blindly challenging the government would gain them popularity, but the voters of Hong Kong appeared to have thought otherwise. In the Eastern Kowloon Election District, for example, Tsang Yuk-shing of the DAB, who once was labeled by the “Pan-Democrats” as a “leftist” for his willingness to constructively cooperate with the Hong Kong government and with Beijing, received 27.13% of the votes – a percentage of votes higher than those received by any of the “Pan-Democrats” who ran for office in the area. While Tam Yiu-chung, a DAB constructivist, received 24.87% of votes and secured two seats for the DAB in the Western New Territories Election District with his partner Cheung Hok-ming, beating the next closest “Pan-Democratic” winner by a margin of 11.38%.

While prior to the election some “Pan-Democrats” had already suggested to soften their stance and to begin dialogue with Beijing, the people of Hong Kong has already made their choice – that constructive and cooperative politicians, pro-Beijing or not, are preferred meaningless slogans for “democracy.” So, while the “Pan-Democrats” are still learning to spell the words “productive cooperation,” the people of Hong Kong are ready to move on to building a more peaceful and productive political culture.

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An Assessment of U.S. Policy in Asia

- by Herschel HARTZ

After eight years of relative calm, the Bush administration’s relationship with Asia in its first term can only be described as one filled with anxiety and confrontation. Washington’s relationship with China has been steadily eroding. This could be especially harmful to the prospects of American foreign policy, for China, being the largest and most influential Asian power, could be a future threat to American supremacy in the region. Tension has been rising ever since an American spy plane landed on Chinese territory after colliding with a Chinese fighter jet, and after President Bush vowed to do all that was necessary to defend Taiwan from an attack from the mainland.

With North Korea, the Bush administration has consistently struck out in getting the regime to agree to nuclear disarmament. In South Korea, the President saw the election of a new leadership less in step with his policy on how to deal with a nuclear North Korea, and more inclined towards making peace with its northern neighbor. Even more harmful was President Bush’s omission of South Korea as one of America’s key allies in the war on terror in his speech before the Republican National Convention. With 3,000 troops in Iraq and a South Korean populace politically pressuring its leadership to pull them out, this omission did not help Seoul’s domestically unpopular resolve to continue its involvement in future ventures. Afghanistan has been invaded and the pro-Western government has barely been stabilized. A secret war on terror is still being fought in the Philippines to root out radical Islamists. Japan’s leadership feels the same democratic pressure.
to pull troops out of Iraq as that of South Korea. This has left the Bush Administration with very little positive news for American-Asian relations.

The stakes are as high as ever and the challenges perhaps greater in a region critical to the war on terror and essential for the security of the United States and its allies. To respond to these challenges, President Bush has announced the greatest change in American military policy in fifty years. With the Cold War long gone and a new American initiative in place to fight terrorism, spread democracy and bring freedom around the globe, President Bush has decided to bring home 70,000 troops from Europe and Asia for redeployment in the war on terror. Defense analysts have been encouraging the move for years. The announcement did not come as a surprise and was based on common sense. In fact, the Americans secretly negotiated with their allies in the region to pull out these troops. This move signals not only a change in US policy to direct new resources for a fight against terror but also a possible change in US-Asian relations.

The 37,000 troops located on the DMZ line in South Korea did very little to coerce the North Koreans to the negotiating table. In military strategy, why would America keep all of its troops at the DMZ line to play as pinned rooks? After all, those troops were no more than deterrents against future conflict; but with tensions rising to get North Korea to disarm, those troops became increasingly more and more in danger.

The Americans have learned many key lessons from their latest wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: air power cannot only perform the job of artillery and soldiers, but probably more powerfully and rapidly. In their pursuit of a leaner and meaner fighting force, the United States has decided that stationing many soldiers in a specific part of the world disables movement. An elite fighting force based in America will allow the country to respond quickly to unexpected threats. The White House submitted a report for public consumption dealing with the issue: “It is no longer relevant to measure America’s war-fighting capability by the number of troops and equipment in a particular country or region.”

The question then begs itself: How will this affect the power balance in Asia? Is this a sign of the Americans creeping back to protect “Fortress America” and creeping away from their responsibilities in the Asian continent? The answer ultimately is that while America is pulling out troops and reanalyzing its military strategy in South Korea, it is not pulling out its influence in the region. And it certainly is not pulling its warships from Asian waters nor pulling out of Afghanistan anytime soon. In order to meet the new threats of terrorism, America had to reverse, from President Bush’s perspective, a military policy that was directed towards the old threat of communism.

At first sight, the smaller American presence leaves a power vacuum on important issues facing the continent. In fact, China would welcome such a sign of American pullback from the region so it can reign freely within the area. North Korea’s response to the new plan is the same response as usual from the paranoid regime, fearing that America’s plan is to ratchet up the pressure on the country and preemptively strike. But the change in troop levels does send a new message to the countries involved in the nuclear standoff. It is now more of a responsibility of the parties involved in the region to see to it that North Korea does not go nuclear, and if it already has, to see to it that the regime disarms. The hope may be that the Bush administration wants to appear less standoffish and approach the situation more cooly and calmly.

But at second glance, America is not pulling out its influence from the region financially. China still greatly depends upon America for its exports, as does South Korea for security. Even more than that, this policy change does not guarantee that smaller, more elite American fighting forces will not traverse the Asian continent in the future if American national security is at risk.

The policy change calls for the stream-lining of decisions to fewer command centers in the region as more bases close and more troops go home. The Western Pacific, Northeast Asia, and Central Asia will still hold command posts, training sites, and bases to continue American influence. This shows that while engaged in a war on terror that requires those troops in Europe and Asia for redeployment to other hot spots for terrorism, America is directing a new course to deal with new threats and not the old, antiquated threats of the Cold War. Even more, America’s redeployment plan signifies a fresh, new start to deal with those threats to American security instead of the Bush Administration’s shaky and confrontational handling of Asia so far.
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The Ballot and Democracy in Indonesia
- by Elliot VELOSO

With the United States deeply divided over the state of the national economy, its efforts to rebuild and stabilize Iraq, and the manner in which it has launched its “War on Terror,” many view the upcoming presidential election as one of the most important in recent memory. Across the Pacific Ocean, however, another election of no less importance has just taken place. It will have a significant impact on the economic and political stability of the entire Southeast Asian region. Faced with issues that are no less vexing than their counterparts in the United States, the voters of Indonesia went to the polls in record numbers to cast their ballots between the incumbent President Megawati Sukarnoputri and former general Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono. With the direct election of Yudhoyono to the presidency, the success of the democratic process in this developing country could bring to a close nearly half a century of autocracy and instability and provide new hope for democracy in Indonesia.

Given the recent history of Indonesia’s political system, it seemed unlikely that a successful democratic transition would even be possible. Since the 1600s, Indonesia was a colony under the control of the Dutch East India Company and later the Dutch government. After a brutal occupation by the Japanese during World War II, nationalist rebels formed the Republic of Indonesia on August 17th, 1945. The Dutch government, however, refused to recognize the independence movement and launched an invasion against mandates issued by the United Nations that recognized Indonesian independence. The violence continued till 1949, when Indonesian independence was finally recognized. The new nation struggled amidst poor economic conditions and political instability until September 30th, 1965, when a bloody coup led by Lieutenant Colonel Untung of the palace guard was put down by General Suharto. Seizing the initiative and with the assistance of the CIA, General Suharto himself seized power in a coup and launched massive persecutions of political opponents and dissidents. Between 300,000 to 1 million accused “communists” were arrested and killed without trial, during which General Suharto instituted his “New Order” (Orde Baru) regime. Under his rule, the Indonesian economy and industry grew, boosted by increased oil exports. This economic growth, however, was overshadowed by corruption, inequality, and harsh rule by Suharto and his close network of political elites. Opposition to his dictatorship grew, and in the face of a serious economic depression and widespread riots, Suharto resigned in 1998. His successor, Bucharuddin Jusuf Habibie, was not popular, and was soon replaced when general elections for the Indonesian House of Representatives were held. The popular cleric Abdurrahman Wahid was appointed president, but in 2000 his involvement in two major multi-million dollar scandals was uncovered. He attempted to suspend the legislature, but did not garner any support from the police or military. He was forced to step down, and his vice president, Megawati Sukarnoputri became President.

With the successful conclusion of the September presidential elections, President Yudhoyono now faces many difficult challenges to his administration. At the forefront of these is political corruption, which remains a serious problem in the Indonesian government. With graft and kickbacks being constant problems in many of the outlining provinces, many Indonesian citizens have resorted to petitions and direct legal action to ensure fair government. For example, Timothy Mapes in a recent Wall Street Journal article details how citizens in West Sumatra, upset over the corruption in their local government, launched a campaign of protest with the help of the local media. Finally, after criminal charges were filed, “a court convicted 43 representatives –nearly the entire provincial legislature – for misusing state funds.” Given the widespread and systematic corruption plaguing the government on local and federal levels, and the lack of substantial reform by the Indonesian parliament to combat it, it seems likely that such collective action by citizens will remain their only recourse, at least for now.

Additionally, there is growing concern over security and terrorism. Indonesia is the largest Islamic country in the world, with over 88% of the population Muslim. In addition, the country also boasts an ethnically diverse population, consisting of Javanese,
Sundanese, Madurese, and coastal Malays. With a diverse population with an unfortunate history of ethnic conflict and rising inequality due to accelerated free market reforms, extremist terrorist groups like Jemaah Islamiah have taken hold. The terrible unemployment rate of 8.7%, based on a study in 2003, has only served to fuel the fires of discontent. As a result, terrorism remains a dangerous problem for Indonesia. The terrible terrorist bombings in Bali on October 12th, 2002 and the Australian Embassy Bombings only makes matters worse. With terrorists growing bolder and foreign investment looking elsewhere, Jakarta has serious obstacles to overcome.

Given the pressing nature of these issues, it is clear that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono victory amply reflects popular concerns. Before he entered politics, Mr. Yudhoyono was the general who pursued the terrorists responsible for the Bali terrorist bombings. His tough stance on terrorism received praise from his fellow countrymen as well as from the international community. In addition, he was expelled from President Wahid’s and Sukarnoputri’s administrations over disagreements with their policies. Given the rampant corruption that plagued both administrations, his expulsions gave him the image of a political “outsider,” appealing to voters weary with the political dishonesty in Indonesia. In contrast, Megawati Sukarnoputri had little success in curbing corruption during her tenure, and she was much criticized for her lack of attention on terrorist activities, especially after the Bali bombings. Despite his election, however, many fear that corruption and terrorism will remain for some time.

Despite all these problems, the elections held on September 20th were a remarkable achievement. Despite the threats of violence by terrorist organizations, no attacks were reported at any of the ballot sites. Voters were able to cast their ballots without fear of violence or intimidation. In addition, according to The Jakarta Post, the “People's Voter Education Network (JPPR), which deployed 20,000 monitors in 26 provinces, said while there were cases of vote-buying in some regions before and on election day, the vote was rated as honest.” This conclusion was also reached by the Carter Center, a U.S.-based international vote monitoring organization founded by former President Jimmy Carter. A statement from the group commended Indonesian election officials, noting that “these extremely complex elections were carried out in such an orderly and successful action is a tribute to the hard work of the millions of election officials and the participation of more than 120 million voters.” Given the difficulty of keeping democratic elections fair in many developing nations, the results of this election were indeed remarkable.

The challenges President Yudhoyono will face in his coming administration are daunting. Voters clearly desire strong leadership to ease unemployment, halt terrorism, and clean the political system of corruption. Whether Mr. Yudhoyono is up to the challenge remains to be seen. What this election year has shown is that even in a developing country with a history of oppression and autocratic rule democracy can not only function, but blossom.

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AIDS in Nepal

by Charlotte BENHAM

In Nepal, considered to be one of the poorest countries in Asia, HIV and AIDS threaten to reach epidemic levels in the next sixty years. In a small country with a population of 23.6 million, an estimated 60,000 are currently infected with HIV. Without sufficient intervention, around 100,000-200,000 young adults will become infected with HIV. Approximately 10,000-15,000 AIDS-related deaths could occur annually, which would foster the creation of a concentrated epidemic in the Kathmandu valley area. This grim scenario has yet to come, however, due to aid from numerous governmental, foreign, and grassroots intervention groups that has made Nepal an admirable example of HIV/AIDS intervention in a Third World country.

The first cases of AIDS in Nepal appeared in 1988. Since then, several high-risk groups have been identified as being prone to infection due to certain activities or habits. The group with the highest risk involves drug users that share injection needles in the Kathmandu valley. It has been calculated that 68% of drug users in the capital are infected with HIV. A secondary urban high-risk group is female sex workers, 17% of which are believed to be HIV-infected. Female sex workers are prone to sexually-transmitted diseases (STD). These women include students, street children, refugees, and other financially-challenged people that are forced to enter the trade. In rural areas, migrant workers spread the infection that they contract from Indian sex workers to their female sexual partners at home. This trend is also present among truck drivers and army personnel. Many women also contract and spread the infection after being rescued from abduction into the Indian sex trade, which is a well-developed black market in southern Nepal. It does seem apparent that HIV is more present in urban areas. In part, this may be true, but it is also true that not enough detection work has taken place in rural places to acknowledge definite
trends in the spread of the infection. Activities that pose a high risk of HIV contraction are most popular among young males. It is no surprise then, that they are the most currently infected group (72% of the total infected are male, 54% overall are ages 20-29) and are the most susceptible to future HIV/AIDS.

Responding to the first cases of AIDS in Nepal, the Ministry of Health has founded the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control. It performs blood screenings, promotes educational programs, distributes contraceptives, treats diseases, and trains health care professionals. In 2002, the royal government started a new four-year plan to promote their programs to rural areas in an effort to better control the HIV-ravaged countryside. In addition, international foreign aid is provided by the United Nations, as well as the American and British governments. International non-profit organizations such as Save the Children, the Synergy Project, the Policy Project, and Family Health International offer funding, volunteers, and equipment to both governmental and grassroots organizations. On the local level, many Nepalese-run women’s rights grassroots organizations including The Women’s Rehabilitation Center, The Family Planning Organization of Nepal, and CARE Nepal, provide education for women through advocacy work on STDs, HIV infection, and safe sex. Though detection and prevention work through education have their shortcomings, the movement against HIV and AIDS in Nepal has done much towards fending off an impending epidemic. Indeed, the Nepalese success story serves as an inspiration towards other countries that are still carrying the crippling burden of the world’s deadliest disease on their shoulders.

**Did you know......**

Nepal is the only official Hindu state in the world.

*Source: [http://www.wooster.edu/ambassadors/nepaltfacts.html](http://www.wooster.edu/ambassadors/nepaltfacts.html)*

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To Mangalagama and Back

- by Lisa KIM

“We couldn’t really communicate using Sinhala or English, so in the beginning they sang Sinhala songs for me while I sang songs in Korean and English for them. For lunch we all dipped our hunks of bread into the same bowls of fish curry and dhal. Between icebreakers and discussions we managed to communicate about families, politics, and relationships with the help of my co-worker/translator Tharangani.”


A 10-hour bumpy bus ride from Colombo, across the island of Sri Lanka, will take you to Ampara. Another 30-minute ride west, heading further inland from the Indian Ocean and the east coast, is the beautiful town of Mangalagama. A casual online search of the name will yield results such as “atrocities,” “death,” and “ethnic cleansing.” When I recall my weekend-long journey there two months ago at a place that is half the globe away, I remember a group of Sri Lankans in their twenties who invited me to share a lunch with them on a sunny day outside on their straw mats. They were discussing the possibilities of developing their town through installing badly-needed wells and toilets. My co-worker Tharangani was sitting with all of us, holding our hands and busily translating. She had visions of pairing economic development with dialogue groups. In a few months she hoped to have a similar session with the Tamil youth one hour north in Batticaloa, and eventually bring young people from Mangalagama and Batticaloa together once mutual trust was established. Conflict resolution and transformation are only sustainable when paired with economic development. By bringing wells and toilets to the two border towns, the youth would be able to realize the fruits of nonviolent communication and dispute resolution. Perhaps this would be the first small step towards a genuinely unified Sri Lanka.

“After the workshop they invited us to bathe in the town tank (i.e. lake) with them, which was so refreshing. We got there via bicycle, with boys pedaling while girls sat sideways behind the handlebars. I used the bathing cloth, which was sort of a challenge but kept me covered! But it was so much fun, and somewhat liberating, to just be in the lake—feeling clean and cool under the afternoon sun, sharing soap and sign language, not worrying about not having my shoulders and knees covered because I was sort of adopted as their younger sister.”

Mangalagama was created in 1967 under a government colonization scheme. It was in October of 1995, however, that the town was put under the international spotlight when it was one of the towns
targeted for mass murder by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). A U.S. State Department Human Rights Report that year states that “in October, 120 Sinhalese civilians were massacred by LTTE forces in an attempt to inflame communal violence. Many of the victims were hacked to death.”

The mission of the LTTE is to create a separate homeland state for Tamils in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka called Tamil Eelam. The island has an extremely long history of Dutch, Portuguese, and British colonial occupation. It was through the well-honed British method of divide and rule that the highly educated Tamil minority were awarded a disproportionate number of government posts. They wielded a great amount of political power. Once the British left, the Sinhalese majority started a highly nationalistic campaign to regain government representation disproportionate to their presence. Today, the highly Tamil regions in the northern and eastern sectors of the island are still underdeveloped compared to the cities of the Sinhalese-majority populations in the south and west. The power struggle seems pitted against the Tamils’ favor. This has bred much Tamil frustration, and leading some to support the LTTE in fighting for a homeland where Tamils do not have to live as subordinates. The LTTE is known as perhaps the most well organized and successful terrorist organization in the world. Many say the massacres in 1995 were meant to lead up to a final confrontation that would set into motion the creation of a separate homeland.

Today, many of the young men in Mangalagama join the Guard Force under the Sri Lanka Army because there are no other job opportunities. The young women turn to garment factories in the Free Trade Zone that can get away with paying little. While we were in the area, a Sinhalese man was brutally murdered in the forest and a bomb was thrown into a Buddhist temple, killing two Sinhalese monks. There were fears of LTTE violence flaring up again in the region.

“The Mangalagama workshop was a strong reality check because a lot of the friends I made work for the Sri Lanka Army. The live in one of the Sinhalese-Tamil border villages in the east, meaning they would be some of the first to go if tensions arise in Sri Lanka again.”

27 July 2004
Nugegoda, Sri Lanka.

Lisa KIM ('06) is a third year student at Brandeis University majoring in Politics and International and Global Studies.

Foreigners in Singapore
- by Qi Ying LOO

Did you know that a phone call made from Singapore to overseas countries – such as Australia, China, France, the U.S., and the U.K. – among others, actually costs less than local calls made within Singapore? This might sound strange, but it is true.

It is only natural that the telecommunications companies here in Singapore are banking in on the communication needs of the country’s fast-growing foreign community. Attracted by the opportunities
in education and in the job market, as well as the orderliness and security of this well-governed city-state, Singapore has absorbed tens of thousands of Southeast Asians as well as South Asians and mainland Chinese into its midst. To a lesser degree, Japanese, Koreans, Europeans and Americans are also finding their way to Singapore. Whether they are professionals, students, or menial labourers; whether in high society or in the middle- or lower-classes, foreigners have penetrated every niche of Singapore society. At present, for many of these expatriates and fortune-seekers, family and friends remain in their home countries, contributing to the booming market for inexpensive communication with loved ones back home). The Singapore Government, however, is prepared to grant some of these foreigners permanent resident status, in some cases even citizenship.

Since the island republic’s independence in August 1965, maintaining its population has been quite a headache for the government. Recent studies have indicated that the country’s total fertility rate (TFR) stands at 1.25, which is short of the TFR of 2.1 needed if the population is to replace itself. There continue to be repeated campaigns encouraging marriage and more children, the most recent of which came barely a month ago. In his National Day Rally speech, Singapore’s new Prime Minister Mr. Lee Hsien Loong unveiled even more incentives for parents and their children, including housing loans and education schemes.

The Government, however, is not putting all its eggs into this basket. For years now, Singapore has worked to establish itself as an ideal place for foreign professionals to call home. It is no exaggeration to say that this policy has worked, and very well too. Although most of these foreigners do not take up Singaporean citizenship, a great many of them hold permanent resident status, which contributes to resident population statistics. Other permit holders are classified as being part of the non-resident population. Either way, they contribute towards the expansion of the Republic’s population. More importantly, they and the generations following them generally remain in Singapore and contribute to the workforce as well as the population.

One of the most effective strategies that the Government has developed in attracting foreign talent is the provision of tuition grants and study loans to students. At present, the Singapore Ministry of Education, along with the country’s institutes of higher learning, offer scholarships, grants and loans to citizens of ASEAN, India and mainland China. These represent golden opportunities to many, when one considers the fact that the standard of education in Singapore is widely regarded as being among the best in the Asia-Pacific region. Add to that the fact that tuition grants and loans can be made with little hassle, and one can see why those desirous of high-quality education but cannot, under normal circumstances, afford it, choose to come to Singapore. Although it is true that many students proceed to the U.K., the U.S., and Australia, where tertiary institutions are considered more established and their degrees ‘gilt-edged’, enough stay on to serve the country. Indeed, the Singapore Government considers its investment in foreign students to be very worthwhile.

Of course, there is the undeniable truth that despite the efforts of China and other ASEAN countries to provide incentives to foreign nationals, Singapore arguably remains the preferred base of operations for many American and European multinational companies. Being a strong ally of the U.S. has its advantages, and having a working population fluent in English is another major edge it has over many other countries. Factors such as the benevolent political climate, Singapore’s reputable establishment as the regional financial and economic hub, as well as an international shipping port, convincingly present more incentives for MNCs to set up shop here. Manufacturing may be moved to countries with lower labor costs, but the regional headquarters of many international companies generally remain in Singapore. This is why one will find that European and American expatriates in Singapore are by no means an uncommon sight.

Sometimes, one will even find it impossible to distinguish a foreigner from a Singaporean, especially when these foreigners are also Asian. Many foreigners have already assimilated so well into Singaporean society that you can hardly tell from their accents or their behaviour where they were originally from. Of course, the effects of globalisation are very keenly felt here. Singapore is also very closely connected with other countries, most notably Malaysia, which is just across the Causeway, and with which it shares a great deal of history.

One drawback from the Government’s efforts to attract foreign talent is that many Singaporeans feel short-changed. They feel that the Government is investing more in foreigners than in its own citizens. In offering foreigners so many education and job prospects, Singaporeans consider themselves deprived of these...
opportunities. This has played a part in the increasing emigration of Singaporean citizens to Australia and other Western countries. For the most part, however, foreigners are generally well-accepted by the Singaporeans.

The success of Singapore, a small island country, to establish itself as a highly developed regional hub has very much depended on its foreign workforce. At present, the inflow of foreigners into Singapore does not show any signs of abating anytime soon. The Government’s benevolent policies towards foreigners are expected to continue to draw more foreign talent into the country.

Qi Ying LOO is a first year student at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore majoring in Accountancy.

Parameswara and the Founding of Melaka (Melacca)
- by Yi Zheng TAN

At the eastern peninsula of Malaysia, a small and historical state was a vital port in the region about 500 years ago. Since the 15th century, Melacca played a significant role as the center of trade for merchants from China, India and the Middle East. It also served as the Islamic center in the region until its occupation by the Portuguese in 1511.

According to a widely accepted legend, Parameswara, a prince from Palembang in South Sumatera, Indonesia, founded Melaka in 1400. After a failed uprising in his homeland, the prince and several of his most trusted followers fled the country and set out to find a new establishment.

He crossed the straits northwards and found himself in a small island called Temasik, which is today’s Singapore. He immediately took power from the reigning ruler who paid tributes to the influential Siamese kingdom and proclaimed himself the ruler. After a short reign there, Parameswara was driven out of Temasik by Siamese attacks. The exiled Parameswara and his followers traveled north again in search for a suitable place. He landed on a place called Muar where he settled there for 6 years. Afraid of the possible attacks from the Siamese kingdom, he fled the place and journeyed north, persistently holding on to his cause.

While the group traveled upwards, they came to a serene place at a river bank overlooking the Straits of Melacca. The prince rested under a large shady tree while admiring the view of the surroundings. He sent out his hunting dogs to look for food. The dogs caught sight of a mousedeer and started to catch it. As they were trying, an amazing event took place – the mousedeer, very much smaller than the fierce dogs, courageously kicked them straight down into the river! Parameswara was astounded by this incident and perceived it as a good omen. “This land is special, for the weak triumphs over the strong. I shall build a settlement here…” he thought.

It was also then that he decided on the name of this place. He turned to one of his followers and asked, “What, if I must know, the name of the tree that I am sitting under?”

“It is called the Melaka tree, your highness,” the follower replied.

“We shall call our new country Melaka.”

Aside from this legend, which has become the bedtime story for many Malaysian children, there are also other several myths about how Melaka got its name. Among others, Gasper Correa, a historian, wrote in 1551 that Melaka was derived from the word “Malagas.”

According to his records, Malay settlements had already existed when Parameswara first arrived at Melaka. Parameswara found out that the people in a fishing village nearby made their living by selling salted fish called “Mulagas” or “Malagas” to the visiting merchants. He therefore named the place after the salted fish, calling it a trading center for selling “Malagas.” Passing from mouth to mouth, “Malagas” gradually became Melaka.

Another myth states that Melaka was derived from “Melakat,” an Arabian word that means a site for gathering. It is believed that Arabian traders named the port after “Melakat” because it attracted merchants from all over the world. However, critics believe that this explanation has flaws. People find it hard to believe that an Arabian word could spread its influence prevalently among the people because the Arabs accounted for only a small portion of the local population. However, it is worth to note that some Arabian words have become part of the Malay language a long time ago.

Did you know......

More than 50,000 ships sail through the Melaccan Straits each year, carrying about one-third of the world’s goods and one-half of its oil supply.

*Source: http://www.politinfo.com/articles/article_2004_06_6_5757.html*
Since the founding of Melaka, it underwent rapid development and became a large trading center in the Southeast Asian region. Its success was highly attributed to the superb management of its Sultans and their assistants, and its strategic location in the Straits of Melacca (an important that route that connects merchants from the East and the West). In the 15th century, it assumed the role as one of the most important trading centers in the Southeast Asian region. Traders from China, India, the Middle East, and Europe came to trade rare spices, tin ore and gold. Its cozy relationship with the powerful Chinese empire enticed other neighboring states to grow dependent on Melaccan protection. Besides, the port was where Islam was introduced to the Malay community, when Sultan Muzaffar Shah declared Islam as the official religion in Melaka.

Nowadays, Melaka remains an important tourist attraction in Malaysia, offering multiple historical tourist sites. A’ Famosa, a fortress built by the Portuguese and standing high on the hill overlooking the Straits, is one of the most popular tourist spots in Melaka. The followers of the Chinese princess Li Poh, who was married to the Sultan of Melacca, built Hang Li Poh Well, which is now another main attraction in Melaka. The Baba and Nyonya Museum portrays the unique culture of noble Chinese descendants whose customs has been immensely influenced by the Malay’s. Indeed, antique collectors should never pass up on the vast variety of antique collections on Jonker street. Melaka – a paradise of untold riches, a place where I am proud to call home.

**Yi Zheng TAN is a second year student at Cornell University majoring in Chemistry.**

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**What is the Brandeis Pluralism Alliance?**

The Brandeis Pluralism Alliance (BPA) aims:

- To create opportunities for a large cross-section of students to question identity and community at a deeper level, and to reach a more thoughtful and enduring understanding of these issues.

- To create alliances among different campus groups addressing issues of pluralism and unity.

- To foster networking, communication, and coalition building (e.g., having two or more clubs or organizations co-sponsor a project).

- To provide funds for creative new pluralism and unity programming involving students and faculty.

Visit us at [www.brandeis.edu/das/pluralism](http://www.brandeis.edu/das/pluralism)!
Congratulations to Monsoon as it begins its second year!

It has been our privilege to know Monsoon’s founding Editors-in-Chief, Kassian Polin and Benjamin Ngan, even though they are majoring in the arts while we tend to bury ourselves among reagents, test tubes, and cells in a science lab. Kassian and Benjamin are graduates of Diocesan Boys’ School in Hong Kong, where Elaine’s oldest brother was the first Asian Headmaster. Drawn by such strong ties in this small world, we closely followed the “birth” of Monsoon in fall 2003, with admiration and excitement.

Monsoon is the first Asian journal of Brandeis University. Three issues were released in the past year, featuring interesting articles on a variety of subjects that have Asian themes but were written for both Asian and non-Asian readers. Monsoon has successfully attracted contributions from students, faculty, and administrators, as well as from writers outside Brandeis. The last issue included a beautiful painting by a Brandeis student on its cover.

The editorial board worked hard toward the goal of inaugurating such a unique publication on campus. The board works even harder and with pleasure to make every issue of this journal outstanding. Their commitment and passion to this project is exemplary. It exemplifies the passion of Brandeis students that provides a strong motivating force and inspiration to both of us as teachers.

Brandeis University is a very special place. From its beginning, it has welcomed students of diverse races and faiths, as well as different ethnic, cultural and national backgrounds. In principle, this diversity has been valued by students, faculty and staff. Brandeis has been a university that treasures creativity, individuality, and scholarship, including respect for different agendas and cultures. The two of us—one an Asian, British subject and the other a Caucasian American—met at Brandeis more than thirty years ago and started an easy-going, harmonious, “east-meets-west” friendship. (Our friendship began, in part, with ping-pong, where usually east beat west.) Our friendship grew into an incredible 24/7 partnership in life and work. We remain happy together at work and at home as we appreciate and treasure each other’s differences. As biologists, we also know that the biological differences between us, and among all humans, are minute—except, of course, the differences between the genders. Our cultural differences often are larger, and it is wonderful to have the opportunity to learn each other’s ways of life. We believe one of Monsoon’s messages, and indeed one of the principles on which Brandeis was founded, is to embrace and treasure all our differences, bringing different viewpoints to Brandeis, learning from each other, and working together harmoniously toward the goal of making this small world into a better and friendlier place.

We would like to wish all of you a good and happy academic year, and to wish Monsoon’s editorial board continued success in their pursuit of excellence, in publishing the best Asian journal at Brandeis.
OUR MISSION
• To provide an Asian perspective on political, economic and cultural affairs in Asia, and to highlight Asia’s relations with the rest of the globe

GIVING
• To send a check (made out to “Brandeis University Student Union c/o Monsoon”), please mail it to “Benjamin Ngan, MB 0137, Brandeis University, P.O. Box 549239, Waltham, MA 02454-9239”

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• We welcome articles from all members of the Brandeis community and beyond
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• Articles from students should include the writer’s full name, college, school year and choice of concentration.
• Articles from non-student contributors should include the writer’s full name and occupation

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