Globalized humanitarianism: U.S. imperial formation in Asia and the Pacific through the Indochinese refugee problem

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Globalized Humanitarianism:  
U.S. Imperial Formation in Asia and the Pacific through the Indochinese Refugee Problem

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Ayako Sahara

Committee in charge:
Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Chair
Professor Joseph Hankins
Professor Adria Imada
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2012
The dissertation of Ayako Sahara is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2012
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother.
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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Globalized Humanitarianism:
U.S. Imperial Formation in Asia and the Pacific through the Indochinese Refugee Problem

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2012

Professor Yen Le Espiritu, Chair

Deploying globalized humanitarianism as a frame of analysis, my dissertation (re)conceptualizes the U.S. Indochinese refugee resettlement as an involvement which exemplified the U.S.’s policy objective of trying to sustain its global power in the region during the Cold War. Engaging in a transnational discourse analysis by citing published materials from both the U.S. and Japan, this dissertation elucidates the ways in which the U.S. employed humanitarianism to carry on its resettlement plan and pressure other countries to participate.

The evacuation and resettlement of Indochinese refugees was not necessary an act of forgetting the war, but rather an act of rescuing the “wounded,” enabling the U.S. to be a savior in Asia and the Pacific. This rescuer image of the U.S. is historically rooted in the U.S.’s presence there. Even though the war in Vietnam could not display the mightiness of the U.S., the rescue of the refugees and orphans at the end of the war
allowed the U.S. public to differentiate the U.S.’s evacuation from the act of war. The theater of rescue had enormous effects on changing the image of the failure of the war. The act of rescue did not stop with the U.S.’s evacuation from the region. A small group of officers from the State Department propelled Indochinese refugee admissions on a large scale by collaborating with the media and mobilizing various organizations. This dissertation points out that the people involved in the resettlement effort had a humanitarian impulse to help the refugees, but they also upheld the larger context of an anticommmunist understanding of the righteousness of U.S. power in Asia.

At the same time, the Indochinese refugee problem became an international burden sharing project. Internationalization of the resettlement efforts allowed the U.S. to act as a leader in Asia, while Asia, especially the first asylum countries, played the role of surrogate refuges to the U.S. This process was also an externalization of the refugee processing to Asia to secure the U.S. border. The U.S. government honed the concept of extraterritoriality, blurring the concept of territory by furthering their association with Asian countries. This internationalization was made possible through the cooperation of other countries. This dissertation examines the relationship between the U.S. and Japan in particular, because I want to show that U.S. hegemony in Asia is not a simple form of domination in which the U.S. coerces other countries to collaborate, but rather an intricate complex of power that enables the U.S. to act as a leader. Japan for the first time opened its doors to the refugees and funded the UNHCR with enormous amounts of money to assist the U.S. in the Indochinese refugee resettlement. By doing so, the Government of Japan gained the honor of being a member of the West that was not only wealthy but moral.
INTRODUCTION

It wasn’t until months after the fall of Saigon, and much bloodshed, that America conducted a huge relief effort, airlifting more than 100,000 refugees to safety. Tens of thousands were processed at a military base on Guam, far away from the American mainland. President Bill Clinton used the same base to save the lives of nearly 7,000 Kurds in 1996. But if you mention the Guam Option to anyone in Washington today, you either get a blank stare of historical amnesia or hear that “9/11 changed everything.”

Recently, with the end of the Iraq War, the memory of the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees at the conclusion of the Vietnam War has reemerged as an exceptional rescue effort. This perception resonates with previous studies that consider the admission of the refugees as “providing safe harbor for the boat people.” This rescue narrative has been an integral part of U.S. power, justifying its military and political actions. In response, this dissertation challenges the perception of the U.S. as rescuing allies. Moreover, I articulate the U.S. resettlement of Indochinese refugees as a U.S. moral and racial project spanning the end-of-war and post-Vietnam War period.

From 1975 to the 1990’s, more than three million people fled from former Indochina. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), from 1975 to 1997, UNHCR camps in first asylum countries, which were mostly Asian countries, processed 1,834,013 refugees; resettlement countries, which were mostly Western countries, admitted 1,954,170 refugees. Since the U.S. admitted 1,287,399

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1 The ‘Guam Option’ that the author mentions references the use of Guam as a staging area for refugees, to resettle them to the mainland U.S. Kirk W. Johnson, “In Iraq, Abandoning Our Friends,” *New York Times* December 15, 2011.
people in total, many studies focus on U.S. refugee policy and the adaptation of refugees into U.S. society. Indeed, because of its involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem, the U.S. developed new refugee policies in coordination with the UNHCR, which carried out international refugee resettlement on an unprecedented scale. The outflow of refugees from former French Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam), referred to as the Indochinese refugee “crisis” or “problem” by the United Nations, originated in 1975 and peaked at 390,000 in 1979. As the name itself reveals, both the government and the public recognized the phenomenon as a regional “problem.” Thus, imperial and colonial understandings of the area and its people contributed to their subsequent criminalization.

This dissertation asks: Why does the end of the war emerge as a rescue operation instead of as an example of U.S. failure and abandonment? How did this rescue continue after the war up until the 1990s? Why and how was U.S. power in Asia and the Pacific sustained? Why and how did the U.S. dominant narrative of rescue and liberation persist? Domestically, as Yen Le Espiritu suggests, the U.S. embraced a “we-win-even-when-we-lose syndrome” after its failure regarding its war efforts in former Indochina. Globally employing humanitarianism, the Indochinese refugee issue marked the moment that enabled the U.S. to carry on its geopolitical and ideological struggle against Communism in Asia. This maneuver mobilized other nations to support the U.S. political agenda of

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isolating newly-established governments from the international political realm of human rights violations and further delineating the (im)moral characterizations. The end of the Vietnam War and its aftermath were moments when the Ford and Carter administrations represented Indochinese refugees as the white man’s burden in order to facilitate national rehabilitation after the U.S.’s defeat in the Vietnam War. I situate the establishment of the Refugee Act of 1980 as a process of recuperation, since the resettlement reinforced the narrative that painted the U.S. as the “refuge of the world.” The idea of the U.S. as “refuge of the world” and “rescuer of friends”, however, needs to be re-contextualized; I suggest that Indochinese refugee resettlement be read as a U.S. strategy to reclaim morality through Indochinese refugee bodies. This echoes what postcolonial theorist Edouard Glissant reminds us: “The West is not in the West. It is a project, not a place.” I propose understanding the U.S. in a similar manner – less as a nation-state confined to a particular geographical region, and more as a project (entailing humanitarianism) extending across Asia and the Pacific. Indochinese refugee resettlement was a part of the U.S. project that makes the U.S. what it is.

Connecting the arguments of Critical Refugee Studies with scholars who conceptualize humanitarianism as a new form of imperialism, I examine the ways in which the Indochinese refugee problem emerged and functioned as an opportunity for the U.S. to represent and reconstruct its power, not only in Asia and the Pacific but also

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7 Lisa Yoneyama claims that according to the myth of “liberation and rehabilitation,” “the enemy population’s liberation from the barbaric and the backward and its successful rehabilitation into an assimilated ally are both anticipated and explained as an outcome of the U.S. military interventions.” Lisa Yoneyama, "Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice" *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6, no. 1 (2003), 58-9.

globally, through the management and control of refugee bodies. Engaging in a transnational discourse analysis by reading materials published in both the U.S. and Japan, I want to elucidate the ways in which the U.S. employed humanitarianism to carry on its resettlement plan and to pressure other countries to participate. By doing so, this project points out the connections between U.S. humanitarianism after the Vietnam War and broader imperial and racial discourses, demonstrating the complexities of U.S. refugee resettlement policies, discussions, and decisions. My research focuses on the time period from 1973 to 1980, shedding light on not only the genealogy of U.S. humanitarian discourse, but also on the emergence of the trans-Pacific refugee figure. The first meeting of the International Conference on Indochinese Refugees in 1979 coincided with the peak in the number of Indochinese refugees, making it a crucial moment for the international community to institutionalize the refugee resettlement in the way the U.S. desired. However, my project is not limited to this time period but rather uses the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a lens to expose the nature of U.S. Empire by connecting this resettlement to U.S. imperial, colonial, and military history in Asia and the Pacific.

End of the Vietnam War?

Important to understanding fully the Indochinese refugee resettlement is a reframing of how we think about the end of the war. The way in which the U.S. government has presented the refugee issue as a humanitarian issue and not a military one from its beginning in 1975 enabled the government to lessen the effects of its defeat after
the war. Moreover, after May 1975, the U.S. insisted that the UNHCR issue a worldwide appeal for commitments to resettle the Indochinese displaced outside their country. The appeal was not only regional but also global. The U.S. government expected that a worldwide call through UNHCR would attract attention from countries around the world and would solve the Indochinese refugee situation in Asia. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger planned the globalization of the resettlement of Indochinese refugees with U.S. interests in mind: “These refugees will require temporary subsistence, transportation and resettlement aid. We proposed that the U.S. be generous in helping these people. We plan to provide such help through our Embassies, voluntary agencies and international organizations. Their assistance will contribute to the defense, security or foreign policy interests of the United States.”

He envisioned the refugee assistance as a globalized system in which the U.S. would assume leadership to consolidate its power in Asia. Here, power means the possession of controlling influence. The U.S. needed international cooperation with the refugee issue not only to affirm U.S. humanitarianism but also to validate U.S. policy and power. In this way, regardless of the war’s result, the power dynamics in Asia did not change; thus, I consider the refugee issue as marking the U.S. ideological political transition from ‘anti-Communist empire’ to ‘human rights empire.’

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9 For instance, former president Gerald Ford stated that the U.S. would “make a maximum humanitarian effort to help care for and feed these hopeless victims.” Jimmy Carter, Public Papers of the President, I: 179.

10 Robinson, Terms of Refuge, 24.


12 Aihwa Ong suggests that “the withdrawal of U.S. troops from mainland Southeast Asia was in a sense the beginning of the end of the cold war”; thus it is possible to consider that the end of the Vietnam War is
From this perspective, the end of the defeat of the Vietnam War can be seen as the beginning of the grand victory of the Cold War. Odd Arne Westad defines the ‘Cold War’ as “the period in which the global conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union dominated international affairs, roughly between 1945 and 1991.” According to Westad, the Cold War was fought in the Third World especially during the 1970s and the early 1980s. Thus, the beginning of the Indochinese refugee resettlement marked a significant moment for the U.S. government and the public to continue the war against the Soviet Union. In fact, the Cold War was “quite hot” in Asia, because it was not only a standoff between superpowers but a conflict fought in Asia and the Pacific.

The U.S. Indochinese refugee policy offered a different narration of U.S. war efforts in the region, revising the history, memory and meaning of the Vietnam War. Even after the Vietnam War, Henry Kissinger did not believe in the “geopolitical” victory for North Vietnam, claiming that “they [the Vietnamese] have achieved an ideological victory and a geopolitical defeat.” He could claim the U.S. geopolitical victory because U.S. domination was sustained in Asia and the Pacific. This geopolitical victory was slowly secured through the creation of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations).

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14 Ibid.
16 Telegram, “Meeting With Malik,” File Indonesia-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE-NODIS (3), National Security Advisor Files: President Country Files, Box 6, Ford Library
17 Social scientist Thomas Jackson mentions that “In the panoramic view of the Vietnam War in the context of the American Cold War victory, the war can be described as tactical victory, strategic defeat, geopolitical victory.” Thomas Jackson, “Geopolitics and the Vietnam War: Pyrrhic Victory’s Antonym” *Geopolitics*, 14: 4, 654.
in 1967, which promoted U.S.-Japanese-Southeast Asian economic and military cooperation. Furthermore, Thomas Borstelmann contextualizes U.S. policy under the Cold War in the particular interest: “Confronted with the erosion of European colonial control of Asia and Africa, U.S. policy makers sought to contain the expansion of Soviet influence by building a multiracial, anti-Communist alliance of the West and the Third World.” In this way, the refugee resettlement was the perfect opportunity for the U.S. to pursue “multiracial alliance” to fight against the Soviet Union.

Of course, some historians have seen the end of the Vietnam War as the “end of Manifest Destiny” or as marking the “limits of U.S. empire.” The Vietnam War was over because the U.S. had to leave the region without choice. However, the U.S. power in Asia and the Pacific did not suddenly disappear and the U.S. conflict with the Soviet did not vanish at that moment. The U.S. as a project was sustained after the war’s end. Mahmood Mamdani emphasizes the impact of the loss of the Vietnam War for the U.S.: “the era of proxy wars that began with America’s defeat in Vietnam closed with the invasion of Iraq.” The end of the Vietnam War was not the end of the U.S. as a project but its shift. The U.S. strategically secured its power in Asia and the Pacific to continue

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18 Political scientist Saul Cohen also claims that the Asia-Pacific rim is the third geopolitical power center of the maritime realm. According to him, all three maritime centers and the trilateral Europe-U.S.-Japan trade network have provided the base of Western economic power. Saul Cohen, Geopolitics: the Geography of International Relations, 2nd ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 295.
21 Mahmood Mamdani, Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Root of Terror, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005), 258.
its war against Communism through the Indochinese refugee problem.22 This stability of the U.S. as a liberal project was maintained with its white and non-white allies through refugee resettlement. The Indochinese refugee resettlement enabled the cooperation of various countries to sustain U.S. hegemony in Asia and the Pacific.

This resonates with what David Scott coins the “colonial governmentality” of the modern colonial state. He states that with the formation of the political rationality of the modern colonial state, not only the rules of the political game but the political game itself changed; not only have the relation of forces between colonizer and colonized changed but the terrain of the political struggle itself.23 His way of looking at Sri Lanka’s history opens up possibilities of writing colonial/postcolonial history as a transformation of power—as colonial power adopting a different strategy and working on and through different targets.24 His intervention is valuable for my project because it allows me to analyze U.S. power not only as governmentality but as a transformative practice. Even though former Indochina was not a direct colony of the U.S., the intention of the Vietnam War needs to be seen as a U.S. imperial/colonial extension.25 Thus, the Indochinese

24 Ibid., 213-4.
25 Here, I use imperial and colonial interchangeably because in the context of the Vietnam War, the way that the U.S. supported the South Vietnam was not only imperial but also colonial. In this way, I do not necessarily differentiate imperialism and colonialism in the context of extension of U.S. power to Asia and the Pacific, because the U.S. ultimately desires to hold control over the territory and people of Asia and the Pacific even though the U.S. does not possess its colonies in a traditional sense, with the exception of Hawaii, Guam and the Pacific Islands. Frederick Cooper defines imperialism as “the exercise of power by a state beyond its borders” and colonialism as “the erection by a state of an apparatus of administrative control over peoples who are defined as distinct.” Following his definition, I analyze the extension of U.S. power in Asia and the Pacific as U.S. imperialism as well as colonialism. Frederick Cooper, “Colonialism and Imperialism” In An Encyclopedia of Africa: South of the Sahara, ed. John Middleton (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1997), 468.
refugee resettlement marked the moment when the U.S. changed the game and the terrain of the game to sustain its empire in Asia and the Pacific.  

**Continuation of U.S. domination in Asia: From Colonialism to Soft Power**

The U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was a means of expanding its empire from the Pacific to mainland Asia; but how did U.S. domination in Asia and the Pacific begin and continue after the war? The effects of the war in Asia were tremendous, economically, politically, and culturally. To become a world empire, the U.S. needed its own allies to stabilize the political and economic situations in Asia. In the name of defending freedom, or Western liberal democracy, the war provided tremendous profits for Japanese and South Korean economies. U.S. war efforts in former Indochina had already managed and organized Asia through an existing satellite system, as the U.S. mobilized Asian countries such as South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Japan as allies. In this way, the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was a tool in extending its imperial coalition from the Pacific to mainland Asia by mobilizing countries in the region.

Since the formation of the U.S. as a global power has a long history in Asia and the Pacific, the U.S. involvement in the Indochinese refugee issue is not the sudden

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26 Philip Golub writes against the view of U.S. decline during the 1970s. “If that is so, decline is not a useful prism in explaining the imperial turn. Indeed, rather than declining, the U.S. found itself in the aftermath of the Cold War in ‘the best of all possible worlds’ (Cumings, 1999: 214), having decisive if temporary competitive advantages over all of its potential strategic rivals and economic challenges.” Philip Golub, “Imperial Will and the Crisis of U.S. hegemony,” *Review of International Political Economy*, vol. 11, no.4, Global Regulation (Oct, 2004), 768.

27 For example, due to the Vietnam War, South Korea gained 17 billion dollars from the U.S. from 1966 to 1971, and Japan got about 70 billion dollars from 1965 to 1972. Hiroshi Matsuoka, *Betonnamu sensō* [The Vietnam War] (Tokyo: chuôkoron shinsha, 2001), 219.

28 Thus, for Asia, the Vietnam War is illustrated as the war in which the U.S. supplied ammunition, Japan sold goods, and South Korea sold blood (South Korea dispatched soldiers). *Betonnamu sensō no kiroku* [Record of the Vietnam War] (Tokyo: otsuki shoten), 175.
byproduct of the end of the Vietnam War but rather emerged through a long history of U.S. intervention in the area. Actual U.S. colonial/imperial expansion in Asia and the Pacific began with the annexation of the Philippines, Guam and Hawaiʻi in 1898. The U.S. imposed English as the primary language and installed an American style educational system. American colonialism in the Philippines continued in the form of imperialism after its independence in 1946 “through trade, foreign assistance, and military bases.” Since 1898, Guam also has been “one of the United States’ most important overseas military bases and one of its most official, but least contested, colonial possessions.” Moreover, despite the anti-annexation struggle led by Kanaka Maoli, Hawaiʻi was forced into the U.S. territory and their resistance has been forgotten in American historiography.

Since its start, the U.S. has represented imperial overseas expansion as a moral mission. Colonialism itself frequently came in a similar moral language—the need to manage those who are not capable of managing themselves in order to either control the threat they represent or to civilize them. This is why U.S. overseas expansion has often been casted as a moral duty. William Appleman Williams further argues that this moral

30 Ibid., 24. I use the word imperialism because the U.S. does not possess the Philippines as its colony anymore, but it retains U.S. power and influence over the Philippines.
33 For example, Hofstadter maintains that there were anti-imperialists who opposed the idea of the U.S. expansion in the late nineteenth century; however, they could not override arguments for annexation, since moral and psychological themes, “expressed in the words Duty and Destiny,” were more powerful. These themes were not only justifications for wars and territorial gains, but also actually desires of the colony. Hofstadter also writes, “What might have seemed a sin became transformed into a positive obligation, a duty.” I want to assert that aspiration for colonization itself was a moral duty. Richard Hofstadter, “Cuba, the Philippines and Manifest Destiny” In *The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays* (New York: Knopf, 1965), 174.
duty was at the heart of U.S. imperial expansion since the beginning of its formation as a nation. U.S. colonialism does not actually occupy the land of the area but takes over political and economical control. This desire for control, Williams asserts, derives from an idea that other people cannot really solve their problems and improve their lives unless they go about it in the same way as the U.S. According to him, U.S. foreign policy is a means of colonialism that violates the self-determination of others. His view helps me to analyze U.S. domination in Asia and the Pacific since U.S. colonialism in Asia continues.

After 1945, the U.S. turned the Pacific Basin into an “American lake,” and through colonization and militarization extended its power to Asia. Extending its power from the Pacific, the U.S. militarized Asia to sustain its hegemony. Choosing Japan as a partner in the region, the U.S. remilitarized Japan quickly after occupation and provided it a geopolitical position as a lesser imperial partner. The Japanese role in Asia became a significant one by providing Okinawa as a U.S. military base and an outpost in order to secure military domination in Asia. Bases not only in Japan but also in Hawai‘i, Guam, South Korea, and the Philippines functioned as outposts of U.S. empire. The power of the U.S. in the region is encompassed by a combination of militaristic, economic, cultural and political superiority.

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34 He articulates the empire-building process by examining Open Door Policy, which he defines as a form of colonialism, because it was derived from the proposition that America’s overwhelming economic power could cast the economy and politics of the poorer, weaker, underdeveloped countries into a pro-American mold. William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972; 1962; 1959), 57.

35 It originates from economically driven policy that craves sustained, ever-increasing overseas economic expansion upon which policy makers believe that American domestic well-being depends. This is why, as Williams elucidates, American domestic well-being has been externalized. There is no division of the domestic and the foreign when U.S. policies are argued. Ibid., 13.

U.S. alliances with Asian countries are what Neferti Tadiar coins “capitalist alliances in Asia.” These alliances have been a financial project, especially after American company executives began situating themselves in the trilateral Europe-U.S.-Japan trade network to provide a base for Western economic power. This kind of trilateralism emerged amidst the specific circumstances of the official end of the Vietnam War (1973) to promote “both economic growth and the recovery of America’s former hegemony in the non-Communist world.” I maintain that the U.S. necessitated this trilateral structure of the world to uphold U.S. power. Furthermore, the Carter administration particularly emphasized the human rights issues to appeal to the American public as well as the international community to reclaim the justice of the U.S. through the extension of global capitalism. Accordingly, because U.S. domination in Asia and the Pacific was sustained by the financial and political stability of the relations between the U.S. and its Asian allies after the end of the Vietnam War, international relation scholars argued that U.S. hegemony in the region persisted, not through hard power but rather through soft power. According to Joseph S. Nye Jr. who coined the term ‘soft

37 Neferti Xina M. Tadiar, *Fantasy-Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong; London: Hong Kong University Press; Eurospan, 2004).
38 Political Scientist Saul Cohen claims that the Asia-Pacific rim is the third geopolitical power center of the maritime realm. Cohen also states, “Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia began to see that their strategic interests lay within the Maritime Realm.” Saul Cohen, *Geopolitics: the Geography of International Relations*, 2nd ed., (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 295; 300. The Trilateral Commission was established by David Rockefeller in 1973 and comprised of corporate executives and politicians from the U.S., Europe and Japan.
39 Former President Jimmy Carter was a member of the Trilateral Commission which recognized the need for greater unity in the trilateral world of North America, Western Europe and Japan. Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, *America and the Cold War, 1941-1991* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 393-4.
41 For instance, this kind of need of American commitment in Asia has been claimed by so many scholars. Joseph Nye writes: “The concerns about American withdrawal heard today were voiced 20 years ago as well, after the Vietnam War. For the security and prosperity of today to be maintained for the next 20 years,
power’ in his book *Bound to Lead*, unlike hard power which is military and economic might, soft power is the capability of “getting others to want the outcomes that you want—[it] co-opts people rather than coerces them.”42 He emphasizes the importance of winning the hearts and minds of people of the world to spread the U.S. value as the global value. The fact that Nye is currently the North American chairman of the Trilateral Commission signifies that capitalist alliance is the basis of the maintaining the soft power.43

The end of the Vietnam War was the moment of transition from hard power and liberalism to soft power and neoliberalism. It occurred through the Indochinese refugee resettlement, which emphasized the greatness of American cultural, political and financial power. This mirrors Joseph Nye’s claims that the soft power of a country rests on its culture, political values and foreign policies.44 I assert that the Indochinese refugee resettlement was a moment when the U.S. turned itself into the promoter and protector of human rights. Through the facilitation of refugee resettlement, the U.S. gained self-righteousness in American culture and morality, as assimilation of the refugees proved the greatness and benevolence of American society. In retrospect, the refugee resettlement was a neoliberal project as well because it stressed individual efforts, enabling the government to cut resources to it, reversing the trajectory established by the

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civil rights movements. In order to facilitate the refugee resettlement, Ford and Carter administrations brought charity into governmental works on an unprecedented scale. This restructuring of government-sponsored charity not only enabled the refugee resettlement to emerge in a moral language but also, ironically, hindered the downward redistribution of wealth. Thus, the Indochinese refugee resettlement was a U.S. imperial project that employed the participation of other countries to prove the capability and dominance of U.S. cultural, political, and financial power.

**Humanitarian Imperialism**

Deploying globalized humanitarianism as a frame of analysis, my dissertation (re)conceptualizes U.S. Indochinese refugee resettlement as an involvement that exemplified U.S. policy in the region during the Cold War to sustain itself as a global power. I challenge the humanitarian impulse as an imperialist and colonialist desire since policy makers have long employed humanitarianism to justify U.S. interventions around the world by coining them as rescues. Although William Appleman Williams differentiates the humanitarian impulse from a civilizing mission that came from confidence in American superiority, I assert that the humanitarian impulse has to be examined as the cause to justify the mission. Scholars have considered humanitarianism as apolitical for both those who offer help and those who need help. Wendy Brown further argues that this takes the shape of an “antipolitics” which is “a moral discourse

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centered on pain and suffering rather than political discourse of comprehensive justice.”

The moral discourse has not been able to provide radical solutions for those who need them but has supplied justice for those who have power. By employing humanitarianism, liberalism, which operated by a logic of covert imperialism, has been able to practice statecraft differently from overt colonialism.

In a way, as Ann Stoler points out, both overt colonialism and liberalism share “imperial systems of knowledge production enabled by and enabling of coercive practices.” As Gayatri Spivak points out, the West as a savior is a “long-term effect” of imperialism. When the Indochinese refugee issue became the humanitarian issue and the Western effort, it reflects “the moral logic of imperialism.” This is what Edward Said calls as an “illusion of benevolence,” where imperialism appears as a moral, benevolent power. Hence, human rights discourse provides the “moral currency” that has been sustaining the power of the West, since the concept of human rights is possession of the West. Randall Williams suggests that human rights politics “produces an international division of humanity which renders largely invisible and illegible all forms of struggle that do not adhere to the demands of an appellative structure of redress.”

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46 Brown, "The Most We Can Hope For…": Human Rights and the Politics of Fatalism, 453. Her broader argument in The States of Injury is that a politics of recognizing wounds and caring for those with those wounds is endemic to the conduct of liberal statecraft.
52 Ibid., 32.
main point is that in employing human rights discourse, we leave unexamined “the excluded, contaminating structures of colonial racism and oppression.” His view of the international division of humanity is critical for my project because it allows me to examine not only the limitation of universalism but also the possibility that the employment of human rights discourse may be enforcing national policy overseas. In addition, Sally Engle Merry’s argument on how human rights discourse works in a nation-state framework also provides a way to understand how it becomes a tool of empire. Human rights discourse legitimizes nation-state based politics and sometimes violence by certain nation-states, since it allows intervening internal affairs to be seen as a humanitarian mission.

Moreover, Ann Stoler claims that “treating humanitarianism as the ruse, the mask, or ‘the packaging’ of empire, as do some of empire’s critics, misses a fundamental point.” What it misses is humanitarianism as the foundation of empire, which is the impulse for expansion. Stoler identifies the idea of this humanitarian impulse as “sympathy” which “conferred distance, required inequalities of position and possibility, and was basic to the founding and funding of imperial enterprises.” She further argues that they were “core features of empire that the elaboration of such sentiments helped to

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53 Ibid., 69.
54 She notes: “It [human rights] envisions the state as responsible for creating these conditions of life and the individual as responsible for making rights claims on the state.” Sally Engle Merry, Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 220.
55 There are also feminist critiques of human rights discourse. For example, Juliette Hua advances a critique of human rights discourse and offers feminist responses claiming that the logic of inclusion furthers a linear notion of progress without a needed structural change in underlying neoliberalism. Julietta Y. Hua, "The Object of "Rights": Third World Women and the Production of Global Human Rights Discourse" University of California, San Diego), 302.
57 Ibid.
The nature of humanitarianism allows empires not only to control other countries and territories—just as the annexation of the Philippines validated Anglo-Saxon superiority for the U.S.—but also to sustain social hierarchies by (re)producing objects of rescue. Stoler claims that: “Social hierarchies were bolstered by sympathy for empire’s downtrodden subjects.” Following her analysis, one can say that humanitarianism works as a myth, similar to the Frontier Thesis and Manifest Destiny, that sanitizes the militaristic aspect of U.S. expansion and transforms it into a benevolent movement, since humanitarianism can provide morality for the acts of empire. Reading humanitarianism in the context of imperialism and colonialism calls into question American exceptionalism and the ways the U.S. has employed it to differentiate itself from Western imperialism and colonialism so as not to identify the U.S. as an empire.

However, the U.S. has been an empire, a powerful liberal and capital enterprise transcending its national boundaries, especially since the end of 19th century. Michael

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58 Ibid.
59 Superiority of the white race provides validation for colonization. Thus, the annexation of the Philippines was the White Man’s Burden and the official doctrine was actually called “benevolent assimilation” in the Philippines. James P. Shenton, "Imperialism and Racism" in Essays in American Historiography: Papers Presented in Honor of Allan Nevins, eds. Donald Henry Sheehan, Harold Coffin Syrett and Allan Nevins (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 320.
Hardt articulates empire as a global power structure—not just as an extension of the nation but a global system “constituted by a network of powers” including other powerful nations and supranational organizations.\(^{62}\) Ann Stoler further suggests that the U.S. is “not an aberrant empire but a quintessential one, a consummate producer of excepted populations, excepted spaces, and its own exception from international and domestic law.”\(^{63}\) I read American utilization of human rights discourse since the late 1970s as a new form of American imperialism in the tradition of “European tradition of liberal philosophy.”\(^{64}\) As Wendy Brown asserts, it is difficult “to separate human rights campaigns from legitimating liberal imperialism” because U.S. human rights discourse itself is an imperial project, which is designed to maximize political and economic profits for the U.S.\(^{65}\) It is not a simple system of domination but rather a complex power formation.\(^{66}\) Claiming that “imperial formations have never been ‘steady states’ in any sense of the phrase,” Stoler’s concept of “imperial formations” permits us to conceive the concept of empire as a formation.\(^{67}\) She claims, “[I]mperial formations’ are macropolities whose technologies of rule thrive on the production of exceptions and their uneven and changing proliferation.”\(^{68}\) What she suggests is that empire is not a fixated power but an on-going productive power. Costas Douzinas’ claim that “global neo-liberal capitalism and human-rights-for-export are part of the same project” is also helpful in

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\(^{65}\) Wendy Brown, ”The Most We Can Hope For…: Human Rights as the Politics of Fatalism.” *South Atlantic Quaterly*, 103 (2-3) (Spring, 2004), 460.

\(^{66}\) Brown clearly critiques the limitation of human rights politics since “rights are not simply attached to Kantian subjects, but rather produce and regulate the subjects to whom they are assigned.” Ibid., 459.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 135.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 127.
analyzing the relation between the liberalism and human rights politics. Wealthy nations, mostly the Western nations, have the power and money to intervene in the world. Liberal (capitalism) and the humanitarian impulse that lead to a humanitarian intervention are intertwined with imperialistic U.S. foreign policy.

For the U.S. government, *globalized humanitarianism*, or the emergence of human rights politics, was a new way to approach world politics as the Vietnam War wound down. Of course, there are differences between the very concepts of humanitarianism and human rights. I collapse them here because, in the Indochinese refugee problem, humanitarianism and human rights discourse were used as inseparable logic to advance the refugee resettlement. Costas Douzinas also asserts that by the time of the Carter administration, human rights had acquired broad appeal on Capitol Hill.

Globalized humanitarianism signifies a shift in U.S. policy before and after the Vietnam War. In the Carter administration, human rights politics became a powerful logic for U.S. foreign policy. Kenneth Cmiel states that “human rights has a long intellectual pedigree, 

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69 Costas Douzinas also contends that human rights discourse has imposed the ideology of the rich on the poor. He writes: “Every time a poor, oppressed, tortured person uses the language of rights to protest, resist, or fight, she draws from and connects with the most honorable metaphysics, morality and politics of the Western world.” Costas Douzinas, *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (London; New York: Routledge-Cavendish, 2007), 33; 293. A rereading of Schmitt with regards to the paradox of liberal democracy will help to reconsider humanitarianism. I employ the idea of democracy from Carl Schmitt by Chantal Mouffe, which is based on the idea of national “homogeneity,” and on the line of demarcation between those who belong to the state and those who remain outside of it. Chantal Mouffe explains that Schmitt declares “the central concept of democracy is not ‘humanity’ but the concept of the ‘people,’ and that there can never be a democracy of mankind.” Mouffe, thus, suggests imagining what Schmitt refers to as “homogeneity” in a different way. Chantal Mouffe, "Carl Shumitt and the Paradox of Liberal Democracy" In *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (London: New York: Verso, 1999), 41; 50. While political scientist Gary Bass claims that humanitarian intervention, which is in fact military operation in the name of humanitarianism, “is not the property of the U.S.,” I assert it is still a "white man’s possession." [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/magazine/17wwln-lede-t.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/17/magazine/17wwln-lede-t.html)


yet the contemporary human rights movement only took off in the 1970’s.”72 The U.S. needed a new way to claim its policy without anticommunist logic. Thus, human rights politics can be seen as a replacement for anticommunism in U.S. foreign policy, allowing the maintenance the U.S. as a global super power. This was possible, I argue, because the refugee policy functioned as a racial project in the U.S.’s attempt to rehabilitate itself after the Vietnam War and sustain its power.

**The Indochinese Refugee Problem as a U.S. Hegemonic Racial Project**

Although the U.S. official narrative of the Indochinese refugee resettlement narrates it as a U.S. humanitarian project, as I explained earlier, by contextualizing U.S. humanitarianism in terms of empire, it can be seen an imperial racial project.73 I say “imperial racial project” because the Indochinese refugee problem instigated a global resettlement program and it formed a global racial order through the U.S.’s global power. Race has been a fundamental part of imperial formation. Ann Stoler claims, “Racism was written into the very definition of republican liberties in the United States as well as France, and the ‘color of liberty’ was decidedly white.”74 In this sense, imperial projects have been racial projects, which formed and sustained imperial racial hierarchies globally. Cedric Robinson helps us to see that this global racial formation is the main factor in the development of Western civilization and capitalism.75 Robinson maintains

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73 “In the words of a State Department memorandum, the greatest contribution that the U.S. made to the stability of Southeast Asia had been to take the refugee burden off the backs of Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. What could not have been done with arms and money was accomplished through the refugee program.” Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers in the Indochina Exodus*, 1975-1982 (Jefferson, NC; London: McFarland & Company, 2010), 246.
that Western civilization relies upon racial capitalism, which in turn requires expansion and “others” for labor.

Yen Le Espiritu’s framework for “critical refugee studies,” which requires examining the political situations that created the conditions for refugees in the first place, helps me to situate the Indochinese refugee issue as a U.S. imperial racial project. She explain the mechanism as follows: “Casting Vietnamese refugees as objects of rescue, this literature [on Vietnamese refugees] portrays them as ‘incapacitated by grief and therefore in need of care’—a care that is purportedly best provided in and by the United States.” 76 This politics of care is in charge of the imperial racial project to project the act of empire as moral. Espiritu urges us to “rethink the reason for refugee flight” because refugee studies scholars “discount the aggressive roles that the U.S. government, military, and corporations have played in generating” refugee exodus. 77 Without doing so, refugees were seen as “the natural byproduct of regional conflicts and undeveloped economies.” 78 Espiritu is saying that it is vital to foreground the refugee as a paradigm to investigate the refugee flight in a “global political-economic and cultural context”, because their stories are tied to U.S. military, economic, and political involvement in Southeast Asia. 79 Espiritu offers a way to consider the U.S. as an empire and its practices as the deep cause of the refugee issue. It is important for us not to naturalize the refugee

76 Espiritu, Towards a Critical Refugee Study, 410.
77 Ibid., 420.
78 Ibid., 421.
79 Ibid., 423.
problem but to observe it in relation with U.S. power and racial formation, which takes place nationally and transnationally.\footnote{She contends that “a critical study of refugee flight needs to account for the history of U.S. imperialism and the fact that Vietnamese American ‘racial formation’ has been determined not exclusively by events in the United States but also by U.S. wars in Southeast Asia.” Ibid., 414.}

The refugee issue is based on complicated power and political dynamics. It is not an operation of rescue or a simple domination of people, and it is not limited to the U.S.-Vietnam relation. U.S. wars in Asia and the Pacific have formed not only racial knowledge of Asia and Asians but also a global racial order. Sherene Razack argues that the refugee issue is in part about border control, which is “an encounter between the powerful and the powerless, and the powerful are always from the First World and mostly white, while the powerless are from the Third World and nearly always racialized or ethnicized.”\footnote{Sherene Razack, \textit{Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 88.} For instance, Espiritu explains that “the popular and official discourse on Vietnam and its people during the Vietnam War established images—of inferiority, immorality, and unassimilability—that ‘traveled’ with Vietnamese to the United States and prescribed their racialization here.”\footnote{Yen Le Espiritu, \textit{Towards a Critical Refugee Study}, 424.} This racialization of Vietnamese refugees continued in the resettlement countries since they in general had to deal with downward mobility, participating in the economy as cheap laborers or small ethnic business owners.

Razack’s view of the refugee issue is indispensable in terms of the power dynamics of the First World and the Third World. In this way, her argument also suggests that the Indochinese refugee issue promotes Western values and racial hierarchy by the First World. Considering most of the Indochinese refugees were employed as cheap labor in resettled countries (not just in the U.S. but in mostly Western countries) as
the result of the resettlement process, the Indochinese refugee issue marked a re-
stratification of the economic and political divide between the First World and the Third
World. Wealthy liberal countries became countries of destination, and poor communist
countries were considered areas from where people were fleeing. Communist nations
were characterized as violators of human rights and democracy. Simultaneously, “host’
countries got recognized as humanitarian nations; as a byproduct of this process, global
economic racial hierarchies were strengthened.

Razack’s argument resonates with Denise Ferreira da Silva’s argument that
challenges the racial othering thesis. She contends that “the productivity of the racial”
and its “globality” (re) produce human difference as “irreducible and unsublatable.”
Since modern (post-Enlightenment) representation produced the universal subject,
transparent “I”, who enjoys universality, and the racial subaltern subject, who exists
outside of universality, within the global order, she critiques the limitation of a social
scientific (sociohistorical) account of racial subjection. Silva challenges the ways in
which “both productive narratives—History and Science—of modern representation have
worked together to institute the place of the subject” as “global-historical beings.”
It is important not to deploy contemporary social categories of the racial and cultural, which,
based on the sociohistorical logic of exclusion, produce racial difference and racial

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subjection and reinforce transparent “I.” This formation of the transparent “I” is what I call a global racial formation that enables a casting of the moral subject as white.

For instance, the way that the international Indochinese refugee resettlement was operated as “burden-sharing” by the UNHCR shows the operation of this U.S. project. The burden-sharing mechanism gained momentum for the Indochinese refugee resettlement in the late 1970s and continued to work as an effective method until the 1990s. According to the UNHCR, camps in first asylum countries, mostly Asian countries, processed the refugees while the Western countries mostly resettled them. The U.S. created this system, which involved first asylum countries and resettlement countries to facilitate the Indochinese refugee resettlement, in order to strengthen the wealth and power of the First World. This system was a microcosm of the global

85 Silva writes “the racial combines with other social categories (gender, class, sexuality, culture, etc.) to produce modern subjects who can be excluded from (juridical) universality without unleashing an ethical crisis.” Ibid., xxx-xxxi.

86 Political scientist Ahilan T. Aruhanantham claims that two major refugee protection schemes exist to manage mass influx of refugees. They are the “safe-haven” strategy and the “burden-sharing” proposal. Even though he proposes “restricted safe haven” as a third way to deal with the influx that is better than the former two, it is clear that the burden-sharing idea has been considered practical. Ahilan states the concept as the following: “The proposed plan would radically restructure the existing refugee system, with the aim of insulating refugee protection from political pressure to end it, while at the same time increasing the number of people protected by the system.” Ahilan T. Arulanantham, “Restructured Safe Havens: A Proposal for Reform of the Refugee Protection System,” Human Rights Quarterly, Volume 22, Number 1 (February 2000).

87 In 1979, the Indochinese Refugee Problem attracted international attention. Several International conferences on Indochinese refugees were held in 1979. For instance, in July 1979, the International Council of Voluntary Agencies Consultation on the Indochina Refugee Problem (on 18th and 19th), the United Nations Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in Southeast Asia convened by the Secretary General (on 20th and 21st), the World Council of Churches Consultation on Indochinese Refugees (24th and 25th) were held. All conferences were held in Geneva, Switzerland. Barry Stein, “Legislative and Judicial Developments: The Geneva Conferences and the Indochinese Refugee Crisis,” International Migration Review, vol. 13, No. 4 (Winter, 1979).

88 Countries such as Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand processed 1,834,013 refugees in total, and resettlement countries, i.e. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the U.S. admitted 1,954,170 refugees in total, from 1975 to 1997. Robinson, Term of Refuge, 294-5.
hierarchies demarcating the First and Third World, and it reflected U.S. global hegemony, which developed through the economical, political and cultural divide separating the countries. Moreover, the involvement of the Government Seven (The Government of Six, which were France, Italy, the UK, Germany, the U.S. and Japan was founded by France in 1975; then Canada joined and it became the Government of Seven in 1976) played a vital role in the development of the resettlement because these countries constituted the core strength that sustained the U.S. project politically and financially.

Hence, the U.S. made the resettlement of refugees a “burden” for both developed nations and first asylum countries while strengthened white privilege. Political scientist Astri Suhrke views the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a successful example of “burden-sharing.” As she reminds us, the Indochinese refugee problem emerged as “burden-sharing,” which traditionally developed in “defense and environmental affairs”, because at that time the problem was a security issue for not only the Third World but also the First World. Suhrke further argues that “the program[me] can only be understood in the aftermath of a devastating war in which the United States, for the most time, suffered a humiliating defeat.” As she claims, U.S. leadership played a significant role in the resettlement.

89 Political scientist Astri Suhrke comments on the success of Vietnamese resettlement: “For the first, and so far last, time in modern history a large refugee population was systematically resettled from a developing country to industrialized states.” Suhrke, *Burden-sharing during Refugee Emergencies*, 405. It developed with some success in other sectors of public policy, notably defense and environmental affairs. Peter H. Schuck, “Refugee Burden-Sharing: A Modest Proposal,” *Yale Journal of International Law*, 22; 243 (1997), 396. The logic is based on an idea of collective action.

90 Ibid., 406
Moreover, I contextualize the resettlement as the moment that provided righteousness for the powerful (the West) and justified the existing power structure that divides the First and Third Worlds. The refugee resettlement enabled the U.S. manipulation of the UNHCR during the Cold War; as Gil Loescher reminds us, the actions of the UNHCR tends to reflect the will of the donor nations because the UNHCR has been aided by major developed countries (the West).\textsuperscript{91} This utilization of UNHCR by the U.S. sheds light on the ways in which the U.S. is a project. The international Indochinese refugee resettlement facilitated a particular type of subjectivation which is tied to and operated through racialization. My point here is not only the expansion of the scale of the UNHCR as its budget increased from $80 million to $500 million, but also the significance of the Indochinese refugee resettlement as the UNHCR’s project because the budget was mostly spent on Indochinese refugees between 1975 and 1980.\textsuperscript{92} The scale of the Indochinese refugee resettlement signifies the relationship between the U.S. and UNHCR in the Cold War context because as political scientist Jussi M. Hanhimaki claims, “the globalization of the refugee crises coincided with the globalization of the Cold War conflicts.”\textsuperscript{93} His quote allows us to see the Indochinese refugee problem as a Cold War conflict. According to Gil Loescher et al., from the 1960s to the 1980s, “governments made little distinction between military aid, development assistance and refugee relief aid.”\textsuperscript{94} Even though the 1975 refugee resettlement was deemed a U.S. “responsibility” by the international community, the scale of Indochinese refugee

\textsuperscript{91} Gil Loescher, \textit{The UNHCR and World Politics} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
\textsuperscript{92} UNHCR, \textit{State of the World’s Refugees: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action}, 79.
\textsuperscript{93} Jussi M. Hanhimaki, “UNHCR and the Global Cold War,” \textit{Refugee Survey}, vol 27, issue 1, 3.
resettlement after 1975 was, in fact, globalized.\textsuperscript{95} Although the UNHCR was the main “international” agency of the Indochinese refugee resettlement, the U.S. government was the main actor conducting the resettlement.

Considering that 1980 was the first year when the UNHCR Commission on Human Rights discussed “refugee matters in a universal context,” the Indochinese refugee problem is one of the U.S. projects that was globalized (involving various first asylum countries and resettlement countries).\textsuperscript{96} It was because the U.S. supported the UNHCR to facilitate the resettlement. In other words, the U.S. government eventually helped to develop the scale and power of the UNHCR.\textsuperscript{97} The U.S. resettlement was a globalization of the Indochinese refugee problem because it operated as a global capitalist project through U.S. global hegemony, inviting members of the West to be involved.\textsuperscript{98} The refugee resettlement was a particular U.S. effort to craft the resettlement as a “global” project. As political scientist Harto Hakovirta explains, the U.S. contribution to the Indochinese refugee resettlement “has been the greatest in absolute terms and

\textsuperscript{95} I am using the word “globalized” instead of “universalized” because the resettlement was not operated throughout the globe but was managed by certain countries under the leadership of the U.S.

\textsuperscript{96} In 1980 the Commission on Human Rights requested Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan to prepare a study on “human rights and massive exoduses” as its special rapporteur. This constituted the first-ever attempt by the Commission on Human Rights to discuss refugee matters in a universal context. In the introduction, the special rapporteur noted that “for the last several years . . . the number and magnitude of flows of refugees and displaced persons have been such as to cause increasing concern within the international community. By the beginning of the 1980s, numbers exceeded ten million.” Maria Stavropoulou, “Displacement and Human Rights: Reflections on UN Practice,” \textit{Human Rights Quarterly} 20.3 (1998), 515-554.

\textsuperscript{97} For instance, Political scientist Jussi M. Hanhimaki asserts that “the nature and scope of the role of UNHCR went through a dramatic change from the late 1960s to the early 1980s.” Hanhimaki, “UNHCR and the Global Cold War,” 3.

\textsuperscript{98} While “internationalization” refers to the various relations between and/or among nations, as “globalization” means the global economic integration of many formerly national economies into one global economy, I employ ‘globalization’ in the sense that the U.S. integrated the Indochinese resettlement into one global system.
somewhat greater than the average in relation to the size of the population.” The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries also have financially assisted almost all of the UNHCR’s aid and received almost all of the Third World refugees resettled overseas. Given this structure of aid, which was dominated by certain wealthy and powerful countries, the Indochinese resettlement was a U.S. imperial project that collaborated with countries like Canada, France and Japan (Japan’s contribution was mostly financial). Most notably, the U.S. urged countries such as Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand to get involved in order to facilitate the resettlement in Asia and the Pacific. Participation by not only first asylum countries but also the developed nations in the resettlement process enabled the U.S. to turn its plan into a “global” one. In this way, the globalization of the resettlement was a reflection of U.S. power configurations.

In the Indochinese refugee case, the Carter administration extended its own resettlement plan into a global program that was significant for U.S. power; the administration converted a short-term refugee operation into a long-time commitment. The view of the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a moral action not only decontextualizes and dehistoricizes the resettlement and U.S. power; it also configures the U.S. as a moral project, establishing the U.S. as a global subject. Moralizing the resettlement has provided virtue to the U.S. to be a leader of the industrialized and developing nations, which were constituted as a powerful community of opponents against Communism. My dissertation not only critiques the ways in which the

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100 Ibid.
101 Loescher and Scalnlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 121
resettlement operated—given that the U.S. institutionalized the global resettlement, building upon a network of first-asylum countries, donor countries and resettlement countries to stabilize U.S. power—but it also exposes how the U.S. turned itself into global power after the Vietnam War.

**Rehabilitation of the Vietnam War**

The Vietnam War was the first war that the U.S. ever lost. The U.S. government was embarrassed not just by the defeat but by the act of abandoning allies. Because of the defeat, the enemy population has never been "liberated" and "rehabilitated.”

Considering the lack of these liberated or rehabilitated bodies after the Vietnam War, the representations of some U.S. former allies as those who were “rescued” and “assimilated” into American society must be considered in part as a substitution of the American myth of “liberation and rehabilitation.” This echoes how particular physical bodies played considerable roles for U.S. policy during the Cold War. David Serlin magnificently analyzes the ways in which physical rehabilitation became an allegory of national rehabilitation in his book. Although he does not comment on the refugee body, this view put the Indochinese refugee resettlement in a different light, in which the resettlement is understood as the rehabilitation of American society.

In a way, this particular moment of history enabled the U.S. to represent itself as a liberator. This is why, as I explained earlier, the underlying logic of the Indochinese refugee resettlement was nearly identical to 19th century notion of a civilizing mission.

Examining the Indochinese refugee resettlement as the U.S. rehabilitation of the war

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103 Lisa Yoneyama, “Traveling Memories, Contagious Justice,” 59
allows us to understand the resettlement as a part of what historian Christina Klein conceptualizes as “Cold War Orientalism.” U.S. cultural production of Asia is a typical example of knowledge production on Asia which parallels the political, military and economic expansion of the U.S. Historian Steven Lee argues: “The Cold War provided the international context and the urgency for the perceived need to expand American power globally and to create and nurture pro-Western governments in areas considered important for reasons of prestige and global strategy.” As he claims, during the Cold War, U.S. expansion was possible through a notion of racial tolerance and inclusion. Thus, U.S. racial tolerance, such as the acceptance of refugees from Communist countries, has to be examined as a means to claim superiority against Communism.

U.S. racial tolerance was enabled through U.S. biopolitical technologies, which included the optimization of certain populations for national interests. Michel Foucault conceives biopower as a new type of state power that emerged in the eighteenth century, through statistics and the control of the population. Foucault notes: “The family will change from being a model to being an instrument; it will become a privileged instrument for the government of the population rather than a chimerical model for good government.”

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105 She claims that the U.S. has been producing and consuming Asia for a long time, yet U.S. cultural production of Asia took the Pacific and Asia as their subject matter, especially after 1945. Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 5.


107 Biopower is the power of regularization, and it consists of making live and letting die. Michel Foucault explicates biopower as a political technology that “brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge/ power an agent of transformation of human life.” Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 143.

government. He also claims: “Governing a family is not fundamentally directed toward
the aim of safeguarding the family property, but essentially means having the individuals
who compose it, their wealth and prosperity, as the objective, the target; it means taking
possible events, like death and births, into account.”¹⁰⁹ This figure of power, which
enables a state to control the lives of people, is what Foucault calls “state control of the
biological.”¹¹⁰ According to him, this is the new right of the sovereign to make live and to
let die, as compared to the right to let live or make die.¹¹¹ This is a “biopolitics” of the
human race, a new nondisciplinary power applied to the living man, to man-as-living-
being, and ultimately to man-as species.¹¹² What he means by nondisciplinary power is
that it is a matter of taking control of life and the biological processes of man-as-species
and of ensuring that they are not disciplined, but regularized.¹¹³ Foucault explicates
biopower as a political technology that “brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of
explicit calculations and made knowledge/ power an agent of transformation of human
life.”¹¹⁴

Historian Takashi Fujitani claims that during WWII the U.S. and Japan developed
a particular form of biopolitical power. He notes: “Rather than segregate or even
exterminate their minority and colonial subjects, these two nation-state based empires
[the US and Japan] were forced to begin a process of including these previously despised

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 97.
¹¹⁰ Michel Foucault, Society must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-76 [Il faut
¹¹¹ Ibid., 241.
¹¹² Ibid., 242-3.
¹¹³ Ibid., 247.
populations in need of life, welfare, and happiness.” According to him, the Indochinese refugee resettlement can be analyzed as an imperial racial project to save and make live Vietnamese, Laotians (including Hmong and other ethnic minorities) and Cambodians. Accepting refugees from former Indochina became significant for the U.S. to maintain its global/historical subjectivity, what Denise Ferreira da Silva defines as “the white transparent (national I)”, against former Indochina, since the existence of refugees proved the failure of the Communist regimes in the area.

In this way, I challenge the deployment of humanitarianism in the Indochinese refugee problem and argue that it was the “Americanization” of humanitarianism. I borrow the idea of “Americanization of world justice” from Lisa Yoneyama, who explains it as an effort to “reestablish the United States as the innocent custodian of world peace and humanity” for humanitarianism. Given the fact that the U.S. was able to sustain its world hegemony through the control of refugees after the Vietnam War, I want to extend her idea of “Americanization of world justice” to humanitarianism, since Denise Ferreira da Silva claims “the critique of racial subjugation should target the very delineation of the territory of justice.” To understand the ways in which the new global order was sustained, it is indispensable to first analyze how a reconfiguration of the global racial order occurred. In this way, we finally perceive the U.S. as a project in the liberal discourse of the politics of care.

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118 Ibid., 37.
Chapter Outlines

In the following chapters, to reveal the function of U.S. humanitarian imperialism in the Indochinese refugee resettlement, I analyze the four significant moments and events of the Indochinese refugee problem. Chapter One, “Theater of Rescue,” challenges the rescue narrative of the refugee evacuation by analyzing the ways in which it functioned as a theater of rescue, not a theater of war. This chapter also explains the ways in which the Ford administration necessitated the rescue of the South Vietnamese and orphans in April 1975, by showing how those programs emerged through the idea of “honorable withdrawal.” Chapter Two, “Saigon Cowboys,” analyzes post-war Indochinese refugee policies as the efforts of “Saigon Cowboys” in the State Department. The chapter analyzes the complexities of the effects of U.S. moral obligations to the Indochinese refugees. U.S. commitments enabled Indochinese refugee resettlement on an extensive scale, yet at the same time it criminalized the area where the refugees were from as “immoral.” Chapter Three, “Surrogate Refuge,” explores the internationalization and institutionalization of the Indochinese refugee resettlement to demonstrate the refugee resettlement as the project for and of the U.S. to make Asia a surrogate refuge of the U.S. Neighboring countries of former Indochina became first asylum countries for the refugee resettlement but were not recognized as places of “refuge” since they did not become resettlement countries. In this chapter, I will juxtapose the Indochinese refugee resettlement with the border making process, in which the U.S. secured its border and developed an extraterritorial asylum system since the late 1970s. Chapter Four, “Trans-Pacific Racisms,” explains the reasons why the U.S. needed Japan to be involved with the resettlement and how Japan responded to this prompt. Although Japan had its own
incentives to become involved in the resettlement, because the government needed to change its domestic welfare system drastically, it took three years to receive only a small number of the refugees to resettle. This was because the government of Japan had its own racial fears of altering the definition of Japanese people and citizens. This chapter analyzes the controlling of refugee resettlement as a way to protect and revive the myth of a mono-racial nation. Involvement with the resettlement program enabled the Japanese government and society to see Japanese citizens as “honorable whites” in the international community, allowing Japan and the U.S. to sustain trans-Pacific racisms against other Asian countries.

In illuminating these four significant aspects—performativity of refugee evacuation, moral obligation to the Indochinese refugees, internationalization of the refugee resettlement, and Japan’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee resettlement, all of which complement each other to advance humanitarian imperialism—this dissertation seeks a different kind of morality for refugees, asylum seekers, and “critical beings.” Instead of employing Giorgio Agamben’s idea of “bare life,” I use Patricia Tuit’s definition of “critical beings” in this project.\footnote{Giorgio Agamben, \textit{Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life} (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Patricia Tuit contends that “the question of the refugee identity has been reduced in simple term to ‘a legal term of art.’” Patricia Tuit, “Refugees, Nations, Laws and the Territorization of Violence” in Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuit eds., \textit{Critical Beings: Law, Nation and the Global Subject} (Hans, UK: Ashgate, 2004), 38. Tuit notes: “the refugee, far from representing the destruction of the nexus of the state, territory and identity, as some accounts would insist that he or she does, exists rather as the tangible product of a legal imagination that is all too wedded to the territorially bound nation.” Ibid., 47.} As she articulates, stateless people are objects of the nation-state, and we unconsciously embrace nation-state ideals. Even though it is common to see the solution of the refugee problem as permanent resettlement in another nation-state, stateless people do not disappear as part of a nation, but rather can...
maintain their in-betweeness, as they are “critical beings.”\(^{120}\) Critical beings “suggest the person who is neither fully included nor absolutely excluded from the juridical order.”\(^{121}\) In this sense, Tuit proposes a new political consciousness able to “challenge the nexus of state, territory and identity.”\(^{122}\) This project follows her articulation of the refugee to expand the notion of rightlessness beyond the legal refugee and to conceive the nation differently.

Understanding nation differently should be the same project as pursuing a different kind of morality, because it leads to questions of state, territory and identity. Western morality has to be examined and critiqued as a part of a broader Western project of imperialism and (neo)colonialism. This dissertation pays close attention to the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a U.S. desire for attaining universality through the act of “rescue” and critiques the U.S. morality of utilizing Indochinese refugee bodies. Alain Badiou claims that it is impossible to speak of one single Ethics, because “the only genuine ethics is of truths in the plural—or, more precisely, the only ethics is of processes of truth, of the labor that brings some truths into the world.”\(^{123}\) Analyzing the refugee resettlement not only reveals the truths of the act, but also allows us to examine this imperial racial project, in order to expose the functions and purposes of U.S. humanitarian imperialism.

\(^{120}\) Patricia Tuit and Peter Fitzpatrick explain these “critical beings” as people who are “excluded or marginalized in the persistent but ever unsettled processes of national/global affirmation.” Peter Fitzpatrick and Patricia Tuit eds., *Critical Beings*, xi.


CHAPTER ONE: Theater of Rescue: Cultural Representations of US Evacuation from Vietnam

The refugee operation at the end of the war needs to be examined as an example of how the U.S. government maintained its economic, militaristic and political power in Asia, since the end of the war did not change U.S. domination in Asia and the Pacific. The Ford Administration issued parole authority to some 130,000 refugees between 1975 and 1976, even though Congress was reluctant to agree with the administrative plan for the evacuation of the South Vietnamese.\textsuperscript{124} Even after the fall of Saigon, there were concerns that the bill’s authorization would lead to the reintroduction of U.S. troops in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{125} Despite the unpopularity of the evacuation plan, the iconography of the rescue, such as images photographed by Hugh Van Es of Americans rescuing the Vietnamese, has been and continues to be a powerful representation of the fall of Saigon (figure 1). Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger encapsulates the sentiment that helps shape this representation in his recent memoir on the war: “Twenty years of hope, frustration, and discord over Vietnam had now been reduced to a single objective: to save the maximum number of potential Vietnamese victims from the consequences of America’s abandonment.”\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} The bill, called “the Vietnam Emergency Relief Act,” which authorized 327 million dollars for evacuation from South Vietnam and for “humanitarian aid,” was passed by the Senate on April 26 but rejected in the house on May 3, 1975. \textit{Congressional Quarterly}, vol.33, no.18 (1975), 904.

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Congressional Quarterly}, vol.33, no.18 (1975), 907. Accordingly, the bill was not cleared until May 16, while the authorization act, providing up to 455 million dollars, was not sent to the President until May 21, 1975. \textit{Congressional Quarterly}, vol.33, no.19 (1975), 1006-1007, vol.33, no.21 (1975), 1075.

Figure 1: Fall of Saigon, Habert Van Es (from The New York Times)

Figure 2: Fall of Saigon, Habert Van Es (from The New York Times)
Indeed, the idea that the U.S. “helped” the South Vietnamese escape became the dominant narrative of the war’s end and what is remembered the most by the U.S. public. For instance, on the 25th anniversary of the fall of Saigon, former president Ford recalled the day when 50,000 South Vietnamese and 6,000 Americans were “saved.” The image of refugee rescue has overshadowed the fact that many Vietnamese allies were left behind. The image above is the most recognizable image of the Fall of Saigon; for decades, it has been mistakenly described as an American helicopter evacuating people from the roof of a U.S. Embassy. However, it was taken not at the U.S. Embassy but at the Pittman Apartments, where a CIA station chief and many of his officers lived. The photographer, Hubert Van Es, who took the photos on April 29, 1975. He explains the situation:

Looking at the Pittman Apartments, I could see 20 or 30 people on the roof, climbing the ladder to an Air American Huey helicopter. At the top of the ladder stood an American in civilian clothes, pulling people up and shoving them aside. Of course, there was no possibility that all the people on the roof could get into the helicopter, and it took off with 12 or 14 on board….Those who were left on the roof waited for hours, hoping for more helicopters to arrive, to no avail.

The U.S. media usually employs the images in which people were being taken into the helicopter (the first two photos), but not the ones in which the helicopter was flying away while people were left on the roof (the second two photos). Why did the messiness of the withdrawal, what Van Es describes as those who abandoned, fade away? Why did the refugee evacuation emerge as an imperialistic rescue narrative, overshadowing the

129 Ibid.
abandonment of U.S. allies? With those questions in my mind, this chapter challenges theatrical representations of the evacuation that display the evacuation as “Americans rescuing Vietnamese.” I am not trying to reveal the bad intentions of the refugee evacuation as an antithesis of the “true” rescue, or how the Ford Administration created the “rescuer” image; rather I expose the way the U.S. was able to play a savior role.

This chapter excavates the ways in which the U.S. withdrawal served as a theater for how the country was treating its own forces and allies globally and domestically. Here ‘theater’ means that the evacuation was not a singular historical event but the stage where history and politics made sense for the people who experienced and witnessed the event. This is what Melani McAlister reminds us as the process of how the production of a discourse about a space “comes to [be understood] as authoritative, as ‘common sense.’”

This chapter also resonates with the ways in which she situates culture as an integral part of politics and history: “Culture is an active part of constructing the narratives that help policy make sense in a given moment.”

Although the end of the Vietnam War needs to be marked as the end of the first televised war as well as the first lost war of the U.S., it was not the conclusion of U.S. involvement in the region but rather the start of U.S. re-involvement in the region in a different form. This was because the theater of war failed but the theater of rescue

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130 Melani McAlister, Epic Encounters: Culture, Media and the U.S. interests in Middle East since 1945 (Berkley, University of California Press, 2005), 8.
131 Ibid., 6.
132 About the relation between the Vietnam War as the first televised war, see Michael Mandelbaum, “The Television War.” Some historians have seen the end of the Vietnam War as the “end of Manifest Destiny” or as marking the “limits of U.S. empire.” Daniel Bell, The Winding Passage: Essays and Sociological Journeys, 1960-1980 (Cambridge, MA: Abt Books, 1980), 255. That is, as the result of anti-war movements, the end of the war should be marked as a victory of people’s power. However, I assert that U.S. power in Asia did not suddenly disappear at that moment. When we view the end of the Vietnam War
succeeded. The theater of rescue echoes with a long U.S. history of imperialistic “rescue” coinciding with its expansion to Asia and the Pacific. The Vietnam War continued this liberation myth through the admission of Indochinese refugees, beginning with the refugee evacuation in 1975. The U.S. as a ‘True Rescuer of Freedom’ is not a new obsession in U.S. history, but rather a historically constructed role that the U.S. has continually employed. Thus, the refugee evacuation was not a unique event of history but rather the moment that enabled the U.S. to rely on its ‘rescuer figure,’ which has existed long before the Vietnam War. Accordingly, in this chapter, I ask: Why did the image and narrative of “rescue” at the end of the war become so powerful? Why was the “rescue” so believable? Instead of narrating the refugee evacuation as a rescue, I argue how the evacuation was staged and performed.

In this chapter, I analyze three cultural representations of American evacuation from Vietnam to demonstrate how the refugee evacuation functioned as a theater of rescue. First, I deconstruct the logic of “honorable withdrawal” by contextualizing it with the idea of “peace with honor,” showing the way in which the concept of “honor” functioned as a racial and gendered idea to protect American manhood. This was why the withdrawal could not be a simple extraction of Americans. Since the original plan of “peace with honor” did not work because of the situation in South Vietnam, the Ford Administration needed to shift the idea of “peace with honor” to “honorable

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133 As I explained in the introduction, in order to understand the ways in which the U.S. evacuation emerged in this historical trajectory, it is important to acknowledge that the U.S. has narrated its own history in Asia as one of liberation.

134 Espiritu clearly analyzes how the bodies of refugees became a site for U.S. society to see the rescue, by turning refugees into successful examples of new Americans. Yen Le Espiritu, “We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose Syndrome”
Second, I will analyze Operation Babylift and the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees as not only crucial military operations at the end of the war that served to avert the attention of the U.S. public from the defeat, but also as cultural representations that enabled the U.S. to play the rescuer role in order to prove U.S. benevolence. Operation Babylift was the military action that airlifted a couple thousand Vietnamese orphans at the end of the war. Evacuations of orphans and refugees were not solely government operations but rather involved various actors such as orphanages and American civilians who wished to help children and refugees. Consequently, the operations turned out more complicated than the Ford Administration originally planned. Finally, by investigating Frank Snepp’s story of the end of the Vietnam War, I demonstrate how the end of the war has been re-narrated as the moment when the possibility of rescue existed. Frank Snepp was a CIA agent who was in Vietnam at the time of the end of the war and who abandoned his ex-girlfriend and his alleged child. Showing how his stories of abandonment indicate an American desire for tragedy and a relentless haunting of American guilt, this third point exposes the ways in which the possibility of rescue enabled the American public to deal with its failure. In this way, the end of the war did not prove the wrongness of the involvement but rather validated the American presence in former Indochina.

1. From “Peace with Honor” to “Honorable Withdrawal”

The situation in South Vietnam worsened suddenly in March 1975, when the Army of South Vietnam decided to retreat from the highlands and concentrate on the defense of Saigon. This change forced the Ford Administration to adapt their plan of “peace with honor” to “withdrawal with honor.” Expectations of a total collapse of South Vietnam urged the administration to find a way to attain financial resources for South Vietnam in order to address the unfolding military situation. Instead of planning a speedy evacuation of Americans there, the administration advocated the idea of military re-involvement and the evacuation of Vietnamese.¹³⁶ This was because the Ford Administration was fixated on the idea of “peace with honor” to demonstrate that the end of the war was an organized and respectable withdrawal. This section contextualizes the fixation of the administration on “honor” as a part of American Cold War culture.

**Peace with Honor/ Peace by Bombing**

The Ford Administration inherited the “peace with honor” idea from the Nixon Administration. In order to maintain American credibility and power in the Asia-Pacific region, the Nixon Administration coined the term to justify the gradual withdrawal as “peace with honor.”¹³⁷ On January 23, 1973, with the signing of the Paris Accords, President Richard Nixon announced to the nation that “we today have concluded an agreement to end the war and bring peace with honor in Vietnam and in Southeast Asia.”¹³⁸ He continued:

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Now that we have achieved an honorable agreement, let us be proud that America did not settle for a peace that would have betrayed our allies, that would have abandoned our prisoners of war, or that would have ended the war for us but would have continued the war for the 50 million people of Indochina. Let us be proud of the 2 [and] 1/2 million young Americans who served with honor and distinction in one of the most selfless enterprises in the history of nations.139

“Peace with honor” was the approach used to represent the retreat of the U.S. army as “honorable.” The Nixon administration’s yearning for honor exposes the ways in which the American performance in Vietnam becomes gendered and how honor serves as an indexical proxy for masculinity. In her work *Fighting for American Manhood*, historian Kristin Hoganson analyzes “honor” as an “attribute of a potent, mature, and chivalrous man, of a man who wields power, who was poised to fight.”140 Given her idea of honor, “peace with honor” is not just a matter of saving face but also a matter of American masculinity. Representing the defeat as honorable is not simply denying it but a process of negotiating with it. Although Hoganson’s argument of manhood is ascribed to discrete individuals, I employ her analysis of honor to a national body because wars have gendered the American nation by characterizing real Americans as those who fight in a war for a country.141 The administration needed a gradual withdrawal in order to be consistent with a “male code of valorous and self-respecting behavior.”142 Thus, the idea of “peace with honor” was not only a symptom of reacting to the traumatic event but also a gendered project to maintain the U.S.’s masculinity.

139 Ibid., 20.
142 Hogason, *Fighting for American Manhood*, 70.
One of the most important meanings of “honor” in this context was not to “betray” allies. This explains why the U.S. government established the Defense Attaché Office in South Vietnam and dispatched U.S. advisors to maintain the South Vietnamese army although it officially announced the end of the war and withdrew U.S. army forces in 1973. The Nixon Administration planned to retain U.S. presence in former Indochina to achieve “peace with honor” by providing sufficient military funding until the U.S. government completely withdrew from South Vietnam and Cambodia.\(^{143}\) Establishing “peace with honor” came at an enormous price for the U.S., which lost more than twenty thousand soldiers and possibly an additional one million Vietnamese.\(^{144}\) Since the “peace with honor” was simultaneously carried out with the Vietnamization of the war, the U.S. government prioritized saving American lives.\(^{145}\) In this way, the U.S. government made South Vietnamese bodies less significant, but maintained their symbolic representation as U.S. allies.

When the Ford Administration realized the grave situation in South Vietnam, it could not face its complete military defeat and blamed Congress for blocking aid to South Vietnam.\(^{146}\) While the administration did not know how long South Vietnam was going to last or whether it would collapse completely, it sought a way to stabilize South Vietnam by attacking North Vietnam. Here, I assert that within the logic of “peace with honor,” attacking North Vietnam was a natural development for the Ford Administration.

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\(^{143}\) The war in Laos was kept secret for twenty years after the end of the wars in the former Indochina.

\(^{144}\) Historian Robert J. McMahon reminds us that “[m]ore than twenty thousand Americans perished during the four years that Nixon had labored to extricate the country from a war he recognized [the U.S.] could not win.” Robert J. McMahon, *Limits of Empire*, 170.

\(^{145}\) Ibid., 170. He does not mention how many South/North Vietnamese had to die because of the strategy.

\(^{146}\) For the reactions of Congress, see Haley Edward, *Congress and Fall of South Vietnam* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London; East Brunswick, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1982).
Henry Kissinger was one of the advocates of pressuring North Vietnam by using armed forces. He proposed to mine North Vietnamese ports on March 24, 1975. Kissinger said that “to drop a few mines simply cannot be beyond the wit of man.”

Dropping bombs on North Vietnam, he contended, should be a tolerable action to alter the situation in South Vietnam. His quote reveals ever-changing American racism against the Vietnamese, because, as historian Sven Lindqvist reminds us, the history of bombing is one of violence against racial Others. Kissinger’s desire to bomb North Vietnam underscores the “colonize savages” mentality, which Lindqvist analyzes as racism. This was not personal racism but a collective one: American troops described Vietnam as “Indian country,” exposing basic assumptions that Vietnam was as a racially and culturally alien enemy.

Even with the controversy of such an action—the Paris Accords article VII prohibited the use of funds “to support directly or indirectly combat activities” and “to finance the involvement of United States military forces in hostilities” in or over Cambodia, North Vietnam, and South Vietnam—Kissinger continued to demand that the military attack the North: “We can say that with respect to military supplies they [North Vietnamese] have violated Article VII. We gain nothing by denouncing them because we give up the ability to say they are violating themselves. Later, if they come to some political demands, like the National Council, we may have to tell them that they’re

147 Memorandum of Conversation, March 24, 1975, National Security Adviser: Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, Box34, Gerald R. Ford Library.
crazy.” Kissinger purposely suggested violating Paris Accords and then accused North Vietnam for having caused it. Kissinger’s desire to use U.S. military forces, despite the Paris Accords article VII, reveals what the Ford Administration really wanted to do. If Congress agreed, the administration wanted to attack North Vietnam again. However, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft described the reluctance of the administration to officially resume combat activities, due to the response in Congress. Support for South Vietnam was unpopular in Congress since Congress had already rejected sending funds to South Vietnam. In addition, there was little public backing for the plan to support South Vietnam.

Nonetheless, as I showed above, the Ford Administration had a strong aspiration to demonstrate U.S. military power to achieve “peace with honor”; the administration did not just give up but rather tried to reverse Congressional reluctance to provide aid to South Vietnam. Since the suggestion to use military forces raised the question of military re-involvement, Department of State officials interpreted the issue of employment of military force into two choices: forgetting or re-involvement.

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150 Memorandum of Conversation, March 24, 1975, National Security Adviser. Kissinger-Scowcroft West Wing Office Files, Box 34, Gerald R. Ford Library.

151 However other high officials in the meeting, such as Assistant Secretary of State Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Philipp Habib, did not agree with Kissinger. Memorandum for W.R. Smyser from Sven Kraemer, “Restrictions on US Military Forces,” March 27, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff Files, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.

152 He said, “Everybody agreed that Article VII of the Paris Agreement was a dead letter because of the massive North Vietnamese violations, but there is a general reluctance to violate this Article ourselves because of fear of the impact on the Hill.” Memorandum from Scowcroft to Kissinger, March 20, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff Files, Box 25, Gerald R. Ford Library.

I think we have two clear options: either (1) to forget completely about re-involvement and to ask urgently for more money on the basis of non-involvement, or (2) to choose an involvement, if we think we must have one, that at least has a positive effect and that does not jeopardize as many of our people as the advisor notion. That sort of thing would be use of B-52’s against troop concentrations or re-mining of North Vietnamese ports. If we choose those means, we will be making the kind of contribution that could spell a material difference and that would justify the explanations that would have to be given at home.\textsuperscript{154}

It is important to note that, to obtain “peace with honor,” re-involvement was the preferable option. At this point, “peace with honor” was only attainable through the deployment of American military power, because otherwise nothing could be done for the condition of South Vietnam. Here, I assert that by 1975 “peace with honor” meant “peace by bombing,” because the Ford Administration favored the option of military aid. “Peace by bombing” meant not only the achievement of peace by military force but also proof of the idea of American honor in Vietnam. The desire for demonstrating military power should be seen as a parallel to that of classical enlightenment colonialism: namely, that there is a linear progression of civilization along which some civilizations (such as the West) are positioned as further developed and thus authorized to intervene on those cast as less developed, either by means of help or direct military intervention. It was also the desire of the government of South Vietnam that urged the U.S. to bomb North Vietnam.\textsuperscript{155} Bombs were seen as “currency that had buying power at the negotiation table.”\textsuperscript{156} I point out that the fact that President Ford dispatched General Frederick C. Weyand to report on the situation in South Vietnam reveals that the administration was

\textsuperscript{154} Memorandum from Smyser to Kissinger, March 28, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff Files, Box 25, Gerald R. Ford Library.


\textsuperscript{156} Sven Lindqvist, \textit{History of Bombing}, 156.
for the option of military re-involvement. Nonetheless, as the situation of South Vietnam was worse than the administration expected, the re-involvement option was eventually unfeasible.

This American desire to employ military power to reverse the situation at the end of the war should also be considered in the context of its distrust of South Vietnam and South Vietnamese people. For instance, Kissinger did not see the need of additional funding to South Vietnam in early April, 1975 and said: “[I]t seems to me that nobody in South Vietnam fought. It seems to me there was total collapse.” Even though the war was going on at that moment, in his eyes, it was not that the war was already lost to North Vietnam, but rather that he did not see any “honorable” aspect in South Vietnam. His quote exposes the common understanding of American soldiers. Historian Thomas Borstelmann writes that “the generally poor fighting record of the South Vietnamese army increased GI’s resentment, for they seemed to be fighting and dying for a people who would not fight for themselves.” They did not see the South Vietnamese as reliable soldiers; rather they considered all the Vietnamese as targets to destroy. The invisibility of South Vietnamese as soldiers validates the U.S. as the sole reliable military power. Administrational needs for the U.S. military power and American soldiers reveal not only the U.S.’s fixation with “peace with honor” but also their disbelief in South Vietnam honor.

Therefore, without additional military power and Vietnamese soldiers, the administration had to accept the prospect of South Vietnam’s collapse and deal with the actual planning of a retreat. Nonetheless, the administration could not just give up “peace with honor.” It adjusted its plan by seeking another way to “stabilize the situation,” formulating the idea of “honorable withdrawal.”

**Esthetics of Evacuation: Evacuation with Honor/ Evacuation without Chaos**

Following the fall of Hue, Da Nang, and Nha Trang, the Ford Administration planned immediate evacuation. Rescue of the Vietnamese emerged as one of the main operations because to execute an “evacuation with honor” the administration needed to evacuate the Southern Vietnamese, claiming that it was a “moral obligation.” There was the dilemma, however, because the administration needed to do so without provoking a sudden collapse of South Vietnam. In a National Security Council meeting, Kissinger explained the dilemma to Ford: “We have to make an evacuation decision. Ideally, from the political viewpoint, we should hold on until after your speech and after Congress makes a decision on our aid request. But if we wait it could collapse all at once before we can get our people out. But if we pull out, we will surely provoke a collapse.” This statement signifies that the administration wanted to get Americans out, which would be a challenging operation to execute without the deployment of U.S. forces, yet it also wanted to wait to see what would happen with the aid request. At the same time, it did not want to pull all Americans out at once, as it would cause the panic

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and sudden collapse of South Vietnam, placing the blame squarely on the United States.¹⁶²

To accomplish the honorable withdrawal was a matter of American dignity, not only in Asia and the Pacific but also in the world. Gabriel Kolko reminds us of the significance of U.S. emergency aid for the Ford administration: it was a way to achieve honor because “aid was not a matter of preventing defeat or saving scarce resources but rather a symbolic defense of U.S. commitments and credibility.”¹⁶³ The Ford administration wanted to provide enough aid to South Vietnam in order to have an honorable withdrawal, which would demonstrate a symbolic reinvigoration of U.S. commitments and credibility in a time of public skepticism surrounding U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. This was why it was vital for the administration to execute a well-ordered, well-organized and well-executed evacuation.

Nonetheless, the falls of Hue, Da Nang and Nha Trang (northern coastal cities from Saigon) triggered panic and made evacuations from there extremely chaotic.¹⁶⁴ In a Washington Special Action Group meeting on April 2, 1975, Department of Defense James Schlesinger stated that “we don’t want any recurrence of the Danang fiasco.” Kissinger agreed with him and suggested that they “get the non-essential personnel out of

¹⁶⁴ For example, on the Fall of Da Nang, at the Da Nang airport on March 30, 1975, a Boeing 727 that landed in an attempt to evacuate some civilians was met by about 300 South Vietnamese soldiers, armed with rifles and grenades, who forced their way aboard the big jet. “Da Nang’s Fall Feared Imminent; US Ship Sent to Help Refugees,” *The New York Times*, March 30, 1975.
there now.”\textsuperscript{165} Of course, this was because they did not want to have more injuries or deaths of Americans, but they also had a specific desire to operate an orderly withdrawal from Saigon. One of the reasons was because the falls of those cities were represented as chaotic in press photographs—such as a photo of an American guy punching a Vietnamese from an airplane in Nha Trang—and this representation was \textit{undesirable}. The U.S. did not want a repeat of this in Saigon at the end of the war (below). The image of the American guy forcefully jabbing a Vietnamese from the evacuation helicopter in Nha Trang is the opposite of what the administration expected as “honorable withdrawal.” Even long after the war’s end, the image continues to circulate as a symbol of the end of the Vietnam War, since it exemplifies the chaotic and ill-organized collapse of South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{166} The image, compared to the one of the helicopter rescue, represents the act of abandonment with physical force. People were not just left out but brutally eliminated from refuge or any possibility of assistance.\textsuperscript{167} In this photograph, we can deduce that the American evacuation was more of an act of selection with force. The American man is portrayed as the central actor of the operation. Nonetheless, the picture has circulated as the pinnacle of the end of South Vietnam, but not of the U.S. evacuation. The circular life of the image has also justified the very violence of an American. For example, the action of an American, Robert Hedrix, who eliminated a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{165} Washington Special Action Group Meeting, April 2, 1975, “Meeting Minutes-Washington Special Actions Group, April 1975 (1)” US National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 24, Gerald R. Ford Library.
\item \textsuperscript{166} The American, Robert Hedrix, was a charter pilot hired by the Department of State to move Americans from the countryside to Saigon in April, 1975. Elaine Woo, “Robert Hedrix, 81; Symbol of the Collapse of South Vietnam,” \textit{Los Angeles Times}, November 5, 2006.
\item \textsuperscript{167} However, this kind of violence is always overridden with the rescue narrative. U.S. evacuation from South Vietnam represents a moment of U.S. rescue efforts, such as in the short film, \textit{The Last to Leave}. Jamie Leno, The Local Filmmaker Chronicles Chaotic Final Days of Vietnam War, http://homepost.kpbs.org/tag/vietnam/; http://thelasttoleave.homestead.com/index.html (Accessed February, 8, 2012).
\end{itemize}
Vietnamese person from the evacuation, was later validated because the guy he threw off was a deserted soldier.\textsuperscript{168}

![Figure 3: Robert Hedrix (from Los Angeles Times)](image)

To ensure an orderly withdrawal in Saigon, Da Nang was represented as an unwanted example by CIA director William Colby, who explained the evacuation of civilians in Da Nang as dreadful: “There have been terrible mob scenes, both at the airport where they stormed the loading aircraft and at the port where they jammed aboard ships. Some of the military have even shot their way on to the ships. A small number has been loaded but law and order has broken down completely and it is almost impossible.”\textsuperscript{169} Describing Da Nang as space outside “law and order,” Colby racialized Da Nang as “chaotic” and “violent,” as opposed to the stabilized spaces where civilization exists. Social theorist Sherene Razack suggests: “[T]o denaturalize or unmap spaces…we begin by exploring space as a social product, uncovering how bodies are produced in spaces and how spaces produce bodies.” Following Razack, I examine the

\textsuperscript{168} Elaine Woo, “Robert Hedrix, 81; Symbol of the Collapse of South Vietnam” Los Angeles Times, November 5, 2006.

\textsuperscript{169} Meeting Minute, March 28, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Files, Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library.
administrational agreement on Da Nang as engendered by the social construction of undesirable space and bodies.\footnote{Sherene Razack, \textit{Race, Space, and the Law: Unmapping a White Settler Society} (2002; reprint, Ontario, Canada: Between the Lines, 2005), 17} They were fearful of what happened in Da Nang because it emerged as an antithesis of civilization and honor.

Since panic had already ensued in Hue, Da Nang and Nha Trang, and was about to happen in Saigon, the administration wanted to organize the evacuation from Saigon well enough to represent the evacuation as honorable. This desire embodied a deep fear of the impossibility of managing the situation, as General George Brown’s comment indicates: “[T]he mob will be hard to control. We might shoot refugees in front of the press.”\footnote{Meeting Minute, March 28, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Files, Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library.} His statement signifies his fear of not only losing power but also of public exposure of the violence against the Vietnamese. He believed that to keep the evacuation in order, Americans might need to kill refugees in order to escape. His fear was not derived from the possibility of violence, but rather originated from the publicity of violence; illustrating the South Vietnamese as a “mob”—as uncontrollable and untrustable—excused the administration of committing violence against their bodies.\footnote{Exposure of the violence caused by U.S. soldiers had been a great source for the anti-Vietnam War movement. Because of this, the Ford Administration was afraid of any coverage of violence against the Vietnamese.} Brown did not condemn the violence against the refugees but rather was extremely afraid of its exposure. He was afraid that the disrespectful images of American violence would not only hurt but also conclude the image of American presence in Vietnam.

The administration did not mention directly but rather indicated that it feared that the South Vietnamese might attack the Americans when they realized that the U.S. was
leaving them, given the situation. Kissinger was informed by the report telling him that “if we pulled out and left them [Vietnamese] in the lurch, we may have to fight the South Vietnamese,” and he claimed that they could not evacuate only Americans.\textsuperscript{173} He stated, “The only problem is getting people through. If you announce that anyone wanting to evacuate should go to Vung Tau, you will have a Da Nang. Unless we can identify how to notify the people and get them to the embarkation point—that is the problem. But if we go to [an] evacuation of only Americans, we may trigger a situation which would prevent getting the Americans out.”\textsuperscript{174} His concern divulges not only the impossibility of American evacuation but also the administrational fear of publicity and violence on both sides—American violence against the Vietnamese and Vietnamese violence against the Americans—that would invalidate the cause of the Vietnam War and the alliance between the U.S. and South Vietnam. In short, to get Americans out safely, the administration believed that they needed to take at least some South Vietnamese.

The above mentioned fear of panic not only came from worries about the evacuation of Americans but also derived from the political fear that the U.S. government could not do anything but surrender. The Ford Administration feared an uncontrolled situation and complete loss of the war. As the situation in South Vietnam became more and more severe, William Stearman predicted the worst case scenario, in which the North Vietnamese Army forces would “be able to walk into town and take over,” on April 11, 1975. He continued to say that it might be impossible to execute the evacuation of

\textsuperscript{173} Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
\textsuperscript{174} Memorandum of Conversation, April 17, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
Americans. On the brink of total loss, the failure of American evacuation would hurt the United States’ credibility of political and military power. It was an issue for individual Americans who would not be able to evacuate safely, as well as the concern of American political and military symbolic power, as the failed evacuation would be forever marked as an American vulnerability.

In sum, the Ford Administration desired the disciplined evacuation to represent the American defeat in Vietnam as an “honorable withdrawal.” The fear of panic was not derived from the actual collapse of South Vietnam; rather, it was from what the collapse represented. If the fall of Saigon resulted in total chaos, it would have devastated the credibility of the U.S. because it would have proved Americans could not retain law and order to manage the South Vietnamese population. It was a matter of having to present the U.S. military power as a reliable and honorable figure at the end of the war. In this way, the Ford Administration tried to stage the evacuation as a well-organized event, even though it was no longer “peace with honor” but an “evacuation with honor.”


During the evacuation of non-essential U.S. personnel and the South Vietnamese who supported U.S. government policy, on the brink of the collapse of South Vietnam, the U.S. aid to South Vietnam had both actual and symbolic meaning. However, it was

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175 “This worst case, but entirely possible, scenario would render the evacuation of most Americans close to impossible and would rule out any chance of extricating the most endangered Vietnamese whom we wish to evacuate.” Memorandum for Secretary Kissinger from William L. Stearman, “Communist Plans to Attack Saigon and Implications for Evacuation Plan,” April 11, 1975, National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for Asia and the Pacific, Box 19, Gerald R. Ford Library.
176 Historian Gabriel Kolko emphasizes the symbolic value of the aid for the Ford Administration: the Administration appealed to the public that they were doing their best to help the South Vietnamese
not only the aid but the actual bodies that had symbolic and political value when it came
down to the evacuation from Saigon. For the honorable evacuation, the evacuation of
Vietnamese “orphans” and “friends” became an integral part of the operation for the Ford
Administration. In this section, I analyze the ways in which Operation Babylift and the
administrative decision to evacuate Vietnamese refugees emerged as U.S. moral and
humanitarian missions. This section foregrounds the fact that the humanitarian program is
a part of U.S. militarism and problematizes the way this operation was planned and the
way it utilized Vietnamese bodies for gaining public support for South Vietnam. I
challenge this representation because it enabled the U.S. government to turn Vietnamese
“allies” into Vietnamese “refugees.”\(^{177}\)

**Operation Babylift: U.S. Militarism and the Rescue Operation for Asian Babies**

As a symbolic rescue operation during the American evacuation, the Ford
Administration executed “Operation Babylift” from April 3 to April 28, 1975. At an
interagency meeting, Chairman Daniel Parker of the Agency of International
Development (AID) decided that the U.S. would airlift a couple thousand Vietnamese
orphans on April 1, 1975.\(^{178}\) By April 28, some 2,700 children had been flown to the U.S.
via the operation.\(^{179}\) This operation is still controversial because many of the children
were not “orphans;” some had mothers or families who wanted to send their children to

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\(^{178}\) The original purpose of the administration—to use the airlift as a cry for help to justify a cry for war—
was not successful, as the war did not continue. This was because AID had been dealing with internal
“refugees” and orphans in Vietnam and had supported the U.S. war efforts. Louis A. Wiesner, *Victims and Survivors*, 327.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 328
the U.S. for their safety (or merely put them in an orphanage with the intent of coming back for their children).\textsuperscript{180} Although the operation did not gain as much public support as the administration originally expected, it still provided enough attention to symbolize itself as a rescue mission.\textsuperscript{181}

The concept of the operation is embedded in the idea of U.S. humanitarian militarism. For instance, the idea of establishing orphanages in Vietnam was an expansion of U.S. “humanitarian” programs from Japan to Vietnam. When they visited Tokyo on a government-sponsored goodwill tour in 1959, Sara O’Meara and Yvonne Fedderson launched a nonprofit organization called ‘International Orphans, Incorporated’ to support Japanese-American children in Japan.\textsuperscript{182} Congress recognized their work in Japan and honored them. At that occasion, General Wallace M. Green, the commandant of the Marine Corps, asked them to “do the same thing with the half-American, half-Vietnamese orphans in Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{183} Accordingly, O’Meara and Fedderson established five orphanages in Vietnam with the help of U.S. Armed Forces.\textsuperscript{184}

This transport of orphanages for children fathered by Americans from Japan to Vietnam exposes the fact that the orphans in both countries are indeed the byproduct of U.S. militarism in Asia. Certainly, as this originates from militarism and the exploitation

\textsuperscript{180} There was a public statement to critique the operation as “immoral.” For instance, see http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/archive/SIBSVOUS.htm.

\textsuperscript{181} For example, the movie Operation Babylift: The Last Children of Vietnam (2009) did not question the legality of airlifting children without any proper immigration procedures. A movie like this overshadows the murkiness of the operation and re-narrates the operation as a rescue.

\textsuperscript{182} Sara O’Meara and Yvonne Fedderson, Silence Broken: Moving From a Loss of Innocent to a World of Love and Healing (San Diego: Jodere Group, 2003), 12-13. It changed the name to Childhelp USA and now Childhelp.

\textsuperscript{183} O’Meara and Fedderson, Silence Broken, 21.

\textsuperscript{184} Ibid., 23-24. Also, Congressman James C. Corman (D-CA) greatly supported Childhelp USA, to set up the work in Vietnam, as well as the Operation Babylift.
of women, it is not only the problem of the U.S.\textsuperscript{185} For instance, Japan also had Japanese fathered children throughout Asia and the Pacific. However, the Government of Japan did not recognize them as Japanese to provide any legal privilege for them, except for the children (both of whose parents were Japanese) who were left out in China after WWII (Japanese orphans in China).\textsuperscript{186} However, the U.S. government, on the other hand, according to Yukiko Koshiro, “was highly concerned that half-American children might become a source of anti-Americanism abroad” and began to “solve” the problem through an overseas adoption plan after WWII.\textsuperscript{187} This was because the U.S. government saw American fathered children as America’s responsibility.\textsuperscript{188} For the government, the matter of abandoned American fathered children was a threat to the image of the American military, since the abandonment of children would be recognized as the irresponsible and immoral actions of U.S. military men. The U.S. government considered the individual actions of military men as a national responsibility because they belong to the military. This is why the U.S. government decided to allocate special immigration status for American fathered children through the Amerasian Act of 1982 and the Homecoming Act of 1988.\textsuperscript{189} Both acts were passed during the Regan Administration to take responsibility of Amerasian children in Asia.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{185} Cynthia Enloe reminds us that militaries rely on women. Cynthia Enloe, \textit{Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarization of Women’s lives} (Berkley: University of California Press, 2000), xii.

\textsuperscript{186} This is because according to Japanese immigration law, until 1985 children had to be born to legally married parents (at least the father had to be Japanese) to claim their citizenship. Since 2008, children who are fathered by a Japanese man without of marriage of the parents finally gained their citizenship, once they are legally acknowledged by their paternity. http://www.moj.go.jp/MINJI/minji163.html

\textsuperscript{187} Yukiko Koshiro, \textit{Trans-Pacific Racism and the US Occupation in Japan} (New York: Colombia University press, 1999), 183.

\textsuperscript{188} Ibid., 184.

\textsuperscript{189} The Amerasian Homecoming Act of 1982 (PL-97-359) started U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Form-360 to provide special immigration status. However the status is only provided to
Hence, I argue that the concept of orphanage for mixed children exemplifies an aspect of U.S. militarism in Asia. The children who were called “Amerasian”—children of American service men and Asian mothers—are common products of not only U.S. bases in Asia but also of histories of U.S. colonialism, occupation, and wars in Asia (famously the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and Thailand). The normative social construction of such orphans as innocent and objects of compassion and love obfuscates the violence and desire that generated them in the first place. Moreover, the discourse of “helping orphans” signals the U.S. as the only benevolent subject in the world that treats them humanely. Contrastingly, Asia always emerges as an exclusionist that turns children into orphans and handles them cruelly. Not only is it the fault of Asian women who cannot look after them but also of the Asian societies that cannot protect them either. In this logic, Asian women and Asian societies are represented as improper and lacking subjects that cannot play their expected “normative” gendered roles of caring parents. By emphasizing the U.S. as a nation of immigrants and Asian countries as discriminatory, this view still prevails. I claim that the concept of the orphanage embodies these racialized and gendered ideas that regard Asian women as bad mothers and Asian societies as prejudiced.


191 I am not saying all American fathered children are products of rape, but I am asserting that the processes that produced them expose a history of U.S. colonialism, imperialism and militarism because Amerasian cases always presume Amerasians themselves as products of American military men and Asian women.

In this way, at the end of the Vietnam War “Operation Babylift” maintained the representation of the U.S. as a moral liberal nation, and the administration hoped this sense of morality would change the public’s opinion regarding additional aid to South Vietnam. For example, the U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, Graham Martin, “stressed that this evacuation along with the millions of refugees abandoning Communist-controlled zones, will help create a shift in American public opinion in favor of the Republic of Vietnam. Especially when these children land in the United States, they will be subject to television, radio and press agency coverage and the effect will be tremendous.”\textsuperscript{193} He saw the efficacy of the operation because refugee children would be represented as innocent victims of wretched Communism, enabling the administration to obtain additional aid to South Vietnam. Even with the tragedy of the C-5A airlift crash that killed close to 200 Vietnamese babies and children, the Ford Administration continued operations to create sympathy for South Vietnam and to soften public opinion about emergency aid.\textsuperscript{194}


\textsuperscript{194} The group of people who engaged in Operation Babylift evaluated the operation as a success because it created sympathy not only for the children but also for stricken Vietnam. Louis Wisner, \textit{Victims and survivors}, 328.
Perhaps one of the most symbolic moments was on April 5, 1975, President Ford greeted incoming “orphans” and was pictured holding a baby when the flight arrived in San Francisco. Photographs of the president holding a baby at the moment of imminent danger of South Vietnam represented the U.S. as a father and savior by implying that the U.S. was a safe space for the “rescued” babies. President Ford was able to demonstrate himself as a rescuer in the image above by participating in a well-organized and calculated photo-up in which he held a Vietnamese baby. Being the center of the picture, President Ford himself is the one gently holding a baby who had just arrived. Everyone surrounding them is supporting his act because it is an act of benevolence to welcome her/him. This image racializes and genderizes the U.S. as a white man and South Vietnam as an Asian baby who needs to be protected. The baby in the frame represents a powerless object of rescue. The image justifies the displacement of her/him as a necessary procurement and the act of dislocation as a celebratory rescue.

The operation was not just for obtaining aid from Congress but also for disguising the evacuations of Americans and Vietnamese by directing attention to the “orphans” as the true rescue mission.\textsuperscript{196} To do so, the administration especially needed “orphans” because they were symbols of U.S. militarism and the evacuation of them would represent a humanitarian aspect. By doing so, Operation Babylift became the theater of rescue in which President Ford was exhibited as a father of those orphans. Although some Vietnamese filed a class action lawsuit against people of the Department of State to argue that the detention of Vietnamese children was unconstitutional, evacuation of these children labeled orphans helped to represent the withdrawal as a rescue mission. The operation represented U.S. politics of care for children in Asia, which Laura Briggs calls as “secular salvation theology;” this has enabled the U.S. to play a rescuer figure in Asia.\textsuperscript{197}

**Evacuation of Friends?**

In this section, in a similar line to the analysis of Operation Babylift, I challenge the idea of *rescue of friends* by uncovering the functionality of the evacuation as a rescue. I argue that the “friends’” bodies were used to signify the power and benevolence of the U.S. As Denise da Silva elucidates, those “friends,” such as Iraqi and Vietnamese refugees, are the “others of Europe” who emerged “to the geopolitico necessities of a particular historical moment.”\textsuperscript{198} As she reminds us, the U.S. utilizes the illusion of responsibility to turn certain groups of people into friends. This friend figure has been

\textsuperscript{196} Lehman claimed that they were using the baby-lift for Vietnamese evacuation. Larry Engelmann, *Tears before the Rain: An Oral History of the Fall of South Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press), 38.
\textsuperscript{197} Laura Briggs, “Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption,” *Gender and History*, 2003, 15:2, 182.
significant for the U.S. to fight the Cold War because it defines the U.S. as a true and sole rescuer and a figure of freedom.

As I explained earlier, in order to separate the honorable withdrawal from the act of war, supporting South Vietnam became fundamental. Since military aid for South Vietnam was unachievable, rescuing South Vietnamese people emerged as equivalent act to that. This was why it was important for Henry Kissinger to rescue “friends” at that moment. Kissinger claimed that “we cannot abandon friends in one part of the world [Indochina] without jeopardizing the security of friends everywhere….the problem we face in Indochina is an elementary question of what kind of people we are….For fifteen years we have been involved in encouraging the people of Vietnam to defend themselves against what we conceive as external danger.”

Playing the rescuer role had a significant meaning for the administration because it would deflect negative images of the U.S. along the themes of abandonment, loss, and escape, by representing the withdrawal as an act of rescue and differentiating it from an act of war. This was why the refugee evacuation was not a legal obligation but rather a moral obligation to rescue the Vietnamese.

More importantly, the rescuer figure was not only a matter of the U.S. and South Vietnam, but also a matter of “the security of friends everywhere.” Kissinger considered how the sudden collapse of South Vietnam would affect the position of the U.S. within a global context. Thus, from the early stage of evacuation, Kissinger proposed to help the South Vietnamese: “We have spent millions of dollars over the past ten years so that the

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North Vietnamese could tear up South Vietnam. I think we owe—it’s our duty—to get the people who believed in us out.” Helping out those who believed the in U.S. was deemed inevitable because the U.S. was obliged to do so. This kind of action transformed the withdrawal into a rescue mission. It also helped to moralize the whole U.S. evacuation because Kissinger believed that it was important to carry out the evacuation “not” in the “context of a bug out.” Since the cause of the Vietnam War, Southeast Asia’s importance, originated from security fears that were often described in “domino” metaphors, U.S. evacuation mattered for future U.S. policy in Asia.

Kissinger did not want to present the defeat of the war as the defeat of U.S. policy. He maintained his desire to prevent curtailment of U.S. foreign policy. There is nothing we can do about the past, but it is important how we react to this. Will we withdraw? Will we give up our commitments and our leadership? The worst mistake we could make now is to say we are undertaking a global reassessment. What we are seeing [in] Vietnam are special circumstances of a commitment that was perhaps unwisely entered into, circumstances of executive weakness here, and so on, none of which could be predicted. To generalize from this would be disastrous in all areas. There can be a domino effect not related to Vietnam but to our competence in foreign policy. We must conduct our foreign policy with confidence and assurance, reiterating our commitments.

Kissinger did not want to project the withdrawal as a U.S. military defeat or as a failed policy since that kind of perception would lead to the reduction of U.S. military power.

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201 Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
202 Robert J. McMahon, The Limits of Empire, 45.
203 Memorandum of Conversation (Cabinet Meeting), April 16, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
and would damage U.S. foreign policy at large.\textsuperscript{204} He also claimed “the worst conclusion we could draw is to conclude that the design of our foreign policy is wrong and needs reordering.”\textsuperscript{205} To maintain the U.S. power structure in Asia, Kissinger argued that they needed to keep U.S. policy the same, regardless of its failure. This indicates that people like Kissinger did not see any defects in the policy and imposed their own beliefs in democracy, liberty, and coalitions among anti-communist governments in Asia.

In this context, the significance of the ‘evacuation of friends’ was deeply intertwined with U.S. militarism and policy in Asia, since the accomplishment of the evacuation would reflect the credibility of U.S. leadership in Asia. For instance, General George Brown remarked that “people wonder if we will turn our backs on Asia. The main question is what we will do about Asia.”\textsuperscript{206} His statement shows American paternalistic attitudes towards Asia. Brown saw it as an American responsibility to maintain an American presence. In this understanding, Asia is a place where the U.S. government guides and leads. This is a U.S. mapping of the world which considers the Pacific as an “American lake,” and part of East Asia and Southeast Asia as not legal American territory but extraterritorial jurisdiction that the U.S. could utilize as U.S. outposts of empire.\textsuperscript{207} This is why a summary of the State Department’s evacuation options concluded that it was necessary to evacuate Vietnamese because “(1) we have a moral obligation to do so and, (2) the rest of the world will be watching to see how the U.S.

\textsuperscript{204} Memoranda of Conversation, April 16, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.

\textsuperscript{205} Memoranda of Conversation, April 25, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Files, Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.

\textsuperscript{206} Meeting minutes, April 9, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Files, Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library.

deals with the people of a country which has long been involved with us.”

The State Department viewed the U.S. evacuation as a symbol of U.S. foreign policy that would affect future U.S.-Asia relations. However, how to fund the evacuation was controversial even among the administration. Kissinger began just focusing on humanitarian aid and suggested that President Ford ask Congress only for this type of aid: “I must say it would be popular to say we have done enough. Give only humanitarian aid, negotiate with North Vietnam to take out those who want to go, and say if the North won’t agree, we will do it by force. You could couple it with a statement saying it was a bad defeat, and we need a bigger defense budget because it’s a dangerous world, and we need the Turkey money.” As long as they attained humanitarian aid, Kissinger would be satisfied to execute the evacuation of Americans and some Vietnamese. Believing that they would not get military aid for South Vietnam, he was looking for a way to deal with the defeat.

Nonetheless, the President opposed his idea because it went “against [his] grain.” He also claimed that “if the Congress want[s] to vote this way, then the efforts of five Presidents, 55,000 dead, and five Congressional efforts are in vain.” Since the President really wanted to represent the war as a meaningful endeavor, the U.S. could not just leave Vietnam. Ford believed that the policy on Vietnam was right and that he

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209 Memorandum of Conversation, April 8, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
needed to fight for it as long as he could. President Ford thought if he did not ask Congress for the military aid, it would prove that U.S. policy on Vietnam was wrong.

This is why President Ford asked Congress for $722 million for military and humanitarian aid on April 10, 1975. He stated:

I hereby pledge in the name of the American people that the United States will make a maximum humanitarian effort to help care for and feed these helpless victims. And, now I ask the Congress to clarify immediately its restrictions on the use of U.S. military forces in Southeast Asia for the limited purposes of protecting American lives by ensuring their evacuation, if this should be necessary. And I also ask prompt revision of the law to cover those Vietnamese to whom we have a very special obligation and whose lives may be endangered should the worst come to pass.

This “obligation” was supposed to provide the U.S. government a just reason to deploy force for an evacuation. President Ford could not give up the military aid for South Vietnam.

The President’s fixation on military aid derived from two strategic military values of the refugees. The first one was that the evacuation of the refugees would facilitate and secure the evacuation of Americans, since the South Vietnamese people would distract the process. The second was of one political symbolic value: to show the U.S. as a moral subject that would “save some South Vietnamese,” in order to gain public support for

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212 He stated: “I have spent a lot of time on this, now and even earlier, going back to 1952. I think our policy, going back to Presidents Truman and Eisenhower, was the right policy. We did not always implement it well, and we may have made many mistakes. But it was the right policy…. But to go to Congress and ask for nothing, that is dubious. It is our best hope, if we can get it.” Memorandum of Conversation, April 9, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.

213 Since the Truman and Eisenhower administrations deemed the importance of Southeast Asia and made U.S. intervention in Southeast Asia logical to save America’s credibility, the president did believe that U.S. involvement was right. Robert McMahon, The Limits of Empire, 40.

U.S. policy and U.S. credibility in Asia. On April 15, since the possibility of getting the aid that president Ford requested was viewed as slim, the administration discussed what should happen if this were to occur. Because the administration knew that the collapse of South Vietnam was inevitable, Kissinger suggested that they “send [Graham] Martin in and say we would like to save as many South Vietnamese as possible.” However, this kind of suggestion was controversial since some of the Senators had already expressed concern regarding the evacuation of Vietnamese. Senator Frank Church (D-Idaho) opposed the idea of a great number of Vietnamese evacuees because it “could involve us in a large war.” He stated, “This raises the specter of a new war, thousands of American troops holding on in an enclave for a long period.” Senator Biden also maintained that “I will vote for getting the Americans out. I don’t want it mixed with getting the Vietnamese out.” The plan for the Vietnamese evacuation was deemed unacceptable because it was different from what the Senators had envisioned. Senator John Glenn (D-Ohio) expressed, “I and most Senators thought of a surgical extraction, not of a ten-day to two-week operation with a bridgehead.” They strongly desired an Americans-only evacuation operation.

Thus, Kissinger rationalized the evacuation of Vietnamese as a requirement, claiming that “to get all Americans out safely, we will need to take out at least some

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215 Memorandum of Conversation, April 15, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
216 Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
217 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
Vietnamese.” This kind of comment, on the one hand, justified the evacuation of Vietnamese to secure the evacuation of American bodies. On the other hand, he disguised his desire to exploit the bodies of Vietnamese to signify the operation as one of “rescue.” In this way, evacuation of some Vietnamese with Americans was rationalized to uphold the morality of the American evacuation from Vietnam, while the evacuation of the Vietnamese was verified as playing a supplemental role to hold up the political symbolic value of the American withdrawal. Accordingly, in the discussion on the target number of Vietnamese the U.S. would aim to rescue, Kissinger mentioned that “this [number] doesn’t mean we can [actually] get them out.” This superficial worth of the Vietnamese contradicts the idea of rescue of friends and the concept of ‘friend’ as an equal status person who has trust and affection. Therefore, a ‘friend’ in this sense was a less essential person to the U.S. (because s/he was legally, racially and culturally different), yet significant enough to help them represent the evacuation as a U.S. rescue mission.

**Technology of Moral Obligation**

By designating the evacuation of the Vietnamese as a secondary objective to the evacuation of Americans, the Ford Administration validated the moral obligation as the motivation for the evacuation of the Vietnamese. This section reveals the ways in which the logic of moral obligation enabled the extended scale of refugee evacuation beyond the administrative expectation. In particular, this was because there was a strong tendency for those who had been in Vietnam to help as many of their “Vietnamese friends” as

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220 Memorandum of Conversation, April 14, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Library.
possible. They did not want to leave their friends in South Vietnam because they recognized that to evacuate without them would be a betrayal since they were “haunted by the abandonment of Vietnamese employees and associates in Da Nang and Nha Trang.” The possibility of abandoning Vietnamese behind motivated quite a few Americans to get them out of their country.

For instance, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Graham Martin became a strong advocate of evacuating South Vietnamese. He stated:

If I have to take these Vietnamese and their families, I intend to do it and answer for it later. I am not asking your approval, so as not to involve the White House ahead of time, and no mention need be made in reply, but I did want you, Henry and the president to be aware. If it causes a flap, you can disown me as having acted without authorization if you wish, but this is the best way to get out of here without having U.S. forces fighting our former allies, or killing Vietnamese civilians.

Martin expressed that taking some Vietnamese was “the best way” to leave Vietnam since he strongly believed in America’s moral obligation to them. He believed that the minimum number of Vietnamese which the US “clearly owe[s] protection in the case of danger” would be 175,000. In the process of withdrawal, Ambassador Martin became the supervisor of the overall evacuation from South Vietnam. While the Ford Administration was arguing about the plan, Graham Martin had the power to decide who would be evacuated. As a consular of Can Tho, Wolfgang Lehman maintained that

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221 Kissinger complained: “[E]ven the tragic plight of the refugees has not produced the official response needed to convince the world and our own people of our concern.” Washington Special Action Group Meeting, April 2, 1975, “Meeting Minutes-Washington Special Actions Group, April 1975 (1)” US National Security Council Institutional Files, Box 24, Gerald R. Ford Library.

222 Arnold Isaacs, Without Honor, 399.


224 Telegram to General Brent Scowcroft from Graham Martin (REF: WH 50640), April 7, 1975, “Vietnam (9),” National Security Adviser: East Asia and Pacific Staff Files, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
although they did not have any formal authority to move Vietnamese people into the U.S.
until April 24, they would send people to Guam and Subic starting at the beginning of
April.\footnote{Larry Engelman, \textit{Tears before the Rain}, 38.} In this way, the U.S. Embassy and Consulates had the overall power to evacuate
both Vietnamese and Americans in the logic of moral obligation.

As the collapse of South Vietnam began to seem inevitable, the administration
wanted the embassy to reduce the number of Americans and pull them out in the end all
at once. The number of Americans had to be reduced to the amount which would be
capable to be removed by one flight.\footnote{Their goal was to decrease the number of Americans from 6,000 to 950. Memorandum of Conversation,
“The President’s Meeting with the Cabinet on Indochina,” April 29, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.} For the administration, it was clear that the
priority of the evacuation was to get Americans out. This is why, to evacuate Americans unharmed, President Ford approved the request from the Secretary of Defense for
authority to allow U.S. forces to use riot control agents (tear gas) in situations requiring
crowd dispersal during the evacuation operation.\footnote{Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, April 17, 1975, “Vietnam (19),” National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for Asia and the Pacific, Box 19, Gerald R. Ford Library.} This preparation with the riot control
agents exposes the administrational understanding that the Vietnamese were racially
subordinate bodies that needed to be controlled. According to that, the Vietnamese people
were not all people who needed to be saved, because some were just mobs that needed to be attacked.

The evacuation of Vietnamese refugees was designed to save “high-risk”
refugees: high governmental officials, military personnel and employees of the U.S.
government and their families. Thus, the administration sought to select those people. For
example, in his memo to Kissenger, William Stearman discusses:


“….how could we sort out those Vietnamese whom we want to evacuate because they are endangered? One possible solution would be to shuttle those rescued at sea to Con Son and Phu Quoc Islands and evacuate those to whom we have some obligation—especially our employees and their families, whom [Ambassador] Martin promised to save. We could invite the UNHCR to arrange for the resettlement of those remaining or we could do this ourselves by directly soliciting offers from other countries.”

The administration wanted to consolidate refugees at a location from where they could rescue the ones they wanted to save. For the administration, there was a clear distinction between “high risk” and ordinary refugees. The South Vietnamese who were considered as “at high risk” were those who were in eminent danger when the Communists took over the South. Kissinger mentioned in a WSAG meeting on April 28 that “our policy is not to favor the ordinary refugees.” He was also frustrated that he did not know what was going on regarding the evacuation.

General Brown responded saying that commercial cargo ships on lease to the Navy were picking up people. He continued: “The Marines are capable of putting off the people onto Phu Quoc Island, but what I’m trying to say is that they are not trained to screen people.”

It was ironic that the evacuation in which the administration originally planned to evacuate only “high-risk” South Vietnamese ended up dealing with much more people than it projected, because the administration claimed a moral obligation to the Vietnamese.

The moral obligation expanded into an Asia-Pacific military mission. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)-Pacific Command was in overall charge of the military moves.

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230 Ibid.
231 The original maximum expectation was 50,000 refugees, but in early in May it turned out that there were about 120,000 refugees. Memoranda of Conversation, May 5, 1975, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
necessary to evacuate all U.S. nationals and some Vietnamese, and it tasked U.S. Commander in Chief Pacific to provide assistance.\textsuperscript{232} Because it was a large scale movement, establishing processing points where refugees were temporarily housed to complete the necessary screening and paperwork prior to entry into the U.S. or other countries was the first task to be accomplished. However, before the decision was made, many refugees were already taken to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. But President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines subsequently informed the U.S. Ambassador that the Vietnamese would not be welcomed at Clark Field or anywhere else in the Philippines, so of all U.S. military bases in the Pacific, Guam and Wake Island were chosen as available destinations for the mission.\textsuperscript{233}

Military operation of the evacuation reveals an American desire to control and manage the Vietnamese, complicating the idea of rescue. For instance, in a memo planning for the evacuation of the Vietnamese, it stated, “[T]he first destination for Vietnamese evacuees will be temporary collecting points in neighboring countries of the Western Pacific area and possibly in the U.S.”\textsuperscript{234} The expression “collecting points” signifies the U.S. strategic technique to gather the refugees and to relocate them to the U.S. as an actual possibility. Philip Habib, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, expected that by working with other countries and international agencies, they would resettle Vietnamese all over the world. As the Ford Administration did not want to admit all of the South Vietnamese people directly into the United States, it

\textsuperscript{233} Ibid., 34.
\textsuperscript{234} Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, April 17, 1975, “Vietnam (15),” National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for Asia and the Pacific, Box 19, Gerald R. Ford Library.
diverted them to different locations, such as the Philippines and Guam for processing control. This plan itself underscores the U.S. racial and cultural fear of bringing Asians directly into the U.S.

The administration also feared that other countries would interfere with the U.S. planning. Planning notes mentioned that “foreign governments where refugees might be sent for interim settlement cannot be notified until a decision is made to undertake an evacuation program because of the need to maintain secrecy.”235 The need for secrecy surrounding the refugee “problem” signifies the administrational wish to mask the messiness of the evacuation since the disorganized influx of refugees represents an image of defeat. For this reason, the administration was upset when this secrecy could not be maintained for very long. A memorandum to Kissinger urged him to make different arrangements for the evacuation. It claimed: “We must also decide what to do about Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines. Apparently, there is a lot of publicity being given to all arrivals at the base, which makes it difficult to use the base for any discreet evacuation.”236 They did not want the all of publicity regarding the refugees, even though the refugee evacuation needed public support.

Nevertheless, Ambassador Graham Martin was angry about the diversion of Vietnamese refugees to Guam or Wake Island. He wrote to the Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft to make sure that the flight would arrive at Subic:

235 Ibid.
I have asked Bill Sullivan to take special care of them, perhaps diverting the plane from the Clark operation to Subic. All of these people are high, former government officials and their families. There is no doubt about their “high risk” category. They have been properly documented for parole into the United States. If these people get diverted to Guam or Wake, I think there is going to be all hell to pay…. I think if he [Dr. Dan] goes through the cattle pens of Wake and Guam, the political fall-out for the President would not be useful.237

The reroute led to an overflow of refugees in Guam and Wake Island and the creation of “cattle pens.” Martin was upset by the possibility that his important friends might be sent there. A memorandum to the president stated that there were 47,000 Vietnamese in Guam and Wake Island and 80,000 in high seas and third countries.238 Guam and Wake Island became two staging areas because Guam is an organized and unincorporated U.S. territory and Wake Island is an unorganized, unincorporated U.S. territory; therefore, the U.S. could utilize those territories without facing official diplomatic relations and use of the land for its own purposes. This employment of Guam and Wake Island as staging areas for the refugees exemplifies the intricacy of U.S. militarism, colonialism and imperialism because U.S. military operation need surpasses local sovereignties’ control over their land.

The overflow of refugees was unexpected, because the Ford administration did not plan to evacuate large numbers of Vietnamese.239 Moreover, the administration was

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239 “It is becoming increasingly clear that we will be able selectively to evacuate only relatively small numbers of endangered Vietnamese (e.g., employees of the US). ….. Most Vietnamese who want to escape will probably have to do so by water.” Memorandum for Kissinger from William Stearman, “Evacuation or Rescue of Vietnamese” April 22, 1975, “Vietnam (21)” National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for Asia and the Pacific, Box 20, Gerald R. Ford Library.
not sure whether it was going to help all of those who actually left their country. National Security Council staff William Stearman asked Kissinger the following: “Dean Brown’s group estimates that the Vietnamese have sea and air assets to evacuate over 50,000 persons—and this is a conservative estimate. Those who fly out to other countries will principally pose diplomatic and consular problems. Those who put out to sea pose operations problems. Do we pick them up or not?”

The memorandum was sent because General Brown discussed U.S. Commander in Chief Pacific’s desire to move U.S. ships close enough to the Vietnam coast to rescue the Vietnamese escaping in boats. Brown was “clearly opposed to the idea and said he was ordering our vessels to stay well out to sea—at 12 miles out.”

This memorandum discloses disagreement and confusion even among the administration about who would be rescued. The administration only wanted to help a small number of “high-risk” Vietnamese.

In reality, the Ford Administration did not anticipate the mass evacuation of Vietnamese and got upset over the swelling number of Vietnamese refugees in Asia and the Pacific. For example, in the WSAG meeting on April 29, Kissinger angrily declared: “The orders are that only Americans are to be evacuated.” A day before, President Ford also mentioned that the two remaining aircraft “should be filled with the DAO personnel and not by Vietnamese.”

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240 Ibid.
241 Ibid.
242 Even for those “high-risk” refugees, Kissinger still asked Ambassador Martin whether he was going to evacuate high-risk Vietnamese on April 25. Telegram to Graham Martin from Henry Kissinger, April 25, 1975, “Vietnam (9),” National Security Advisor; National Security Council East Asian and Pacific Affairs Staff Files, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
244 Meeting Minutes, April 28, 1975, National Security Adviser: National Security Council Meeting Minutes, Box 1, Gerald R. Ford Library.
the administration believed the target of evacuation was Americans, not the Vietnamese. Although they publicly maintained that they would rescue as many as Vietnamese people possible, they wanted to rescue all the Americans and some small number of “friends.” Along with not having any concrete plan to evacuate the Vietnamese listed as “high-risk,” the moral obligation to the Vietnamese paradoxically allowed more Vietnamese people than the administration originally expected to leave their country.

Although the Ford Administration could not control and purify the image of the end of the war as well-organized, I assert that administrational efforts to execute “honorable withdrawal” enabled it to deflect the messiness of American military failure in the region and shift the focus to the act of “rescue.” Although South Vietnamese bodies were not fully visible during the evacuation, they were displayed as those who had to be “rescued” because the South Vietnamese were the true victims of the war, not the Americans. A crying child image, which was shown on the cover of Time Magazine on April 14, 1975 can be seen as this example (below).

Figure 5: Refugee child (cover from Time Magazine)
An image of a victim who is crying for help is unquestioningly employing the rhetoric of the U.S.’s moral obligation to South Vietnam. In her book, *Purity and Exile*, Liisa Malkki explains how the refugee image appears “as a singularly expressive emissary of horror and powerlessness” in a humanitarian context.245 Situating refugee as powerless, humanitarian discourse generates the need for “a certain kind of protection.”246 Discourse which situates refugees as powerless otherizes refugees and victims as non-heteronormative subjects.247 The image of a refugee seeking help validated the act of rescuing those who were fleeing their countries (not only South Vietnam but also Cambodia and Laos), even though the administration’s original plan was to evacuate only “high risk” South Vietnamese. Claiming “moral obligation” enabled the Ford administration to be a rescuer at that moment, but at the same time, because it assumes a universal idea of rescue, the administration could not be selective. This explains why President Ford wanted to help all refugees who fled the region.248 He also emphasized the successes of the evacuation and viewed refugees as evidence of the righteousness of U.S. policy by locating it in the history of admittance of the Hungarians and the Cubans.249

246 Wendy Brown, “Human Rights as the Politics of Fatalism,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* vol. 2, no. 3 (Spring, 2004), 460.
247 There is a possibility for queering the refugee figure according to Liisa Mallki. I suggest the refugee figure has been a productive site for a heteronormative nation. In this way, it is possible to analyze the figure in relation to the terrorist figure that Jasbir K. Puar argues. Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
248 On May 6, the President stated: “All in all I consider it a very successful operation under the most difficult circumstances, and I think we owe our military forces a sincere vote of thanks for their courage and dedication. …. Looking at this large number of refugees, I have no doubt that we can handle these numbers. I want you to know that it just burns me up that these great humanitarians all want to turn their backs on these refugees. We didn’t do this to the Cubans and to the Hungarians, and damn it, I don’t want to see us turn our backs on the Vietnamese.” Memorandum of Conversation, May 6, 8:10-9:20 am, National Security Adviser: Memoranda of Conversation, Box 11, Gerald R. Ford Library.
249 Ibid. Julia Taft, who was the head of interagency task force for resettlement of Indochinese refugees in 1975, recalled the justification: “[B]ack in ’75, one of the justifications that Ford gave was related to
3. Un-savable South Vietnam

Although the evacuation did not turn out as a total chaos such as the Ford Administration feared, the fact of U.S. abandonment of South Vietnam remains. Instead of revealing the U.S. failure of withdrawal, the abandonment story at the end of the war has been circulating as a “tragic story” emphasizing the possibility of rescue. In this section, I analyze the tragic story of CIA agent Frank Snepp at the end of the Vietnam War, not just to critique the “rescue” narrative but to reveal the ways in which the representation of the end of the war has functioned as a theater of rescue. It exposes Snepp’s and America’s desire to fill the void of abandonment through the un-savable body of Mai Ly and South Vietnam.

Need of a Tragic Story

Even though the administration stressed the evacuation of the Vietnamese as a “rescue,” it was extremely unpopular in the U.S. society at large. On the one hand, U.S. popular media did not praise the evacuation of refugees. There is no clear-cut hero or rescuer figure in the U.S. cultural representations of the evacuation. On the other hand, the media did not openly criticize the administrative decision to receive the refugees

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250 Of course there are stories revealing the failure of the withdrawal. For instance, see Larry Berman, No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger and Betrayal in Vietnam (New York: Touch Stone, 2001).

251 At the end of the war, from April to May 1975, the media did not report on the “rescue” aspect of evacuation but rather illustrated the government’s struggle of accepting refugees and the wary reception by the public. For example, The New York Times described how the U.S. was struggling to resettle South Vietnamese in late April. “U.S. Struggling to Resettle Refugees” The New York Times, April 24, 1975. The New York Times also announced that there was “wide hostility” towards “Vietnamese refugees.” “Wide Hostility Found To Vietnamese Influx; Hostility Found Across the Country as the First South Vietnamese Exiles Arrive,” The New York Times, May 2, 1975. Time described Americans’ attitude towards the Vietnamese as “a cool and wary reception.” Time, May 12, 1975, 24.
Admitting refugees was understood as an inevitable result because the U.S. had set a precedent with other international crises. The South Vietnamese became “the newest Americans,” according to an article in the *Los Angeles Times*. The article also claims: “Nothing can be done for the dead of Vietnam, for the future, healing war’s wound.” This quote reveals an American desire to not quickly forget the Vietnam War but to cover up the violence done in former Indochina. I want to call a close attention to these apathies, because I believe that it signifies the deep stigma of U.S. failure.

Here, I assert that American guilt for the abandonment of the people of former Indochina did not simply disappear given the administrational official rescue narratives of evacuation and resettlement. Instead, I claim that American guilt necessitated a “tragedy” to justify what happened by elucidating that the war was out of American control. Furthermore, the troupe of tragedy served also to obscure the U.S. origins of such bereavement. Moreover, tragedy is used to regain whiteness by subjectifying the American (White) man as the moral subject. This is why there are a lot of “tragic” stories between a Vietnamese woman and an American man: *Heaven and Earth* (1993), *Good Morning Vietnam* (1987), *Three Seasons* (1999), *The Quiet American* (2002) and the musical *Miss Saigon*. These cultural productions of tragic (love) stories reveal the impossibility of rescue to recuperate the wounds of the Vietnam War. Films that take place in the “Third World” often require the female lead to stand in for the nation. The

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252 For instance, there was an article claiming that the U.S. does not have any choice but to accept the refugees, since accepting refugees is a U.S. tradition. “We have No Choice, Our Tradition,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1975.

253 This is also a “rescue” narrative that asserts the U.S. as a sole rescuer of the world. *The New York Times* reported that President Ford asked the “nation to open its doors to the refugees.” “Ford Asks Nation to Open Doors to the Refugees,” *The New York Times*, May 7, 1975.

tragic love story has to be analyzed in this gender discourse because such discourse engenders the feminization and emasculation of (South) Vietnam.255

Frank Snepp’s true story of the loss of his girlfriend and his son circulated through his books and his articles and in the U.S. media for many years as “the worst of the tragic stories of the last day of Saigon.”256 Examining his story with similar stories illustrates not only Snepp’s desire of justifying his action but also American national exploitation of Vietnamese bodies. It has the same consumerism of Miss Saigon. These two stories possess striking resemblance in the portrayals of Kim in Miss Saigon and Mai Ly in Frank Snepp’s story, because both characters are prostitutes, had kid(s) with American men, and killed themselves. The analogy between the two stories is not a coincidence but rather an inevitable narrative of the American/Western experience in Vietnam as “tragedy.” I claim it discloses an American/Western sense of ownership of Asia. Here, I critique the tragic love story of Frank Snepp and Miss Saigon as what Christina Klein calls “Cold War Orientalism.” This is a kind of Orientalism that emerged especially during the Cold War, in which the U.S. historically produced and consumed Asia. Thus, U.S. cultural production that takes Asia as subject matter has to be understood as part of and related to U.S. political, military and economic expansion in Asia.257

Although Miss Saigon is a musical written by French playwrights Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil, the story is based on the opera Madame Butterfly, and it

255 This is not only for Vietnamese but also for Cambodians and the Hmong; the movies The Killing Fields (1984) and Gran Torino (2008) depict white male protagonists as saviors.
has been reinforcing stereotypical images of Asian woman as sexy, suffering, and suicidal.\textsuperscript{258} Kim in \textit{Miss Saigon} repeats the figure of the hypersexualized Asian woman, as Cio-Cio San in \textit{Madame Butterfly}, as she fell in love with the American man Chris during the Vietnam War and had a boy. Because Kim found out that her future-husband already was married to an American woman and she could not go to the U.S. with him, she killed herself in the end.\textsuperscript{259}

I read Kim’s suicide as a murder by the West because the story cannot end without her death. Because she killed herself by her own hands, the West/audience does not have to get their own hands dirty. Kim’s suicide represents the erasure of an Asian female body from the present and future to contain her within the guilty/painful past. Kim’s suicide justifies the past wrongs of the West as an exceptional tragic story, and her death overshadows the violence of the West, reducing her pain to merely a heartbreaking love story. Consequently, by excluding Kim’s body from a white family, \textit{Miss Saigon} functions as entertainment that allows the West to forget its past immoral acts (colonialism, imperialism and militarism). \textit{Miss Saigon}, therefore, exemplifies Western desire to recuperate the morality of the West through white love (between a white husband and wife).

\textbf{Haunting Guilt}

\textsuperscript{259} When Kim found out that her husband was already married to an American woman Ellen, she insists that they take her child Tam with them to the U.S. because he has more chances with them than with her. Ellen declined the offer saying she and her husband want to have their own baby. \textit{Miss Saigon, Room 317}. Since Kim figures out that if she dies Tam will be able to go to the U.S., Kim commits suicide. \textit{Miss Saigon, Final}. 
CIA agent Frank Snepp’s real experience also exposes the same desire for a recuperation of morality and a mending of the past. Nonetheless, there are three different versions of Snepp’s experience. Changes in details and settings expose not only his politics of memory but also his haunting guilt. In the book that Snepp originally published in 1977, he described the story on Mai Ly (although he does not mention on her name) differently:

Around midmorning a Chinese girl, an old acquaintance, called to ask my help. Her American husband had abandoned her and her children, she explained tearfully; she had no one else to call on but me. I told her wearily I could do nothing at the moment. I was chained to my desk. “But contact me again in an hour,” I said. “I’ll see what I can do.” There was a brief silence on the other end of the line. Then her voice drifted in, cool and distant. “If you won’t help me,” she said, “I’m a dead woman. I’ll kill myself and my children. I’ve already bought the pills.” I glanced at the papers piled high in front of me. Polgar wanted something written, another useless analysis, as soon as possible. No, I could not break away. “Look,” I said, “just phone in an hour. I’ll help you then.” Precisely on schedule, an hour later, she called again. As it happened, I was away from my desk. She left a message with the duty officer: “I would have expected better of you. Goodbye.” That was the last I heard from her. 260

Here Snepp does not appear as caring. In his book, *Irreparable Harm* that was published in 1999, Snepp explains the differences in his accounts: “In an earlier book I told a story that is recounted here, concerning a woman I call Mai Ly, but did not provide precise details of her life and passing out of a sense of guilt that has taken years to overcome.” 261

Even if he tried to hide her from official retribution by changing her into a Chinese girl in his first book, it does not erase the fact of his abandonment of her and her children. Mai Ly did not have anyone but Snepp to rely on and she was threatening her and her

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260 Frank Snepp, *Decent Interval*, 453-454.
children’s lives. Mai Ly was betting their lives to attain Snepp’s assistance. In this original version, Snepp is guiltier of not helping her than in other versions.

Moreover, she was abandoned twice in the story, first by her husband and then by Snepp. Rather than being innocent or caring he appears irresponsible and merciless in this story because rescuing her was not a compelling force for him. Additionally, he said that “I could do nothing at the moment.” As Snepp missed Mai Ly’s second call, he could not do anything but accept the fact that she might have killed herself. Consequently, the phrase by Mai Ly; “I would have expected better of you. Goodbye” has a different connotation that simple separation/blame. This is not just an accusation but a bitter farewell for Snepp and the U.S., because “you” could have done better but “you” did not do so. In disappointment, she rejected his presence with her “goodbye.” As a result, Snepp no longer stands in for the moral subject or rescuer but signifies a killer in this version. He could not prove worthy of her trust and he abandoned Mai Ly and her son.

Nonetheless, the story that appeared in *Newsweek* on the 25th anniversary of Fall of Saigon is different from the account mentioned earlier:

The statuesque, almost six-foot-tall Mai Ly had been a hostess in a dive where prostitutes sold “Saigon tea” and their bodies to the round-eyes, Snepp would later write. Snepp’s romance with Mai Ly had been on again, off again, until she disappeared in 1973. Almost two years later she showed up at Snepp’s door - holding a baby she claimed was theirs. At first Snepp was not sure what to believe, though today he accepts paternity of the child, a boy. He hangs on to a photograph of Mai Ly looking regal in a skin-tight dress, while he awkwardly holds the baby like a fragile and foreign object. Shortly after that photo was taken, Mai Ly and the child vanished again, only to resurface the day before the final evacuation of Saigon. "Call back in an hour, I'll be glad to help," Snepp told her over the phone that afternoon when she called, begging for an exit visa for herself and the child. But when he got back to his desk more than an hour later,
there was only a message for him from the woman. It read: "I would have expected better of you."\footnote{262}

This account narrates a “prostitute” that desperately needed Snepp’s help but could not be rescued. In this version, she showed her disappointment in him not helping her. Readers of the article can read Snepp’s abandonment of Mai Ly as the abandonment of South Vietnam. He (the U.S.) wanted to help her (South Vietnam), but he could not do it, and he had to leave at the end. In this way, Snepp is not the completely irresponsible one, as he was willing to help, because Mai Ly was an un-savable body, a prostitute.

Accordingly, the article feminizes South Vietnam as a perfunctory prostitute who sought help only at the end. This is apparent when the article exceptionalizes the “death of Mai Ly” as the only terrible event during the last days of Saigon:

> By the last week of April Snepp was strung out and edgy, no longer sleeping more than a couple of hours a night. With his fellow spooks, he was helping to run a "black" airlift, using forged documents to spirit out South Vietnamese friends aboard the agency’s secret airline, known by its cover name, Air America. At the same time, he was writing intelligence reports trying to convince the ambassador that the end was near. But, a quarter century later, the excuse that Snepp was too busy no longer suffices to quiet his guilty conscience over the death of Mai Ly.\footnote{263}

Although he was “too busy” dealing with the situation to help her, he had been trying his best to assist other Vietnamese. The other Vietnamese whom Snepp needed to rescue were saved and only Mai Ly (and her child) was left behind. Consequently, the story narrates that he did not mean to fail to rescue her, but he had no other choice.

Emphasizing the “conscience” over her death underscores his morality as an American who was also responsible for the fate of South Vietnam; the representation of Snepp

\footnote{263} Ibid. 
emerges as an innocent do-gooder. The U.S. plays a redemptive masculine savior (moral man) and South Vietnam plays feminine sinner (prostitute) who needed to be salvaged. While he failed to play the savior role, as Mai Ly’s prostitute figure was the property of Snepp, his missed opportunity of rescuing her does not completely lay blame on him but rather narrates the story as a tragedy. This relationship between Mai Ly and Snepp, and by extension between Vietnam and the U.S., can be read as a repetition of the relationship between Kim and Chris in Miss Saigon and Cio-Cio San and Pickerton in Madame Butterfly.

Mai Ly and their son’s deaths cannot be fully consumed like Kim’s suicide, because unlike a performance of Miss Saigon, Snepp’s life goes on as an American who was in Vietnam. The article in Newsweek also narrates the aftermath as a story of Snepp surviving story with his loss: “Snepp, now a producer for the syndicated show ‘Extra,’ went back to Saigon in 1991. As he walked past the seedy tenement where he had stayed with Mai Ly, he realized that their son, had he lived, would have been 18 years old.”

His son never died in his imagination but continues to grow up. “What would have been” is always contrasts with “what has been.” The contrast always invokes him to regret that there was a chance to make his reality “what would have been.” In Snepp’s case, it was the possibility of the rescue. He has to deal with his loss. Loss of Mai Ly, a child, and Vietnam haunt him and always impede the successful rescue story of the U.S.

The newest version of Snepp’s memoir of Mai Ly narrates not helping her as his worst failure during the last days in Saigon:

\[264\] Ibid.
About forty-eight hours before the end I got a call from a Vietnamese woman I had had an on-and-off relationship with since my first year in Vietnam. She had disappeared from the city in 1973. Near the end of 1974 she showed up at my door with a year-old baby boy. I believe it was my own child. So just before the collapse she called and said, “You’ve got to evacuate me because the Communists will kill me for running around with an American and having an American child.” I was working on another report for the ambassador so I said, “Look Mai Ly, call me back an hour. I’ll do what I can to get you out of the country.” She said, “You better because if you don’t I’m going to kill myself and this child.” She called back in an hour or so and I was briefing the ambassador and missed the call. On the last day I saw a police man who knew her and asked him to go find out where she was. He sent word back to me that she had killed herself and the kid. I’ve never been able to verify it, but as I came off the roof of the embassy I was overwhelmed with this numbing guilt.

In this account, Mai Ly was asking Snepp for his help because she was scared about how the Communists might treat her for what she had done and she needed to escape the country. Although Snepp was ready to help her, he could not reach her. The story depicts that Snepp missing her call brought the sad end to Mai Ly and their child. In this way, Snepp does not take full responsibility for their deaths and unconsciously lessens his guilt, as he had to deal with other stuff. Moreover, dramatizing his role as could-be-rescuer-turned-out-to-be-abandoner, his story illustrates the possibility of rescue. Since he never confirmed Mai Ly and her child’s deaths or whereabouts after the evacuation, Snepp has been exploiting Mai Ly and her son’s possible deaths to depict the fall of Saigon as the worst personal tragedy of his memory.

I read Snepp’s re-narration of the Chinese girl into a “Vietnamese prostitute” in later versions as his desire to dramatize the fall of Saigon as his most “tragic moment” in the Vietnam War. I am not interested in whether Mai Ly is Chinese or Vietnamese.

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Rather I am concerned with the ways in which Snepp illustrates his story differently each time and how the story was received as a tragic story of the end of the war. It is unjustifiable to narrate her over and over as the last terrible moment of the Vietnam War to symbolize his regret, shame, and sorrow. Like Kim’s suicide in the ending of Miss Saigon, the suicide of Mai Ly signifies the end of the Vietnam War for Frank Snepp. However, his guilt about not letting her and their son out of the country did not end like as in Miss Saigon, where the audience could go out of the theater and return home to live their lives. In the case of Snepp, the memory of Mai Ly and their son does not go away but rather keeps coming back.

However, changes in Snepp’s original narrative into his “most tragic story” reveals not only his desire but that of the American public to believe in the possibility of rescue. They also divulge Snepp’s narcissism because by telling his story as a tragedy he represents himself as a moral subject. According to Sigmund Freud, narcissism is a form of behavior that the libido, having been withdrawn from the external world, channels into the ego. Ego is the part of the psychic apparatus that experiences and reacts to the outside world and thus mediates between the primitive drives of the id and the demands of the social and physical environment. The fact that Snepp’s story was perceived as the “most tragic story” also revealed a collective narcissism surrounding the Vietnam War since to consume the event as a tragedy was to channel the libido into the ego. His narration functions to lessen his guilt and shame, because he justifies the abandonment of Mai Ly (South Vietnam) by emphasizing an out-of-control (tragic) situation. I claim that

turning the loss of the war into a “tragic death” to mourn is the consumption of the event and about self-preservation. Her death represents American abandonment but overshadows the U.S. military violence in the region by implying the helplessness of the situation and the desire of rescue.

Yet, his effort of renarrating the event as tragedy between him and Mai Ly (through the differences of stories) exposes not only his failure to rescue her but also his obsession of re-narrating the story as his climax event of Vietnam. His fixation on Mai Ly suggests that he has been attempting to punish himself by revealing his action to seek forgiveness. Since Snepp repetitively represents Mai Ly as an un-savable body, his way of reaching mercy is to rationalize the impossibility of the rescue. Since Snepp’s story served as a self-pity-fantasy of rescue, it ironically provides the never-ending (im)possibility of rescue. Accordingly, Snepp cannot be an innocent moral subject but a bearer of the impossible rescue. In this way, the death of Mai Ly symbolizes his pain in the American evacuation from Vietnam yet enables the American public to consume a “tragic story” like his.

**Conclusion**

As I showed in this chapter, American evacuation from Vietnam was staged and performed as a theater of rescue. This is why there was no clear cut image of the evacuation as a rescue, yet some images of rescue were sustained and maintained through political and cultural conditions at the end of the war and facilitated to represent the U.S. evacuation as an act of rescue. Images of orphans arriving safely in the U.S. through “Operation Babylift” and the final evacuation by a helicopter with a queue of people have
overshadowed certain images, like the crash of C-5A in Operation Babylift and the chaos and mess in evacuations from Hue, Da Nang and Nha Trang. A confluence of factors that represented the American evacuation as a theater of rescue also echoed with the American frontier narrative, which enables Americans to see themselves as the civilized and to validate violence against savages. Although the end of the war was a moment of crisis for the U.S., since the evacuation was performed as a rescue event, the evacuation distinguished itself from the act of the war.

Since the U.S. maintained its position as a rescuer in Asia and the Pacific through the “refugee rescue,” the logic of American civilization was not totally discredited. This was why the government saw the Indochinese as a peril to American society and they were “dispersed” throughout the U.S. to assimilate faster. A fear of an influx of Indochinese refugees into the U.S. was rationalized; Bill Ong Hing reminds us that the U.S. desires to control the Vietnamese are based on racial fear and the desire to control Asian immigration to the U.S. The Ford Administration needed to help some “friends,” but not all of them. This is why Philip Habib, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, expected that by working with international agencies, he could resettle Indochinese refugees all over the world.

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268 He writes, “The Vietnamese American community has been shaped by complicated, sometimes contradictory self-serving and humanitarian foreign policy objectives, which create and reflect a close and controversial relationship between used strategically to control the size, location, and livelihood of the Vietnamese community, sometimes creating discernible tensions.” Bill Ong Hing, Making and Remaking Asian American through Immigration Policy (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 138.

269 He claimed, “They [international agencies] will be able to move them [Indochinese refugees] around the globe.” House Committee on Judiciary, Refugees from Indochina, Executive Session, 94th Cong., 1st sess., 1975, 178-179.
their legal responsibility to the people of Indochina into a moral obligation, as racial and gendered projects of rescue. Moreover, as I explained above, the function of cultural representations of rescue allowed the American public to consume the fall of Saigon and the death of Mai Ly (and her child) as an irrepressible tragedy.

In the end, refugees themselves had to deal with this discrepancy between the morality of “rescue” and the impossibility of “rescue” for most. They were the ones who were forced to endure this contradictory reality of rescue and survival. This nature of rescue continued after the war, as a group of people in the Department of State called “Saigon Cowboys” believed the value of moral obligation and carried on the mission of rescue. This continuation persuaded the Ford and Carter Administrations to issue additional paroles for the refugees. To analyze the meaning of rescue more and to examine U.S. humanitarian imperialism, I discuss implications of their actions in the next chapter.

As I demonstrated in chapter one, the American evacuation from Vietnam functioned as a theater of rescue. In this chapter, I analyze the ways in which the symbolic rescue continued after the end of the evacuation since the Indochinese refugee resettlement recuperated the morality of the U.S. as a refuge of the world. The significance of the refugee policy can be seen in the establishment of the Refugee Act of 1980. On signing S.643 into law, President Carter stressed the United States’ “long tradition as a haven”:

….The Refugee Act reflects our long tradition as a haven for people uprooted by persecution and political turmoil. In recent years, the number of refugees has increased greatly. Their suffering touches all and challenges us to help them, often under difficult circumstances. The Refugee Act improves procedures and coordination to respond to the often massive and rapidly changing refugee problems that have developed recently…..Moreover, the Refugee Act will help refugees in this country become self-sufficient and contributing members of society. Until now, resettlement has been done primarily by private persons and organizations. They have done an admirable job but the large numbers of refugees arriving now create new strains and problems. Clearly, the Federal Government must play an expanded role in refugee programs….Everyone who worked so long on its passage can be proud of this contribution to improved international and domestic refugee programs and to our humanitarian traditions.270

As this speech shows, on the one hand, Carter reaffirmed the U.S. as a refuge of the world. On the other hand, Carter claimed that refugees have to “become self-sufficient” to contribute to society. Refugees who resettled in the U.S. must live within the demands of these expectations. Thus, the U.S. government has a right not only to regulate the number of refugees on an annual basis but also to manage them socially

and culturally by taking on “an expanded role.” Ironically, in this sense, for the refugees, the U.S. is not a place of refuge but a place of competition, where refugees need to be assimilated and become self-sufficient. The act of providing refuge, in reality, justified the dislocation and assimilation of the refugees by translating refugees from objects of rescue to be liberal subjects. Furthermore, as the admittance of refugees discredited the newly established communist countries in former Indochina, it enabled the Carter Administration to sustain the U.S. “withdrawal with honor,” by presenting America as savior of the Indochinese refugees.

The resettlement of Indochinese refugees was a U.S. racial project which turned refugees into the white man’s burden. The phrase “white man’s burden” comes from Rudyard Kipling’s poem. Sherene H. Razack explains that it “exhorted white men—Americans on the eve of an imperial war in the Philippines—to take up the thankless burden of meeting the needs of their ‘new-caught sullen peoples, /half devil and half child.’”271 Even though the term ‘white man’ can be ambiguous and unstable, I read it as white male privilege over people of color, because it validates American righteousness over Filipinos by emphasizing their racial and moral superiority.272 I am not saying that the U.S. military is all white, but rather than there is a general tendency within U.S. military to iconically represent itself as a white mighty figure, in contrast to other parts of the world which are iconically represented as the racialized Other. The distribution of the obligation to care is unevenly distributed along national and racial lines.

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271 Sherene H. Razack, Dark Threats and White Knights, 4.
272 As W.E.B Du Bois claims, this superiority is a wage of whiteness that is deeply rooted in colonialism and imperialism. W.E.B. Dubois, Black Reconstruction in the United States, 727.
Moreover, the white man’s burden, as William Easterly mentions, “emerged from the West’s self-pleasing fantasy that ‘we’ were the chosen ones to save the Rest.” I analyze the Indochinese refugee resettlement in the context of Easterly and Razack’s understanding of the “white man’s burden,” a fantasy that presupposes the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon civilizations. Indeed, the resettlement became a civilizing mission and an opportunity for the U.S. to rehabilitate a white masculinity that naturalizes the violence against Others. Although the underlying logic of the resettlement was identical to the 19th century notion of a ‘civilizing mission of colonialism and imperialism’, I do not limit the term to this historical circumstance but rather view it as a racial/cultural understanding, which has propelled the Indochinese refugee resettlement since the late 1970s.

Nonetheless, the resettlement was not originally planned as an imperialistic rescue. The refugee resettlement was made possible through the tremendous efforts of a small group of people who were called the “Saigon Cowboys.” Thus, I ask: How did the Saigon Cowboys work together with other people to gain additional paroles and a longer U.S. commitment to Indochinese refugees? How was the specific moral obligation to Vietnamese refugees extended to Indochinese refugees? To answer these questions, I examine the processes which expanded the resettlement and which resulted in the Refugee Act of 1980 within the context of an emergence of U.S. humanitarian imperialism. I am not trying to demean the people who enabled the refugees to resettle in the U.S., but rather want to reveal the functions of the resettlement for the U.S. I assert

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274 It is unclear who named them “Saigon Cowboys.” However, according to Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, a small group of junior Foreign Service officers were nicknamed as such by the people who worked with them, because of their passion for the refugee evacuation and refugee admission. Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 123.
that the Indochinese refugee policy was not just a number game of how many refugees
the U.S. government resettled, but a political, cultural and racial symbolic gesture of
“rescue.”

Therefore, in the following, I scrutinize critical moments of U.S. humanitarian
imperialism to show the gradations and processes of how the refugee policy was
constructed as a moral obligation. I start with the heroism of the Saigon Cowboys to
demystify the rescue. Moreover, the cultural understanding and representation of the
refugees as “victims of Communism” served as an ideological justification for U.S.
foreign policy. Secondly, I explain how the victimization of Indochinese refugees was
carried out and how the Indochinese refugee situation emerged as a “humanitarian crisis”
even though Vietnam put an end to the Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia. I reveal
the ways in which the coalition of people to achieve the parole and longer U.S.
commitment to the Indochinese refugees turned out to accuse Vietnam of being a human
rights violator. Finally, I argue that the racial construction of these refugees as former
colonial subjects who are “different” from and “inferior” to First World citizens produced
a type of distancing that reinscribes certain hegemonic ideas of Euro-American
whiteness. In particular, I purport that the establishment of the Refugee Act of 1980 was
the moment that the U.S. defined refugees as a problem. Assimilating the Indochinese
refugees into U.S. society had significant meaning, not only in showing the greatness of
the U.S., but also in erasing past violence domestically and internationally. Thus, the U.S.
deemed itself the true savior of the situation by claiming itself the refuge of the world.

1. Saigon Cowboys: Claiming Moral Obligation
Admission of refugees from former Indochina gradually became an extensive project which was one of Carter’s major global human rights projects. In *Refugee Workers in the Indochina Exodus, 1975-1982*, Larry Clinton Thompson explains that few Americans “took on the lonely task of helping the people left behind in the aftermath of the Vietnam War” and “these few kept the nation’s interest and sense of obligation to the Indochinese alive while many Americans longed to lapse into amnesia.”275 His view narrates the Indochinese refugee resettlement as an exceptional humanitarian effort. Moreover, Thompson writes that “A lesson for Americans in the fall of Saigon is that history judges kindly those who put humanity ahead of politics and policy.”276 He believes that humanity proves the greatness of some Americans who helped Vietnamese refugees. Although I am not demeaning the efforts of the people who worked for the refugees to resettle in the U.S., I believe that their initiatives have to be examined in the political, cultural, and racial context of U.S. hegemony and empire of the post-Vietnam War era.

Therefore, in this section, I reveal the ways in which the moral obligation logic was sustained and the overall Indochinese refugee resettlement was developed after the Vietnam War. I analyze the discourse that framed the ‘Saigon Cowboys’ as ‘American heroes’ in order to lessen the guilt of American failure in Vietnam. It is important to expose the imprecations of the ways in which the sense of obligation to the Indochinese refugees emerged and developed into an American humanitarian commitment, because the resettlement enabled the U.S. to claim their moral superiority in Asia (particularly in

275 Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 1.
276 Ibid., 30.
Southeast Asia) by describing the resettlement as a “humanitarian rescue.” By examining the additional paroles of Indochinese refugees as an American racial and political project, I divulge how the Saigon Cowboys’ efforts regarding the refugee resettlement ended up depicting the refugees as the white man’s burden.

Rescue as Reparation for Abandonment: Critiquing the Heroism of the Saigon Cowboys

According to Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, the continued operation of the resettlement was the result of enthusiastic efforts by members of the Department of State. They stated that a small group of junior Foreign Service officers made possible the Indochinese admissions program which was supported by a number of senior State Department officials.277 The very committed influential officials were mainly Sheppard Lowman, Henry “Hank” Cushing, and Lionel Rosenblatt. They were called “Saigon Cowboys” because they also made tremendous efforts to evacuate Vietnamese people in 1975. They carried on their involvement in the refugee resettlement after 1975: Cushing and Lowman served as senior officers of the Refugee Office (1975-82) and Rosenblatt eventually served as a refugee coordinator in the U.S. Embassy in Bangkok and Thailand, and played a significant role in the development of the resettlement until he left the State Department in the late 1980s.278

Hank Cushing was Deputy in the Consul General of Can Tho in 1975. During the evacuation, he took “a barge down the Mekong River filled with Vietnamese and his staff and proceeded out to sea to meet the U.S. fleet offshore.”279 Around that time, Sheppard Lowman was chief of the internal political reporting of the U.S. embassy and “personally

277 Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, Calculated Kindness, 123.
278 Larry Thompson, Refugee Workers, 239.
279 Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, Calculated Kindness, 123.
arranged for the departure of hundreds of South Vietnamese.” Lionel Rosenblatt was part of the personal staff of the Deputy Secretary of State and “took off at his own expense for Saigon and spent the final weeks in South Vietnam helping to evacuate a substantial number of his former Vietnamese colleagues.” Their rescue of Vietnamese refugees in 1975 was appraised because, according to Thompson, “they were the very antithesis of the ‘Ugly American.’” He values those who evacuated Vietnamese refugees because he believes that it was an honorable act.

The reputation of the “Saigon Cowboys” mirrors the desires of the American society to have a “good American” who fought until the very end for the South Vietnamese. It is not only a matter of justice, virtue, honor, and integrity but also of race and masculinity. George Mosse pointed out that masculinity becomes “a racial imperative.” The heroism of the “Saigon Cowboys” reveals the yearning of a white hegemonic masculinity in the evacuation because it implies not only a brave engagement in the struggle against Communism but also the superior manhood of the Americans who carried out their moral obligations to Others. “Cowboy” in this sense represents “American greatness,” because he struggles against tyranny.

In this way, the “Saigon Cowboys” represent the manhood of American democracy and American racial superiority, because ‘cowboy’ has been “one of the models for normative middle-class Western masculinity.” In American culture, the cowboy figure promotes positive values. According to Frantz and Choate, “Ideally the

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280 Ibid.
281 Larry Thompson, Refugee Workers, back cover.
283 Christopher Blazina, The Cultural Myth of Masculinity (Westport, CT: 2003), 49.
American cowboy was a superb horseman which as a fact he was; an expert of the fast draw and the use of a Colt revolver…brave beyond question; always on the side of justice, even if that justice was a bit stern at times; the defender of virtuous women; the implacable foe of the Indian; and a man to whom honor and integrity came naturally.”

The cowboy plays this tough moral masculine figure in order to embody the superiority of white American manhood.

In the post-Vietnam War period, calling a group of State Department officials “Saigon Cowboys” can be seen as an effort to the rehabilitate an American masculinity damaged by the failure of the Vietnam War. I use the word “rehabilitate” to situate the specific healing process after the loss of the war in the context of “the Cold War economic liberalism” because, as David Serlin suggests, in the era of geopolitical insecurity, boasting about normal, healthy bodies of citizens represents a nation as the best. His chapter on the Hiroshima Maidens, in particular, has helped me to understand the portrayals of the Saigon Cowboys in this light. For example, his explanation of the performance of the act of saving war-wounded bodies can be applicable to the Saigon Cowboys and their assistance of the refugees. In this way, the very notion of “Saigon Cowboys” can be read as the persistence of the frontier myth. For instance, calling those who evacuated the South Vietnamese “cowboys” reveals a racial and social fantasy in which white men conquer new uncivilized territory.

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285 This “rehabilitation” is not only about the actual acts of rescue but also about the circulation of their acts as rescue.
The Cowboy myth is deeply connected to the frontier myth, which is famously depicted by Frederick Jackson Turner. As Turner reminds us, the advancement of the frontier is the Americanization and development of the U.S.\textsuperscript{287} The transformation of the frontier is a characteristic of American history. The Kennedy Administration employed the frontier myth for the Vietnam War: Vietnam was the “New Frontier” for Americans.\textsuperscript{288} Accordingly, the American public consent to their “mission” in Southeast Asia and American troops described Vietnam as “Indian country.” This understanding exposes the basic assumptions about Vietnam as a racially and culturally alien enemy.\textsuperscript{289} “Saigon Cowboys” has to be understood within the political use of symbolic violence, which assigns a moral figure to the U.S. and a barbaric figure to Vietnam/Communism. The cowboy image and frontier thesis exemplify the political and moral validity of the violence against Communism. These myths sanitize the militaristic aspect of U.S. expansion and transform it into a benevolent movement. This is a common narration for the making of an empire, which calls territorial acquisition a “civilizing mission.” These myths represent the rhetoric that enabled the U.S. to imagine itself as a civil nation and describe its expansion as development, not invasion.

“Saigon Cowboys” carried on their “quest” after the evacuation from South Vietnam as Lowman and Cushing took positions in the Office of Refugee and Migration Affairs at the DOS, and Rosenblatt set up a refugee program in Thailand. They developed the last-ditch evacuation effort into a program. Lowman said, “Without Rosenblatt, Cushing, and me the refugee program would have continued. There were enough people

\textsuperscript{288} Richard Slotkin, \textit{Gunfighter Nation}, 1-4.
\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 493.
of good will in the State Department and the government to guarantee that. But it would have taken months or even years for the program to evolve. The three of us got things going quickly.\footnote{Larry Thompson, \textit{Refugee Workers}, 110.} As he claims, their efforts were extraordinary because they succeeded the DOS to propose an additional 11,000 Indochinese refugees to be admitted into the U.S. in January 1976.\footnote{Ibid., 109.}

Although by using parole authority admitting refugees was not a difficult task for the administration, the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) expressed reluctance toward accepting refugees in the earlier stage of refugee influx.\footnote{To Dean Brown from L.F. Chapman, Jr., Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, May 1, 1975, “Vietnam (22),” National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files, Box 20, Gerald R. Ford Library.} By May 1, 1975, the INS had only authorized the parole of some 22,000 people who were high risk Vietnamese and who were lifted out or assisted out by U.S. resources. Any more than this number was too much according to the INS: “The proposal is open ended, in that it would logically lead to admitting many additional to those now on board the Arvn [Army of Republic of Vietnam] refugee ships and craft and would therefore trend toward the Cuban experience in which the President announced that the United States would accept any Cuban who could escape Cuba—675,000 did so.”\footnote{The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service under the Department of Justice was transferred to the U.S. Citizenship and Naturalization Services under the Department of Homeland Security in 2003.} Since the agency did not want to have the Cuban experience again, it claimed that the president’s proposal should be limited to accepting only high risk refugees whom Americans helped to get out.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{10} Larry Thompson, \textit{Refugee Workers}, 110.
\bibitem{11} Ibid., 109.
\bibitem{12} The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service under the Department of Justice was transferred to the U.S. Citizenship and Naturalization Services under the Department of Homeland Security in 2003.
\bibitem{13} To Dean Brown from L.F. Chapman, Jr., Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, May 1, 1975, “Vietnam (22),” National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files, Box 20, Gerald R. Ford Library.
\end{thebibliography}
Loescher and Scanlan write that the “Saigon Cowboys” propelled the refugee admissions “not only by a humanitarian concern for refugees but also by a deep sense of guilt and personal involvement.” It was their desire to continue the U.S. commitment to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Thus, their attempts to create the Indochinese refugee program must be understood as a compensation of their unfinished business. For example, Lowman recalls the end of the Vietnam War as follows:

A lot of the political people didn’t get out. Hell, a lot of everybody didn’t get out. We got out most of the Americans, including the contractor types. And we got out a lot of Vietnamese, 130,000 altogether. But we didn’t get out the bulk of our employees. We didn’t get out the bulk of the political figures. We didn’t get out an awful lot of people who needed to leave.

In the end, I suppose that’s why I went into the refugee program….I didn’t want to represent the U.S. government, I really didn’t. I got over that, but I felt we had left a lot of people behind, we had let them down, we had betrayed them.

Since he believed that Americans did not “get out an awful lot of people,” he wanted to obtain additional paroles for the refugees. His quote reveals that the refugee program was the way to compensate the “betrayal” that the U.S. carried out because Americans abandoned the trust of people in former Indochina who had assisted the U.S. war efforts. Even if it did not compensate, at least it was motivated by a sense of indebtedness. The U.S.’s failure in the war meant not only deserting people there but also abandoning the national trust of its citizens. Thus, for Lowman, operating the refugee program was the way to seek justice to correct the wrongs not only for himself but also for America. Accordingly, recuperating justice in his sense could only be achieved by the resettlement

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294 Gil Loscher and John Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 123
of the Indochinese refugees. In this way, the resettlement was the restitution for the U.S. abandonment of former Indochina.

This is why DOS officers like Lowman felt a moral obligation to carry on the resettlement. For the Saigon Cowboys, since the refugee resettlement had to be continued, they complained about the situation of refugees in Thailand and sought a way to obtain additional admission of them to the U.S. The American Embassy in Bangkok, Thailand reported the conditions to the Secretary of State in June 1975 to grab attention for the refugees:

> It has been a little more than two months since the flow started and the overall refugee problem in Thailand remains no nearer a solution than it did the day first refugees arrived from Phnom Pehn. The only change has been in the increase in their numbers since the fall of Saigon and more recently the radical political change in Laos resulting in the flow of refugees from that quarter. The deteriorating conditions under which these refugees exist are morally and physically debilitating.  

The quote reveals the assumptions that Communist countries and Thailand were incapable of dealing with the refugees who were former allies of the U.S. Thus the U.S. might have to intervene in the situation due to the worsened circumstances. This was the U.S. imperial gaze that recognized the existence of refugees in Thailand as a regional “problem.” It also implies that the situation was not the American’s fault but rather was caused by political changes in the region. Hence, Communism was the one to blame. Nonetheless, the American embassy staff believed that it was Thailand’s responsibility to provide better living conditions for the refugees.  

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297 “Under the international law and tradition, these refugees should be considered the responsibility of the RTG [Royal Thai Government], and indeed the RTG does administer the camps where most of the refugees
The U.S. embassy staff was irritated by the treatment of the refugees because they believed that those refugees should have been allowed to stay in Thailand. The U.S. embassy requested U.S. commitment since American staff thought that “there seems to be no choice” and “our moral responsibility will not go away.”

They believed that those refugees would stay in Thailand and would not go back to their countries. For this reason, U.S. moral responsibility was a rationale for obtaining the additional parole for some refugees in Thailand. The U.S. embassy staff assumed that additional parole was the final step to shutting down refugee resettlement. Americans believed that they were responsible for some refugees, not all.

Partial responsibility for the refugees was indispensable for the U.S. to stabilize its power in Southeast Asia. For instance, according to Loescher and Scanlan, the Saigon Cowboys “were also strongly anti-Communist and believed that future stability of America’s remaining allies in Southeast Asia would be threatened by the presence of the numbers of refugees.” The U.S. experienced this kind of geopolitical fear regarding Southeast Asia, as described by what William Applemen Williams calls as “the tragedy of American Diplomacy.” The geopolitical fear derives from the firm belief that America’s welfare depends upon sustained and secured overseas economic and political life. For a number of reasons, however, the RTG has remained and is likely to remain firmly opposed to allowing most of these refugees to stay in Thailand….Domestically, traditional Thai prejudices come into play, and these ethnic groups are not popular. The RTG can also see some justification for refusing resettlement since very few of the refugees want to remain in Thailand. The Thai seem to hope that with the passage of time many of these refugees will be willing to return to their own countries. This view appears to us totally unrealistic.”

298 Ibid.
299 “We strongly believe we should take the final step and complete our part of this refugee problem. This will still leave several thousands in Thailand to be handled by the RTG and international agencies.” Ibid, 25.
stability. This is dangerous because this leads to “civilizing efforts.” In this way, the Saigon Cowboys maintained their moral obligation to the refugees in the form of their third-country resettlement.

Even though the number of refugees in Thailand was about 73,000 in December 1975, the U.S. was not able to admit the refugees who were left in Thailand because the INS imposed a limit of 134,000 refugees to parole. The U.S. Department of State believed that the original consultation was 150,000 so they could bring an additional 16,000 in a high risk category. To obtain the admission, the DOS claimed that the U.S. would be the only one to improve the situation immediately. Maintaining the notion that the refugees lived in terrible conditions in the Thailand camps, the DOS requested a parole in early 1976. This was the first major parole request after the evacuation. It was estimated at that time that there were about 80,000 Indochina refugees in Thailand and a small number in other countries in Southeast Asia.

The Saigon Cowboys succeeded into obtaining this parole for the Indochinese refugees because they had powerful sponsors in crucial positions within the Department of State such as Philip Habib, who was first an Assistant Secretary of State for Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and later an Under Secretary for Political Affairs during

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300 Williams explains the fear of “externalizing evil serves not only to antagonize the outsiders, but further intensifies the American determination to make them over in the proper manner or simply push them out of the way.” William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972; 1962; 1959), 15.
302 It claimed that: “Immediate action is necessary. Camp conditions in Thailand are terrible. The UNHCR and the Thai Government are not making any progress in resettling the bulk of the refugees within Thailand.” Ibid.
303 Not every former South Vietname or Indochinese got “refugee” status, especially after October 31, 1975. That was the final date for refugees who left Indochina by their own means and were in the third countries and a part of the U.S. controlled resettlement system in 1975.
the Ford and Carter administrations. Nonetheless, the parole meant the continuation of the United States’ moral obligation to not only Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees, but also refugees from Laos who resettled in the U.S. after the evacuation. This was the first time that the U.S. government extended the parole for Laotians, including ethnic minorities such as the Hmong. Since only Vietnamese and Cambodians were permitted into the U.S., this parole was significant for including all people who fled their land in former Indochina.

I read this inclusiveness of the category of “Indochinese refugee” as reflective of an anti-communistic perception of people in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. It suggests the desires of the DOS officers like the “Saigon Cowboys” to be a “liberator” for the people in the area. Thus, admission of refugees was indispensable for the U.S. to maintain commitments to the people in the area. Consequently, refugees were assets to fight Communism. Communist Vietnamese/Laotians/Cambodians were considered evil and anti-Communist Vietnamese/Hmong and other ethnic minorities/Cambodians were viewed as the objects of rescue. In this way, the former was a racial enemy who was inassimilable and the latter was a racial friend who was assimilable in the U.S. This differentiation of race by ideology reflects anti-Communism, in which different types of racial Others operate as different types of threats.

In the Congressional hearing on February 5, 1976, Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, Philip Habib claimed that the parole would allow the U.S. to bring control over the refugee situation by maintaining

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304 Gil Loescher and Joe Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 124. However, the administration could not retain an open-ended authority.
305 According to Thompson, people who were involved in the war efforts in Laos were eager to bring Hmong refugees in Thailand into the U.S. Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 103-109.
special attention to Indochinese refugees. He said, “[F]or our part, we owe our concern to such refugees not only because they claim special ties to the United States but also because for many it is the very existence of those ties which causes them greater difficulties than other refugees.” He emphasized “special ties” as “a certain obligation, a residual obligation” to the Indochinese refugees. Morality justifies a form of intervention in the name of justice, and Others would be submissive to the moral subject. To achieve the parole, Habib promised that this would be the State’s “final request” and promised no more parole authority without new legislation. Therefore, the parole request for 11,000 was finalized. The Ford administration made the commitment to Congress in May 1976 not to request additional parole authorizations because the claim of the DOS to “rescue” the refugees was not popular.

**Sustained Moral Obligation as a Matter of Basic Human Rights**

However, when President Carter took office, the State Department pursued an increased parole of 15,000 Indochinese refugees. This parole in 1977 has to be examined within the context of the new beginning of development for the Indochinese refugee resettlement because it established the character of the refugee admission as a humanitarian moral obligation and expanded its scale to a longer political commitment. Moreover, this marked not only the continuation of the refugee rescue that began in 1975 but also the shift into a humanitarian mission. For instance, Habib, at that time Under Secretary for Political Affairs and Department of State, asserted that the admission of

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307 Ibid., 511.
308 Ibid., 524.
309 Gil Loescher and Joe Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 127.
additional Indochinese refugees and the extension of the existing refugee assistance program was “a degree of obligation, moral obligation, and a humanitarian program.”310 His understanding of the Indochinese refugee admission as a moral obligation and humanitarian program reflected the sentiment of officers who previously served in Vietnam. It was that “the U.S. had a special responsibility toward those Indochinese who could not or would not remain behind after the Communist victories.”311 This anti-Communist belief enabled the DOS to claim an obligation to “rescue” refugees because it validated the act of supporting refugees as a declaration of achieving “justice.” Contextualizing the pursuit of resettlement within this anti-Communist framework allows us to see their humanitarian moral obligation in a different light. Describing the resettlement as a humanitarian act to free refugees from Communism, the DOS represented them as a group of people who should be helped not only by the U.S. but also by Liberal countries.

This anti-Communist yet humanitarian narrative of the refugee situation was inseparable from the emergence of human rights politics. The anti-Communistic moral obligation was particularly modified into a human rights issue during the Carter administration due to the continuing flow of Indochinese refugees into neighboring Southeast Asian countries. For instance, on June 23, 1977, Secretary of State Cyrus Vans requested the parole of 15,000 by claiming: “I believe the United States bears a special responsibility for both groups of refugees [boat people and land refugees to Thailand]—a matter of basic human rights. I am therefore asking for your concurrence in a request to

311 Gil Loescher and Joe Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 123.
the Attorney General that he uses his parole power on an urgent basis to admit 15,000 refugees into the U.S. to stop this tragic loss of life and suffering.” It is important to point out that he believed that the U.S. “bears a special responsibility” yet it was “a matter of basic human rights.” In his logic, U.S. responsibility was not only a particular political concern but also a universal one, since the problem was a humanitarian tragedy. Defining the resettlement as a U.S. humanitarian responsibility was significant because the refugee problem became a human rights issue. The logic of the “humanitarian tragedy” turned the U.S. into a transparent subject. This obliterated the culpability of the refugee situation and also enabled the U.S. to behave as a savior in the situation.

Some Congressmen agreed with the DOS on the additional parole because they also approved of its cause. For example, Paul Simon (D. House-Illinois) wrote, “I simply want you to know that there are some of us who feel we have an obligation to provide that kind of assistance…. It seems to me we cannot simply wash our hands of the matter and do nothing. I strongly urge humanitarian action to help these refugees.” The perception that the parole was a “humanitarian action” not only obscured the fact that the U.S. was the culprit of the situation—sudden and unorganized evacuation from former

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312 Memorandum for the President from Cyrus Vance, June 23, 1977, “Refugees-Indochinese, 3/77-12/77,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library, Atlanta, Georgia.
313 However, National Security Council Staff James Barie was against the idea of immediate parole of 15,000 Indochinese because he believed that there would be more paroles later. July 8 memo for Michel Oksenberg National Security Council Staff from James Barie: “The President should be made aware of any new reason for paroling the 8,000. Because there may be the need for later paroles.” Memorandum for the President From Cyrus Vance, June 23, 1977, “Refugees-Indochinese, 3/77-12/77,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library.
314 Domestically there were strong anti-refugee-admission feelings against Indochinese since 1975, because of the economic situation in the U.S.
Indochina—but also the fact that it was directly connected to U.S. involvement with the flow of refugees in the region. Recognition that the situation was a “humanitarian” problem revealed a judgment that the refugee situation was the “problem of Southeast Asia.”

Representing the Indochinese refugee problem as a human rights problem of the region, the Carter Administration shifted their refugee resettlement into a humanitarian mission. I assert that the way the administration deemed the refugee issue a humanitarian issue allowed them to disconnect it from U.S. former commitments and to display it as a new crisis in the region. The U.S. refused to be accountable for the situation in Southeast Asia and blamed it on Communism and the Communist governments. As a result, the U.S. assumed a leadership position to help with the construction of Asia’s new human rights violations regarding refugees.

“Assimilation as Americans”: Meaning of Humanitarian Action

Although the additional parole in 1977 was called a “humanitarian action,” the Carter Administration reduced the support of the government for the refugees significantly. Even though the original plan for additional parolees was for a three-year federal support, President Carter pushed for a shorter period (18 months) to receive assistance. Carter stated that with a cutting of government funding “should begin

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316 For example, the memo to Secretary of State Brzezinski claimed: “We appreciate the urgency of the situation and agree that the United States has a responsibility to take a leadership role in coping with the refugee problem in Southeast Asia.” Memorandum to Zbignew Brzezinski and Michael Oksenberg from Stu Eizenstat and Frank Raines, July 12, 1977, “Refugees 7-12/77,” National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material Subject File, Box 51, Jimmy Carter Library.

broader government involvement and assimilation as Americans.” The idea of less funding while promoting more assimilation of the refugees has to be understood in the context of a conservative backlash and emergence of what Lisa Duggan calls *superficial neoliberal multiculturalism*.  

Moreover, an examination of the assistance program to quicken assimilation of the refugees reveals a deep assimilationist belief in universal modernization that ignores the fact of the refugees’ subordination and suffering. As Robert G. Lee points out, since assimilation theorists believed that “the greater part of assimilation rested on the accommodation of the minority to the host society,” refugees were recognized as the ones that were responsible for their adaptation to life in the U.S. Carter’s letter to the six Senate and House Committee chairmen also claimed that “With the continued assistance of the private and public agencies that have contributed so generously to this program, I am confident that the adjustment to life in the United States will be made by the refugees from Indochina.” The Carter Administration reduced the amount of aid because they considered that it would be generous enough for the refugees to become financially independent from welfare and for them to be incorporated into the labor market.

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318 Ibid.  
322 It reports on the status of refugees from Cambodia and South Vietnam: “public cash assistance 31%, unemployment 21%... we continue to make substantial progress in the resettlement and assimilation of the Indochina refugee into American life.” Reports to Congressional Committee on Indochinese Refugees, March 18, 1977, “Refugees-Indochinese, 3/77-12/77,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library.
The Americanization of Indochinese refugees proved the greatness of American society to the officials of the Carter Administration. According to a Foreign Policy seminar paper, “Whatever the historical judgment of the American involvement in Indochina, we can take credit for welcoming some of the victims of its traumatic conclusion and launching them into a contrasting culture. They are going to work out here. Taking example from the best of the inspired amateurs who have handled the launch will smooth the adaptation and insure the enrichment of our society.”

Juxtaposing the idea of making the refugees Americans with the utilization of the refugee resettlement allows us to see it as not the benevolence of the U.S. but rather the flexibility of the American society to accept the refugees. It was not the capability of the refugees to adapt, but rather the American cultural, political and racial ability to absorb refugees (ability means the capacity of U.S. policies and society to tolerate refugees into the society). Thus, the Indochinese refugee resettlement had a huge impact on the administration, compelling the public to acknowledge the American nation as moral, healthy, and generous, at least at the policy level.

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323 “Whatever the historical judgment of the American involvement in Indochina, we can take credit for welcoming some of the victims of its traumatic conclusion and launching them into a contrasting culture. They are going to work out here. Taking example from the best of the inspired amateurs who have handled the launch will smooth the adaptation and insure the enrichment of our society.” Thomas J. Barnes, *Of All the 36 Alternatives Indochinese Refugee Resettlement* (Department of State Foreign Policy Seminar Report, 1977), 52, in “Refugees-Indochinese 3/77-12/77,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library.


325 Senator Edward M. Kennedy complemented the President’s initiative on Indochinese refugee resettlement efforts, saying, “I congratulate you on your leadership and congratulate the members of the Congress in responding to what is in our great tradition as a humanitarian nation.” Remarks of the President at the Signing Ceremony for Indo-Chinese Refugee Act and Implementing Legislation for the Treaties Transfers of Offenders to and from Foreign Countries, October 28, 1977, “Refugees-Indochinese, 3/77-12/77,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library.
For that reason, the narrative of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants and refugees was continuously renewed with confidence during the resettlement program. For example, on October 28, 1977, President Carter’s remark at the signing ceremony of the Extension of Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1975 depicted the significance of the refugee admission as signifying the great morality of the U.S.: \(^{326}\)

I doubt if any other group of refugees in my lifetime have been so devastated by war than those from Vietnam and Laos, Cambodia. And it has been a very controversial thing domestically to have people come into our country who don’t know the language, who are not, at the time they come, self-sufficient, and who, when they receive language training and vocational training and education and job placement, compete for various jobs. But the Congress again has shown that we are a great nation, not just militarily and economically, but in our commitment to principles.\(^{327}\)

As the statement falls into the logic of the assimilation paradigm that simply assumes incorporation of refugees as immigrants, the moral responsibility of the U.S. only means legally admitting Indochinese refugees. I claim that this understanding of the responsibility naturalized the difficulties of refugees and lessened the responsibility of the U.S. government to help refugees. In this way, the Carter administration shifted the moral responsibility for the Indochinese refugees, which began in the evacuation, from the U.S. to the international community. This was problematic because it overshadowed U.S. political and military interests in the refugee resettlement.

Therefore, the Carter Administration was able to represent the U.S. as an innocent and benevolent actor and the refugees as the ones who owed kindness to the U.S. because they were given refugee admissions. Representing refugees as beneficiaries of Western

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\(^{326}\) This also included the parole for another 15,000 Indochinese refugees in the nine months.

\(^{327}\) Remarks of the President at the Signing Ceremony for Indo-Chinese refugee Act and Implementing Legislation for the Treaties Transfers of Offenders to and from Foreign Countries, October 28, 1977, “Refugees-Indochinese, 3/77-12/77,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library.
generosity (objects of rescue), the Carter Administration was able to play the savior figure of a white man. The refugee resettlement presented an occasion to prove the superiority of the West (masculinity) where Anglo-European Liberalism was a form of “political equality of white men.” It was necessary to heal the wounds of the Vietnam War through the resettlement and assimilation of Indochinese refugees in the U.S. in order to reclaim American masculinity in the post-Vietnam War period. The masculinist implications of war are expressed in the following by Brenda M. Boyle: “War has been seen as the foremost place and time in modern American culture where and when boys are transformed into men and where their masculinity is then measured.”

2. Vietnam as a Human Rights Violator: Coalition for Longer Commitment

Administrators like the Saigon Cowboys who had been advocating resettlement from the beginning of the evacuation of Vietnamese refugees sought a stronger U.S. official commitment. They made efforts to obtain more attention for the Indochinese refugees, to change the reluctance of the Congress against the resettlement. Since the advocacy and work of supporters resulted in the parole of 25,000 Indochinese refugees for the following year on June 14, 1978, this section analyzes the coalition of officials to achieve the parole and longer U.S. commitment to the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a process to accuse Vietnam as a culprit. Although relations among Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were complicated, the American general understanding of the refugee problem enabled the representation of Vietnam as evil. Why and how did it happen? I

328 Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?*, 5.
330 Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 126.
believe the accusation of Vietnam as the cause of the situation allowed the U.S. to claim morality more than ever. In this section, I examine the process by which the U.S. claimed morality by analyzing how the advocacy operated and accomplished the gaining of additional paroles.

**Towards the Comprehensive Refugee Program**

In November 1977, Shepherd Lowman, one of the Saigon Cowboys, asked for help from Leo Cherne, the chairman of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), to gain public support for the refugees. Cherne agreed to pressure the Carter administration to issue paroles for admitting more Indochinese refugees, resulting in the securing of parole for 7,000 boat people within a month and the creation of a “Citizens Commission on Indochinese refugees” by the end of the year. I assert that the coalition between the DOS (especially advocates like the Saigon Cowboys) and the Commission propelled the admission of the Indochinese refugees. The establishment of the “Citizens Commission on Indochinese refugees” greatly promoted the refugee resettlement because it comprised a cross-section of America's political, cultural, and religious leaders who were influential on Capitol Hill. The Commission conducted many trips to Southeast Asia and for years served as the leading supporter of the Indochinese refugees, and advised administrations on the refugee situation to gain greater government involvement in the refugee resettlement.

In February 1978, the Committee’s advocacy of the resettlement synchronized with the move of the DOS to attain a longer commitment to the resettlement proposing to

331 Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 122.
332 Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 123.
admit 25,000 per year for the next few years.\textsuperscript{333} Compared with the number that was proposed by the Interagency Task Force (30,000 refugees in three years), the DOS suggestion exposed the expanded scale of the program. The scale of the DOS number represented their eagerness for the resettlement. This was because the DOS was seeking not just long-term refugee policy but also a flexible yet stronger authority to handle the refugee issue. The refugee matter represented important key issues to address for the DOS because many DOS officials saw it as not only a rescue operation but also a national security matter.\textsuperscript{334}

While Congress was reluctant to endorse the additional parole for the Indochinese refugees, the Citizen’s Commission played a huge role in changing the mood of Congress. The Commission impacted the government policy when Cherne and the Commission met with Congressman Joshua Eilberg’s Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and International Law on March 1, 1978.\textsuperscript{335} One member from the Commission, civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, quoted the support from both the labor unions and the African American community: “If America can be cruel enough not to admit into this country people who if they are sent elsewhere will be shot, that same cruelty will make it impossible for them—we, us—Americans to deal with the problems

\textsuperscript{333} Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, February 27, 1978, NLC-126-11-30-1-5, Jimmy Carter Library.
\textsuperscript{334} “The State Department has come forward with this recommendation in response to a general feeling that we need a more regular and orderly way to deal with the Indochinese problem, rather than waiting until an emergency exists before acting.” Ibid. At that time inter-department discussions on the issue were held. President Carter also asked “to develop a comprehensive refugee policy” in the same month. Since then, “NSC, the Domestic Policy Staff, State, Justice, OMB and HEW staffs” met and discussed the measures. Memorandum for the President from Zbignew Brzezinski and Stu Eisenstat, March 18, 1978. “[Refugee Policy], 3/23/78 [CF, O/A 427],” Office of Congressional Liaison: Beckel, Box 228, Jimmy Carter Library.
in our ghettos and for our poor. This is for me a moral question.\textsuperscript{336} By this speech, as Larry Clinton Thompson claims, “Eilberg and the naysayers were defeated.”\textsuperscript{337} Rustin claimed that the admission of the Indochinese refugees was similar to helping the poor in the U.S. As the U.S was a nation of goodwill, he believed that the U.S. should help the refugees. For this reason, Rustin described the resettlement of the refugees as a moral trial for American society. His statement provoked tremendous compassion for the refugees, because he framed the issue regarding parole as an obligation to downward distribution of wealth. Rustin persuaded the Subcommittee on refugee resettlement because of his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement.\textsuperscript{338}

The coalition among people such as the Saigon Cowboys, Cherne and Rustin further changed the reluctance of Congress regarding the additional admission of Indochinese refugees. In the same month, Rustin also convinced the Executive Council of the AFL/CIO labor coalition to support the entry of Indochinese refugees, and wrote a \textit{New York Times} advertisement signed by eighty African American leaders requesting the U.S. government to adopt a “coherent and generous policy.”\textsuperscript{339} The coalition between African American leaders and the State Department was successful enough to put a proposal for the additional parole on the President’s desk by the end of the month.\textsuperscript{340} As a

\textsuperscript{336} Larry Thompson, \textit{Refugee Workers}, 125; Aaron Levenstein, \textit{Escape to Freedom}, 266-7.
\textsuperscript{337} Larry Thompson, \textit{Refugee Workers}, 126. According to Leo Cherne, Shep Lowman also believed that Rustin’s words influenced the outcome. Andrew Smith, \textit{Rescuing the World}, 120.
\textsuperscript{338} It is interesting that the way Cherne, pro-Vietnam War activist, and Rustin, anti-Vietnam War activist, both agreed on the admission of the Indochinese refugees. Rustin saw the refugee resettlement as genuine benevolent action and he was later involved in Haitian refugee issue as well.
\textsuperscript{340} Larry Thompson, \textit{Refugee Workers}, 126.
result, the following year, on June 14, 1978, the U.S. government decided to accept
25,000 Indochinese refugees for resettlement.\footnote{Ibid., 126.}

The significance of the coalition was that it enabled the DOS to obtain the parole,
and it incited public concerns on the Indochinese refugee problem since it promoted
broader coalition building. More civic organizations and more individuals supported the
Citizen’s Commission’s recommendations on the refugees.\footnote{Aaron Levenstein, \textit{Escape to Freedom}, 208.} For instance, the Anti-
Defamation League of B’nai B’rith, the National Council of Jewish Women, and the
National Council of Voluntary Agencies joined in approving the findings of the
Commission.\footnote{Ibid., 268.} A multi-racial and multi-religious coalition was built around the group
of people who strongly advocated the Indochinese refugee program. This coalition
created a demand for the government to issue more paroles and to have more of an
involvement in the resettlement.

Because of the successful coalition, Lionel Rosenblatt went back to Thailand to
run the resettlement program, which became the largest and most costly overseas
program of the DOS during that time.\footnote{Larry Thompson, \textit{Refugee Workers}, 126; House Committee on Judiciary, \textit{Refugee Problems in
Southeast Asia}, 97\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2\textsuperscript{nd} sess., 1981, 37.} Due to the increased work for the DOS,
Shepherd Lowman structured the Joint Voluntary Agency (JVA) system to reduce the
actual tasks of the DOS. After this change, the JVA became the party responsible for the
DOS operations, while the DOS positioned itself in the supervisor position. For the
Indochinese refugee matter, Lowman chose Cherne’s organization, the IRC, to head the
JVA, which contracts with the DOS to handle the administrative work of processing
Indochinese refugees in Thailand. The DOS also assigned the job of finding sponsors for
refugees to the American Council of Voluntary Agencies (ACVA). The ACVA “found
and evaluated sponsors, forwarded information on sponsors to the JVA in the field,
handled administrative details, and took over responsibility for the refugees when he
landed in the United States.”\(^\text{345}\) In this way, refugee resettlement operations became an
indirect U.S. governmental mission, which actually managed the non-governmental
organizations such as the JVA and ACVA, interviewing refugees and finding and
evaluating sponsors for refugees. In other words, Lowman brought the charities to
governmental work.

I assert that with the implementation of non-governmental organizations in the
State Department, the work of the refugee problem was redefined as charity.
Restructuring the refugee work as charity had a great consequence on the overall refugee
work because it became not only an apolitical task of the U.S. but also the benevolent
mission of the U.S., even though it was a State Department initiated program. Lowman,
in this sense, depoliticized and dehistoricized the program from the U.S. wars in former
Indochina. He delineated the Indochinese refugee resettlement as not solely a U.S. effort
but rather as a part of the international reaction to the refugees.\(^\text{346}\) By asserting the parole
as part of a universal humanitarian project, the Carter Administration did not need to
have open-ended admissions of Indochinese refugees. Thus, President Carter was able to

\(^{345}\) Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 127.

\(^{346}\) For example, a memo for the President shows as the following: “In our announcement of the parole, we
will emphasize the U.S. parole as part of an international response to the refugee problem and the
continuing U.S. commitment to assist Indochinese refugees.” Memorandum for the President from
Zbigniew Brezezinski, June 10, 1978, NLC-1-6-6-5-3, Jimmy Carter Library.
prioritize domestic issues of inflation and unemployment, and rationalize the additional intake as a manageable and bearable “burden.”

“A Crime against Humanity”: Public Sentiment against Vietnam

The comprehensive Indochinese refugee program was part of the U.S.’s geopolitical project to stabilize Southeast Asia. There was political symbolic value in calling the refugees from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam ‘Indochinese refugees.’ Grouping of the refugees as ‘Southeast Asian’ or ‘Indochinese’ has to be understood in the context that the refugee policy was to assist U.S. diplomatic objectives. Even though ‘Indochinese refugees’ consisted of different national, ethnic, and racial groups in the region, the U.S. represented them as a homogenous group of people because they were generally categorized as victims of Communism. This was why the category of the Indochinese refugees (or Southeast Asian refugees) did not represent the heterogeneity of the group.

While the category of the Indochinese refugee was heavily focused on the Vietnamese, Leo Cherne pressured Congress to accept more Cambodians as parolees. He requested an authorization of the immigration of 15,000 refugees in camps in Thailand at a Capitol meeting of executive branch legislators and private citizens to discuss possible U.S. actions regarding Cambodia held on June 8, 1978. By emphasizing that Cambodians were experiencing a “holocaust,” Cherne claimed that Cambodians who left their country were “the least helped of present and planned immigration programs because few of them have close family relationships in the United States or previous ties to the U.S.

347 In May 1978, Carter commented, “There is a total of about 220,000 Vietnam refugees that we’re going to take into our country. These were our allies and friends during the war. They fought alongside us; their lives were in danger. That’s one refugee for every thousand Americans. It’s not too heavy a burden for America to bear.” Aaron Levenstein, *Escape to Freedom*, 269.
government.” The Senate paid similar attention to the Cambodian situation as Cherne did, and “passed an amendment to the FY 1979 State and Justice Appropriation Bill expressing the sense of the Senate that the Attorney General should parole 7,500 Cambodian refugees into the United States in FY 1978.” Although Attorney General Griffin Bell opposed the idea strongly, some members of the Congress convinced him to do so. The next day, Bell sent a letter to Cyrus Vance authorizing three new parole programs: 21,875 Southeast Asian refugees, 3,500 Cuban political prisoners and 1,000 Lebanese victims. As this process of the parole divulges, even though the category was named Indochinese or Southeast Asian refugees, those spots were predominantly allocated for Vietnamese refugees. Cherne and the State Department had to request to “include” Cambodians to also be resettled. Divestment of Cambodians from the Indochinese refugee category was prevalent from the beginning of the refugee resettlement. These acts of exclusion reflect the racism against Cambodians. Later, there was a complaint to the government about the “discrimination” against Cambodians.

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350 “Judge Bell’s position on a Cambodian refugee parole is quite clear; he opposes it strongly.” Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, September 18, 1978, NLC-10-15-2-26-4, Jimmy Carter Library.
For instance, Chairman of the Committee on Judiciary Peter Rodino, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and International Law Joshua Eilberg, Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on the Judiciary Robert McClory and Ranking Minority Member Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and International Law, Hamilton Fish, Jr. sent a letter to Griffin Bell asking urgent parole of 17,500 Indochinese refugee. Letter to Attorney General Griffin Bell, December 4, 1978, “Refugees-File no.1 [4],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.
351 Letter to Cyrus Vance from Griffin Bell, December 5, 1978, “Refugees-File no.1 [4],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library. Brzezinski gave more details of the parole of Indochinese refugees: “In response to a worsening refugee situation in Southeast Asia, Griffin [Bell] and Cyrus Vance have coordinated an increase in U.S. assistance and have completed consultations with the Congress. A special parole for 2,500 boat case refugees from Malaysia in connection with the Hai Hong incident, an additional parole of 15,000 boat cases to relieve the pressure on Malaysia where the camp population has increased from less than 5,000 to nearly 50,000 in recent months, and a special parole urged by the Congress of 15,000 Cambodian refugees are planned.” Memorandum for the President form Zbigniew Brezezinski, December 6, 1978, NLC-1-8-7-33-9, Jimmy Carter Library.
because it was too difficult to find sponsors for Cambodians to resettle in the U.S. In addition, the dominance of Vietnamese in the Indochinese refugee category reflects the political belief that Indochinese refugees are victims of Communism.

The reason why the general understanding of the Indochinese refugee figure emerged as a victim of Communism was because there was an emergence of public sentiment against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and because refugees were represented as victims of it. Anti-Vietnam (Socialist Republic of Vietnam) sentiment was not only the residue of the sentiments of Vietnam War advocates, but of the former anti-Vietnam War activists. For example, an American folk singer who had strongly opposed American involvement in the Vietnam War, Joan Baez protested the “repressive acts” against Hanoi in late 1976. However, her involvement in former Indochina did not stop when the war ended. Baez became vocal about the boat people and formed an informal group called Humanitas, International Human Rights Committee in May 1979. Her involvement in the refugee resettlement as well as her anti-Vietnam movement influenced the Carter administration, the DOS, and the Citizen’s Commission.

When Baez established her organization, she placed advertisements in the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post, the San Francisco Chronicle and the San Francisco Examiner, in the form of an open letter to the Socialist Republic of

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Vietnam. She wrote a letter to 350 of her former colleagues to join her, and eighty-three signed the advertisement.

Four years ago, the United States ended its 20-years presence in Vietnam. An anniversary that should be cause for celebration is, instead, a time for grieving. With tragic irony, the cruelty, violence and oppression practiced by foreign powers in your country for more than a century continue today under the present regime. Thousands of innocent Vietnamese, many whose only “crimes” are those of conscience, are being arrested, detained and tortured in prisons and re-education camps. Instead of bringing hope and reconciliation to war-torn Vietnam, your government has created a painful nightmare that overshadows significant progress achieved in many areas of Vietnamese society…. We have heard horror stories from the people of Vietnam—from workers and peasants, Catholic nuns and Buddhist priests, from the boat people, artists and professionals and those who fought alongside the NLF.

Former anti-war activists like Baez could not ignore the treatment of “innocent Vietnamese” because she thought that the end of the war should be a time for “hope and reconciliation.” Her anti-war activities were for the people, not for the government. This is why after the war Baez spoke up about Vietnam and the refugee situation.

Her protest letter depicted the Hanoi government as an abuser of human rights. I assert that Baez’s personal disappointment with the aftermath in Vietnam provoked not only the concerns about inhumane treatment of people in Vietnam, but also the image that Vietnam was malevolent. Although Baez’s anti-Hanoi movement upset many former anti-war activists, it provoked public attention to the boat people and blame of the Hanoi government. Her advertisement was sensationalized for the American public because it...

357 Larry Thompson, Refugee Workers, 146.
was understood as “Vietnam ‘Doves’ vindicated the ‘Hawks.’”  

The public saw her anti-Vietnam movement as an act of validating the “hawks” who were pro-war because Baez was known for being an anti-war “dove.” Another article mentioned that “it used to be that you could judge a person’s politics by his or her views on Indochina. But yesterday’s hawks and doves have done so much acrobatic ideological flying in the last few months that even a professional watcher can get befuddled.” Even though Baez’s protest disturbed the political line between former pro-Vietnam War and anti-Vietnam War, it also created the coalition among former pro-and anti-Vietnam War activists to achieve more support for the Indochinese refugee resettlement by illustrating Socialist Republic of Vietnam as a human rights violator.

Two months after the advertisement, Baez made “a plea, not a protest” for the boat people of Southeast Asia around the Lincoln Memorial. Baez delivered her message as follows: “We're here to show that we're human, that we have hearts. And that not one more person should die at sea if we have anything to say about it….There is no excuse for it. We have the equipment, so let's save them.” Her words illustrated the situation of the boat people as a humanitarian crisis that the U.S. needed to rescue. This is why she called for the president to “send out the Seventh Fleet.” Baez’s plea not only pushed the Carter administration to commit more to the refugee issue but also changed the public notion on Vietnam, as she claimed the U.S. could be the only savior of the situation.

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362 Ibid. Baez’s idea became a reality later when the Refugee Act of 1980 was signed by the President.
As Baez’s protest against Hanoi unveiled the Hanoi government as evil, the figure of Indochinese refugees shifted from “the debris of our war” to “a crime against humanity” in 1979. For example, in April 1978, *Newsweek* mentioned that a State Department official said “We’re picking up our wounded after the battle” and “they’re the debris of our war.” This is the continuation of the moral obligation that the Saigon Cowboys had claimed. I am not saying that the obligation disappeared but rather that the recognition of accountability for the refugees was transferred from the U.S. to Vietnam. For example, a *New York Times* article in June 1979 depicted the refugee flow as “a crime against humanity.” This was not just the accusation against Vietnam but also the recuperation of the U.S. as rescuer, because the U.S. held the morality to accuse the evil by decontextualizing and dehistoricizing the refugee issue.

Baez’s anti-Hanoi movement was a new phenomenon in the late 1970s that reactivated the ideology of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants/refugees. The American media depicted the refugees who resettled as the lucky and successful ones, in contrast to the suffering of the refugees in Southeast Asia. By portraying refugees who resettled in the U.S. as brave survivors, a *Newsweek* article implied that those who reached the U.S. are successful primarily because the U.S. saved them. This narrative reinforced the American Dream myth, which posits America as the land of plenty. Consequently, the U.S. became a ‘refuge of the world’ while Vietnam began to be perceived as an ‘abuser

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363 Since there was a strong public apathy concerning Indochinese refugees as well, I am not saying everyone was supporting this view. However, the refugee situation raised the fundamental question of the validity of Communist governance in Vietnam.


of human rights.’ As a result, around that time, the U.S. failure in Vietnam and its accountability to Indochinese refugees gradually faded away.

The Cambodian situation also strengthened the image of former Indochina as inhumane to the U.S. public. This can be seen in the fact that Baez also addressed the issue of humanitarian relief in Cambodia: her interests in the aftermath in Vietnam expanded into the situation in Cambodia as well. Beginning in October 8, 1979, for two weeks she toured nine refugee camps and transit centers in Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.368 “People are dying like flies,” Baez commented at a news conference. She expressed her hope to meet with President Carter to suggest ideas for getting food and medicine to the starving refugees in Cambodia.369 Baez’s passion reached the President and Baez met with him for “ten minutes in the Oval Office to speak about Southeast Asian refugees.”370 She was greatly concerned about the food distribution in Cambodia and informed him of the situation to request some government help. From that moment, the Carter Administration developed a close connection with Baez regarding the Indochinese refugee issue.371

Before the Senate Judiciary Committee, at the end of the same month, Baez described the ravages of hunger she had seen in order to obtain acute governmental action in Cambodia.372 “We don't have weeks and weeks,” she claimed; “It's a question of

369 Ibid.
371 Baez met President Carter on October 30, 1979, and Mrs. Carter talked with her before she took a trip to Thailand to visit refugee camps. A Congressional study mission to Kampuchea and Thailand also took place from October 19 to 26, 1979.
thousands dying per day.” Baez was trying to obtain more attention from the Carter administration on the situation in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam, claiming that “life in their homeland had become intolerable and they could no longer stay and nobody spoke of their leaving in any other terms other than escaping.” In this way, she represented the refugee situation as a whole humanitarian crisis of Southeast Asia. Because the administration shared her view, in November 1979 First Lady Rosalyn Carter traveled to refugee camps in Thailand to win more domestic and international support for U.S. policy in former Indochina. After her visit, Mrs. Carter testified in Congress on Cambodian relief: “I visited Thailand November 8-9 to express the concern of all Americans over the tragedy unfolding in Cambodia, to pay tribute to the Thai government for the actions it has taken to alleviate the plight of Indochinese refugees, and to consider what additional steps the United States and other nations might take to provide food and medical care to those who have fled Cambodia as well as those who remain there.”

I assert that in her statement her use of the term “Indochinese” refugees exemplifies not only her understanding, but also the administrative understanding of this issue.

Emphasizing the “suffering” of the refugees, Mrs. Carter rationalized the need for humanitarian assistance. It was an “absolutely unbelievable crush of humanity” and the U.S. should be the one to stand up to help. Heterogeneous groups of refugees from

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373 Ibid., 25
374 Ibid., 24
376 Mrs. Carter claimed that because she “witnessed incredible starvation, disease, dislocation and suffering,” she urged the U.S. to “act urgently to stimulate and contribute to expanded international efforts
Vietnam, Laos and Cambodian were incorporated and lumped into the “Indochinese” refugee problem and perceived as one singular homogeneous problem of former Indochina. I find this homogenizing gesture problematic because it constructs the various problems in the geographic region as a single issue of Communism. Simplifying the various situations happening in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam as a humanitarian crisis in Indochina marked the area as perilous. Even though Vietnam overthrew the Democratic Kampuchia in January 1979, ending the atrocity of the Khmer Rouge, the U.S. government and public continued to blame Vietnam for the “invasion.”377 This anti-Vietnam sentiment was part of the public concern regarding the refugee situation, which depicting former Indochina as inhumane. “Indochina is bleeding,” Barry Wain wrote in *Foreign Affairs*; “Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea discharge a massive flow of apparently permanent refugees, on a scale the world has not experienced since World War II.”378 Describing refugee flow from former Indochina as a “crisis,” anti-Vietnam sentiments and advocates of Indochinese refugee admission functioned together to propel admission of Indochinese refugees into the U.S. The U.S. government and public continued to discredit the Communist government in Vietnam.

This deep disbelief in Vietnam constantly appeared in the name of human rights. In a testimony given before a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee in June of 1979, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke made it clear that human rights had been

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a main topic of discussions in talks with Vietnam since 1978.\textsuperscript{379} Holbrooke, who had been one of the high-level supporters of the Indochinese refugees in the State Department, did not want to keep the embargo against Vietnam in 1977.\textsuperscript{380} However, because the government of Vietnam demanded economic assistance from the U.S. as reparations, the U.S. government refused to discuss normalization until the summer of 1978.\textsuperscript{381} The U.S. halted the possibility of diplomatic relations with Hanoi because the U.S. recognized Vietnam’s occupation in Cambodia as an “invasion” and the flow of boat people into South China Sea as a “massive human tragedy.”\textsuperscript{382}

**U.S. as an Ultimate Savior**

The rescue of Cambodian refugees also supported the images of the U.S. as a savior and of Vietnam as an abuser of human rights. The U.S. as a rescuer of Indochina emerged through the American media in the late 1970s. The story written by Sydney H. Schanberg in the *New York Times Magazine* is representative of a larger cultural and political discourse that paints the U.S. as a savior of Indochina. It was later published as a book called *Life and Death of Dith Pran* and turned into a film, *The Killing Fields*. His story was sensational to the American public because it revealed not only the saga of the Cambodians but also the mass-killings of the Khmer Rouge. His story of the survival of Dith Pran ushered in the moment that brought ultimate justice to the Indochinese refugee

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\textsuperscript{380} The memorandum reveals that “Holbrooke basically wishes us to drop the embargo and establish interest sections or trade offices with the Vietnamese.” Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, November 21, 1977, NLC-26-40-1-10-7, Jimmy Carter Library.


resettlement. I challenge the cultural representation of Dith Pran as a Cambodian holocaust survivor who was the ultimate survivor because it assigned the U.S. to play a decisive savior role.\footnote{The fact that he was a Cambodian refugee yet he became a symbol of rescue, from the late 1970s to the early 1980s, indicates the complex truth about U.S. rescue of Indochinese refugees. There are so many cultural productions of refugee rescue such as memoirs, anthologies etc.}

Dith Pran, who was an assistant to Schanberg, a New York Times correspondent, reached Thailand on October 3, 1979, after the Communist takeover in Cambodia.\footnote{The New York Times, October 12, 1979, Friday.} Soon after Pran escaped to Thailand, his ordeal appeared on the news as follows: “When the Khmer Rouge took over Cambodia in 1975, a Cambodian newsman saved an American reporter from execution. For four years after that, Dith Pran struggled to survive under the new regime and Sydney Schanberg tried to find him. Now they have found each other.”\footnote{Denis D. Gray, The Associated Press October 13, 1979 (Proquest).} In this way, their reunion was illustrated as a touching moment and “a total miracle.”\footnote{Ibid.} Furthermore, Schanberg writes about this moment as follows: “We stand like that for several minutes until his thin frame stops shaking and his legs slip to the ground. He looks at me say: ‘I am reborn. This is my second life.’”\footnote{Sydney H. Schanberg, The Death and Life of Dith Pran, (New York: Penguin Books, 1980; 1985), 60.} This description highlights and indicates their reunion as a moment of rescue of Pran as well as a divine event. I assert that Schanberg reclaimed his morality through the reunion, and by extension American morality at large. Not only did Schanberg believe it was a miracle, but the U.S. public recognized it as “rescue.”

Nevertheless, Dith Pran was in fact abandoned by Schanberg in 1975. To witness the communist victory in Cambodia, Schanberg stayed a while after the U.S. evacuation.
of Cambodia. Although Schanberg was able to leave the country, Pran was not able to accompany him even though his wife and children had evacuated earlier. His family was broken up between the U.S. and Cambodia. Since 1975, for four and half years, Pran had to endure starvation and fear of execution because of his education and his career of working with foreigners. During his time in Cambodia, Pran recalled that “Every month, under the Khmer Rouge, I have [a] dream that you [Schanberg] come to get me in a helicopter.”\(^\text{388}\) However, it did not happen to him and he had to seek his escape by himself. Thus, when he “walked 100 miles over rugged terrain to the Thai border” and “made it to a frontier refugee camp.... his teeth are decaying and he suffers from malnutrition.”\(^\text{389}\) It is important to imagine his situation as a survival of the abandonment, because none of this would have happened if he had evacuated in 1975 with his family.

Instead of narrating Pran’s story that way, his devastated situation was incorporated into a broader account of recovery of not only his health but also his family. According to an article, “Two days later, Schanberg was on a plane to Bangkok. Dith Pran's wife was notified. And Dith Pran had his first hot bath, first solid meal and a first easy night of sleep since 1975.”\(^\text{390}\) As the article described, Schanberg was the savior of Pran and his family because he brought Pran to the U.S. Pran’s family was able to be reunited because of Schanberg’s network and ability. In addition, the article also implied that the U.S. was the one that could provide the comfortable space, whereas Cambodia

\(^{388}\) Sydney Schanberg, *The Death and Life of Dith Pran*, 62.


\(^{390}\) Ibid.
did not offer Pran the ability to be clean and well fed. This reveals an imperial imagination that the U.S. is the only one that can provide a comfortable “modern” life: with Schanberg’s help Pran was able to stay in a hotel in Bangkok, not a refugee camp.

Even though Schanberg did not literally rescue Pran from the Khmer Rouge (though Pran saved Schanberg from the Khmer Rouge in 1975), moving Pran to the U.S. functioned as a substitute narrative of salvage since Schanberg was the one that moved him through the bureaucracy to bring him to the U.S. Because of this, Schanberg’s story is his atonement for the abandonment. In the book, Schanberg asked Pran’s forgiveness for leaving him in Cambodia. “Can you forgive me for not being able to keep you safe in the French Embassy, for leaving Cambodia without you?” Pran responded “…Nothing to forgive. We both made a decision. We both agree to stay, no one pushed the other. You tried all you could to keep me, but it didn’t work. Not your fault. We stayed because we did not believe in a blood bath. We were fools; we believed there would be reconciliation. But who could have believed the Khmer Rouge would be so brutal?”

Narrating their reunion this way, Schanberg unburdened his guilt of the past by confirming that it was not his fault. Blaming the Khmer Rouge as the reason for Pran’s tragedy, Schanberg’s story cleansed the role of the U.S. of the past and enabled it to reimagine itself as a rescuer. Once again, refugees from former Indochina, Cambodian refugees in this case, were signified as victim of Communism.

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391 I assert that this emphasis on superior domesticity outside of Cambodia in Pran’s rescue is synonymous to what Anne McClintock calls “commodity racism.” Anne McClintock, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context, (New York: Rutledge, 1995), 31.
392 Sydney Schanberg, The Death and Life of Dith Pran, 60.
393 Ibid., 60-61.
Schanberg was finally able to compensate his action by bringing Pran to the U.S. Pran’s immigration was also emblematic for the Carter Administration, as he was invited to the Cambodian relief-national Cambodia Crisis Committee meeting on January 29, 1980. Rosalyn Carter introduced Dith Pran as a “survivor…best way to describe this man who has endured of the tragedy of Cambodia.” He became a symbolic figure of the Cambodian refugee because “….he has survived; that is testimony to his determination to endure and to the determination of the spirit—to endure and to survive—of millions of his countrymen and women.” The depiction of Dith Pran as a Cambodian victim/survivor accompanied the image of the U.S. as an ultimate rescuer because the U.S. was not only the one that saved him but also his place of refuge. According to Mrs. Carter, American efforts in Cambodia enabled his rescue; she asserted that “the U.S. government is supporting almost one third of the total cost of the international relief effort and that the American people have generously responded to the urgent pleas for funds.” Mrs. Carter asked for support of the Cambodian relief effort because she believed that “we [Americans] cannot afford to forget,” as “it is up to us to keep this in the forefront of concerns before the people of our co[untry].” The Carter Administration illustrated the American nation as an innocent sympathetic subject and persuaded more efforts to Cambodian relief.

Through the story of Dith Pran, the humanitarian tragedy in Cambodia strengthened the image of Vietnam as a human rights abuser. In a way, Pran’s tragedy stratified the U.S. official government narrative of the Indochina area as a humanitarian

395 Ibid.  
396 Ibid.
crisis zone. Vietnam’s attack on the Khmer Rouge regime did not help the government’s perception of Vietnam, since the U.S. recognized Vietnam’s occupation in Cambodia as an “invasion.” Indeed, the U.S. government recognized the Vietnam-backed Hen Samlin government in Cambodia as not much different from the Khmer Rouge.\footnote{Sheldon Neuringer, \textit{The Carter Administration, Human Rights and the Agony of Cambodia}, 54.} The U.S. pathologized areas of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as inhumane and uncivilized because they were all lumped together as Communist governments. Accordingly, what was happening in Cambodia was widely perceived as the responsibility of Vietnam, the Soviet Union, or Communism. Since the Cambodian situation was equated with the holocaust, the U.S. government and public recognized Vietnam as a ruler of Cambodia as well as a totalitarian (inhumane) dictatorship.\footnote{Andrew Smith, \textit{Rescuing the World}, 124-6.}

This image of Vietnam worsened when the Vietnamese forces in Cambodia refused assistance from humanitarian organizations like Doctors Without Borders (Medicins Sans Frontieres, MSF). Since MSF’s application to send food and medical supplies across the Thai-Cambodian border to the refugees was denied, “out of frustration, MSF leaders decided to launch a ‘March for Survival’ to give visibility to the plight of the Cambodian refugees.”\footnote{Ibid., 124. March for Survival took place on February 6, 1980.} The “March for Survival” included celebrities such as Joan Baez to gain visibility for the situation in Cambodia. It was to be covered in American and European media. The march was organized into an international body to obtain political and financial support. About 120 members visited the Sa Kaeo refugee camp in Thailand and then marched to the Klong Luek Bridge from Thailand into
Cambodia. Baez reported that the March was not “to prejudge the situation but just to pose the questions of why Kampuchea [Cambodia] does not let in more doctors and more food.” However, these kinds of questions placed blame on Vietnam, since Vietnam was the one that declined aid. Thus, Vietnam emerged as a human rights violator in the late 1970s and the cause of the refugee problem that included the torture and killing of the Khmer Rouge.


The above mentioned coalition of congressional and public concern regarding the refugee situation in Southeast Asia shifted the Indochinese refugee admission into a permanent commitment to refugee admission, as the establishment of the Refugee Act of 1980 in May 1980 proves. In this section, I examine the way in which the ad-hoc Indochinese refugee programs reached a point to become a permanent involvement in global refugee issues by analyzing the process as a decontextualization and dehistoricization of the obligation to Indochinese refugees. Furthermore, around the same time, the systematic problems of the resettlement caused issues in the local communities when the government and popular media critiqued the refugees as problems. I interpret this blame game as not only the dysfunctional operation of the program but also as the anti-refugee sentiment which derived from anti-Asian racism and which also helped to sustain it. One of the major reasons that the refugee program began to be decreased in numbers was because of the growing opposition to the additional admission of refugees,

400 Ibid., 125-6.
401 “A Story Silence Greets Survival Marches; Sit-In on Border Bridge,” Bangkok Post, February 7, 1980; Rescuing the World, 127.
even within the State Department. This anti-refugee feeling affected the position of the
refugee workers as well. Although Congress passed legislation creating a Bureau of
Refugee Affairs at State in 1980, refugee-workers in Southeast Asia were not considered
“major players in the Washington bureaucracy” and were not given significant positions
in the Bureau. All of the Saigon Cowboys left the State Department around the early
1980s.

Decontextualization and Dehistoricization of the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement

The Refugee Act was significant for the U.S. because it not only established the
legal concept of ‘refugee,’ which is different from ‘immigrant,’ but it also reaffirmed the
U.S. as a nation of immigrants and refugees. Edward M. Kennedy claimed that the
Refugee Act strengthened the humanitarian character of the U.S.: “The Refugee Act is an
instrument of policy to meet the needs of the homeless around the world. But it will be an
effective instrument only if U.S. leaders use it wisely. If they do, it will serve the
country's humanitarian traditions well, and it will also serve the cause of peace.” In this
way, he claimed that the U.S. is the haven of the world, as well as the rescuer who brings
peace to the world.

Nonetheless, the Refugee Act was not popular and the process of its establishment
was not easy because of the disagreement over the number of refugees that the U.S.
accepted annually. Originally the bill [S. 643] was submitted to Congress on March 8,
1979. It was the first comprehensive overhaul of U.S. refugee laws since 1952.\footnote{The President maintained, “Our proposals will provide more realistic and humane entry procedures under emergency situations and will bring uniformity and coherency to our current piecemeal refugee assistance programs. ....With Ambassador Clark’s direction, I believe we will finally have a program which is effective and efficient. We cannot do this job alone—we will encourage other countries to do their share in settling additional refugees as well. The United States has a compelling moral obligation to these refugees from which we cannot shrink.” Carter answering the question, “Refugees, 2/79/12/79,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library.} The bill provided the structural reforms approved by the President last year, stabilizing the flow of refugees up to 50,000 annually and establishing a permanent refugee assistance program in which the Federal Government would pay the first two years after their arrival.\footnote{Memorandum for Stu Eizenstat from Frank White and Ellen Goldstein, March 2, 1979, “Refugee-Legislation 1/79-3/2/79,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 40, Jimmy Carter Library.} It should be emphasized that in the name of humanitarianism, the funding for the refugees was now shortened to two years.

Although the Carter administration decided to improve the refugee situation by introducing new legislation, the President did not want to make a solid pledge on the bill for three years: 1979, 1980 and 1981. For example, on its draft, Carter chose option one for refugee legislation, which outlined an acceptance of 50,000 more refugees for 1979 and “120,000 annual rate through 1981.”\footnote{Subject to actual review and Presidential determination prior to each year, and request additional appropriations of $74 million, $200 million and $238 million for 1979-1981. Memorandum for the President from James McIntyre, March 9, 1979, “Refugee-Legislation, 3/3/79-12/79,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 40, Jimmy Carter Library.} However, Carter also wrote: “a) State must be careful in attitude and statement not to encourage more refugees from S[outh]E[ast] Asia. b) Make no firm commitment for ’80 & ’81. I will make these decisions later.”\footnote{Underlined by President Carter. Memorandum for the President From James McIntyre, Jr., March 9, 1979, “Refugee-Legislation, 3/3/79-12/79,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 40, Jimmy Carter Library.} His comments signified that he did not want to decide on the numbers for the next two
years in advance because he wanted to reduce the number as much as possible.\footnote{Carter’s remarks confused his staff and they thought that “the President’s written comments indicated that he wanted no commitments for 1980 and 1981.” Furthermore, the Office of Management and Budget believed that “the President really meant to check Option Four …to wait and see on 1980 and 1981.” Option four was to admit 50,000 more refugees only for 1979 and defer the 1980-81 decisions. Memorandum for Stu Eizenstat from Ellen Goldstein, March 24, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library. Consequently, President Carter was asked by his staff, “In your decision memo of March 16 on refugee admissions and budget revisions, you checked option one which projected admissions of 120,000 for FY 1980 and 1981, requiring a budget supplement for FY 1980 of $200 million. Your written comments, however, have made unclear how to proceed on the FY1980 supplemental request.” March 30 Memorandum for the President from Stu Eizenstat and Ellen Goldstein, March 30, 1979, “Refugees-Indochinese, 1/79-7/79,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 37, Jimmy Carter Library. They also claimed that “Option one is flexible and does not preclude lowering refugee flow for FY 1981.” Memorandum for the President from Stu Eizenstat and Ellen Goldstein, “Refugees-File No.1 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.}

Eventually, it became clear that the President chose Option one, which would admit 120,000 refugees.\footnote{A note on March 31 claims that the “President approves Clark’s saying that we expect 120,000 refugees for FY80 +FY 81 although formal determinations will be made later.” Memorandum, March 31, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.} Still, the President’s comment suggested his reluctance to make a clear and maximum commitment to the admissions for fiscal years 1980 and 1981.

Although Carter did not want to make a bold move to admit more Indochinese refugees, there was an immediate need for additional parole while the legislation was pending. On April 5, 1979, Senator Edward Kennedy sent a letter to Griffin Bell to request parole as the following:

As you know, the extension of these existing parole programs was raised during the Committee’s hearing on March 14\textsuperscript{th} on S.643, the Refugee Act of 1979. The Committee has this important legislation under active consideration. However, pending final Congressional action on this bill, it is my view that you should continue to use your parole authority under section 212 (d) (5) to meet our international responsibilities toward the homeless—as we have for more than two decades.\footnote{Letter to Attorney General Griffin Bell from Edward Kennedy, April 5, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.}

His expression “our international responsibilities toward the homeless” divulges his understanding of the admittance of the refugees as a universal moral imperative to rescue
the “homeless.” In this way, the Indochinese refugees were turned into “homeless” people without any particular political ties to the U.S. I assert that this signified an American effort to universalize the U.S. commitment to the refugees as an apolitical ethical act, in order to erase the past mistakes and violence in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. Claiming international responsibility, Kennedy denied particular past connections to the refugees and renewed the meaning of the parole as a humanitarian concern. On April 12, Attorney General Griffin Bell authorized parole into the United States of an additional Indochinese refugees (40,000) and Soviet and Eastern European refugees (25,000).

Nonetheless, despite the administration’s intention, the new refugee legislation was taking more time to launch. In December, the legislation was still pending. Finally on March 5, 1980, “In a surpris[ing]ly narrow vote, the House yesterday approved the Conference Report on our refugee bill by a fifteen vote margin…A signing ceremony is probably unwise given the recent unpopularity of refugees and Senator Kennedy’s co-

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413 He also noted that “My action is necessary to bridge the time period between now and the October 1, 1979 effective date of refugee legislation submitted by the Administration to Congress.” Letter to Cyrus Vance from Griffin Bell, April 12, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.

414 A memo reveals the situation well: “The bill is expected to reach the House floor on Thursday. Although there is no chance of it being enacted this year, we are pushing strongly to get it through the House this year. Several amendments will be proposed with which we disagree.” Memorandum for Stu Eizenstat from Frank White, December 17, 1979, “Refugees-File No.2 [1],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.

415 The parole program for admission of Indochinese and Eastern European and Soviet refugees would expire on Dec 15, 1979. Because the new legislation on admissions of refugees is pending, the Secretary of State has requested that Civiletti exercise the authority to extend the parole program. Thus, again, the Administration needed an extension of the parole program. Letter to Robert McClory from Acting Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, December 11, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff, Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.
sponsorship of the bill."\textsuperscript{416} It was a close vote of 207-192 in the House and the fact that a signing ceremony was considered “unwise” exposed how unpopular the bill was.

Despite the unpopularity of the Act, the proposed refugee admissions and allocations for fiscal year 1980 were released in the next month. It projected 168,000 Indochinese and 33,000 Soviet refugees out of a total of 230,700 refugees.\textsuperscript{417} The Office of the U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs claimed, “[W]e propose to give preference to refugees with ties to the United States, such as close relatives or past association with the U.S. Government or American institutions, and to refugees without such ties who are of special humanitarian concern to the United States such as political prisoners.”\textsuperscript{418} This preference had existed from the beginning of the Indochinese refugee influx to the U.S. but it was emphasized again at this time because Refugee Affairs wanted to reduce the number of resettlements of Indochinese refugees to the U.S.

Given the fact that the DOS had emotionally committed to refugee admission, this reduction request seems odd. However, since the Act did not specify the resettlement of Indochinese refugees but claimed the resettlement of refugees in general, the Indochinese refugee resettlement could not be separated from other various refugee programs. That meant that the Indochinese refugee admission had to be consulted with other programs, such as Cuban, Haitian and Soviet Jews, to balance out the numbers.\textsuperscript{419} For instance, a


\textsuperscript{418} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{419} For example, Stu Eisenstat opposed both the State’s and OMB’s recommendation that “Soviet Jewish admissions be reduced by 70,000 for FY 1981.” He insisted on the President’s approval of 33,000 Soviet Jewish admissions, thereby reducing Indochinese admissions by 24,000, from 168,000 to 144,000 annually.
letter to U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs Victor Palmieri from Deputy Director John White suggested “lower alternatives” for Indochinese refugees because of “the low flow of refugees out of Vietnam to countries of first asylum and reduced camp population…. the fact that the U.S. has become a ‘first asylum country’ on its own rights with the recent and continuing influx of Cubans and Haitians…. the increasing pressures for the admission to the U.S. of other groups…. the current depressed domestic economic situation and the need for budget restraint.” The quote reveals his wish to cut back the number of Indochinese refugees to adapt to the current situation of other refugee influxes to the U.S. and to decrease the funds of the Indochinese refugee resettlement. At this point, the Carter administration was carrying out refugee admissions as a global refugee influx to the U.S., thus reflecting U.S. commitments in the world.

White’s letter, nonetheless, also recommended that those factors “must be judged against our desire to promote stability in Southeast Asia, to preserve the principle of first asylum, and to continue as a leader in the international community’s efforts to assist refugees.” He revealed that there were political interests in and a diplomatic significance of the Indochinese refugee resettlement. White perceived that the number of U.S. admissions of Indochinese refugees had to be sustained to secure U.S. power in the world, because the strong commitment to resettlement would ensure U.S. leadership in the international community and would stabilize Southeast Asia. I assert that through the process of liberalizing the refugee policy and maintaining that the refugee issue was a

Memorandum for the President from Stu Eizenstat, [Date unknown, 1980], “Refugees, 1/80-12/80,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library.


Ibid.
universal humanitarian issue, the Carter Administration expanded the area-specific refugee policy into a part of the U.S.’s global diplomatic strategy.\footnote{Statistic for Refugee Admissions for FY1980, [Date unknown, 1979], “Refugees, 2/79-12/79,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library.}

Despite the significant admission of Indochinese refugees, some people in the administration, including President Carter, wanted to reduce the number of Indochinese refugee admissions. This is confusing because the increase was what the administration wanted. Since 1979 the Carter Administration increased the intake of the Indochinese refugee from 7,000 to 14,000 per month, but now they wanted to reduce it to 12,000 a month because the reduction “need not have that effect internationally and is desirable domestically.”\footnote{For example, a memorandum for Stu Eizenstat from Frank White and Ellen Goldstein shows their reluctance: “State believes, and OMB agrees, that if the United States reduced its monthly commitment to its pre-June, 1979 (Tokyo Summit) level of 7,000, there could be serious international repercussions. They argue that other nations which had in turn doubled their admissions when we doubled ours, would also break their commitments. We agree that such a reduction to 12,000 per month need not have that effect internationally and is desirable domestically. NSC and the Volags oppose any reduction in the 14,000 level.” Memorandum, September 4, 1980, “Refugees, 1/80-12/80,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library.} The administration realized the difficulties of handling 14,000 refugees per month. The admission of 14,000 per month was originally based on several considerations. First, there was the need to assure “friendly Southeast Asian countries that the United States is committed to helping keep refugee camp population at manageable level.” Second, there was the need to adjust to the “universal reluctance to allow development of a ‘Palestinian’ situation where large groups append their whole lives in camps.” Third, there was “the need for continued U.S. leadership in the refugee effort in order to maintain the impressive performance of third-country resettlement efforts.” Fourth, there was “the need to demonstrate support for ASEAN in the face of
Vietnamese aggression.” The U.S. understood the refugee situation as “Vietnamese aggression” and claimed the need to help Southeast Asian countries. These concerns exposed the fact that not only was the U.S. resettlement of the Indochinese refugees an extremely political matter between the U.S. and Southeast Asian countries, but also that the U.S. political stability was dependent on the handling of the refugees. Moreover, since the number of admitted Indochinese refugees was a symbol of U.S. support for ASEAN countries, the number had to be higher than other countries. As a result, both the U.S. and ASEAN countries used the refugees as pawns in order to increase the coalition among the relations between the U.S. and ASEAN nations.

Although the admission of Indochinese refugees played a significant role in ensuring U.S. leadership in the world, the demand for the reduction of the refugee influx to the U.S. prevailed after the establishment of the Refugee Act due to anti-refugee sentiments. U.S. coordinator for Refugee Affairs Victor Palmieri complained about the admission of refugees in general. He wrote: “It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between applicants for refugee status who are motivated by fear of persecution and those who seek to immigrate primarily for a better way of life in the United States.” At this point, it became important to “eliminate those with only economic motives.” It is ironic that, even though ideology of liberalism is supposed to have less regulation and secure the mobility of people and things, entrenched poverty cannot be seen as a form of persecution. Palmieri’s consideration of those economically motivated refugees as not true refugees exposed the public conception of some refugees as

424 Memorandum for the President from Victor Palmieri, [Date unknown, 1980], “Refugees, 1/80-12/80,” Domestic Policy Staff Ellen Goldstein Subject Files, Box 35, Jimmy Carter Library.
425 Ibid.
426 Ibid.
a threat because they were coming to the U.S. for material reasons. This is the schizophrenic nature of liberalism that presumes a disparity between the mobility of liberal subjects and non-liberal subjects. Officials like Palmieri believed that refugees should have a clear sign of political persecution in order to access liberal citizenship.

Palmieri’s statement reflected the anti-refugee sentiments in Congress and the INS. For instance, one of the INS officers, District Director in Hong Kong Joseph Sureck wrote to Palmieri critiquing the inflow of the Indochinese refugees: “It has became an endless stream with the hoped-for destination for most being the U.S.—Shangri-La.”427 Senator Walter Huddleston (D-Kentucky) also claimed that many of the Indochinese refugees were “economic opportunists.”428 These arguments have to be analyzed as reflecting not only anti-immigrant sentiment but also as anti-refugee responses that assumed some refugees’ illegitimacy to come to the U.S. These refugees were criminalized as an economic threat, as moochers and invaders of the U.S. I assert that this anti-refugee logic emerged as an extension of anti-immigrant sentiments.

As Palmieri’s and others’ complains exposed, economically motivated immigrants were viewed as a non-essential group (or enemy) to U.S. society. This divulges the idea that U.S. citizenship should be granted to those who seek political and/or religious freedom but not financial freedom. This moralization of U.S. citizenship was necessitated to validate the barring of undesirables. It is an interesting move for a country that repeatedly asserts itself as a nation of immigrants and refugees to be unwelcome immigrants and refugees. This contradiction was resolved by casting

427 Quoted in Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, Calculated Kindness, 168.
economically motivated immigrants and refugees as less moral. In this way, the category of refugee had to be developed into the strict political and/or religious victim figure. This was made possible by the establishment of the Refugee Act of 1980, where the idea of ‘refugee’ became a legal concept that could be distinguished from other immigrants.

**Blaming Indochinese Refugees as a Problem for Local Communities**

Whilst the Refugee Act was being established, Indochinese refugees began to be represented as the cause of “problems” for local communities in the United States. I investigate this representation of the refugees as the American understanding of refugees as a “burden” to local communities. It was a process of pathologizing the refugee bodies. I assert that the problem was widely perceived as “their” issues, not as a structural and persistent problem that local communities already had.\(^{429}\) In September 1979, “the Indochinese refugee problem” had been “a matter of concern among Mayors.”\(^{430}\) In particular, the refugee influx into Orange County, California was criticized as an “over concentration” and “an unfair burden.”\(^{431}\) The fear of the influx emerged as a community

\(^{429}\) For instance, Deputy United States Coordinator for Refugee Affairs commented on domestic aspects of the refugee problem: “What is surprising is that during the past four years of existence of this program, we have had as little trouble as we have had…. As I noted, problems are inevitable and we should not be surprised by, nor exaggerate, what has happened at Seadrift, Texas and Denver, Colorado.” Memorandum for Newman from George N. Barbis, Acting, August 29, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [1],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.

\(^{430}\) A letter was sent to White house staffs saying “the Indochinese refugee problem was a matter of concern among the Mayors.” Letter from Tom Cochran to Stuart Eizenstat, Jack Watson and Anne Wexler, September 4, 1979, “Refugees-File No.1 [1],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.

\(^{431}\) Information Sheet on the Refugee Situation in Orange County, October 15, 1979, “Refugee-File No.2 [4],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library. Congressmen (Don Edwards, John Burton, Augustus Hawkins, Jim Lloyd, Henry Waxman, Tony Coelho, Ronald Dellums, James Corman, Pete Stark, George Miller, Anthony Bellenson, Jerry Patterson, Julian Dixon, Glenn Anderson) went to the President to ask for funding for the Indochinese refugee children for the next year because it is “indeed a Federal problem, and not solely a local one.” Letter to the president, October 24, 1979, “Refugee-File No.2 [4],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.
health problem, such as tuberculosis. Rep. Jerry Patterson (D-Santa Ana) mentioned that “We’ve all heard rumors about things down the street, ranging from tuberculosis to leprosy.” As his quote reveals, bodies of refugees were believed to be contaminated and spreading disease. Refugees were perceived as diseased bodies that required control and management by the government. I use the term ‘body’ because those pathologizing discourses demonstrate that the U.S. did not see the refugees as fully human. Their bodies were a pollutant to the local communities, and thus needed to be contained.

This was not a new thing. This racial coding of the sanitation of certain groups of people in the U.S. has existed long before the Indochinese refugee influx. For example, Nayan Shah writes, “At the turn of the century, ‘health’ and ‘cleanness’ were embraced as integral aspects of American identity; and those who were perceived to be ‘unhealthy,’ such as Chinese men and women, were considered dangerous and inadmissible to the American nation.” In this way, the portrayal of Orange County in the late 1970s can be interpreted as a repetition of the fear towards the Chinese in San Francisco during the turn of the century. It can also be seen as exemplifying the

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432 A letter to the President complained about community health problems due to the refugee influx to certain areas: “It has been widely reported in the press in several localities, for example, that communicable diseases such as tuberculosis are carried by some of the refugee population, despite the requirement that refugees be properly tested for communicable disease before entering the country.” Letter to the President from members of Congress, October 29, 1979, “Refugee-File No.2 [4],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.


434 Although one might argue that the health scare is a part of a culture of fear that emerged in the 1990s, as Barry Glassner claims, I locate the origin of the fear of immigrants and refugees as threats to local communities much farther back. Barry Glassner, The Culture of Fear: Why Americans are Afraid of the Wrong Things (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

“exclusionary strategies in U.S. liberal democracy.” Since things like disease, epidemic rumors, and concerns about conflicts appeared with the sudden influx of Indochinese refugees, I assert that they were derived from public fear of the Indochinese refugees. This fear has to be examined as a ‘public gaze’ on Indochinese refugees that represented them as having “deviant” cultures and “unhealthy” bodies. Their bodies were seen as an embodiment of those deviances. Blaming refugees for problems justifies for the exclusion of these refugees, and dehumanizes the refugees as carrying infectious diseases.

Nevertheless, the “refugee problem” was in fact caused by the problem of the resettlement program. The White House staff claimed “the inability of our domestic resettlement machinery to handle the increase in the volume of refugees.” Although Matthew Nimetz, acting U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, and Nathan Stark, Undersecretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), proposed actions to develop a domestic resettlement program for Indochinese refugees, there was a “lack of coordination among White House staff on refugee activity.” There was no easy fix for the resettlement mechanism to manage the flow of refugees. On top of that,

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436 Ibid., 253.
437 Memorandum for Stu Eisenstat from Frank White and Ellen Goldstein, November 9, 1979, “Refugees-File No.2 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 23, Jimmy Carter Library.
438 Memorandum to Stuart Eizenstat from Matthew Nimetz, acting U.S. Coordinator for Refugee Affairs and Nathan Stark, undersecretary of the Department of HEW, November 17, 1979, “Refugees File No.2 [1],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library.; Frank White and Ellen Goldstein wrote to Stu Eizenstat: “We continue to be dissatisfied with the lack of coordination among White House staff on refugee activity.” Memorandum for Stu Eizenstat from Frank White and Ellen Goldstein, November 19, 1979, “Refugees-File No.2 [3],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library.
439 Assistant to the President for Domestic Affairs and Policy Stuart Eizenstat wrote: “I have been concerned for some time about the inability of our domestic resettlement machinery to handle adequately the increase in the flow of refugees.” Memorandum for Secretary Harold Brown, Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, Secretary-designate Philip Klutenick, Secretary-designate Shirley Hufstedler, Secretary Ray Marshall, Secretary Moon Landrieu, Director Samuel Brown, Director John Macy, Director James T.
the administration decided to take a back-seat approach because they thought that the
Great Society model would not work anymore. The administration needed a new way
to deal with the refugee issue since the President’s re-election campaign wanted to win
public support by illustrating the resettlement as positive.

The alternative to the Great Society model did not improve the situation, but
rather enabled the shift of government attention to non-governmental organizations. I
analyze the suggested stance of the Federal Government in the context of a neo-
conservative and neo-liberal shift from the War on Poverty campaign to a war against
poor people, especially since the 1980s. Cutting back the involvement of the Federal
Government, the resettlement became a charity opportunity. This reversed the effects of
the Civil Rights Movement and rejected the “downward redistribution” of capital. The
approach altered the Great Society model and brought the responsibility for the
assimilation and economic self-sufficiency of the refugees solely on their abilities and on

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McIntyre, Jr. November 21, 1979, “Refugee Housing [2],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil Rights
and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.

Senior Advisor Amitai Etzioni suggested the Federal government serve “as the refugees’[’] patron of last
resort”, because he believed that the Great Society model would not work anymore. He wrote: “The result
of this [Great Society model] approach is to put the burden on the most attacked, overloaded, sector of the
society—the Feds—and leave the Administration as the agency responsible for all the difficulties sure to
follow. See California. The main alternative conception is: ‘We’ (the American Society) have a problem.
We (the Feds) see it. We (the Feds) will hence seek a coalition of nongovernment agencies, foundations,
community groups, etc. to take on this problem, take pride and credit, etc. We shall act as conveners and
catalysts to the extent needed. And, to the extent the nongovernment coalition will fail, we will have to step
in, as a last resort.” [Underlined in original] Memorandum for Ellen Goldstein and Frank White from
Amitai Etzioni, December 4, 1979, “Refugees-File No. 2 [1],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy Staff Civil
Rights and Justice: White, Box 24, Jimmy Carter Library.

Frank White wrote: “I believe that, as the President campaigns during the months ahead, he will need to
be able to say some positive things about what he has done to resettle the refugees and how he has tried to
insure that the refugee burden not fall disproportionately on low-income people.” Memorandum for Stu
Eizenstat from Frank White, December 7, 1979, “Refugee Housing [1],” Staff Offices Domestic Policy
Staff Civil Rights and Justice: White, Box 21, Jimmy Carter Library.

Glen Omatsu, “The ‘Four Prisons’ and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from

I borrowed the words “downward redistribution” from Lisa Duggan. Lisa Duggan, The Twilight of
equality?, xvii.
non-governmental organizations. This is an analogous to the neo-conservative and neo-liberal logic that puts an emphasis on individual efforts and that ignores the institutional racism that sustains social, cultural, racial, and economical privileges and disadvantages.

Accordingly, the blaming of Indochinese refugees as the causes of crisis prevailed. For instance, U.S. coordinator for Refugee Affairs Victor Palmieri also mentioned, “I am concerned about the possibility that serious problems may erupt in the very near future as a result of Indochinese refugee resettlement in certain communities across the country.” Although he believed “that the resettlement of more than 300,000 Indochinese since 1975 is an important accomplishment,” he exposed his anxiety about the resettlement. To him, the resettlement seemed to be out of control. Palmieri claimed that “the growing scarcity of jobs and housing and the increasing federal, state and local budgetary resources, however, has brought us to a critical point in our domestic refugee problem.” What he implied was that refugees were to blame for inducing financial difficulties on the federal, state and local level. This exposes not just xenophobic fear but also racism, because the refugees were seen as not just foreigners but also a racially and culturally different group of people. Refugees were created and confirmed as a “problem” in these discourses. Palmieri’s fear originated from his belief that refugees would disrupt the existing order of American society. In turns, this problematization of refugees was a project to reclaim the U.S. as a land of white people.

In this way, through the pathologizing of their bodies as unhealthy and dependent on American society, refugees were identified as threats to not only health but also to a

financial and cultural crisis of the community. Thus, the resettlement of the refugees had include not only an assimilation process but also a treatment procedure in which inferior bodies were transformed into healthy and financially self-sustaining bodies. After all, the American “civilizing” mission on the Indochinese refugees justified the national fantasy of the U.S. as the refuge of the world.

**Conclusion**

The Saigon Cowboys, such as Lionel Rosenblatt, formulated the temporary parole of 1975 into the Refugee Act of 1980. Their persistent personal efforts renewed the image of the U.S. as a refuge for not just Southeast Asian refugees but for the rest of the world. In contrast to the U.S, Vietnam was publicly perceived as a perpetrator of the refugee situation in Indochina. President Carter’s commitment to human rights provided a comprehensive global refugee policy during his term, yet the refugee policy was based on an anti-Communist logic of receiving people during their transition and reformation from Communism to Democracy. The institutional assimilation of refugees reaffirmed the image of America as a land of freedom and a nation of immigrants/refugees.

The reclamation of the U.S. as a nation of refuge was sustained by controlling the refugee influx into the U.S. The number of Indochinese refugees was carefully controlled over the years and “managed down” as well.\(^4^4^6\) This was partially because anti-refugee sentiments emerged and original supporters of the Indochinese refugee admission could not hold their demand strong. The fact that two of the Saigon Cowboys left their refugee

\(^{4^4^6}\) Larry Thompson, *Refugee Workers*, 238.
work in the Department of State around 1982 had a great effect on the setback too.\textsuperscript{447}

Additionally, another member of the Saigon Cowboys, Lionel Rosenblatt, was not assigned an important position in the Refugee Bureau when he came back to the U.S. from Thailand in 1981.\textsuperscript{448} After Ronald Reagan took office, his administration proposed smaller refugee allocations, marking a decrease from 173,000 in 1981-82 to 70,000 in 1985-1986.\textsuperscript{449} President Reagan distributed most of the 70,000 slots (as many as 64,000) to Communist controlled areas such as the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, former Indochina, and Cuba. Therefore the refugee policy exemplified a strident anti-Communist policy.\textsuperscript{450}

The civilizing mission of Indochinese refugees continued to sustain anti-Communist policies and a binary world view of Communism=evil/Democracy=moral. Under the Reagan Administration, Secretary of State George P. Shultz gave a speech to mark the tenth anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, claiming that America’s “sacrifice was in the service of noble ideals—to save innocent people from brutal tyranny.”\textsuperscript{451} Through the Refugee Act of 1980, the Carter administration prepared a platform for recuperating the Vietnam War wounds, admitting refugees from Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. This was also applicable for militaristic expenditure, since the Carter Administration reversed the post-Vietnam expenditure in 1980 to 127.3 billion dollars.\textsuperscript{452}

\textsuperscript{447} Ibid., 239.
\textsuperscript{448} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{449} Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, \textit{Calculated Kindness}, 189.
\textsuperscript{450} Ibid., 189.
\textsuperscript{451} John Dumbrell, \textit{American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 79.
\textsuperscript{452} The US defense budget was $270 billion in 1999, $399.1 billion in 2004, 685.1 billion in 2010 (fiscal year). Ibid., 52.
As I explained in this chapter, the resettlement validated the assimilation theory and the myth of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants/refugees. In this production of the narration of the U.S. as a sole rescuer and protector of rights, the Indochinese refugees were widely perceived as a true burden of a modern society cast as “white.” I have analyzed significant moments for the U.S. Indochinese refugee policy to expose the common understanding of the Indochinese refugee problem as a humanitarian crisis in order to reveal the resettlement issue as a prime example of ‘white imperial love.’ Vincent L. Rafael writes: “White love holds out the promise of fathering, as it were a ‘civilized people’ capable in time of asserting its own character. But it also demands the indefinite submission to a program of discipline and reformation requiring the constant supervision of a sovereign master.” Love and discipline are inseparable in liberal discourse. Moreover, it was the State Department that created the system to transfer governmental work to nongovernmental organizations through the Indochinese refugee resettlement. Bringing charity to government work not only redefined the refugee resettlement as charity but also accelerated the post-Vietnam War understanding of the refugees as victims of Communism.

The development of the Indochinese refugee resettlement was a “global” endeavor of the U.S., Southeast Asian countries, Japan, Canada, Australia, and other countries. Therefore, in the next chapter, I expose the ways in which the U.S. enabled certain Southeast Asian countries to be a “surrogate refuge” where the U.S. held refugees temporally. However, refugees were not held for permanent resettlement in these

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specified countries, and therefore, through the processes of internationalization and institutionalization of the refugee resettlement, these countries were not recognized as places of genuine refuge.
CHAPTER THREE: Surrogate Refuge: Internationalization and Institutionalization of the Indochinese Refugee Resettlement

As I explained in chapter two, a group of people including the Saigon Cowboys that engaged in the Indochinese refugee resettlement since the late 1970s enabled the United States government to claim the U.S. as a refuge of the world. In this chapter, I will examine the ways in which the refugee resettlement was operated as a U.S. global racial project that allowed the U.S. to carry out a moral crusade against Communism and to utilize Asia as its extraterritorial jurisdiction. I will argue that the ways in which the U.S. internationalized and institutionalized the Indochinese refugee resettlement constituted a process to turn Asia into its own extraterritorial jurisdiction, by Americanizing humanitarianism. By claiming the refugee resettlement as obligatory to the international community, the U.S. optimized humanitarian aid as a political means to advance the domination of Democracy and Liberalism. In this way, the Carter Administration was able to globalize the U.S. concept of ‘refugee’ as a person freed from Communist countries. The administration demanded that other countries participate in and cooperate with the U.S. arrangement, even though some countries did not think that the Indochinese were refugees and thus treated them as illegal immigrants or displaced persons.\footnote{For example, Southeast Asian countries believed that Indochinese refugees were illegal immigrants or displaced persons, not necessarily refugees. Valerie O’Connor Sutter, \textit{Indochinese Refugee Dilemma}, 101.}

Due to the overall Indochinese refugee resettlement proposed and operated by the U.S., certain Asian countries acted as U.S. extraterritorial jurisdiction by associating with the U.S., becoming first asylum countries and holding Refugee Processing Centers (RPC). Many of the Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines became first asylum countries. In addition, Hong Kong
also played a significant role in the resettlement effort by providing refugee centers. South Korea and Japan financially helped as well. I employ the word “extraterritorial jurisdiction” to problematize the U.S. extraterritoriality, because the U.S. imposed that various places in Asia and the Pacific act as humanitarian “surrogate refuges,” with refugee camps and processing centers. Since the resettlement was designed and operated by the U.S., I argue that this is a form of U.S. colonialism and imperialism. The fact that the U.S. was able to turn Asia into a “surrogate refuge” of the U.S. in the Indochinese refugee resettlement allows me not only to examine it as a result of diplomatic negotiations, but also to analyze it as a manifestation of U.S. humanitarian imperialism in Asia and the Pacific. Since the U.S. needed a “surrogate” territory for holding and resettling refugees, some countries functioned as U.S. extraterritorial jurisdiction for supporting the refugee resettlement, and thus were unable to become “true refuges.” Of course, U.S. extraterritoriality has a long history in Asia and the Pacific, beginning with the late 19th century expansion of the U.S. empire. However, I will reveal how this American utilization of Asia constituted a new American imperial formation in the post-Vietnam War period, given that the U.S. relocated the first asylum and processing system in Asia in order to guard its borders and develop the refugee resettlement as a global program.455

Thus, this chapter asks: How did Asia act as an American extraterritorial jurisdiction and “surrogate refuge”? How did the U.S. attain the cooperation of first

455 Following Yen Le Espiritu’s argument regarding “militarized refuge,” in which she claims that the U.S. holds military power to be the refuge of the world, I expand the idea by analyzing how that U.S. military power required Asian countries to be a “surrogate refuge.” In this chapter, I want to point out the nature of the schizophrenic desire of the U.S. to be a land of refuge but to guard its borders against undesirables. Yen Le Espiritu, “Militarized Refuge: A Critical Reading of Vietnamese Flight to the US,” Unpublished Paper (University of California, San Diego, March 21, 2011).
asylum countries and support from other countries to resettle refugees? How did the U.S. develop the idea of institutionalizing the resettlement in Asia? I ask these questions to challenge the U.S. internationalization and institutionalization of the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a project of humanitarian imperialism by exposing the fact that it was a U.S. global racial project. The refugee resettlement functioned as a global allocation of Indochinese refugees and validated the First World’s control of the world. Following Denise Ferreira da Silva’s observation, I also view the refugee resettlement as the moment when the figure of the Indochinese refugee was turned into a “new friend of Freedom” who could only remain in the territory of freedom with U.S. help. In this way, the refugees delineated the line between Communism and Liberalism and enabled the representation of the latter as a rescuer who holds morality. As da Silva claims, they illuminate the “ethical boundaries of empire.” In the case of the Indochinese refugee resettlement, the Carter Administration delineated those boundaries through the internationalization and institutionalization of the refugee resettlement.

Throughout this chapter, I will challenge the common understanding of the Indochinese refugee resettlement as a global benevolent mission by analyzing the resettlement as a new form of American imperialism, which I call humanitarian imperialism. Analyzing it in the context of the Cold War allows us to see the U.S. moral obligation to expand Indochinese refugee programs to involve more countries and to admit more refugees as a way to develop U.S. humanitarian imperialism and to continue waging the war against Communism. Moralizing the resettlement, the U.S. played a leadership role for industrialized and developing nations and made them into a powerful

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community of opponents of Communism. I claim that, through the resettlement of
Indochinese refugees, the U.S. represented itself as the liberator of the oppressed and the
leader of the global community. By articulating the Indochinese refugee problem as a
problem for external control, the administration pursued a strong commitment in Asia
and remained the leader of Asia even after the Vietnam War. This was because
paradoxically the U.S. land had to be secured from the refugee influx.

Therefore, first, I illustrate the ways in which the U.S. needed support from
first asylum countries for the resettlement. I analyze how the U.S. kept certain countries
such as Thailand as first asylum countries by conceptualizing the refugee resettlement as
an international civilizing mission. Second, I demonstrate the ways in which the Refugee
Processing Center (RPC) was established, since I believe that the RPC is the most
significant example that defines the characteristic of the Indochinese refugee
resettlement. I contextualize the RPC within American border making technologies.
Finally, I examine how the U.S. accused Vietnam and pressured other countries to
distribute their aid to the refugee resettlement instead of to Vietnam. Throughout this
chapter, I show that the international resettlement of Indochinese refugees was the U.S.
government’s project to maintain American power through humanitarianism.

1. Indochinese Refugee Resettlement as a Moral Mission

Without the efforts of first asylum countries, the internationalization of the
resettlement was unattainable for the U.S. The alliance between the U.S. and Southeast
Asian countries gradually started in 1975, when the U.S. government asked neighboring
countries to allow a temporary stay of the people due to the unexpected U.S. evacuation
from the region. The U.S. demanded that countries such as Thailand provide temporary protection for people from former Indochina. The U.S. Department of State considered these people “refugees,” not illegal or displaced persons, and it needed to help as many of them as possible. Consequently, first asylum countries could not be too cruel to refugees because they had to prove civility by providing care for refugees. In short, the U.S. emphasized the importance of their support by claiming it was their duty to do. I claim that for the U.S., obtaining cooperation from first asylum countries functioned as part of a U.S. “civilizing mission” that was designed to teach the countries to help victims of Communism; the U.S. believed that those who were leaving were refugees that needed to be saved. Thus, first I explain how the U.S. utilized Asian countries as first asylum countries for its resettlement of the Indochinese refugees. Second, I elucidate the ways in which the U.S. expanded the refugee resettlement internationally.

The Ambivalent Alliance between the U.S. and Southeast Asia

In 1975, Thailand became a first asylum country for refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. In April 1975, the Prime Minister of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) was already reluctant to assist the refugees for a long time basis, though the U.S. government demanded it do so since the earlier stage of the refugee influx to Thailand. In July 1975, the RTG requested the assistance of UNHCR and the

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457 The U.S. Embassy claimed, “Chachai said it would be absolutely impossible to agree to refugees remaining in Thailand up to six months. If the serious problems he foresaw regarding this whole matter could be overcome, the RTG could at most agree to a fairly brief transit period. (They have accepted 30 days in the case of Cambodians.)” Telegram to Secretary of State from American Embassy Bangkok, April 19, 1975, “Thailand-State Department Telegrams To SECSTATE-NODIS (1),” National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for East Asia and Pacific, Box 18 Thailand (2), Gerald R. Ford Library.
U.S. to obtain support to deal with the refugees. Despite this, the flow of refugees continued, and UNHCR and the U.S. did not resettle those people outside Thailand. Thus, the number of refugees swelled to about 73,000 in December 1975. Even though, as I explained in chapter two, the Ford Administration issued a parole for an additional 11,000 refugees in January 1976, the rest of them were left out there. There was no valid solution to the situation in 1976, and more and more people continued to leave the region. Since the U.S. evacuation of the region, refugees started pouring into neighboring countries. However, the U.S. did not recognize the refugees as a product of their war but rather as a product of Communism in the region.

Some journalists bought awareness to the refugee situation in Asia. In particular, Henry Kamm, a correspondent from The New York Times who believed that the refugees were proof of the failure of the Communist governments in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, provoked public compassion toward the Indochinese refugees. Kamm played a significant role in the American perception of Indochinese refugees because he represented the refugees as “victims from Communism” and also victims of Asia. He wrote: “Their (Vietnamese) accounts of why they sought exile at great risk to their lives present a generally negative picture of Vietnam today, particularly in the provinces.” Refugees fleeing Communism indicated that Vietnam society had serious problems. Thus he demanded a need for international attention for the refugees. In addition, Kamm also

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458 This request also includes assistance for Meo refugees from Laos. Memorandum for Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft, July 23, 1975, “Thailand (12),” Box 17, National Security Adviser: Presidential Country Files for East Asia and Pacific, Gerald R. Ford Library.
helped construct the idea that Asian countries did not care for the refugees or for their community.\textsuperscript{461} This was because his racist notion of the distribution of intimate care; he assumed that non-Communist Asian countries lacked the quality to aid the refugees.

Moreover, depicting the Indochinese refugees as victims of Asia had a great impact on public perception of U.S. refugee policy. Kamm was discontent with the treatment of Indochinese refugees in Asia. According to him, Asian countries also had a responsibility to refugees because of their involvements in the war. “Asian countries, no matter how much they may have profited during the war in Indochina, feel little obligation to extend help to the war’s final flotsam.”\textsuperscript{462} Kamm considered refugees as “the war’s final flotsam,” the “burden” that the world had to share. However, Kamm believed that Asian countries did not share the same obligation as the U.S. deemed. Consequently, he considered support from other countries an inevitable duty because the refugee was a flotsam that the U.S. could not control. I assert that in this way, Kamm illustrated the refugee problem as a problem of Southeast Asia and Asia in general.

Kamm depicted the incapability of Asia to solve its issues when he portrayed Indochinese refugees as victims of Asia. He blamed not only Communist countries but also Asia as a whole for the mistreatment of the refugees and the inadequate dealing of the situation. I claim that the U.S. pathologized Asia as an inhumanitarian space by sensationalizing the

\textsuperscript{461}He concluded his article by saying: “Such groups of Vietnamese continue to be picked up at the sea and put ashore in various Asian countries. Their welcome is usually restrained because the host countries regard the refugees as an embarrassment in their attempts to establish normal relations with Hanoi. How many perish at sea or caught and punished will never be known.” Henry Kamm, “Vietnamese Escapees Wait, as World Turns a Deaf Ear” \textit{The New York Times}, June 8, 1977.

indifference of Asian countries to the refugees through the news media, as exemplified by the example of Kamm.

The Carter administration shared the Kamm’s view on the Indochinese refugee issue and did not take full responsibility for the refugees. Accordingly, in 1977 the administration tried to convince first asylum countries to continue maintaining protection for the refugees. In this respect, for the Carter Administration, assuring assistance from first asylum countries was critical in managing the resettlement. The way that the administration dealt with first asylum countries exposes the U.S.’s understanding of the refugee resettlement as a humanitarian mission of the international community.

However, first asylum countries did not share the U.S.’s view regarding the Indochinese refugees and became impatient with the situation because they recognized those refugees as “economic refugees.” In December 1977, a memo for Brzezinski depicted U.S. concerns as well:

Assistant Secretaries Holbrooke and Derian called in Thai Ambassador Arun to express serious concern about the apparent Thai intention under the new policy of November 15 to prevent refugee boats from landing in Thailand and to prevent so-called economic refugees who enter by land from remaining in Thailand. Arun indicated that the RTG [Royal Thai Government] has permitted Indochinese refugees sanctuary in Thailand for several years and this might be enough. He explained the serious economic, social and political burden caused by refugees. Holbrooke said that there is a long tradition in the U.S. of assisting refugees, but that the U.S. Congress does not want to carry all of the burden. If the Thai appear to wash their hands of the matter it complicate[s] our ability to assist with their maintenance in Thailand and sour[s] Congressional perception of the RTG.

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463 For instance, when Prime Minister of Malaysia Bussein Binn Onn visited the President in September 1977, the administration wanted “to obtain Malaysia’s continued cooperation in temporarily accepting Indochinese refugees as a state of first asylum.” Memorandum for the President from Warren Christopher, September 24, 1977, NLC-15-29-8-4-1, Jimmy Carter Library.
As the quote reveals, although the Thai government did not want to continue its support, the U.S. demanded it do so by warning that the decision would seriously damage U.S.-Thai relations. Basically, in this way, Assistant Secretary Richard Holbrooke claimed that stricter policy on the refugees should not be implemented because the Thai Government could not and should not “wash their hands of the matter.” Depicting the refugees as a “burden,” the Carter Administration diminished its own responsibility and universalized the issue as a humanitarian crisis in order to convince Thailand to cooperate. In other words, the administration believed that the resettlement was a humanitarian mission in which Southeast Asian countries were obliged to participate.

Nevertheless, although the U.S. did not forcefully coerce Southeast Asian countries to do so, it applied plenty of pressure. The U.S. emphasized the importance of the “humanitarian” aspect of the refugee treatment. For instance, around that time, President Carter sent a letter to the Prime Minister of Thailand to convince the government to continue the temporary protection of the refugees:

Thailand’s humane treatment of Indochinese refugees also attests to your country’s mercy and compassion. The United States is continuing to help move refugees from Thailand for resettlement abroad, and we support the activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees—both in Thailand and elsewhere. I know the refugee problem is difficult for your country, but I hope you will continue your humanitarian approach in this distressing situation.465

Carter claimed that humane treatment of the refugees would signify “mercy and compassion” internationally. Maintaining the Indochinese refugee issue as a humanitarian issue, the Carter Administration stated that the mistreatment of the

refugees was unacceptable. In this sense, it was clear to the U.S. government that the Thai government should provide temporary care for the refugees because it was a moral thing to do. The U.S. saw humane refugee treatment not only as a humanitarian principle but also as an obligatory action of the U.S. ally. This U.S. behavior should be analyzed as a civilizing mission, because the U.S. directed Thailand to support the refugees by stressing the morality of refugee treatment.

Consequently, the U.S. considered Thailand’s reluctance to collaborate as an obstacle to the humanitarian project and therefore immoral. For example, strict policies towards Indochinese refugees were not only morally but politically unacceptable for the U.S. The Department of State said: “The strict policies announced recently by Thai[land] and Malaysia are strongly opposed in principle by the U.S. and the UNHCR, which argue that enforcement of the measures, especially turning away boats, could violate human rights and thus, both tarnish the countries’ international image and jeopardize the willingness of third world countries and the UNHCR to provide further financial and resettlement assistance.” 466 As the quote reveals, the administration blamed Thailand and Malaysia for their policies by depicting them as immoral. This was because the U.S. conceptualized the association of first asylum countries as a moral action. The administration could not be silent on the mistreatment of the refugees when the National Security Council memorandum reported it. 467

Nonetheless, for the ASEAN nations (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines), providing asylum to the Indochinese refugees was not a universal moral imperative but rather a responsibility of the United States, because they considered the U.S. as the cause for the Indochinese refugee situation. That sentiment is evident in the following statement from the State Department:

In so doing [shifting the blame to the U.S. and the international community], the ASEAN nations will argue that the situation is not of their making, that they have carried more than their share of the burden, and that the U.S. and UNHCR are ultimately responsible (by written guarantee) for resettling the Vietnamese elsewhere. From the ASEAN nations’ point of view, the only viable long-term solution will be permanent resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees in other, non-ASEAN countries. Consequently, they are not likely to consider suggestions that they attempt to share the burden among themselves or offer permanent asylum and resettlement.\footnote{Report on Refugees and Human Rights: An Issue in US-ASEAN Relations, December 20, 1977, NLC-7-65-6-7-0, Jimmy Carter Library.}

This article showed the logic of the ASEAN nations; they maintained that the U.S. was responsible for the resettlement. The ASEAN nations believed that they bore more of the burden than they should have to because they considered the U.S. responsible for the situation. This was contrary to what the Carter administration deemed a humanitarian action. The U.S. administration perceived the refugee resettlement as a humanitarian issue, not a U.S. responsibility. Thus the understanding of resettlement between the first asylum countries and the U.S. was at a disjuncture.

This disparity between ASEAN nations and the U.S. regarding the refugee issue was not resolved but rather intensified as the Carter Administration kept trying to maintain temporarily protection for the refugees in Southeast Asia. To gain the support of Thailand on the refugee issue, President Carter had to demonstrate America’s
commitment to relocate the refugees from the region. Accordingly, the resettlement became a significant topic of the U.S.-Thai relation. A CIA report on March 9, 1978 also exposed the refugee issue as the bilateral issue of the U.S.-Thai effort. The issue was not only viewed as a significant issue in the U.S.-Thai relation but also viewed as an international problem in which the U.S. and Thailand had to cooperate together. This kind of bilateral communication within the larger context of global resettlement was significant for the Carter administration to carry out its plan as a global humanitarian one.

In this way, the U.S. forced certain countries to bear the heavy burden, as reflected in the Government of Thailand’s claim that they were forced to bear an “unfair burden” during the resettlement. Thailand had assisted over a million refugees from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam and held thirteen refugee camps inside the country since 1975.

**Indochinese Refugees as International “Share”**

Cooperation of first asylum countries such as Thailand was crucial for the U.S. yet uneasy to obtain. Because the U.S. government and public thought of the Indochinese Refugee Problem as problem of both Communism and Asia, and because they assumed that Asia was incapable of solving it, they viewed the resettlement of the refugees as an international responsibility. This was apparent when Congressman Joshua Eilberg

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469 The administration needed to reassure the Thai Prime Minister Krinangsak Chamanani of its commitment, and thus claimed: “The United States is continuing to help move refugees from Thailand for resettlement abroad, and we support the activities of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees—both in Thailand and elsewhere.” Telegram from Jimmy Carter to Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, March 1 1978, NLC-16-101-2-18-1, Jimmy Carter Library.


(House-D, Pennsylvania), who was the chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, and International Law, suggested that the President hold the international conference “to take the lead in convening the nations of the world for an International Conference on Indochinese Refugees.”\textsuperscript{473} His idea implied that he already took for granted the globalizing of the resettlement to integrate a group of nations to operate under the direction of the U.S.\textsuperscript{474}

The view of Indochinese refugees as an international responsibility continued and strengthened over the years, as Congressman Eilberg kept suggesting the internationalization of the refugee resettlement. He claimed that three elements were crucial for the U.S. to maintain its involvement: national regulation of the influx of refugees, international support, and international attention for the Indochinese refugee problem.\textsuperscript{475} Eilberg believed that “the U.S. ought to get very tough with other countries to have them accept their ‘fair share.’”\textsuperscript{476} According to him, the admission of refugees was not an American responsibility but rather an international one, and the U.S. was the one who must educate the other countries to recognize that. In other words, he presumed that the resettlement of the refugees was an international humanitarian “mission.”

\textsuperscript{473} In the letter to the President Joshua Eilberg states: “I propose, therefore, that you take the lead in convening the nations of the world for an International Conference on Indochinese Refugees.” Letter to the President form Joshua Eilberg, July 12, 1977, “Refugees, 7-12/77,” National Security Affairs: Brzezinski material Subject File Box 51, Jimmy Carter Library.

\textsuperscript{474} The conference did not happen until July 1979, because the U.S. needed to stabilize the globalization and institutionalization of the resettlement first.

\textsuperscript{475} “Met with Congressman Eilberg with Oksenberg, Loehman and Oakley on Indochinese refugees…..Eilberg believes the solution to the problem includes three initiatives: Permanent legislation establishing long-term authority and built-in limits. State is now ready to support such legislation. A vigorous program to increase acceptance by the international community. Eilberg has nothing good to say about the UNHCR and believes the U.S. ought to get very tough with other countries to have them accept their ‘fair share.’ An International Conference to focus world-wide attention on the problem.” Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, December 7, 1977, NLC-10-7-3-1-9, Jimmy Carter Library.

\textsuperscript{476} Ibid.
In this sense, the resettlement became a civilizing mission for the U.S. to educate not only Asia but also the international community. Indeed, the action derived from this sense of duty can be understood as a U.S. imperial maneuver to force other countries into the American way. William Appleman Williams reminds us that there has been “the proposition that America’s overwhelming economic power could cast the economy and politics of the poorer, weaker, underdeveloped countries into a pro-American mold.”

The manner in which the U.S. pressured the international community for the refugee resettlement resonates with what Williams claims as the American belief that “the other people ought to copy America.” Accordingly, this faith is based on the assumption that an Americanization of the world would bring political, financial and cultural prosperity by promoting Democracy, Capitalism and Liberalism.

Moreover, in the late 1970s, casting the Indochinese refugees as a share of the world’s problem had a particular political meaning: it served to demarcate the free world as the area where the refugees could be resettled. Within this view, the refugees were represented as not just the white man’s burden but rather the Free World’s burden, so that helping them became analogous to supporting Democracy. Around that time, legal scholars began proposing the idea of assigning refugees worldwide by matching their preferences with host countries. This idea was based on the premise “that helping refugee[s] is a jointly held moral duty and obligation under international law” and it developed into a global system of responsibility-sharing for refugees in the early 1990s.

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478 Ibid., 17.
Hence, the act of admitting refugees reflects the Cold War culture of proving the morality of Democracy and the inhumane nature of Communism. The international community did not have to be the West—European and North American nations—but they had to be global allies of the U.S.

The “fair-share” view of the Indochinese resettlement was problematic since it eliminated the U.S. political and cultural objective for the resettlement. The decontextualization of the resettlement enabled a different politicization of the resettlement. It masked the reasons why the U.S. saw the need to help the refugees and it naturalized their admission as a necessary commitment of the international community. The idea of the other countries as having a “share” of the world’s refugees signifies that the resettlement was, in fact, a regional security matter; the U.S. would share the cost and defense responsibility. Furthermore, the U.S. government assumed its role as a leader to balance the compatibility between needs (refugees and asylum countries) and contributions (temporary protection, financial distribution, and permanent resettlement). In this sense, the U.S. became a mediator of all countries and a manager of the whole system of refugee resettlement.

However, the Carter Administration did not want to hold an international conference organized by the U.S. but by the international community. For that reason, when the UNHCR proposed a conference, the administration saw an opportunity because they believed that “[s]uch a meeting would serve U.S. objectives by hopefully improving international acceptance of refugees, particularly boat cases, and allaying the fears of the

countries of first asylum that might ultimately be required to absorb all of the refugees they assist. At this point, the Carter Administration needed other countries to “absorb” refugees to alleviate the load of first asylum countries. Thus, facilitating international resettlement of the refugees was the number one priority. As the refugee flow increased more rapidly in 1978, the administration needed to expand the range of internationalization for the resettlement by issuing paroles and persuading other countries.

In fact, the Carter Administration relied on other countries’ increasing their refugee intake in order to advance the resettlement. This is why the administration was pleased when Australia increased their intake of refugees after the U.S. parole. The Carter Administration utilized political symbolic value of parole to gain not only international support but also domestic approval for the refugee resettlement. A memorandum suggested to the President, “In our announcement of the parole, we will emphasize the U.S. parole as part of an international response to the refugee problem and the continuing U.S. commitment to assist Indochinese refugees.” U.S. parole, which

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482 Cyrus Vance told the President: “The refugee exodus from Vietnam tripled in April and May and has now reached 4,000-5,000 per month, 60% of which are Chinese.” Memorandum for the President from Cyrus Vance, June 5, 1978, NLC-128-13-9-3-3, Jimmy Carter Library.
483 Cyrus Vance explained how the additional parole worked as follows: “[Foreign Minister of Australia] Peacock also welcomed your decision to parole an additional 25,000 Indochinese refugees into the U.S. and reaffirmed Australia’s own commitment to take 9,000 more Indochinese.” Memorandum to the President from Cyrus Vance, June 8, 1976, NLC-128-13-9-6-0, Jimmy Carter Library.
484 Commissioner Leonel J. Castillo (INS) said that they would be able to begin the 25,000 Indochinese refugee parole on June 14, 1978. Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 10, 1978, NLC-1-6-6-5-3, Jimmy Carter Library.
was a temporal admission for the refugees, was also a tool for coping with the situations both internationally and domestically.485

The administration needed other countries to participate in the refugee resettlement because they not only believed that it was an international “mission” but they also wanted to decrease the refugee influx into the U.S. In the late 1970s, the Carter Administration acknowledged the advantages of the internationalization. For instance, Status of National Policy on Indochinese Refugees claimed: “International participation in resettlement of Indochinese refugees is actually substantially better than is generally understood. Leaving aside the initial evacuation and its aftermath in the summer and fall of 1975, the record for the last two years has seen a total of 74,000 Indochinese resettled; 31,000 in the United States and 43,000 in third countries, not including Thailand.”486 The increase of the resettlement number in the third countries but not in the U.S. was incentive for the administration to develop the internationalization of the resettlement to respond to the Indochinese refugee problem. The U.S. could not be accountable for all the refugees alone, and its ability to “share” them with other countries decreased the U.S.’s original load while keeping U.S. morality intact.

The Carter administration operated the resettlement as a moral duty of the international community. It offered other countries the opportunity to share in the morality by splitting the cost and labor of resettlement. Through this moral mission, resettlement countries (mostly the West) embodied more morality than first asylum countries because they were the ones that were solving the problem. Since Asian

485 By establishing the Refugee Act of 1980, the President was able to issue parole, temporary admissions of refugees, without consulting with Congress.
countries were not eagerly involved in the resettlement, the U.S. recognized them as morally inferior to the West. For this reason, first asylum countries were seen as temporary sufferers of the burden, while wealthy countries that admitted refugees were recognized as true carriers of the burden. In this way, the U.S. internationalization of the resettlement delineated the division of the first asylum countries as less ethical and the resettlement countries as more ethical. Therefore, the power hierarchy between the First and Third world was maintained and strengthened through the moral language of the Indochinese refugee resettlement.

2. Making Home Front: Securing and Restructuring the U.S. Border

I assert that the alliance of the U.S., first asylum countries, and other resettlement countries led them to carry out the more comprehensive resettlement plan in the late 1970s. To facilitate the third country resettlement of the refugees, the Carter Administration sought to set up a center for the Indochinese refugees in Southeast Asia. Indeed, Refugee Processing Centers (RPCs) were established in the Philippines and Indonesia in the early 1980s. I claim that the establishment of RPCs in Southeast Asia was vital for the U.S. to reach the final step of institutionalizing the Indochinese refugee resettlement. I analyze this process as a (re)formation of the U.S. home front, because border making is home making, “deciding who is in as well as who is out.” Here, I employ the trope of “home” to explain that the aims of a global strategy of U.S. border and population control that employed biopolitical technology for optimizing the refugees.

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487 The Philippine Refugee Processing Center was opened in Morong, Bataan, Philippines in 1980.
In other words, I contextualize the refugee camps in Southeast Asia as an essential result of the securing and restructuring of the American border, in order to show that the U.S. as a project required Asia to act as a surrogate refuge.

**Refugee Processing Centers in Southeast Asia**

The Ford administration already tried to systematize the resettlement of the refugees by establishing refugee processing centers in the Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, Wake Island, and Guam in 1975, when the U.S. evacuation from Vietnam carried out. However, in 1978, the Carter Administration was trying to build ones in Southeast Asia, in areas that were neither U.S. territory nor U.S. military installations. The early sites of the staging areas for the refugees were not reopened because the Carter administration demanded the refugee camps in Southeast Asia to handle and manage the refugee resettlement. I argue that this signifies not only a *transfer* of the staging areas to Southeast Asia but also an *externalization* of the staging areas outside the U.S.

The Refugee Processing Center was a new type of refugee camp: a final staging area to resettle Indochinese refugees in a variety of third countries. Setting up those centers in Indonesia and the Philippines facilitated the whole process of Indochinese resettlement and expanded the capacity to hold refugees in Southeast Asia, since they were mainly designed to process refugees to their resettlement countries. The U.S. believed that it would be more efficient to have a reception facility to choose the refugees that were most desirable in the first asylum countries, train them for assimilation in resettlement facilities, and then resettle them in the third countries. In this way, resettlement countries did not have to admit any refugees who were ineligible to resettle.
Instead, all the refugees remained outside the country until they were legally admitted to resettle.

The Carter Administration needed the RPC to control refugees in Southeast Asia in order to secure the U.S. border and to strategically select certain groups of people who are deemed more valuable than others. When American Vice President Mondale met with Prime Minister of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew on September 29, 1978, he proposed that Singapore “work cooperatively with ASEAN as a group (plus Australia) to accelerate efforts to resolve the problem.” Mondale also mentioned to Lee Kuan Yew that the possibility of “organizing a pool of resettlement guarantees to meet the needs of first asylum countries”, because the U.S. “hopes it will facilitate the opening of a refugee reception facility in Singapore.”\(^{489}\) His suggestion revealed that the U.S. wanted to open a reception center to facilitate international resettlement somewhere in Southeast Asia. The U.S. attempted to systematize its international resettlement plan between first asylum countries, reception facility countries with “a pool of grantees,” and the resettlement countries. The pool of refugees was not only for existing resettlement countries but also for future resettlement countries to select from.

The U.S. was able to hold on to the idea of “a pool of refugees” to keep control of the resettlement because the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed to cooperate with the UNHCR to fund such a facility.\(^{490}\) However, because some ASEAN countries thought that they had accepted enough tasks in the refugee resettlement, they “urged the international community to recognize the heavy burden borne by ASEAN

\(^{489}\) Background and Talking Points for Vice President Mondale’s Meeting with Lee Kuan Yew, [September 1978?]. NLC-133-67-11-1-7.

countries which have been forced by circumstances to become countries of transit.” As the number of boat cases and the influx of Cambodian refugees into Thailand increased, Malaysia declared that “in response to intensified domestic political pressure Malaysian Prime Minister Hussein and Minister of Home Affairs Ghazali have publicly stated that Malaysia can accept no more refugees and will tolerate no criticism of its ‘change in policy.’” Although Malaysia showed intolerance for the influx of refugees, they agreed to the founding of processing centers in ASEAN countries in February 1979.

When ASEAN countries accepted the idea of the RPC, they also tried to make the refugee problem an issue of the “civilized world”:

> The ASEAN member-countries however are aware that the Indo-China refugee problem is a humanitarian problem which because of its magnitude and implications is no longer a problem of the Southeast Asia region alone but has become truly a matter of concern for the whole civilized world. It is for this reason and in response to the last Geneva Conference on refugees that the ASEAN member countries are ready to offer a positive and concrete contribution towards the alleviation of the burden and the eventual solution of the refugee problem. They are studying the possibility of providing a place or places in the ASEAN region to be utilized as a site for a UNHCR refugee processing centre. This offer, however, can only be realized if the necessary support can be obtained from the UNHCR, Vietnam and other countries, especially those with developed economies, who have often expressed their concern for human suffering and the necessity of upholding humanitarian principles.

The purpose of this announcement was to claim that the problem “has become truly a matter of concern for the whole civilized world” and to make sure that the support from the UNHCR and other countries provided the place(s) for a processing center. Although

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491 Ibid.
492 Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, January 30, 1979, NLC-1-9-4-12-4, Jimmy Carter Library.
493 According to the Statement on behalf of ASEAN by Chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee in Bangkok on 21 February 1979, ASEAN consented with the concept of a humanitarian mission regarding the Indochinese refugee issue. http://www.asean.org/1596.htm.
494 Ibid.
the quote showed the permission of ASEAN countries “to be utilized as a site for a UNHCR refugee processing centre,” they emphasized a precondition of necessary support from the developed nations. Thus, the Meeting on the Establishment of a Processing Center for Indochina Refugees was held on May 15-16, 197, to negotiate the resettlement program among ASEAN countries, donor countries, and the UNHCR.

While there was the basic consensus on building processing centers in Southeast Asia, the refugee situation was exacerbated in June 1979. ASEAN countries claimed that the “heavy burden of providing temporary shelter to the illegal immigrants/displaced persons (refugees) have reached the limit of their endurance and have decided they would not accept any new arrivals.” 495 Moreover, they expressed the hope that processing centers could also be established outside the ASEAN countries. 496 ASEAN countries did not fully agree with the idea of creating processing centers only in Southeast Asia. They were anticipating the cooperation of other countries as a way to improve their situation of first asylum, because they had “reached the limit of their endurance.” 497 ASEAN countries complained about carrying the “heavy burden of providing temporary shelter” to the refugees. 498 This was because accepting the arrivals in those countries provoked economic and political issues. Furthermore, they did not recognize the political reasons to save the refugees, as they saw the refugees as “illegal immigrants/displaced persons.” This differed from the U.S. understanding of the Indochinese refugees.

496 Ibid.
497 Ibid.
498 Ibid.
Nonetheless, the U.S. wanted to locate RPCs only in Southeast Asia, because the U.S. did not want to create refugee camps in the U.S. mainland or U.S. territory. Even though the Carter Administration increased the number of refugee admissions—in 1979 as they announced a 14,000 intake of Indochinese refugees per month at the Government Seven Economic Summit in Tokyo—on June 28 and 29, 1979, they also announced that they did not want to open their gates to all the refugees. Before the Geneva conference on the Indochinese refugee issue (July 20-21, 1979), the Carter Administration considered making new contributions to the refugee resettlement.

One of the proposed initiatives was to increase the intake of refugees. It originally suggested an approval of “the accelerated admission of 20,000 Indochinese refugees to be processed through the use of a United States military installation and the funding necessary to support this initiative.” However, President Carter opposed this and commented: “I prefer to avoid this. 14,000 per month can be accommodated, I believe,

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499 There was an opposition to the conference. The UN delayed the announcement of the conference on refugees because of pressure from China. Memorandum for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski, June 30, 1979, NLC-11-3-16-8, Jimmy Carter Library. The U.S. government consulted with other countries before the conference as well to obtain a good result. For example, a memo revealed that “FCO Assistant Undersecretary Murray informed Ambassador Brewster on Wednesday that he thought the British government would have little problem with the text of our proposed summit statement on refugees.” Memorandum, June 29, 1979, NLC-4-23-6-10-5, Jimmy Carter Library.

500 There were five proposals. First, they announced an add to “the State Department FY-1080 Budget Amendment to increase its planned contribution to the UNHCR for care and maintenance for Indochinese refugees for FY-1980 to $105 million.” In addition, $30 million was added to the Amendment as a U.S. contribution to the UNHCR for the construction of Refugee Processing Centers (except for $8.5 million). Furthermore, the President approved the use of Military Sea Lift Command charters to move refugees to new refugee centers; $14 million would be added to the State Department FY-1980 budget to fund this activity. The administration also declared that they would have the Secretary of Defense reinforce existing orders to provide more assistance to refugees, with the addition of a half squadron of reconnaissance aircraft dedicated to search for refugee vessels. The fifth initiative was authorizing “the Vice President to propose the establishment of an International Fund for Refugee Resettlement and, if justified by international response, indicate that the Administration will request $20 million in a January supplemental budget request and for the two years following.” Memorandum for the President from Cyrus Vance, July 19, 1979, NLC-126-17-34-1-5, Jimmy Carter Library.

501 Ibid.
without a ‘refugee camp’ in our country which would have limited practical value.”

President Carter did not agree with the admissions of 20,000 refugees per month because he believed that 20,000 would create a “refugee camp” in the U.S. Carter’s comment reveals the fear of a massive influx of refugees and the desire of maintaining strict control of the U.S border. According to him, the number of refugees into the U.S. had to be tightly controlled to not exceed the limit. This shows how biopower operates: the level of the population needed to be a specific number, in this case 14,000. This set maximum also exposes the effort to manage and control the influx of refugees so as not to disturb the society where they are resettled. The fact that Carter did not want to have a refugee camp in his country but wanted it in Southeast Asia also reveals his desire to distinguish the U.S. as a country of resettlement, not a country of first asylum. Carter’s desire that the refugee transition be situated in Southeast Asia also exposes a rejection of a responsibility for the refugees who were impacted by U.S. military involvement in the region. Situating refugee camps in Southeast Asia meant not only dividing the line between first asylum countries and resettlement countries but also rewriting not only the history of the U.S. in Southeast Asia but also temporal and spatial boundaries. Carter’s decision divulges the way in which the U.S. escaped dealing with the refugees as the primary responsible party in the region.

Consequently, the Carter administration maintained a self-righteousness and benevolent image at the Geneva Conference on Indochinese Refugees on July 21, 1979. Vice President Walter F. Mondale delivered a speech: “To alleviate the tragedy in Southeast Asia, we all have a part to play. The United States is committed doing its share.

502 Ibid.
just as we have done for generations. ‘Mother of exiles’ it says on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty as the port of New York…. We are preparing to welcome another 168,000 refugees in the coming year.” Mondale proposed the same admission of 14,000 Indochinese refugees per month for the next year, which did not differ from the earlier proposal. Although the U.S. repeated the same decision regarding the intake of refugees, Mondale stressed a traditional understanding of America as a nation of exiles. The administration’s effort to justify its number of refugee intakes must be examined alongside its efforts to also pathologize Southeast Asia as space of tragedy, secure the U.S. border against refugees, and encourage other countries to join them. In this way, the U.S. did not amplify the scale of the resettlement of refugees in their own country, but tried to lessen their original load of the refugee resettlement and secure its border against the refugees.

The Carter administration was satisfied with the result of the U.N. conference. In particular, the Department of State was satisfied about the proposal by the Philippines because “it would provide an island for a Refugee Processing Center to hold up to 500,000.” The DOS also claimed that they “want to use the General Assembly to maintain the international momentum for solving the refugee problem and to encourage various UN agencies to contribute to this process.” This American deployment of the

504 “Indonesia has not yet agreed to a large Refugee Processing Center.” Briefing Paper by the Department of State on the UN Conference on Indochinese Refugees, July 25, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.
505 “We will want to use the General Assembly to maintain the international momentum for solving the refugee problem and to encourage various UN agencies to contribute to this process.” Ibid.
UN and the UNHCR shows that the U.S. initiated a system of resettlement that became first an official problem of the international community and then a UN project.

Additionally, this Americanized UN project formed a linear route to the resettlement destinations, from their areas of origin, to first asylum countries, to processing centers and finally to resettlement. The route was the embodiment of the idea of U.S. refugee control and assimilation, since it exemplifies the US-INS system that, according to Michel Lagurre, relies on five mechanisms of control: “departure or embarkation control; disembarkation or border control; maritime control; internal control; and, as the ultimate mechanism of surveillance, carceral control.”506 These processes were based on binary ideas of exclusion and admission. The Carter administration needed the RPC to strengthen those “control procedures” by bringing possible refugee subjects from first asylum countries to the RPC.

**Extraterritorial Refugee Processing**

Eventually one of the RPCs was constructed in Bataan Island, Philippines and opened in 1980. I situate the RPCs in the larger development of an extraterritorial processing system in U.S. history. For instance, the use of Guantánamo can be a good example. Amy Kaplan claims that the transformation of Guantánamo is a reflection of U.S. power and U.S. imperialism.507 She further argues its extraterritoriality as follows: “Its legal—or lawless—status has a logic grounded in imperialism, whereby coercive

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507 “Guantánamo has played a strategic role in the changing exercise of U.S. power in the region, as a coaling station, a naval base, a cold war outpost, and a detention center for unwanted refugees.” Amy Kaplan, Where is Guantánamo? *American Quarterly*, vol. 57, no. 3, 832.
state power has been routinely mobilized beyond the sovereignty of national territory and outside the rule of law.”

I place the establishment of the RPC system in American imperialism as she suggests. The Carter administration wanted the RPC to be a place where refugees could be optimized as assets of the international community. Although Judith Butler claims that the exceptional state of detainees in Guantánamo is an indefinite suspension, this political structure was not a current invention.

In addition, the concept of the RPC should be situated as part of a broader U.S. plan to reform the American border, because it occurred in the same context as the U.S.-Mexico border issue. I assert that outsourcing the refugee processing to Southeast Asia was a part of the U.S. rebranding of itself and also its restructuring of the global racial order. Deep attention toward matters related to immigration across the U.S.–Mexico border concomitantly emerged during the 1970s. In fact, the House of Representative Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, a subcommittee of the Committee on International Relations, argued the policy towards the Indochinese refugees in contrast to “illegal” immigration. For instance, Albert Shanker—President of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, and a member of the Citizen’s Commission on Indochinese Refugees—mentioned in 1978: “I would say, further, that when you take a look at the number 25,000 for a year, or if you add the Cambodians to that, and increase

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508 Ibid.
509 By using the concept of the state of exception, Butler explains that detention is an act of war in which the state claims emergency and then defers the law. It seems like Butler thinks this indefinite detainment is the new form of power that countries, like the U.S., acquire in deciding what is dangerous for the society and what to do to prevent that danger. Her work sheds light on the process of producing and reproducing subjugated subjectivity through the law. However, it also limits the concept of racial subjugation to the current phenomenon. Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London; New York: Verso, 2004).
the number and then take a look at what the total immigration to the United States is now from all resources, legal and illegal, what we are dealing with here is an opportunity to solve a major international problem, and the price is really a very tiny percentage of what the total inflow is into the United States for other countries.”511 He emphasized the merit of the Indochinese refugee admission as a chance to solve an “international problem,” claiming how small the price was. Comparing the number of refugee admissions with total immigration, Shanker stressed its political and economical value and its immense influence. This valuing of refugees, which enabled the U.S. government to facilitate their admission, reflected the willingness of the government to admit more preferable subjects into the nation. It was also a manifestation of an unwillingness to accept “illegal” immigrants and aliens.

Indeed, committee members shared not only Shanker’s view on the value of the refugee admission but also on the undesirability of an influx of “illegal aliens.” For example, Lester L. Wolff, Chairman of the Subcommittee on International Relations, claimed: “With regard to the point of the flow of legal and illegal aliens to our shore, if we could close the border between the United States and Mexico we might make provision for these people very easily. They would be accommodated upon a legal basis rather than flow of illegal aliens coming to this country who do not face the same type of difficulties.”512 Of course, as Mae Ngai elucidates, undesirability of “aliens” itself created the category of “illegal”; there is a long history of racial hatred against a non-white influx

512 Ibid., 95.
Yet, I want to stress that by opening the door to the refugees, the U.S. wanted to close the border to the “illegal aliens.” The act of saving the refugee posited higher morality than admitting laborers. In this way, in the name of the refugee “rescue,” the U.S. government enabled itself to reject “illegal aliens” in order to protect the country. I claim that the U.S. government represented the refugee as an antithesis of the “illegal alien” to justify the aversion against the “illegal alien.” Criminalization of an economically motivated alien emerged in the context of admission of the refugees. This process also signified a development of a categorical hierarchy between refugees and illegal immigrants, by racializing the category of “refugees” as preferable compared to that of “illegal aliens.”

The U.S. began using the space outside the U.S. not just to hold but to train refugees as “resettlement guarantees.” This process allows me to recognize it as a politicization of refugees, differentiating them from immigrants. The systemization had two significant meanings for the formulation of the refugee concept globally (not just in the U.S. but in other countries as well) in this period. One was to provide righteousness for the people who were defined as refugees to resettle in the third countries. The other was to deprive the possibility of asylum for people who were not driven from political and/or religious motivations. In this way, the U.S. government supported people who escaped from Communism, maintained its anti-Communist understanding of the idea of

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514 “We have a responsibility, as a nation which believes in humanitarian response to the tragedies of all peoples, to aid the refugees from Indochina. But we share that responsibility, together with other nations. We applaud the Governments of Australia and France for their positive and generous response in this situation and others to join them in adopting a positive and constructive policy toward the Indochinese refugees.” House Committee on International Relations, *Refugee Crisis in Indochina, 1978, 95th Cong., 2nd sess., 1978*, H461-22, 80.
‘refugee,’ and excluded economically-motivated people from the definition of ‘refugee.’ I claim that this reveals the U.S. racial discourse on the Indochinese refugees, which constituted a global racial order that figured not only Southeast Asia as a U.S. jurisdiction but also refugees as racially and culturally subordinate subjects to resettlement countries and first asylum countries. Even though U.S. expansions were promoted chiefly by diplomatic negotiations, extraterritoriality offers unapproachable privileges to those who occupy the area. For example, American troops in countries such as Korea, Japan and Iraq are protected legally by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that usually allows those associated with the U.S. military to live beyond the reach of local law.515

Unlike SOFA cases, the RPC was less visible as a U.S. project, because it was seen as a multinational enterprise not just to construct a center but also to manage it in Southeast Asia. Construction of the RPC was a result of international arrangements by the U.S. For example, the endowment from countries was the following: U.S. construction 9 million, U.S. operation 6 million, Japan 5 million, Federal Republic of Germany about 3.3 million, Republic of Korea 1 million, Switzerland 0.6 million, and Netherlands Committee 0.4 million.516 There was discordance among various nations because many countries “were reluctant to contribute because they did not anticipate using the Center.”517 The U.S. government, on the contrary, believed the viability of the center to reduce populations in first asylum countries because it assumed the role of the

515 There are a lot of great works done on SOFA from a bilateral standpoint. For instance, Jinwung Kim, “Ambivalent Allies: Recent South Korean Perceptions of the United States Forces Korea (USFK)” Asian Affairs, vol.30, no.4 (Winter, 2004), 268-285.
517 Ibid., 10.
center was “asylum relief.” U.S. refugee officials were “attaching more significance to the Center for resettlement training” since they anticipated “refugees would receive some pre-resettlement orientation, language instruction, and job training because refugees were expected to remain for several years at the Center.” These intentions for the center reveal that the aim of the RPC was to hold people for a longer time period to diminish not only the amount of refugees in the first asylum countries but also the orientation tasks of the resettlement countries. As a result of the construction of the RPC, U.S. officials “would like greater international use to be made of the Center because this could suggest that third-country resettlement could increase.”

“Biopolitical Labor”

The process of securing and restructuring the U.S. border was also that of constructing the U.S. as a “refuge.” I want to point out here that this was possible through biopolitical optimization of the refugee population—the control of a population of refugees to utilize it for a state—since the U.S. required legitimate refugees who were victims of Communism to be a refuge. Since border control and the control of populations are inseparable, I want to examine the latter by exposing the American role in shaping the global structures of Indochinese refugee resettlement. Particularly, the American idea of the RPC was to turn refugees into assets of society by mobilizing them against Communism. This kind of idea was common during the Cold War. For instance,

518 Ibid.
519 Ibid., 11.
520 Ibid., 14
According to James Jay Carafano, Dwight Eisenhower had a plan to mobilize a stateless population of Europe to fight against Communism.\footnote{Carafeno writes that Europe's security problem is never going to be solved satisfactorily until there exists a U.S. of Europe. With that in mind, Eisenhower detected “a great deal of sense in the whole idea” of raising a legion composed of displaced foreign nationals. Enlisting Europe's unwanted and refugee national groups to fight together for a common cause would, he believed, serve as a powerful demonstration of the potential for Europeans to provide for their own collective security. James Jay Carafano, “Mobilizing Europe's Stateless: America's Plan for a Cold War Army,” \textit{Journal of Cold War Studies} 1.2 (1999) 61-85.}

However, in the case of Indochinese refugees, the U.S. focused more on the Americanization of refugees by teaching them English and American culture. One might claim that this signified a depoliticization of the refugees, but on the contrary, it marked the politicization of refugees as members of the free world by making them assimilable subjects. Screening the refugees into the RPC and educating them in the RPC constituted a process of purging undesirable behaviors and thoughts. In this way, I assert that the idea that the RPC indicates a somewhat new U.S. technology of refugee management that was based on the biopolitical optimization of the refugee population. The reason why I claim that the RPC was a new technology in the early 1980s is because it was not just a U.S. project but a “global” project. The idea of a “pool of resettlement guarantees” was derived from the U.S. government. The RPCs were located in Southeast Asia and managed by the UNHCR and the U.S. In the Philippines’ case, the government of the Philippines acted as a sub-leader of the refugees and executed the U.S. civilizing mission of the refugees.

Traditionally speaking, as the U.S. had developed technologies of population control on a tremendous scale through the creation and maintenance of slavery, reservation camps, and Japanese American internment camps. I believe the refugee camp
and the resettlement camp for Indochinese refugees can be analyzed as an American
technology of population control.\textsuperscript{522} I am not trying to claim that all population control
techniques are the same, but rather I am asserting that they exemplify the ways in which
biopolitics work. As Ann Stoler illustrates in her book, colonial biopower consists of not
merely imposing an imperial system of control but rather the making of its system.\textsuperscript{523}
Population control, which is based on the concept of race, sustains the system of empire
by recreating a very ambiguous imperial formation. Racial ‘Others’ in the empire are not
outside of its boundaries but are in fact forming the boundaries. Furthermore, historian
Takashi Fujitani’s argument on Japanese internment camps helps me to further my
analysis because he examines the internment camp as a productive space where the U.S.
government turned Japanese Americans into civilian and military labor.\textsuperscript{524} He claims that
the aim of the internment camp was not to exterminate but to prolong the lives of people
to utilize the population for the nation. This “biopolitical labor,” which facilitated the
capitalization of South Vietnamese refugees as labor, took place in 1975 through the
refugee resettlement. The refugees who were not family members of U.S. citizens or who
were not financially qualified could not officially enter the U.S. without sponsorship. To
resettle in the U.S., they had to register with a resettlement agency to get sponsorship.\textsuperscript{525}
Sponsorship required the fiscal and moral responsibility of a U.S. resident, citizen, or

\textsuperscript{522} In \textit{Transition to Nowhere}, authors compare the internment to Vietnamese refugee camps. William Liu et al., \textit{Transition to Nowhere}.
\textsuperscript{524} Takashi Fujitani, "Right to Kill, Right to Make Live: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during WWII," \textit{Representations} 99 (2007).
\textsuperscript{525} Gail Paradise Kelly, \textit{From Vietnam to America}, 81.
group of citizens to insure that refugees “do not become public charge[s].” A sponsor had to provide food, clothes, and shelter for the refugees until they became self-sufficient. All costs of living for refugees after the camps were thrown on individuals and organizations. Thus, sponsorship often turned into employment possibilities.

Sociologist Gail Paradise Kelly explains that the lack of government financing of the refugees increased the possibility of exploitation at the hands of their sponsors, and led to sponsorship being tied to contract labor. The Interagency Task Force that was responsible for the refugee resettlement did not have any procedures for safeguarding refugees against exploitation in the sponsorship program, but it also promoted job-related resettlement venues for the refugees, which often paid less than minimum wage. There was an obvious capitalization of the refugees as cheap, exploitable labor. In this way, the refugee camps became a cheap labor pool for U.S. society. U.S. authorities wanted to resettle the refugees quickly and economically, as they were more concerned about the cost of camps than how the refugees resettled. Thus, the U.S. government developed the idea of capitalizing on the refugees by making them cheap labor.

What was different in the late 1970s is that the Carter Administration expanded the group of resettlement countries by funding them with money from the U.S. and other countries. In a way, the U.S. mobilized various countries to advance the refugee resettlement by implementing the U.S. necropolitical labor system in the international

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526 Council of Volunteer Agencies Camp Pendleton “Sponsorship Information,” Vietnamese Immigration Collection, SUNY/Buffalo Archive.
527 Gail Paradise Kelly, From Vietnam to America, 133.
528 Ibid., 144-5. Tony Newman from Hebrew Immigrant Aid Service complained about sponsors “shopping” around the camp or looking for “domestics.” Memorandum on Tony Newman, Box.9, Vietnamese Immigration Collection, SUNY/Buffalo.
529 Newman also critiques the “ordering” of sponsorship, with community sponsors who merely “line them up and ship them out.” Ibid.
530 Gail Paradise Kelly, From Vietnam to America, 69.
community. For instance, the Coordinator for Refugee Affairs, Dick Clark, suggested
facilitating the resettlement of the refugees by utilizing them as labor. He maintained: “In
addition to increasing resettlement opportunities in Western Europe and other traditional
resettlement countries...consider creating an international fund to promote resettlement
of refugees in developing countries, and to underwrite economic development projects
based on refugee labor.” Clark wanted to allocate Indochinese refugees to developing
countries for resettlement in the name of developing those countries. His quote divulges
the ways in which the refugees were treated as resources for the U.S. to be distributed
anywhere countries wanted them to be located. Although the countries did not literally
buy them in exchange for money, they were offered money to resettle them in their
countries. Of course the purpose of the resettlement was to decrease the numbers of
refugees in the first asylum countries; however, the U.S. disseminated the refugees
wherever possible to speed up the resettlement. I assert that the arrangement Clark
proposed was to make certain countries a “surrogate” refuge. Just like the surrogate
mother cannot be a legitimate lawful mother, a surrogate refuge cannot be a lawful
refugee, even though the countries provided temporary asylum for the Indochinese
refugees.

As Clark’s plan was actually implemented, the Carter administration was able to
achieve collaboration from a range of countries for additional resettlement (Argentina,
300; France, 5,000; Costa Rica, 250, Ireland, 100; Italy, 1000; Israel, 200; Netherlands,
100). It was significant that the refugee resettlement was a central topic at the

531 Memorandum to the Vice President from Dick Clark, June 18, 1979, NLC-10R-21-4-1-3, Jimmy Carter
Library.
532 Ibid.
Government Seven Economic Summit in Tokyo in 1979, because the Indochinese refugee problem was the issue of a global economy of wealthy nations. Accordingly, capitalization of the refugee as labor took the form of a global allocation of refugees, because it was based on the idea of cost efficacy rather than the refugees’ needs. This embodies the system of U.S. humanitarian imperialism, because the U.S. created the system of international resettlement of the Indochinese refugees by connecting first asylum countries, the donor countries and resettlement countries. In a way, the U.S. assembled multinational arrangements to facilitate the refugee resettlement. In the name of humanitarianism, the U.S. distributed refugees as labor to developing countries.

The role of the RPC exposes the development of U.S. biopolitics on refugees in the international sphere because the government of the Philippines further pursued the purpose of the RPC. Their goal for the Center was “to transform refugees from displaced individuals into people well prepared for productive and meaningful lives in the countries of final destination.” In this way, the Center was not an extermination camp but the camp where refugees become useful for the society in which they resettle. This echoes the ways in which Aihwa Ong conceptualizes the refugee camp as the space where governmentality works as a technology of citizen subject making. Indochinese refugees did not automatically become citizen subjects because they had to become provisional immigrant subjects, and in the case of the RPC, “resettlement guarantees.”

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533 The forum of the Government of Six (France, Italy, the UK, Germany, the US and Japan) was founded by France in 1975, then Canada joined and it became the Government of Seven in 1976.
535 Her view can be extended to examine the role of RPC as well. Aihwa Ong, *Buddha is Hiding.*
This idea of the Center as a productive space became a consensus among people who participated in the resettling of refugees. For instance, the report wrote: “The UNHCR, and the Philippines and U.S. government officials are adamant that the RPC should not be used solely as a staging area. Officials also believe that any effort by third countries to use the RPC requires concomitant obligation for training.” The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) started an English as a Second Language (ESL) program at the Center in March 1980. In November 1980, the UNHCR contracted with the ICMC for ESL and a Cultural Orientation (CO) program through July 1981. This program was designed “to facilitate the social and economic integration of the refugees in the United States.” The officials considered that “refugees were either ill-prepared for the job market or were becoming dependent upon others and the welfare system.” This means that those officials measured “productivity” of refugees by their English speaking ability and economic independence. The program aimed to produce very particular types of subjects eligible for citizenship. Refugees who were now categorized as “resettlement guarantees” were expected to attain their cultural assimilation (language and cultural understanding) to reach a financial status above the poverty line. In this way, the RPC was a space of educating refugees in order to turn them into assets of society.

It is indispensable to identify this procedure as a “cleansing” refugee bodies and cultures before they would be resettled. The U.S. was controlling and managing procedures to immunize their bodies not just for literal health concerns, but also for

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537 Ibid., 11
538 Ibid., 12.
language and culture concerns, ensuring that the refugees would be self-sufficient in society. Hence, the route that refugees had to go through was not just “transit” but also “quarantine” before resettlement. Neel Ahuja traces the formation of a biosecurity apparatus, arguing that the U.S. has a long history of a culture of quarantine.\(^{539}\) Thus, I contextualize the RPC in this U.S. imperial formation, while simultaneously highlighting the novelty of its development, given the analysis that the Indochinese resettlement was a biopolitical and multinational project that was cast as humanitarian.

I assert that being a refugee indicates going through not only assimilation but also sanitizing processes of his/her body and culture.\(^{540}\) Given that a refugee status means political, cultural, social, and racial subjectification to resettlement countries, the establishment of the RPC entails that the Indochinese refugees were internationally recognized as those who needed to be civilized. This was of course based on the cost effective idea that it was cheaper to train the refugees in Southeast Asia than in the U.S. or other industrialized nations. However, it was not only the matter of money but also an issue of U.S. economic and cultural “subimperialism” in Asia and the Pacific. Jin-Kyung Lee suggests the concept of “subempire” and “subimperialism” to explain how the U.S. empire actually functions in Asia.\(^{541}\) The concept of subimperialism(s) in Asia enables us to see the power dynamics of U.S. imperialism. Subimperialism activates U.S. imperial formations by sustaining vertical power formations. Lee’s analysis of the South Korean


\(^{540}\) As Monica Chiu argues, negotiation between war-ravaged refugees (Hmong and other Southeast Asian refugees) and refugee medicine has to be analyzed to expose the medical, racist and colonial power construction. Monica Chiu, “Medical, Racist, and Colonial Construction of Power” in Asian American Studies Now, 370-392.

army playing a humanitarian role in South Vietnam echoes that of the RPC in the Philippines, because the RPC enabled the Philippines to play the role of civilizer in the international community. This analysis also shed a light on the political, cultural, social, racial and national hierarchy between former French Indochina (Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam), the Philippines, and the U.S. The idea of the RPC is based on the idea of a civilizing mission (assimilation and sanitization). However, the task was not simply operated by industrial nations but substitute regional nations as well. The purpose of processing refugees was to “civilize” cultures, languages, and bodies as “objects of rescue.” Paradoxically, the “cleansing” process was in fact “pathologizing” their home countries because other countries saw them as refugees that needed to be “saved” by other countries.

3. Accusing Vietnam as the Culprit of the Situation

As I explained above, the U.S. did not agree with ASEAN countries on the location of the RPCs outside Southeast Asia. The Carter Administration ignored those demands and endorsed the initiative to convene an international conference on the problem by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. At this time, the goals of the administration were to “address the practical issues of greater resettlement opportunities[:] vastly increased financial support for the care and maintenance of the burgeoning camp population, creation of more RPC in Southeast Asia to relieve the burdens of the countries of first asylum, and reaffirmation of the principle of first
asylum.” In this way, the U.S. affirmed the stability and capability of the resettlement system for both first asylum countries and resettlement countries.

The refugee resettlement was important to the U.S. because of its political significance, financial reasons (this includes funding support from other countries), and the need to resettle refugees globally. I identify this attempt as one example of U.S. humanitarian imperialism because framing the resettlement as a moral issue allowed the U.S. to gain control over other countries and to accuse Vietnam of being immoral. The Carter Administration utilized international conferences on the refugee problem as opportunities to not only play the blame game but to also obtain allies for the resettlement.

One major goal for the U.S. was to hold the international conference on refugees to blame Vietnam for the situation. For instance, on June 20, 1979, a memo to the U.S. president from Dick Clark stated that “some of the ASEAN countries (especially Indonesia and Malaysia) may still be reluctant to condemn Vietnam formally.” He carried on as follows: “A possible pressure point would be redirection of Western bilateral and multilateral aid from Hanoi to the refugee program, also helping finance the latter. (The Japanese would be the key to such an effort, but they have recently told us they will not cut off bilateral assistance on the basis of the refugee problem. Also Swedes told us yesterday that they are now ready to make a demarche to Hanoi, and consider additional steps.)” Clark was hoping to cut off any aid to Hanoi and to divert it to refugee

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542 Memorandum to the Vice President from Dick Clark, June 18, 1979, NCL-10R-21-4-1-3, Jimmy Carter Library.
543 Memorandum to the President from Dick Clark, June 20, 1979, NLC-126-17-29-2-0, Jimmy Carter Library.
resettlement by forcing other countries to *denounce* Vietnam. Accusing Vietnam was, in this sense, an impediment of economical aid to Vietnam.

Moreover, Clark believed that the U.S. should get the support of the ASEAN to gain financial support from certain countries that supplied aid to Vietnam. He said, “We will seek ASEAN support to press those countries now providing bilateral aid to Vietnam (about $130 million, principally from Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Japan) to shift their aid to support Indochina refugees. We will also attempt to divert the approximately $150 million in multilateral aid to Vietnam (e.g., IBRD, ADB) to refugee relief.”\(^{544}\) What Clark intentioned was that all aid to Vietnam must be allocated to ASEAN countries to assist refugees, not a country such as Vietnam. This meant two things: one, to block aid to Vietnam by criminalizing Vietnam as an abuser of the refugees; and two, to compel the countries who aid Vietnam to divert aid to the refugees.

By illustrating refugees as victims and Vietnam as the abuser, Clark demonized other countries’ aid to Vietnam and coerced them to aid the refugee resettlement instead. I assert that this was the way the U.S. controlled other countries by its own moral discourse. It was a matter not only of the distribution of aid but also of fulfilling their political agenda. Accordingly, humanitarian aid was embedded in politics because the aid should have been provided to the area that the U.S. recognized as most needing. Appropriating aid for the refugees entailed the demarcation of Vietnam as a malevolent space in order to justify not only the resettlement plan but also the foreign policy against Vietnam. Humanitarian assistance reflected U.S. foreign policy.

\(^{544}\) Ibid.
Needless to say, this humanitarian imperialism was present in the discussions on the normalization of U.S.-Vietnam relations. In May 1979, the Carter administration was considering resuming discussions with the Vietnamese government, but before they began, they wanted to condemn Vietnamese policies regarding Cambodia, refugee flows, and the Soviet Military presence. The administration wanted to be “…clear that progress toward normalization would be contingent upon changes in these Vietnamese policies.” It was indispensaible for the U.S. to accuse policies of Vietnam as the source of the trouble. Objectifying Vietnam as sinful through the refugee resettlement, the administration discredited Vietnam as a country that the U.S. could work with.

Coordinator for Refugee Affairs Dick Clark, claimed that the Indochinese problem was “a staggering humanitarian problem,” and thus “we cannot individually or collectively ignore” it. Calling the refugee problem a humanitarian issue was a political action because it indicated the brutality of Vietnam. Clark further mentioned that “one part of our effort should be heavy pressure upon Vietnam to stop treating its citizens so inhumanly that many of them actually pay for the privilege of fleeing, knowing that they

545 A memo for Brzezinski on March, 1979. “Our bilateral relations with Vietnam have not progressed substantially since last fall but we do hope to be able to move ahead with normalization in the context of the broad resolution of outstanding issues in the area, particularly the refugee situation and the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchia.” Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski from James Cochrane, March 21, 1979, “Japan, 1-4/79,” National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material Country File, Box 41, Jimmy Carter Library. This was not only a U.S.-Vietnam issue; it also involved Japan, as Secretary Vance told Ambassador Mansfield: “Before we begin discussions with the Vietnamese, we would like to know whether Japan would be willing to discontinue aid to Vietnam if Vietnam is unwilling to reduce and regularize refugee flows and reduce the Soviet use of Vietnamese military facilities.” Telegram to Ambassador Mansfield Embassy Tokyo from Secretary of State Vance, [May?, 1979], “Japan, 1-4/79,” National Security Affairs: Brzezinski Material Country File, Box 41, Jimmy Carter Library.
547 Ibid.
548 Memorandum to the President from Dick Clark, June 20, 1979, NLC-126-17-29-2-0, Jimmy Carter Library.
may well die or remain for years in refugee camps." The “inhumanity” of Vietnam was conceptualized to confirm the righteousness of the U.S. against Vietnam for the refugee problem. In brief, Clark viewed Vietnam as the cause of the refugee flow, and thus, an evil. Denouncing Vietnam was meant not only to stop the refugee flow but also to represent Vietnam as a “sinner” and to claim that the U.S. was the true “savior” of the situation. This moral mission was tied to Christianity since the government mobilized religious organizations to get involved. Through this understanding of the refugee situation as a humanitarian crisis, the refugee resettlement became an instrument for the U.S. to demarcate the Free World from the Communist World, by judging countries as humanitarian or inhumanitarian according to their contribution to the resettlement.

This delineation of two worlds was at the core of U.S. foreign policy as the Cold War recommenced in 1979. Michael Hunt reminds us of the way the Carter Administration officially accused Vietnam as the culprit of the situation, stating that President Carter “transformed human rights into an anticommunist rallying cry.” The administration believed that the Soviet Union had to be punished. For example, Dick Clark wrote: “International pressure would be greatest effect if it stresses that the Soviets must share responsibility and opprobrium with Vietnam.” The critique of Vietnam had to be connected to the denouncement of the Soviet Union as well because he deemed that

549 Ibid.
550 Of course, there are other religious (e.g. Jewish) and non-religious organizations involved in the refugee resettlement. However, the Ford and Carter administrations mobilized many church organizations and President Carter himself was an evangelical Christian. The logic of immorality of Vietnam can be seen as harboring these religious connotations.
552 Ibid., 185-186.
553 Memorandum to the Vice President from Dick Clark, June 18, 1979, NLC-10R-21-4-1-3, Jimmy Carter Library.
the Soviets were accountable for the inhumanity of Vietnam. This Vietnam-Soviet connection implied a U.S. geopolitical mapping of Communism during the Cold War. A country’s closeness (politically and financially) to Vietnam/the Soviet Union was seen by the U.S. as an indication of evilness. Humanitarianism was based on the concept of morality, which was portrayed in the geopolitical map charting U.S. friends and enemies. That kind of U.S. world vision already existed during the Vietnam War.

Thus, the Indochinese refugee resettlement reinforced the existing structure of U.S. allies in Asia. I assert that in this way the Carter Administration restructured the post-Vietnam War foreign policy in Asia by controlling other countries’ aids to Vietnam. The aim of the U.S. was not only to denounce Vietnam internationally but to also mobilize the international community for the refugee resettlement. In the name of humanitarianism, the U.S. administration prioritized refugee aid over aid to Vietnam and forced other countries to follow the same course. I claim that obstructing aid to Vietnam and redirecting it to the refugee resettlement were significant parts of the American surrogate refuge project that aimed to “rescue” refugees from Communism and “educate” them in Southeast Asia. The U.S. was not only responsible for the border making of Democracy but also for the nurturing of humanitarianism in Asia.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I show the ways in which Asia (mostly the ASEAN nations) became a “surrogate refuge” in the Indochinese refugee resettlement. These countries did not become nations of refuge in the American sense, but many of them hosted refugees until the 1990s. I use the word “surrogate” to describe how the U.S. employed Asia as
substitute of the U.S. to host the Indochinese refugees. In a way, the process in which an
ASEAN nation became a “surrogate refuge” simultaneously constituted the U.S. as the
true refuge of the world. As I explained above, the process was complex and cannot be
narrated as a simple story of U.S. domination. First asylum countries supported the U.S.
because they wanted to prove their civility by providing care for the refugees. Although
the U.S. admitted the most number of refugees in the world, I do not see this gesture as
“benevolent,” but rather analyze it as constituting a U.S. power (re)formation in Asia,
because the U.S. utilized refugee bodies to appropriate U.S. morality. This is why I
investigated the refugee resettlement as a process of border making.

The complexity of humanitarian imperialism regarding the Indochinese refugee
resettlement derived from its global institutionalized system. The U.S. employed Asia as
a “surrogate refuge” to support the Indochinese refugees temporarily and to moralize the
refugee resettlement as a humanitarian responsibility, while holding leadership over the
overall system of the resettlement. In this way, the U.S. exploited the Indochinese refugee
problem as an opportunity to claim its own righteousness, painting the problem as a
serious security/humanitarian issue in Southeast Asia. Consequently, the Indochinese
refugee resettlement functioned as a U.S. policy in Asia that validated the U.S.’s own
anticommunist policy as a moral one.

As I explained in this chapter, the refugee resettlement was a humanitarian yet
imperialist mission, since the U.S. exploited its power and diplomatic channels to control
and manage the resettlement as a global racial program. By forcing other countries to be
involved, the U.S. applied their idea of “refugee”—one who escapes from the Communist
region. Thus, “refuge” became a place where industrial democracy resides. This process
racialized non-resettlement countries as morally inferior while simultaneously casting resettlement countries as refugees. I highlighted the establishment of refugee processing centers in Southeast Asia as a grand achievement of humanitarian imperialism, since they allowed the U.S. to play the role of leader in Asia. Thus, humanitarian imperialism demarcated the world in two: Communism/evil versus Freedom/liberation. Some Asian countries maintained their status as friends of the Freedom/liberator by participating in the refugee resettlement. The Carter administration resumed the Cold War logic of condemning Communism through humanitarianism to reinstate American morality internationally.

In this way, I assert that the U.S. produced a new form of imperialism which I call ‘humanitarian imperialism.’ It was coupled with the institutionalization of the Indochinese refugee resettlement system, which was attained through cooperation with first asylum countries and donor and resettlement countries. I argued in this chapter that it was not only the resettlement system itself that enabled the U.S. to recuperate its power in Asia, but also the ways in which it secured and restructured the U.S. border and utilized the refugees as biopolitical labor. These processes invigorated U.S. morality and financial power. Furthermore, other countries participated in the resettlement by providing temporary or permanent resettlement, labor, and money for facilitating the international resettlement. Thus, the resettlement was not only an issue between Asia and the U.S., but a global project based on multinational contributions and participation.

As a result, Indochinese refugees became the ones that owed a moral debt to industrial countries and temporary asylum neighboring countries. I assert that when the refugees became a moral burden and resettled in a country, they were turned into debtors
of this morality because they were represented as “objects of rescue.” Both first asylum countries and resettlement countries recognized the refugees as wounded and imperfect subjects who needed to be rescued (in this particular sense, to be resettled in a democratic nation). It was their bodies and cultures that became the “objects of rescue” of the U.S. and its allies. In this way, Indochinese refugees verified American superiority in the world, not only over former Indochina and Communism but also over U.S. allies as well. The U.S. depicted itself as the only nation of immigrants and refugees that absorbed the most number of the refugees in the world by contrasting itself to Japan.

Therefore, the Indochinese refugee resettlement was significant in enabling the U.S. to reclaim morality by discrediting Japan’s economic power and (re)appropriating U.S. power. By pressuring Japan to do more on the refugee resettlement, the U.S. was able to stress the greatness of the U.S. as a nation of immigrants and refugees. To further explain the resettlement as a U.S. global racial project, the next chapter will examine Japan’s involvement in the resettlement. In contrast to the ASEAN countries, Japan was able to become a donor country. To expose the intricacies of U.S. humanitarian imperialism, I will analyze the ways in which Japan embodied it and how the refugee figure emerged in Japan to uphold U.S. racial discourse and trans-Pacific racism.
CHAPTER FOUR: Trans-Pacific Racisms:
Development of Japan’s “Honorary White” Racial Identity

In 1979, President Carter proclaimed America a liberal multicultural nation made up of refugees and immigrants by comparing it to Japan’s “homogeneous society.” The U.S. employed the language of multiculturalism—which claims that the United States is a heterogeneous nation that holds the ability to absorb refugees and immigrants—in order to justify its own program of modernizing other countries. The U.S. needed various countries not only to disperse the share of the refugees but also to establish the universal morality of resettlement. This is why the U.S. requested help from Asian countries, Australia, New Zealand, Nordic nations, South American nations as well as African countries. The resettlement was a global joint operation under U.S. leadership. Carter linked Japan’s capacity to “do more” to accept refugees with that of the United States. This claim sought to maintain American pride and undermine Japan as an emerging economic power in order to win the Cold War. This chapter explains the ways in which these two nations developed their racial identities. As Carter’s claim reveals, American humanitarian efforts regarding the international Indochinese refugee resettlement functioned as a global racial project. This constituted not a simple form of American

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554 For Japanese names, I use family name-given name style except the names of authors in notes.
555 President Carter claimed in 1979 that “We recognize Japan has a very homogeneous society; ours is quite heterogeneous. We are a nation of refugees or immigrants. It is easier for us to accept refugees, perhaps, than Japan. But there is no doubt in my mind Japan can do more, and there is no doubt in my mind the United States can do more.” Jimmy Carter, “Interview With the President,” June 23, 1979, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States 1979 Book 2, (Washington DC: GPO), 1150-51.
556 Malini Johar Schueller defines this as “multicultural imperialism”, which is “both a means of legitimating the state’s global imperial project and as a means of normalizing colonial racial difference.” Even though she is talking about Area Studies, my argument is similar to hers; it is the power structure of using a certain amount of diversity to legitimize one’s own power as superior to rule others. Malini Johar Schueller, “Area Studies and Multicultural Imperialism,” Social Text 90, vol. 25, no. 1(Spring 2007), 50.
dominance but rather an opportunity for Japan to claim itself as an honorary white member in the international community.

I examine the association of these two countries to show the ways in which trans-Pacific racisms, which enable hegemony of a particular configuration of racial difference, are activated through refugee resettlement. Japan’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem was not merely the result of international and national pressures on Japan to support refugees, but the product of U.S.-Japan relations, which encouraged Japan to take the side of the U.S. to facilitate its regional control in Asia and the Pacific. The Indochinese refugee problem gave Japan the opportunity to be a regional leader that was subordinate to the U.S. and an honorary member of the West by contributing its “share”—allowing the resettlement of refugees in Japan and giving the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) administration financial funding for the refugee programs. This was a great opportunity for Japan because the government finally had the chance to show the world that Japan had not only recovered from the war but that it also had become an economically and politically powerful country in the world at that time.

Thus, I ask: Why was the Government of Japan (GOJ) reluctant to engage in the Indochinese refugee problem but eventually cooperated with the U.S.? How did the GOJ manage to admit the refugees? How did the involvement affect the category of race? Although the GOJ did not fully play the humanitarian role, which originally was assigned by other countries, Japan played the role of a major donor country to support U.S. leadership and civilizing missions in Asia. Through their involvement in the refugee problem, the GOJ accepted about 11,319 refugees in total and limited Japan’s role as a
benefactor of the world community by carefully choosing not to receive many refugees but instead financially supporting the international resettlement of the refugees.\textsuperscript{557} This chapter sheds light on how the GOJ not only gained a sense of being a part of the West but also redefined who should be “Japanese.” The government defined the lawful concept of refugee and excluded others who could not be categorized as such.

This chapter is organized into three sections. First, I analyze the GOJ’s reluctance to participate in the Indochinese refugee issue for reasons based on racial ideas embedded in its concept of citizenship in the late 1970s. The Indochinese refugee problem has to be understood not only in the national context of a non-immigrant policy but also in the definition of “Japanese.” Because it took three years for the GOJ to even permit resettlement of the refugees, I examine the GOJ’s reluctance to change the law as being based on racial fears. Pressures from the U.S. government played a significant role in motivating the GOJ to do something more about refugee resettlement. Second, I analyze how the GOJ’s decision to accommodate the refugees ended up limiting the concept of refugee in Japan. I critique how the GOJ did not grant UN defined refugee status to Indochinese refugees but instead created the category of “Indochinese refugee” as temporal racial administrative category. I assert that this led to the othering of foreign-resident subjects as aberrations of society and validated discriminatory actions against such non-normative subjects in society. Finally, I juxtapose changes in GOJ’s policy regarding the Indochinese refugee resettlement within the context of trans-Pacific racisms. The GOJ and Japanese society narrowly defined the Indochinese refugee

\textsuperscript{557} According to the data, there were 11,319 people in total: 3536 were boat people, 4372 were people who resettled from oversea refugee camps, 2669 were people who settled through the Orderly Departure Program, people, and 742 were former foreign students. 8200 were Vietnamese, 1300 were Laotian, and 1300 were Cambodian. http://www.mofa.go.jp/MOFAJ/gaiko/nanmin/main3.html#2.
category to maintain the myth of a single race nation, thus enabling the GOJ to claim
global power.

1. Guarding Its Door against the Refugees

Even though the U.S. tried to internationalize the refugee resettlement right after
the end of the Vietnam War, the GOJ was, at first, reluctant to participate.\(^{558}\) This section
explains why Japan tried to guard its door against the refugees and how the U.S.
responded to it. It starts by analyzing and contextualizing Japan’s racial fear against the
Indochinese refugees and other groups of people. Until April 1978, the GOJ did not
accept any resettlement of refugees in Japan, including those who were foreign students
from South Vietnam who basically could not go back to any other places and the refugees
that had already reached Japan by boats. Because they were small in number at first, the
government provided these people a special permit for staying temporally in Japan but
did not provide special measures to officially support or help them. Thus, private
organizations (mostly religious organizations) and the UNHCR managed places for them
to stay.\(^{559}\)

One Single Race Myth

When the first Vietnamese “refugees” arrived in Japan on June 24, 1975, the GOJ
officially declared that they would not admit any refugees to resettle in Japan. Because

\(^{558}\) Internationalization here means that the U.S. government tried to gain the involvement of other
countries to make the Vietnamese refugee resettlement an “international issue.” For example, in April
1975, the Ford Administration sent embassies to find staging areas and pressured the UNHCR to entail
international support for the refugees.

\(^{559}\) Takahito Ogino, “Waga kuni ni okeru nanmin ukeire to kötekihien no hensen [Changing processes of
refugee admission and public support for refugees in Japan]” Shakai fukushi gaku [Social Welfare Studies],
vol.46, no. 3, (March 2006).
the GOJ did not have any domestic legal mechanisms to permit the landing of refugees or foreigners without proper travel documents, the GOJ sought to handle the Vietnamese “boat people” as “victims of maritime accidents” instead of refugees or asylum seekers.\textsuperscript{560} Even though the people reached Japan’s shore, the GOJ did not implement a new law to rescue those “refugees” or change existing laws to adapt to the situation until the late 1970s.\textsuperscript{561} According to the Japan’s Immigration Bureau, due to the lack of immigration policy in Japan (there was no official immigration policy), refugee resettlement was out of the question.

This reluctance reflects the myth of “one single race of Japanese people.” For example, as the Japanese government official claimed, it was difficult to accept immigrants and refugees for geographical, economical and social reasons, since Japan was historically a “single race” nation-state (tan-itsu-minzoku kokka).\textsuperscript{562} The myth resurfaced when the Indochinese refugees began to reach its shore in 1975. It comes from the strict concept of the “Japanese nation” as a single race of homogeneous “Japanese people.” The racial concept of “Japanese people” was socially constructed especially after WWII, since between the second Sino-Japanese War and WWII, the GOJ imagined Japan as a multi-ethnic empire, claiming the political slogan “Hakko ichiu” (eight cords, one roof, which means the entire world under one roof). At the time of Japanese empire building in Asia and the Pacific, “Japanese people” were imagined as being ethnic

\textsuperscript{560} The government calls them “boat people (bō-to-piipuru)” instead of refugees or asylum seekers. Ryuji Mukae, Japan’s Refugee Policy: To be of the World (Fucecchio, Italy: European Press Academic Publishing, 2001), 103-4.
\textsuperscript{561} The bureau also pointed out the necessity of a future plan of social welfare if the GOJ opened its doors to the refugees for residence. Kagei Umeo, Chief of Immigration Bureau of Japan, answering the question on the Japan’s policy on refugees, June 25, 1975, shūgin hōmu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Judicial Affairs], 75\textsuperscript{th} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.28, 11.
\textsuperscript{562} Ibid.
Japanese people who had family registrations in the original Japan territory (this understanding of “Japaneseness” has been widely accepted and legitimized in Japan). In this way, the government repeatedly differentiated the “Japanese nation/citizen (nihon kokumin)” and the “Japanese people (nihon-jin)” to maintain the Japanese people as a single race. Cultural studies scholar Oguma Eiji discusses the racial hierarchy and control of differences between “Japanese citizen” and “Japanese people” as rhetoric to vindicate Japan’s colonization in Asia and the Pacific but to exclude local people from “Japanese people.”

The myth of Japan as a single race society has been sustained by the racial discourse of “Japanese people.”

The single race myth has been strengthened through not only the above-mentioned government procedure but also by American racism during the Cold War. According to cultural studies scholar Iwabuchi Koichi, during the Cold War, the U.S. made efforts to implant a sense of superiority in the Japanese in relation to the Communist countries. He writes that John Foster Dulles, who was assigned to negotiate the peace treaty with Japan, argued in the 1950s that “it might be possible to capitalize on the Japanese feeling of racial and social superiority to the Chinese, Koreans and Russians, and to convince them that as part of the free world they would be in equal fellowship with a group which is superior to the members of the Communist world.”

Given this context, when Japan became a much stronger economic power in the 1960s,

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563 This was through the family registration system in which people were tied to the Japanese land. Eiji Oguma, *Nihonjin no kyōkai* [The Boundaries of the Japanese] (Tokyo: Shinyo-sha, 1998).
Japanese society by in large claimed that the reasons for the economic development could be found solely in Japanese culture. This evoked a boom of “nihon-jin-ron,” a non-fiction genre of literature consisting of theories of “Japaneseness.”\(^{566}\) The boom of “nihon-jin-ron” signified an outburst of nationalistic feelings that were provoked by the process of Japan regaining power in the world.

Japan’s unwillingness to provide asylum aimed to secure the strict control of Japanese citizenship through the exclusion of undesirable subjects. Because the GOJ considered the asylum seekers/exiles/refugees to be an unwanted group of people, some lawyers, academics and human rights advocate tried since the 1960s to seek a way for Japan to participate in the international human rights regime.\(^{567}\) Those advocates tried to establish a lawful concept of “refugee” or “exile” to provide protection for his/her status while s/he is in Japan, and several Diet members (who were members of the Socialist Party such as Inomata Kozo) submitted a bill titled the “Political Refugee Protection Law (seiji bomeisha hogo ho)” four times before 1981.\(^{568}\)

However, since 1975, the GOJ did not fully oppose the idea of refugee evacuation by the U.S. For example, Minister of Foreign Affairs Miyazawa Kiichi stated that he did not oppose the use of U.S. bases in Japan for a “humanitarian mission.”\(^{569}\) He did not mean to allow refugees to stay on the U.S. bases in Japan but rather permitted the exercise of U.S. military power to rescue refugees. The GOJ accepted some degree of

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\(^{566}\) According to Iwabuchi, this was a revival of the 1930s positive emphasis on Japanese uniqueness. Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism,” 7.


\(^{568}\) Until when the GOJ acceded to the UN Refugee Convention and its Protocol which took place in 1981, there was no lawful concept of a refugee in Japanese law. Ibid., 101.

\(^{569}\) April 15, 1975, sangiin gaimu iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Foreign Relations], 75\(^{\text{th}}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.9, 6.
support for this U.S. mission as long as the U.S. was responsible for them. Miyazawa’s understanding of the humanitarian mission was only to help the refugees in the former Indochina region “not to starve.” He did not expect resettlement to occur but rather was simply willing to provide food and temporary shelter. In this way, Japan did not anticipate accepting refugees in their soil. Nonetheless, this kind of attitude was considered unacceptable by the U.S. and became a significant issue between two the countries.

Fear of Admitting “Illegals”

The “one single race of Japanese” narrative provides a context through which to understand not only the disinclination of the National Diet to accommodate the situation of the exiles and refugees but also the fear of offering asylum to those who the GOJ presumed were “undocumented/illegal” aliens. The GOJ finally began to make official responses to the Indochinese refugee situation in September 1977, forming “the liaison conference for the purpose of responding to Vietnamese refugees” [Vietnam nanmin taisaku renraku kaigi] and establishing its office. In April 1978, the GOJ finally decided to allow Vietnamese refugees to resettle in Japan, choosing an “ad-hoc” basis for “refugees” from Indochina and choosing not to provide them residential status upon their arrival.

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570 Miyazawa Kiichi emphasized the importance of humanitarian aid to the refugees. June 4, 1975, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations], 75th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.19, 2-4.

571 Gaimushō jōhō bunka kyoku [Bureau of Information and Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan], indoshina nanmin mondai to nihon [Indochinese Refugee Problem and Japan], (Tokyo: gaimu shō [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan], 1981), 51.

572 Jurist Shimada Yukio claims that Japan has provided asylum for political exiles since Japan already acknowledged the principal of non-extradition of political offenders at the end of 19th century. The GOJ has been reluctant to provide asylum to those who might spoil international relations with other countries or to those who may claim refuge “illegally.” Yukio Shimada, kokusaihō jyō no higoken seidoshi ron
The fear of “undocumented/illegal” aliens did not start with the influx of Indochinese refugees, as the government had rejected political sanction frequently before. For example, the case of Dong Hee Kim sheds light on how Japan’s Immigration Bureau had been denying asylum requests like his and deporting or incarcerating Korean asylum seekers. Dong Hee Kim came to Japan in 1965 to request asylum because he wanted to escape going to the Vietnam War with the South Korean army. Kim was arrested for his illegal entry into Japan and his request was denied by the GOJ. Although his case provoked the public’s interest on the issues of Korean asylum seekers in relation to Japan’s colonialism and the Vietnam War, the GOJ deported him to North Korea in 1968. The GOJ’s rejection of him can be seen in other practices of indefinite detention of “undocumented/illegal” aliens in Japan. As in the case of Dong Hee Kim, the GOJ put so many possible-asylee/refugees into an “undocumented/illegal” alien category to strip them of their rights of asylum.

The reason why, from the 1975 to 1978, the GOJ did not allow the Indochinese refugees to resettle in Japan was because the government believed that the status of those refugees was somewhat similar to those who are “illegal” aliens in Japan. For example, on October 7, 1976, assistant Vice-Minister of Justice (hōmu daijin kanbō shingikan)

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[Institutional History of Right of Asylum in International Laws] waseda hōgaku kaishi [Journal of Law of Waseda University], vol.24 (1974), 17. However, the conditions of asylum have been swayed by powers. The French government pressured Japan to expel Vietnamese students from Japan because they were considered to be “dangerous elements.” Japan deported Vietnamese students living in Japan and ended the Dong Du movement that was started by Phan Boi Chau in 1905 and that had sent Vietnamese students to Japan to learn for the future of Vietnam. Masaya Shiraishi, Donyū undō wo meguru nichihutsu ryōkoku no taiō [Japanese and French governmental responses to Dong Du Movement], ōsaka gaikokugodaigaku kaiho [Journal of Osaka University of Foreign Studies], vol. 73.


574 Ibid.
Takemura Teruo revealed the ministry’s view on the Vietnamese refugees, saying that those whom the GOJ temporally permitted to stay in Japan did not suffer from the actual persecutions outlined in the Refugee Convention. Thus, if the GOJ began to interpret the definition of refugee to include those people who were perceived to be fleeing from economic difficulties, Japan might then have to admit “smugglers” (mitsunyukokusha) from South Korea in this manner. The GOJ, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) defined those people who came from South Korea without proper processing as “stowaways” or “illegal” immigrants; a government official even opposed the phrase “Korean exile” or “Korean refugee.” Then, this denial of the label “Korean refugee” expanded into a refusal to admit those who fled North Korea: the GOJ often used the word “dappoku-sha (people who exit North)” instead of calling them refugees or exiles.

Between 1952 and 1978, the Immigration Bureau developed the skill of categorizing non-citizen subjects who did not have appropriate documents or visas to stay

575 Takemura Teruo, October 7, 1976, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations], 78th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.3, 2.
576 Nakae Yosuke, October 7, 1976, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relation], 78th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.3, 14. He said that most of the people who came from South Korea without the legal route were processed as smugglers [mikkō shā] or illegal immigrants [mitsu nyū koku shā].
577 On May 8, 2002, a family of North Korean exiles sought asylum in Japan by running into the Japanese consulate-general in Shenyang, northeast China. Video footage of two men running into the consulate building while Chinese policemen were stationed at the entrance and of two women and a child following them being grappled reveals the inhumane treatment of those who were asking asylum. Although the family eventually gained their resettlement in South Korea, the video provoked an argument over why the GOJ guarded its door against those who seek help. Gregory Clark, “Japan at Its Inconsistent Worst” Japan Times, May 17, 2002. “Bomei naimin ni mon tozasu nihon shinyo ryojikan jiken jinken saiysusen ni [Japan is closing its doors on exiles and refugees; human rights has to be prioritized in the incident of the consulate-general in Sheny]” Asahi shimbun, May 13, 2002.
in Japan as “illegal” subjects. As I explained above, the government officials did not consider those “illegal” subjects to be refugees, exiles or asylum seekers. There are many court cases in which the GOJ denied shelter to possible-refugee subjects. For example, Yoon Sugil’s case is a famous case. In 1976, Japan’s Supreme Court decided that the government was not responsible for offering refuge. Because he entered Japan illegally, the court rejected his right of asylum and allowed the MOJ to deport him. This was a landmark case of the GOJ’s policy on safe haven, because it pronounced that in order for a person to claim a right to asylum, s/he had to be in Japan “legally.” The “legality” in Yoon Sugil’s case ignored its arbitrary nature. In fact, he was a “Japanese citizen” under Japan’s colonization of Korea, yet that right was removed after the San Francisco Peace Treaty in 1952, when the GOJ revoked the citizenship of former colonial subjects.

The view that the right to asylum has to be legally obtained is analogous to the ways in which Japan’s Immigration Bureau defines “special permanent resident” status as a “qualification (shikaku)” not a “right/entitlement (kenri).” This differentiation exposes Japan’s desire to manage and control this group of people as subordinate to Japanese citizens. Classifying the status as a qualification is an act meant to strip rights from the people and to redefine their status as something that they need to keep up. Otherwise, they lose their status because they are “qualifications” not “rights/entitlements.” This technique of the Immigration Bureau was developed after

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578 Officials also developed other terms to describe such “illegal” subjects, calling them stowaways (mikko-sha), trespassers (mitsunyukoku-sha), illegal immigrants (fuho-nyukoku-sha), illegal aliens (fuho-zanryu-sha), and illegal residents (fuho-taizaisha). They all fall into one category of “illegal” beings in Japan.
WWII. After the San Francisco Peace Treaty, the GOJ deprived citizenship from its former colonial subjects—people from the Korean peninsula and Taiwan—and claimed that they were now non-citizen subjects under the Japanese laws. Since then, ‘Japanese citizen’ has meant either those who have Japanese ancestry (racially Japanese) or those who are naturalized Japanese (racially not Japanese yet culturally assimilated as Japanese).581 Thereafter, although most of those who stayed in Japan gained their “qualification” to stay in Japan, those who left Japan lost it. To maintain their “qualification,” they need to attain a re-entry permit.582

Fear of Invasion

The single race myth and fear of admitting “illegals” originated from Japan’s geopolitical condition. Japan’s paranoia about the invasion of Koreans or Taiwanese was heightened during the Cold War. Many arguments reveal a fear of the arrival of Korean or Taiwanese refugees to Japan if something were to happen. The Japanese government feared not the arrival of Vietnamese refugees but the existence of political instability, which would generate such refugees much closer to Japan. For example, on August 22,

581 Asakawa Akihiro claims that this is not only the GOJ’s decision but rather the agreement between the governments of South Korean and Japan. Moreover he reveals that public assistance (which provides a monthly stipend) for former citizens continued after 1952 and that the GOJ took special measures to help former Japanese who were government officials naturalize to keep their jobs. Thus, he is against the idea of the deprivation of citizenship that scholars like Ōnuma Yasuaki assert. Although I understand what Asakawa maintains, because for former Japanese who were from Korea or Taiwan it constituted an abolishment of their right to be citizen without their consent, I take Ōnuma’s side on this issue. Asakawa Atsuhiro, Kindai nihon to kika seido [Naturalization in the Modern Japan] (Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2007), 226-235; Ōnuma Yasuaki, Zainichi Kankoku, Chōsenjin no kokuseki to jinken [Nationality and Human Rights of Zainichi Koreans in Japan] (Tokyo: Tōshindō, 2004), vi; 242.

582 Asakawa Akihiro’s work is very helpful in understanding the naturalization process in Japan. This lawfully unstable “qualification” system was possible because the GOJ had categorized former colonial subjects as “gaichi-jin (people from outside Japan yet Japanese citizens).” The process deprived former Japanese citizenship and provided “qualification” on one hand; however it later enabled those who used to be categorized as “gaichi-jin” to naturalize as not only as “Japanese citizens” but also as “Japanese people.” This is a paradox of the law, because the GOJ excluded a former Japanese citizen as a foreigner, so that if s/he fulfills the condition s/he would be able to naturalize.
1975, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time, Miyazawa Kiichi, implied that there would be a possibility that the defeated army (of South Korea) would flee to Japan if there was a war in a neighboring country.\footnote{Miyazawa Kiichi, August 22, 1975, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Relations], 75\textsuperscript{th} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 30, 10.} In the same year, on December 5, 1975, Diet member Ukeda Shinkichi urged the GOJ to take some measures to prepare admitting refugees in case an incident happens and triggers a flow of refugees and exiles to Japan.\footnote{Ukeda Shinkichi, December 5, 1975, shūgiin naikaku iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Cabinet], 76\textsuperscript{th} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 7, 16.} These kinds of arguments continued in 1977. For example, on March 10 and April 6, 1977, there were debates about what the GOJ would do if an incident happens on the Korean peninsula.\footnote{Ukeda Shinkichi, March 10, 1977, shūgiin naikaku iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Cabinet], 80\textsuperscript{th} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 7, 16; Itoyama Eitarō, April 6, 1977, sangiin yosan iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Budget], 80\textsuperscript{th} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 14, 18.} Those questions were raised because there was a discussion of the evacuation of the U.S. army from South Korea. In 1977, the Carter administration announced the evacuation of the Second Infantry Division of the U.S. army from South Korea.\footnote{The Carter Administration changed its plan regarding the evacuation and freezed it until 1981. Asahi simbun, July 21, 1979.} The evacuation plan incited the fear that war would erupt on the Korean peninsula, causing a flood of refugees to Japan.

In 1978, those fears were still present in Congress and the argument of helping refugees from Korea involved the possibility of cooperation of Japan’s Self Defense Forces.\footnote{On June 6, Diet member Ukedo Shinkichi stated that we already learned that the Vietnam War refugees would come from the ocean if the war broke out on the Korean peninsula. Ukedo Shinkichi, June 6, 1978, shūgiin naikaku iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Cabinet], Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], 84\textsuperscript{th} Diet, no. 22, 9.} For example, the chief of the Department in the Defense Agency [bōei kyokuchō] Ito mentioned the possibility of rescuing refugees on March 2.\footnote{Ito Keiichi, March 2, 1978, shūgiin yosan iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Budget], kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], 84\textsuperscript{th} Diet, no.4, 26.}
11, Congressman Tada Shogo claimed that this role of the Self Defense Forces was dangerous because it might lead to an overseas dispatch of the forces.\(^{589}\) Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sonoda Sunao replied that the discussion was solely based on the possibility of humanitarian rescue, if a refugee was about to die in the ocean.\(^{590}\) The use of the Self Defense Forces was controversial because some saw their deployment, even for the humanitarian use of rescuing refugees, as “participation [in] the war.”\(^{591}\) Taiwan was also included in this fear of a flood of refugees to Japan. On December 21, 1978, Congressman Kyan Shinei from Okinawa asked for special consideration from the government. Because of the location of Okinawa, if something happened in Taiwan, Okinawa would be the place where people would come.\(^{592}\) Even in 1981, scholar of international law Miyazaki Shigeki advised the Diet not to aggravate the situation on the Korean peninsula since it might lead to the pouring of Korean refugees into Japan.\(^{593}\)

This paranoia is a reflection of the GOJ’s concern about the political instability of Asia, which would menace Japan’s political and economical strength.\(^{594}\) However, I read this paranoia not only as a geopolitical fear but also as a racial fear, because those refugees who might come to Japan were seen as threat to the Japanese people.

\(^{589}\) Tada Shogo, March 11, 1978, sangiin yosan iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Budget], 84\(^{\text{th}}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 8, 10.

\(^{590}\) Sonoda Sunao, Ibid.

\(^{591}\) Congressman Matsumoto Zenmei believed that if Japan used forces in South Korean waters to rescue refugees, it would be a participation in the war. Matsumoto Zenmei, August 16, 1978, shūgiin naikaku iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Cabinet], 84\(^{\text{th}}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 27, 32.

\(^{592}\) Kyan Shinei, December 21, 1978, sangiin kessan iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Audit], 86\(^{\text{th}}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 2 (additional), 29.

\(^{593}\) Miyazaki Shigeki, May 14, 1981, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs], kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], 94\(^{\text{th}}\) Diet, no. 14, 6.

\(^{594}\) This kind of paranoia still continues today. For example, according to the article on Sankei shimbun, there would be three scenarios of what would happen to Japan when the war resumes in the Korean peninsula. Sankei shimbun, June 25, 2010.
Indochinese refugees began reaching Japan’s shore, the government hastily mentioned that they “want to reserve various opportunities like obtaining a job and so on for the Japanese people.” This quote exposes how the national economy and welfare were prioritized for those Japanese people but not for all legal residents in general. For example, in 1970, South Korean resident in Japan Park Jong Suk appealed to court because even though he passed a test for an entering exam, the company Hitachi rejected him after discovering that he was not a Japanese citizen. Economist Tanaka Hiroshi also criticized the fact that Japan’s welfare excludes Korean residents in order to preserve sources for the Japanese. He discussed how a local government declined applications from Korean residents for public housing because the official believed that the housing should be reserved for Japanese citizens first. This logic of scarce resources such as jobs, housing, and welfare enables the GOJ to consider non-citizen subjects, including legal residents, as deviants and unwelcomed guests. In this context, the GOJ did not want to admit the Indochinese refugees into Japan and sustained the public conception of the refugees as bringing racial and cultural disorder to Japan’s society.

“Let’s Push Japan”: Japan’s “Reprehensive” Action

However, as the number of the Indochinese in Southeast Asia swelled, the GOJ acknowledged the need for involvement in the refugee resettlement. Among the various countries, Japan was the country that the Carter administration was particularly eager to persuade to do more concerning the Indochinese refugee resettlement. U.S.’s eagerness

595 Kagei Umeo, June 25, 1975, shūgiin hōmu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Judicial Affairs], 75th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 28, 11.
597 Ibid., 203-4.
for Japan’s participation in the project—a part of U.S. moral geopolitical mapping—can be examined as a global capitalist invitation to be a member of the West. Enhancement of Japan’s security role was an important American goal and a key feature of Carter’s Asian Policies.\textsuperscript{598} Since the Carter administration particularly emphasized the human rights issues to appeal to the American public as well as the international community to reclaim the justice of the U.S. through the extension of global capitalism, Japan was voluntarily ready to do more for the U.S.\textsuperscript{599} When Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda visited President Jimmy Carter in March 1977, Fukuda was prepared to cooperate with the international Indochinese resettlement, claiming that the GOJ would admit the refugees as residents to Japan.\textsuperscript{600}

The GOJ knew that the U.S. and other countries presumed Japan’s aid contribution because Japan profited financially and grew into an economic power. Japan had been internationally criticized about its contribution to international aid and development because of its huge trade surplus.\textsuperscript{601} International relations scholar Eileen

\textsuperscript{598} John Dumbrell, \textit{American Foreign Policy: Carter to Clinton}, 27. Since Jimmy Carter was a member of the Trilateral Commission which recognized the need for greater unity in the trilateral world of North America, Western Europe and Japan, Graebner et al. assert that “Trilateralism promised both economic growth and the recovery of America’s former hegemony in the non-Communist world.” Norman A. Graebner, Richard Dean Burns, and Joseph M. Siracusa, \textit{America and the Cold War, 1941-1991: A Realist Interpretation} (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010), 393-4. I maintain that the resettlement functioned in this trilateral structure of the world to uphold U.S. power.

\textsuperscript{599} Mary Stuckey, \textit{Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda}, 87. Mukae explains that this decision to accept refugees for resettlement was not a result of its own policy initiative, but rather was part of Japan’s alliance politics with the U.S. and a diplomatic response to global and regional criticisms directed at Japan. Ryuji Mukae, \textit{Japan’s Refugee Policy}, 119.

\textsuperscript{600} Masaya Shiraishi, \textit{Japanese Relation with Vietnam}, 89. Since waves of refugees arriving by boat in Japan increased in 1977, the GOJ began to respond by establishing a “liaison conference for responding to Vietnamese refugees [Vietnam namin taisaku renraku kyogikai]” and holding its office to deal officially with the matter in September, 1977. Gaimushō, \textit{Indoshina nanmin mondai to nihon}, 51.

\textsuperscript{601} “Japan needs to contribute to the very economic order from which it thrives and to work on issues such as North-South development.” Elaine Scolinos, “Japan: Coming to Terms with Internationalization,” \textit{Asian Affairs}, vol. 15, no.2 (Summer, 1988), 102. Political scientists Brooks and Orr claim that there have been four distinctive stages in Japan’s official development assistance (ODA) policy, which are from 1950 to 65,
Marie Doherty claims that, “this period [from 1973 to 1980] marked the beginning of [Japan’s] aid globalization, although Asia retained its number-one status.” She also contends that Japan’s aid program was meant to act as “a world power” for “national economic and security concerns.” One might think that it was an unpredicted coincidence that the Indochinese refugee problem took place at the time when Japan grew into an economic power and was pressured by the international community to contribute more aid. However, in reality, it was not a coincidence at all. Japan profited from the Vietnam War. According to historian Thomas R.H. Havens, the “export policies did not permit arms to be sold abroad, yet Japanese industries took in at least $1 billion a year from providing goods and services to the United States and South Vietnamese forces.” As capitalist affluence and humanitarianism were linked through U.S. militarism, Japan needed to contribute more on the refugee issue.

In the meeting, both of the heads of the two countries confirmed the U.S. to play a role as a Pacific nation. The U.S. as a Pacific nation delivers significant importance to Japan, because as long as the U.S. takes control of Asia and the Pacific, Japan has an advantage in the region to play the second most powerful country. Thus, Japan would gain profit by keeping strong ties with the U.S. Therefore, Prime Minister Fukuda gave a speech emphasizing the ties by saying that to build a peaceful world, Japan and the U.S.

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602 Eileen Marie Doherty, “Japan’s Expanding Foreign Aid Program,” Asian Affairs, vol.14, no.3 (Fall, 1987), 130
603 Ibid., 148
need to cooperate together. \(^{605}\) At the same time, President Carter mentioned supporting Japan’s admittance as a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN. \(^{606}\) The MOFA explained that this was unexpected to the GOJ, according to a staff memo.\(^ {607}\) However, the news agency Kyōdō Tsushin reported that social critic Kase Hideki was sent by the GOJ on a secret mission to ask the Carter administration to give some speech to support Japan’s bid for the Security Council seat.\(^ {608}\) This meeting could be analyzed as a capitalist political trade of Japan’s voluntary cooperation to the refugee issue for the U.S.’s support for Japan’s seat in the UN Security Council. Japan’s assistance to the U.S. resettlement plan was motivated by a wish to not only propitiate President Carter, who was a strong human rights advocate, but also to gain political recognition in the international community. However, Japan has not yet been able to successfully achieve a seat on the UN Security Council.

Because the GOJ had promised cooperation, Japan’s neglectful treatment of the refugees upset the Carter Administration because the GOJ did not take actions as the U.S. expected. For instance, on June 10, 1977, a memo for the President from Zbigniew Brzezinski claimed:

An article appeared in the New York Times on Wednesday concerning Vietnamese refugees. It discussed the plight of 37 refugees who, a month ago, set out in a small fishing boat from Vietnam….. I find this conduct by the Japanese highly reprehensible. I have asked State to make a demarche to the Japanese in which we would seek the following two objects: (1) Encourage the Japanese to allow a greater number of Indochinese refugees

\(^{605}\) Prime Minister Fukuda Speech on March 22, 1977, Gaikō seisho [Diplomatic Bluebook], no.21 (Gaimushō [Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan]), 82-84.
\(^{606}\) “Fukuda shusō hōbei” [Memorandum on Prime Minister Fukuda visiting the US], March, 1977, 01-1967-1, Declassified Documents by Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.
\(^{607}\) Ibid.
\(^{608}\) Memorandum, 01-1967-4, Declassified Documents by Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.
Brzezinski referred to one of Henry Kamm’s articles in the *New York Times* that was on the mistreatment of the Vietnamese refugees. Although the Liberian-flag, Swiss-operated freighter picked up thirty-seven Vietnamese refugees out at sea and brought them to Japan, Japan’s authorities did not allow the refugees to come ashore even temporarily unless the Liberian or Swiss Government guaranteed that it would be responsible for getting the thirty-seven people out of Japan.

Kamm critiqued Japan’s action as exemplary Asian behavior by illustrating the refugees “waiting in limbo.” He implied that Vietnamese refugees were in limbo because Asian countries like Japan ignored their desperate situation. The GOJ had received 689 refugees after the Vietnam War but 258 of them had gone to permanent immigration elsewhere. Even after the government of Japan allowed refugees to wait in Japan, “it does not feed, clothe or shelter them, extends no medical, educational or social services and allows no refugee to work to provide for his or her own needs.” Accordingly, Kamm illustrated Japan as a country not willing to help the refugees. He quoted one of the thirty-seven refugees: “‘We don’t understand Japan, they call themselves a country of freedom.’” In this way, Japan appeared not only as a cold-
hearted country but an undemocratic country because of the mistreatment of the refugees. Kamm believed that as a democratic nation, Japan should have helped the refugees.

In addition to that, Kamm elucidated the opinion of Shunji Kobayashi, Chief of the General Affairs section of the Immigration Control Bureau. Japanese officials like him doubted the refugees’ authenticity as political refugees because he believed that they were leaving Vietnam for their material advancement, just like the great number of Korean illegal immigrants. Kamm did not agree with him, pointing out a resemblance between the refugees fleeing Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia and the people who fled Hungary in 1956 or other Communist countries since World War II. Kamm believed that the refugees should be acknowledged as “political refugees” given their political incentive to leave. Thus, he pleaded that the refugees’ rights be protected.

Brzezinski’s memo revealed that the article had a great effect on the Indochinese refugee issue since it made him ask the Department of State to do something to change the attitude of the Government of Japan. President Carter also agreed with his recommendation and wrote “Let[‘]s push Japan” on the memo. It is important to note that Brzezinski thought that Japan’s treatment of the refugees was “reprehensible.” This word signifies that Brzezinski not only agreed with Kamm but also believed that Japan’s treatment was unacceptable because it was immoral. Thus, both Kamm and Brzezinski assumed that the U.S. could blame Japan for the mistreatment of the refugees. Their assessment was propelled by a sense of justice that assumed the refugees were objects of rescue because they were victims of Communism. In a way, as the administration took its own morality for granted in judging Japan, Brzezinski and President Carter believed that

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613 Ibid.
the U.S. was doing the right thing by pressuring Japan to do more for refugee resettlement. Therefore, the administration began demanding Japan’s participation in the resettlement of the refugees.

Another memo on the same day suggested that Brzezinski urge “the Japanese to adopt both a more generous temporary asylum policy (allowing longer than a 30-day stay), and greater contributions to the international refugee program.”

Another memo for Brzezinski also revealed that the Department of State pressured the Foreign Ministry of Japan to cooperate with the U.S. It said, “Lunched with Yukio Sato, Head of the Security Division of the North American Bureau in the Japanese Roe Foreign Ministry. I told him that Japan should be prepared to do much more on the refugee issue in the coming weeks. He seems receptive, and promised to report this to the Prime Minister’s office.”

These memos signify that the administration was trying to deal with the refugee issue as an international program and that it required more commitments from Japan regarding the Indochinese resettlement. This kind of expectation for Japan to do more in both resettlement policy and financial aid for the Indochinese refugees reveals the U.S. insistence on its vision of the resettlement. As they wanted Japan to have a more “generous” asylum policy and a “greater” contribution, the administration expected Japan’s efforts to be similar to the U.S.’s version of efforts.

Thus, the Carter administration did not see the willingness of the GOJ to do more in the involvement but rather perceived the cooperation as an outcome of U.S. efforts.

For instance, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance claimed that “The action is in response to

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615 Memorandum for Zbigniew Brzezinski, July 8, 1977, NLC-10-3-7-7-3, Jimmy Carter Library.
American pressure, both in Congress and in the Executive Branch.” He also believed that Japan’s contribution to the refugee resettlement would benefit Japan because it would “strengthen Japan’s image with Congress and the public and…set a fine example for other nations to follow.” This quote showed how U.S. used paternalistic behavior towards Japan not only to control Japan to facilitate the resettlement of Indochinese refugees but also to represent Japan as a good example to prove American power and direct other countries.

I assert that an underlying American understanding of GOJ’s actions acknowledges the ability of the U.S. to educate and lead Japan into moral action. Furthermore, this U.S. satisfaction with the GOJ exposes U.S. imperial behavior in Asia in general. Claiming Japan’s transformation as the result of American endeavors, the administration assumed the moral superiority of the U.S. and the inferiority of Japan. Indeed, educating Japan as an example in Asia demonstrated America’s capability to civilize an Asian country. This American attitude towards Japan and other Asian countries signifies not only the self-righteousness of the U.S. regarding the resettlement of the Indochinese refugees but also the assumed superior morality of the U.S. regarding its assumption of the role to promote the refugee resettlement in Asia on behalf of the refugees. Accordingly, the U.S. did not expect another country to act like the U.S. but rather anticipated to have subordinates like Japan that the U.S. could control and

616 Memorandum to the President from Cyrus Vance, April 26, 1978, NLC-15-24-6-25-6, Jimmy Carter Library.
dominate to do what it wanted. In this way, the U.S. could be the only legitimate leader to
guide the other countries on the right path.617

2. Opening the Door to the Indochinese Refugees?

The GOJ perceived its contribution to the Indochinese refugee resettlement as an act of being a “civilized country,” which would allow it to cast itself as a member of the West in the international community. This was why the MOFA of Japan saw that involvement was significant.618 The MOFA believed that the problem was a “touchstone” to could be used to prove the credibility of Japan in the international community. Although the MOFA saw the opportunity, the resettlement would directly affect domestic policy as well as immigration policy, and the Ministry of Health and Welfare (the MOHW now is combined with the Ministry of Labor and called the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare) and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) were against the idea of admitting refugees. Thus, this section examines the disagreement between the MOFA and the MOHW and how it was overcome by the political symbolic value of the involvement. I examine closely the creation of the Indochinese refugee category because it was Japan’s technique that delineated the legality into a racial category in order to eliminate possible refugee subjects.

The Refugee Resettlement as Internationalization of Japan

617 Although the U.S. was also pressured by first asylum countries to do more, the Carter Administration claimed that the U.S. was already doing its best.
618 The MOFA narrates it as follows: “From the understanding of the responsibility and role of Japan to the international community, to respond to such expectations of the world through both public and private sectors, it is necessary to make a contribution to the international community appropriate to our strength as a nation. In this way, we believe that we can say that the Indochinese refugee problem is one of the great touchstones which put our nation to the test.” Gaimushō, Indoshina nanmin mondai to nihon, 8-9.
Although the MOJ and the MOHW resisted changing the laws to accommodate the refugees, the MOFA became a strong supporter of involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem, due to strong international pressure and a want to show Japan’s political power to the international community. The MOFA believed that Japan’s international contribution would further facilitate international cooperation so that Japan could contribute to international peace and development at the same time. Validating Japan’s prevailing status only as economic and peaceful, not militaristic, the MOFA saw the opportunity for Japan to prove itself as a powerful country which deserved to be a part of the wealthy nations, the West. The GOJ’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem has to be understood in this context of Japan desiring to be a financially and morally legitimate member of the West by contributing to global peace. It was the recuperating project of Japan to be a member of the West once again, for the first time since WWII. Neferti Tadiar reminds us that “The desire for incorporation might thus be seen as a desire for citizenship in the international community, a citizenship that entails more than an allegiance to the ideals of internationally, which entails also a buying into the preconditions of the Free World.”\textsuperscript{619} MOFA supported refugee resettlement in order to characterize Japan as a moral nation that could thus obtain a position in the international community.

It was important for Japan to improve its status in the United Nations (UN). The GOJ saw this as the benchmark of Japan’s recovery in the international community.\textsuperscript{620} On the one hand, through involvement in the Indochinese refugee resettlement process, the

\textsuperscript{619} Neferti Tadiar, \textit{Fantasy-Production}, 41.

\textsuperscript{620} After WWII, Japan finally regained its independence in 1952 and rejoined the UN in 1956.
MOFA achieved political power in the UN. Although the MOFA made efforts to accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which took place in 1979, the GOJ reserved some points of the covenant in relation to domestic laws. Japan’s involvement led to political engagement such as acceding to the UN Refugee Convention and Protocol in 1981. The GOJ used this opportunity to gain visibility as one of the powerful nations, since Japan was the first Asian country to do so. The compliance to the UN Refugee Convention permitted the MOFA to run for a seat on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and it obtained one in 1981.\(^{621}\) On the other hand, those attempts were parts of MOFA’s ultimate and persistent goal of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council (which has not yet come true). Since 1972, the U.S. has been officially supporting Japan on the issue.\(^{622}\) Therefore, the MOFA wanted to sustain a good partnership between the U.S., and admitting Indochinese refugees to Japan would do so and thus profit Japan greatly. Consequently, the MOFA voluntarily subordinated itself to the U.S. under the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty in order to reestablish Japan’s position as the second most powerful country in Asia, especially during the 1960s and 70s.\(^{623}\)

The stability of U.S.-Japan relations did not alter U.S. policy in Asia after the end of the Vietnam War. For example, President Ford proposed a continuation of the Pacific

\(^{621}\) http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/jinken_r/index.html
\(^{622}\) In this respect, the MOFA deemed the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty as the key to pursue the seat, because without U.S.’s help it would be impossible to do so. Thus, the GOJ regaining power in international community was contingent on maintaining U.S. power in Asia.
\(^{623}\) This was because the MOFA believed the significance of the presence of the U.S. in Southeast Asia. Even right after the end of the Vietnam War, the GOJ asked for stronger U.S. presence in Asia, although the government already had diplomatic ties with North Vietnam and was planning to open an embassy in North Vietnam in April 1975. Takashima Masuo, March 26, 1975, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs], 75th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 11, 2.
Doctrine of former President Richard Nixon with a “new Pacific Doctrine” during his December 1975 visit to China, Indonesia, and the Philippines:

The second basic premise of a new Pacific Doctrine is that partnership with Japan is a pillar of our strategy. There is no relationship to which I have devoted more attention, nor is there any greater success story in the history of American efforts to relate to distant cultures and to people. The Japanese-American relationship can be a source of great, great pride to every American and to every Japanese. Our bilateral relations have never been better. The recent exchange of visits symbolized a basic political partnership. We have begun to develop with the Japanese and other advanced industrial democracies better means of harmonizing our economic policy. We are joining with Japan, our European friends, and representatives of the developing nations this month to begin shaping a more efficient and more equitable pattern of North-South economic relations.  

This statement reveals how the U.S. considered Japan its partner—but not an equal one—and how it desired to extend a U.S. ruling system called “industrial democracy” throughout Asia and the Pacific. The partnership is a success story of the U.S. but not of Japan. Joining American economic policy was not exactly a choice for Japan but simply what it was supposed to do. It was an act of subordination towards the U.S. Since the speech did not mention the Vietnam War at all, it gives the impression that the result of the war did not affect U.S. governance in Asia and the Pacific. Instead, the speech emphasized systemic stabilities such as U.S.-Japan relations as reasons for the U.S. to pursue the Pacific Doctrine.

Nevertheless, Japan also pursued a unique relationship with the two Vietnams during the Vietnam War. While the GOJ cooperated with U.S. policy and had a good partnership with South Vietnam, it also maintained a steady relationship with North

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Vietnam. This two-sided relation with the two Vietnams continued since the GOJ considered the region as lucrative for material imports and a market for Japan’s goods. Thus, the GOJ’s foreign policy goal in Asia after the Vietnam War was to co-exist with two different groups, the ASEAN and Indochina. This coexistence included the U.S. as well, as Japan tried to be a mediator of U.S.-Vietnam relations in the late 1970s. The GOJ’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem emerged in their efforts to achieve harmony and cooperation.

Nonetheless, the involvement eventually stabilized U.S. power in Asia as the GOJ did not deny or oppose the basic idea of the U.S.’s rescue of Indochinese refugees. The GOJ did not impose Asian or Japanese values upon the whole issue against the U.S.’s initiative. Instead, the GOJ picked the reason not to accept many refugees as the ‘single race society.’ In this way, the GOJ emphasized the uniqueness of Japanese society as a reason for not admitting refugees. Japan did not directly challenge U.S. humanitarianism but rather utilized the one race myth of Japanese exceptionalism in order to validate the limitations of Japan being a resettlement country. Japan missed its own chance to initiate contributing to or opposing the U.S. plan of refugee resettlement

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626 “Fukuda sōri tōnan azia hōmon [Prime Minister Fukuda visit to Southeast Asia]” 01-946-2, August 1977, Declassified Documents by Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

627 Akitoshi Miyashita and Yoichiro Sato eds., Japanese Foreign Policy in Asia and the Pacific: Domestic Interests, American Pressure, and Regional Integration (Houndmils, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave, 2001), 86.

628 This uneasiness about Japan’s role in Asia is still visible in the current situation. One can say the relations between Japan and other countries in Asia are not stable enough to have a security treaty. Sandra L. Leavit particularly points out the lack of security cooperation between Japan and Southeast Asia. Sandra L. Leavitt, “The Lack of Security Cooperation between Southeast Asia and Japan: Yen Yes, Pax Nippon No” Asian Survey, vol. 45, no.2 (Mar.-Apr., 2005), 216-240.
The GOJ did not pressure the U.S. government to take full responsibility for the refugee issue, but rather took a position that considered the issue a universal humanitarian problem in order to maximize the benefit of Japan getting involved in it.

The GOJ publically supported the Indochinese refugee program of the UNHCR because the GOJ saw the opportunity for Japan to be recognized as a full member of the international community. Internationalization for Japan, in this sense, was a morally charged effort to do something for the refugees. Internationalism, which advocates economic and political cooperation, is tied to a sense of duty. Accordingly, the GOJ considered the refugee issue a humanitarian issue. Thus, the GOJ not only agreed with the UNHCR and the U.S. but also played the representative role of Asia. On September 25, 1979, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sonoda again pointed out the Indochinese refugee issue, claiming that it was threatening the peace and stability of Southeast Asia. He claimed:

The most urgent issue in Asia now is to secure peace and stability of Southeast Asia. In this area, although nation-building of countries of ASEAN is advancing steadily in the context of development of intraregional cooperation, conflict and tension existing in Indochina peninsula and exodus of refugees is giving great anxiety on safety of countries of ASEAN. In particular, the Indochinese refugee problem is

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629 Significant changes in Japan’s refugee policy in 1977 and 1978 both happened when the GOJ had meetings with the U.S. government.
630 For example, Foreign Minister of Japan Sonoda Sunao gave a speech to the United Nations assuring that the refugee issue was a humanitarian issue on September 25, 1978: “The refugee problem could bring tension and conflict between countries, but at the same time, it is basically a humanitarian issue. From this viewpoint, our country has been increasing our contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East. Also, in Asia, for helping Indochinese refugees, to the special work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, in addition to existing contribution, we are making efforts such as special donation of 10 million dollars.” Gaikō seisho [Diplomatic Bluebook], no.23 (Gaimushō [Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Japan]), 352-357.
already beyond the limit of the humanitarian issue and becomes the cause of instability of Asia and the Pacific region.\footnote{Ibid., no.24, 369-377.}

Since the GOJ officially cooperated with the U.S. position on the Indochinese refugee problem, framing it as a humanitarian issue and thus encouraging other nations to resettle the refugees, involvement also provided a chance for the GOJ to claim itself as a rescuer of and in Asia.

To engage in the rescuer role, the GOJ considered the involvement as an opportunity for “internationalization (kokusaika),” and thus it decided to admit refugees into Japanese society. The GOJ utilized its admission of the refugees and contribution to the international resettlement as an opportunity to claim itself an “international” powerful country and a “benevolent” nation. The GOJ used the bodies of Indochinese refugees, the small amount of them that were accepted, to show the Japanese nation as “international,” “civilized” and “savior-like.” For example, former Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi (December 7, 1978-June 12, 1980) once maintained that “by accepting Indochinese refugees, Japanese society truly opened the door to internationalization.”\footnote{Gaimushō, Nanmin mondai to nihon.} This statement reveals that Japan’s involvement in Indochinese refugee resettlement was believed to strengthen Japan’s international position. A politician like Ōhira believed that Japan finally became a member of the international community through participation in the resettlement. “Internationalization” is a popular word in the Japanese society. It does not mean to fuse Japanese people or culture with other people and cultures in a cosmopolitan sense, but rather indicates a desire to expand Japanese power internationally. Thus, “internationalization” in Ōhira’s quote does not necessarily mean
opening Japanese society to refugees but rather signifies Japan’s willingness to be a part of the international community through the action of accepting the resettlement of the refugees.

Furthermore, cultural studies scholar John Clammer characterizes internationalization in Japan as “the internationalizing specifically of consumption rather than Japanese life in general.” This kind of framing of “internationalization” was made possible by taking a “share of the West”; that is, the bodies of refugees. The Minister of the Foreign Affairs Sonoda Sunao strongly believed that, to gain respect in the global community, Japan needed to take action on the refugee issue. Sonoda also deemed that Japan’s lack of positive contributions to international human rights issues and aid to developing countries added to criticism of Japan’s increase in trade surplus. He thought that the refugee aid would help greatly to divert criticism of Japan’s economic growth. The admittance of Indochinese refugees had this political significance because politicians like Sonoda did not believe that Japan was appropriately evaluated in the world. For example, he claimed that “there is unfair criticism against Japan’s treatment of refugees from other countries.” Sonoda believed that a humanitarian act would reduce

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634 For example, in 1979, the Minister of the Foreign Affairs Sonoda Sunao mentioned that the refugee issue attracts scorn of other countries because Japan is handling it poorly. Thus, Japan is considered an inhumane, un-civilized, un-democratic and undeveloped country. Sonoda Sunao, February 27, 1979, shūgiin yosan iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Budget], 87th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 1, 32.
635 Sonoda Sunao, May 29, 1979, shūgiin naikaku iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Cabinet], 87th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 14, 30.
636 Sonoda Sunao February 14, 1978, shūgiin yosan iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Budget], 84th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.12, 14.
unfavorable judgment against Japan and would help it to gain respect from the international community.\textsuperscript{637}

This political gesture aspect of the resettlement shows Japan’s willingness to associate with the international community while ironically sustaining the single race myth of Japan. For instance, although Sonoda advocated the admission of refugees, he also claimed that it would be difficult for the Indochinese refugees to settle in Japan.\textsuperscript{638} Sonoda’s perspective also reflected public opinion. According to a survey regarding the Indochinese refugee problem conducted by the Cabinet Office in 1982, almost 30\% of the people opposed the idea of increasing the number of the refugee resettlement because about 80\% of them believed that Japan is a small and populous country.\textsuperscript{639} This scantiness of land discourse shows Japan’s incapability of admitting the refugees. By this logic, Japan is already occupied by Japanese people and there is no space for refugees. Therefore, Japan’s incapacity for “others” justified its unwillingness to accept refugees.

The GOJ believed that symbolic admission of the refugees would solve the unfair criticism directed towards Japan, hence it did not acknowledge the immediate change of the society at large. As the GOJ and Japanese society in general embraced economic success as the result of the superiority of Japanese culture, they did not recognize the urgent needs for drastic change of Japanese society.\textsuperscript{640} Thus, the refugees

\textsuperscript{637} It is important to point out here that he considered admitting refugees to not only cooperate with the West but also to behave “properly” as a powerful nation. The MOFA deemed that the idea of the “internationalization” of Japan in the context of joining the international resettlement efforts was taking a share as a part of the West.
\textsuperscript{638} Sonoda Sunao, December 20, 1978, shūgīn gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs], 86\textsuperscript{th} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 2, 14.
\textsuperscript{639} http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/s57/S57-06-57-04.html.
\textsuperscript{640} This was obvious when the Ōhira administration officially launched studies on Japanese culture, proclaiming an “age of culture (bunka no jidai).” Japanese studies scholar Befu Harumi critiques Ōhira’s project in his book \textit{Hegemony of Homogeneity} as the ideological use of Japanese culture. Harumi Befu,
who resettled in Japan were the ones that should prove their value in society. The affirmation of Japaneseness was also employed in projects by the Foundation for the Welfare and Education of the Asian People, which was responsible for refugee resettlement by the GOJ. In January 1982, the foundation started “meeting encouraging settled Indochinese refugees” annually to “encourage the refugees who settled in Japan where culture and life is different from theirs and to facilitate understanding of the Japanese on refugee settlers.” This signifies the GOJ’s limited understanding of the refugee resettlement and the refugees, because they were treated as “others” in society.

**The Abolishment of the Nationality Clause: Effects of Acceding the UN Refugee Convention**

While there was strong reluctance to refugee resettlement, Japan’s acceding to the UN Refugee Convention and Protocol in 1981 brought much more dramatic change to the Japanese nation overall because the GOJ had to alter domestic and immigration laws. The GOJ had to abolish the “nationality clause” for welfare, bringing the most significant transformation of Japanese society. Here, I analyze the eradication of the “nationality clause” as a carefully calculated process by the GOJ. In fact, this process allows us to see Japan’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem as a racial project. Moreover, it also explains why the category of ‘Indochinese refugee’ in Japan was implemented as a racial category.

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641 The name of the meeting was changed in 1989 to “The Gathering with Settled Indochinese Refugees: Festival of Love and Gratitude” and again in 1995 to “The Gathering with Settled Refugees in Japan.” According to a web site, the gathering has two parts: in the first part, the foundation awards certificates of appreciation to employers who cooperate and hire refugee settlers and who support the foundation, and it also honors refugee settlers who are role models, and in the second part, there are dances and songs performed by the refugee settlers. [http://www.fweap.or.jp/tsudoi.htm](http://www.fweap.or.jp/tsudoi.htm).
Scholars studying the Korean residents in Japan (Zainichi Studies) have critiqued the way the GOJ handled this removal. They claim that the GOJ did not tackle the issue by taking responsibility for the colonization of Korea and Taiwan. Instead, the removal took place for the sake of the GOJ’s international position. Ōnuma Yasuaki notes that the GOJ “began to admit the application of social welfare for resident aliens” because of the international pressures and “thus rights of resident aliens were beginning to be guaranteed as an accidental result.” His quote suggests the ways in which the refugee issue profited Japan to skip dealing with the past. However, the reason for the delay of acceding to the UN Refugee Convention in 1981 (it took three years from the official resettlement of the Indochinese refugees in Japan in 1978) was the struggle between the advocate, the MOFA, and the opposers, the MOHW and the MOJ. It was not an “accidental result” but a carefully planned one.

The GOJ did not want to provide equal social welfare, education and job opportunity to those non-citizen subjects, including Koreans in Japan. Even though the MOFA recognized the consequences of the Convention, they understood the reluctance of the MOHW and the MOJ. On August 19, 1980, Minister of Foreign Affairs Itō Masayoshi said:

At a cabinet meeting of the former Ōhira administration, [acceding to the Refugee Convention] became at once an issue, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs [Ōkita Saburo] made remarks that, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, it would instantly involve the national pension issue of Koreans in Japan, so we could not come to an agreement on the terms. Thus during the last administration, [the government] did not discuss the

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642 Ōnuma Yasuaki and So Yondaru Hen, Zainichi kankoku chōsenjin to jinken,164
643 Minister of Foreign Affairs Ōkita Saburo pointed out that there were problems with dealing with the MOHW regarding the Convention. April 15, 1980. Ōkita Saburo, April 15, 1980, shūgiin kessan iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Audit], 91st Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.14, 8.
[acceding to the refugee convention] issue.\textsuperscript{644}

The GOJ did not reach a consensus to comply with the Refugee Convention easily, because there was the matter of national pension for Korean residents in Japan. The MOFA did not openly critique the unwillingness.

This GOJ’s exclusionary attitude was already criticized by civilian organizations in 1977 regarding problems of national pension for permanent resident Koreans. For instance, an organization to request national pension for Koreans in Japan was established to support Kim Hyun Jo, a South Korean legal resident in Japan who had paid premium for twelve years. He found out that he could not receive the pension because he was not a Japanese citizen.\textsuperscript{645} Even though his local government office had encouraged him to enroll and pay monthly fees since 1960, his pension request was denied in 1976.\textsuperscript{646} His first motion of complaint against the MOHW was denied in 1979 by the Examination Committee of Social Insurance, because according to the committee, he did not have the qualification to enroll to begin with, and thus, he did not deserve the pension.\textsuperscript{647} Although he finally won his entitlement against the GOJ in 1983, this kind of treatment of Korean residents in Japan was called and recognized as “nationality discrimination (kokuseki-sabetsu).”\textsuperscript{648} However, the GOJ did not acknowledge it as discrimination and instead used the phrase “nationality clause (kokuseki-jyoko).” The nationality clause was an example of nationality discrimination. It was designed for guarding nationality as

\textsuperscript{644} Itō Masayoshi, August 19, 1980, shūgiin gaimu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs], 92\textsuperscript{nd} Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 2, 2.
\textsuperscript{645} Asahi shimbun, November 6, 1977.
\textsuperscript{646} Asahi shimbun, June 2, 1979; July 21, 1979.
\textsuperscript{647} Asahi shimbun, June 2, 1979.
\textsuperscript{648} Tanaka Hiroshi, Sengo 60-nen o kangaeru [Thinking 60 Years of the post-war]: hoshō saiban, kokuseki sabetsu, rekishi ninshiki (Tokyo: Sōshisha, 2005).
citizenship rights, excluding non-national subjects such as permanent residents and temporarily residents from receiving welfare.

The media also supported the government view of the nationality clause of national welfare as non-discriminatory. For example, a 1980 newspaper article on the abolishment of the national clause of the pension, entitled “Provide National Pension for Foreigners,” implied that the fact that the government would offer national pension to “foreigners” should be seen as a benevolent act. This kind of narrative dismisses the problem of the exclusion of foreign residents from national welfare in the first place. Furthermore, this understanding of national pension did not raise awareness of the existing inequity against permanent residents. Considering that most of those residents were former Japanese citizens, the GOJ and the Japanese public in general needed to discuss the nationality clause to social welfare as post-colonial oppression on them. Instead, the focus on the elimination of the nationality requirement was not a post-colonial issue anymore but rather a matter of inclusion of foreigners into the Japanese nation.

In this way, Korean permanent residents were recategorized as “foreigners” so that they were no longer considered part of the Japanese citizens or people anymore. The dichotomy of Japanese people and former Japanese citizens (Japanese people and Japanese citizens) shifted into one of Japanese citizens and foreign residents in Japan (Japanese citizen and permanent resident). The Indochinese refugees were collapsed into the category of foreign residents in Japan. This is why the head of the Immigration

Bureau explained that there was no preference between treatment of refugees and of foreign residents from the Korean peninsula. Moreover, even when the GOJ decided to accede to the Convention of the Refugees, some MOHW officials recognized the removal of the “nationality clause” as “inevitable” but it was unfavorable. The MOHW finally agreed to accede to the Refugee Convention by eliminating the nationality clause of the national pension, yet this action did not reconstruct the existing system of welfare but rather just removed the national clause as an exceptional gesture for the Indochinese refugees.

**Exceptional Category of Indochinese Refugees in Japan**

Although admitting Indochinese refugees for resettlement in Japan was significant for the history of Japanese immigration, the limitation of the category reflects the GOJ’s technique of being exclusionary. When Japan finally implemented the Indochinese refugee resettlement in 1978, it treated Indochinese refugees as ‘guests,’ a temporary racial category. It is important to emphasize that Indochinese refugees constituted a

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650 May 29, 1981, shūgiin hōmu inkai [House of Representatives Committee on Judicial Affairs], 94th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.17.
651 For example, on May 14, 1981, lawyer Harago Sanji, summoned as an unsworn witness in the Diet, pointed out this unwillingness as follows: “According to the statement on the rectification of national pension submitted to the Minister of the Health and Welfare, Sonoda [Sunao], by the name of Yamada Yuzo, who is a chairman of the Advisory Council on National Pension [kokumin nenkin shingikai] on March 23, this year [1981], included the opinion that is ‘please be noted that do not violate the foundation of the national pension system.’ An opinion like Yamada’s is problematic because he wants to keep the basis of the national pension system, even though it contradicts with the spirit of the principle of the Convention on the Refugees. According to the opinion of Ōkouchi Kazuo, chairman of the Advisory Council on Social Security [shakai hosho seido shingikai], on March 27, it shows the belief that ‘[it=acceding to the Refugee Convention] is going to abolish the nationality requirement. [I] acknowledge it as inevitable.’ These attitudes of both the Advisory Councils on National Pension and Social Security, as I introduced now, reveal remarks like it is inevitable from the extremely passive standpoint, as this way… I highly regret whether Japan’s attitude is fine this way or not as a lawyer….” Harago Sanji, May 14, 1981, shūgiin gaimu inkai [House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs], 94th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.14, 7.
group that the GOJ allowed to resettle, but they were not lawfully “refugees” under Japan’s immigration and control order. Under the GOJ’s definition, “Indochinese refugee” was not the lawful concept of refugee but rather a generally accepted notion. The GOJ did not automatically extend the Indochinese refugees to the UN convention refugee status or vice versa. Race was deeply involved because the category was racialized to only include “Indochinese” who were from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

The resettlement of the Indochinese refugees began before the implementation of the UN refugee convention in Japan, so that the Indochinese refugees who were admitted to Japan did not have to fulfill the MOJ’s approval of “refugees” even though they were known as “refugees.” This differentiation of “Indochinese refugees” from UN convention-defined refugees in Japan constituted the GOJ’s technique to limit the category of refugee as narrowly as possible to eliminate as many refugees as possible.

When the GOJ issued the Cabinet Understanding to admit resettlement of the “Indochinese refugees” in 1978, the GOJ referred to those who were from former Indochina as “Indochinese refugees.” They were, in reality, non-UN-Convention refugees and “specially” permitted guests. The GOJ made Indochinese refugee an exception from legal refugee status while still labeling them “refugees.” It was advantageous for the

from 1979 to 1982 each year recorded more than 1,000 people, while the year 1980 marked the peak as 1278 people arrived. http://www.rhq.gr.jp/japanese/know/i-nanmin.htm. The April 1978 Cabinet decision to permit refugee resettlement in Japan represented “a crucial turning point in the history of Japanese ‘domestic’ refugee policy since it was the first time in post-WWII Japan that its government ever did so.” Ryuji Mukae, Japan’s Refugee Policy, 102. This decision was not only significant for International Relations studies, but also crucial for Japan’s changes in domestic policy, though the number of the refugees Japan admitted was small. However, even after the government’s decision, the GOJ treated Indochinese refugees as “guests” because ‘Indochinese refugees’ were not a legal category of refugee, but a temporal racially-charged category. Thus the GOJ only allowed them to stay temporarily.  

653 The term “refugee” applies to any person who “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the
GOJ to do so. Because of the demarcation of “Indochinese refugee” and the UN defined refugee category, the GOJ kept the strict definition of refugee while admitting “Indochinese refugees.” For example, Yoshida Nagao, the Head of the Immigration Bureau in 1978, mentioned that Japan was participating in the UNHCR’s plan of helping Vietnamese refugees as a member of the United Nations.\(^654\) According to him, Japan was not helping refugees in general but rather specifically the Indochinese refugees in the UNHCR camps.

Accordingly, when the Indochinese refugee problem under the UNHCR management was finished, the GOJ abolished the temporary category of ‘Indochinese refugees’ as well. In this way, from the beginning, the GOJ created the ‘Indochinese refugee’ as a special category separate from the UNHCR defined refugees, so that the GOJ could keep their own definition of refugee as strict as possible to exclude the admittance of UNHCR defined refugees into Japan. It has been extremely difficult for possible refugee subjects to obtain their refugee status in Japan, as the GOJ has demanded that they prove their political/religious prosecutions.\(^655\) This way of participating in the refugee resettlement continues today and the GOJ keeps the category

\(^{654}\) Yoshida Nagao, April 28, 1978, shūgiin hōmu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Judicial Affairs], 84\(^{th}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 21, 8.

\(^{655}\) The GOJ admitted 39 refugees (!) in 2010. There are cases that UN defined refugees were deported to their countries of origin because they could not prove their political/religious persecution, which the GOJ usually demand to be submitted as documents. Petrice R. Flowers, “Failure to Protect Refugees: Domestic Institutions, International Organizations, and Civil Society in Japan.” *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Volume 34, Number 2, (Summer 2008), 333-361. http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/press_090130-1.html
of refugee as unattainable as possible.\textsuperscript{656} Thus, Japan’s refugee category failed to follow the universal standard and excluded possible refugees who deserved to be saved by differentiating Indochinese refugees from other ethnic groups such as Taiwanese and Korean possible refugee subjects.\textsuperscript{657}

Moreover, “Indochinese refugee” was an exclusionary category for people from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam as well because to be classified as so they had to fulfill the qualification for the “resettlement permission” according to the Cabinet Understandings. For instance, the GOJ differentiated people from former Indochina who reached Japan’s shore as “boat people” from “Indochinese refugees.” Demarcating the idea of “Indochinese refugee” from that of boat people and displaced persons (ryūmin), the GOJ minimized its responsibility to support Indochinese people who left their countries. In the MOJ’s definition, UN defined refugee, Indochinese refugee, boat people, and displaced person are all different legal categories.

Eliminating “displaced person” from the “refugee” definition was also a significant maneuver that the GOJ employed. Different from the English definition of “displaced person,” the GOJ employed the word “ryūmin” to demarcate the people who were originally from the former Indochinese region yet had obtained some other country’s passport or travel document to enter Japan. The GOJ began calling some of the

\textsuperscript{656} Japan started resettlement of Karen refugees (from Myanmar) on September 29, 2010 by cooperating with the UNHCR. Japan became the first country to accept their resettlement in Asia. However, the GOJ only admits 30 Karen refugees for a year. http://www.unhcr.org/4ca1c5899.html http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/nanmin/symp_gai.html.

\textsuperscript{657} However, some members of the Social Democratic Party had challenged the GOJ’s treatment of the refugee category, because they questioned the difference between the Indochinese refugees and possible refugee subjects already in Japan (who were mostly Taiwanese/Koreans). In their understanding, if the GOJ allowed the Indochinese refugees to legally stay in Japan, those had been believed as “illegal” or “undocumented” immigrants, such as Koreans, would deserve to do so as well. The GOJ never used the word “nanmin (refugee)” for Taiwanese/Korean possible refugee subjects.
refugees “ryūmin” because the GOJ deemed that they committed “illegal” entries into Japan or were staying in Japan “illegally.” The GOJ did not want to admit those who were not clearly “refugees,” such as someone coming directly from a UNHCR-operated camp in Southeast Asia. For example, some “ryūmin” cases discussed in the Congress were of those who were originally from former Indochina countries yet acquired Thai or Taiwanese passports to travel to Japan to stay and who were on the brink of deportation. Their status as “Indochinese refugees” was not approved because they had an “illegal” entry into Japan. The GOJ required people who claimed “Indochinese refugee” status to identify themselves with their “legal” procedure and processing.

This intolerance of the Indochinese refugee category divulges the GOJ’s lack of understanding of the multiple displacements of people in Asia. For example, in one case a Chinese-Laotian woman named Tran My Lan, who possessed a Thai passport to enter Japan, was arrested on October 4, 1979 for violating immigration control order and foreign registration law and was incarcerated in a detention center (kochishō) to stand trial in a criminal court. She received suspended prison terms in the trial on March 28, 1980 and was held in the detention center again for about a month prior to deportation.658 The Immigration Bureau did not consider her a Laotian because her passport was a genuine Thai passport. Therefore, she and her advocates had to go back to Thailand to prove that she was not a Thai but a Laotian national. The group of lawyers called “The Commission of Lawyers to Rescue Indochinese Refugees in Japan (Zainichi Indoshina nanmin o sukuu hōritsuka no kai)” visited refugee camps in Thailand and discovered that

658 April 23, 1980, shūgiin hōmu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Judicial Affairs], 91st Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 19, 5-6.
Ms. Tran was adopted by a Laotian royal family.\(^{659}\) This information became important evidence to prove the possibility of persecution if she went back. Thus, she was able to request permission for temporary stay in Japan for a year, beginning July 21, 1981. She was the first case of an “Indochina ryūmin” gaining permission to stay.\(^{660}\) Because this story offered hope for similar situations, some “ryūmin” came forward hoping that they would obtain permission to stay. As a result, seven cases of “ryūmin” evictions occurred by the end of 1982 and the GOJ did not provide permission to them.\(^{661}\) The support group for those “ryūmin” critiqued the way the GOJ pretended to ease the treatment to make them arrested as a “ryūmin-hunt” (tricking them in order to arrest them).\(^{662}\)

In another case, Thach Hoa and Van Vung Phu were arrested for violation of immigration and control order.\(^{663}\) Because both of them had Taiwanese passports, the GOJ considered them Taiwanese nationals and would not provide any support to them, even though they claimed that they were originally from Vietnam.\(^{664}\) Cases such as Tran, Hoa, and Phu expose the fact that the concept of “Indochinese refugee” was based on not only Japan’s understanding of nation and race but also on Japan’s exclusion technique. The GOJ comprehended Indochinese refugees as people who held passports from Laos, Cambodia or Vietnam or who could prove their origin in former Indochina. Thus, it did not want to accept exceptions like Tran, Hoa, and Phu. This was because once the government allowed a third country passport holder to be considered an Indochinese

\(^{659}\) Asahi shimbun, July 17, 1980.
\(^{660}\) Asahi shimbun, July 22, 1981.
\(^{661}\) Asahi shimbun, December 13, 1982.
\(^{662}\) Ibid.
\(^{663}\) November 13, 1981, shūgiin hōmu iinkai [House of Representatives Committee on Judicial Affairs], 95\(^{th}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no.7, 20.
\(^{664}\) Ibid.
refugee, the elimination of those who were from those countries, such as Thailand and Taiwan, from the refugee category would be difficult. Thus, securing the Indochinese refugee category as an ethnic/racial one was extremely important for the GOJ to eliminate the possibility of accepting Thai/Taiwanese or other passport holders. According to Asahi Shimbun, in 1980 there were about 2-300 “ryūmin” who did not meet the legitimate status to claim refuge and who kept their status as illegal because they were afraid of deportation.665

The precise categorization of “Indochinese refugee” was a part of the GOJ’s post-WWII technologies of control and population management. The Indochinese refugee issue overlaps with other issues such as “Japanese orphans in China (chūgoku zanryū koji),” “Koreans who were former Japanese citizen left out in Sakhalin (saharin zainichi tyosen/kankoku jin),” and “Former Japanese soldiers’ pension (moto-nihonhei no onkyū).” “Japanese orphans in China” were the legacy of the Japanese empire; they mostly consisted of Japanese children who were left in China after the families repatriated to Japan after WWII. As the result of China-Japan relations, the GOJ finally began to release information about the children in 1975.666 “Koreans who were former Japanese citizens left out in Sakhalin” became known as an issue due to the movement by Korean resident Park No Hak, who was repatriated from Sakhalin. Since 1958, he and his wife Horie Kazuko have worked to get the GOJ to let former Japanese (Koreans) go back

665 Asahi shimbun March 14, 1980.
666 Ōkubo Maki, Chūgoku zanryū Nihonjin [The Japanese left in China]: “kimin” no keika to, kikokugo no kunan [process of abandonment and difficulties after coming back] (Tokyo: Kōbunken, 2006), 346. The Japanese who were left in China after WWII began being invited to visit Japan in 1981. If they found their relatives in Japan when they visited, they were allowed to come back to Japan as Japanese. Since 1985, when a guarantee system started, even if they cannot find their relatives they are permitted to come back to Japan.
to Japan. In 1975, lawyers such as Takagi Kenichi sued the GOJ for making those Koreans stay in Sakhalin for labor against their will. The “Former Japanese soldiers’ pension” issue was brought forth by Nakamura Teruo, a former Japanese citizen and ethnic minority in colonized Taiwan. He was “discovered” in Morotai, Indonesia in 1974. He was there for thirty-one years as a Japanese soldier because he did not surrender until then. His existence exposed the complexity of the war but also the mistreatment of former Japanese soldiers like him. Because of the San Francisco peace treaty, Nakamura lost his nationality and was treated as a “non-nationality person (mukokuseki-sha),” and thus he was not able to receive any pension for serving Japan in the war.

In the 1970s, the GOJ and Japanese society finally faced responsibility for the war and its empire in Asia through these issues. Nonetheless, the GOJ prioritized them according to their proximity to the Japanese race, as the GOJ presumed that those who were racially Japanese had to be rescued first. This was why the involvement and support of the Indochinese refugees raised questions about the Japanese helping non-Japanese. As I explained above, this was the result of Japan’s racial fears and of how the

667 Takagi Kenichi is the same lawyer that sued the GOJ in the 1990s for its responsibility for comfort women.
668 Asahi shimbun, December 27, 1974.
669 Although Nakamura received donations and fund-raised money from various organizations, official payment from the GOJ was 30,000 yen and un-paid payment 38,000 yen (about $340 at that time). This was benefit for coming back. Asahi shimbun December 27, 1974; Kawasaki Masumi, Kaettekita taiwanjin nihonhei [Returned Taiwanese Japanese Soldier] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjū, 2003), 83-85.
670 However, as Lisa Yoneyama claims, Japan did not repay the debt towards Asia. The GOJ’s attitude towards Asia has not changed. Lisa Yoneyama, Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space, and the Dialectics of Memory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 11-12. Mun Gyong-su also asserts that responsibility for the wars of Japan only focused on the beginning the war. The torture of white soldiers was not considered part of its responsibility for assaulting Asia. Mun Gyong-su, Zainishi Chōsenjin mondai no kigen [Origins of Zainichi Korean Problems] (Tokyo: Kurein, 2007), 161.
671 “Japanese orphans in China” received the most government attention and support.
concept of citizenship in Japan strategically sustained a racial identity of Japaneseness, even when the GOJ admitted the Indochinese refugees and acceded to the Refugee Convention.

The refugee recognition in Japan became so difficult because the GOJ did not establish an independent agency to manage applications and evaluate refugee status. Although civilian organizations like the “Committee for Helping the Indochinese Refugees (indoshina-nanmin wo tasukeru kai),” the “Committee of Lawyers to Help Indochinese Refugees in Japan (zainichi-indoshina-nanmin wo sukuu horitsuka no kai),” and the “Citizen’s Committee for Solidarity with Indochinese Displaced Persons (Indoshina-ryūmin ni rentaisuru shimin no kai)” proposed that the GOJ create an agency for the refugees, the GOJ, especially the MOJ, did not agreed to do so.\(^6\)\(72\) Okuno Seisuke, Minister of Justice in 1981, was against the idea that practice of the Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees was under sovereignty of the nation-state. Therefore, approval and decision of refugee status was under Japan’s right and responsibility.\(^6\)\(73\) The MOJ wanted to retain its power to limit the number of refugees in Japan. Even though the GOJ employed the UN definition of refugee, the MOJ kept its own interpretation of it to ensure strict control of the number and meaning of ‘refugee.’ The MOJ understood that the convention did not impose that Japan be responsible for admitting refugees who were outside of the country.\(^6\)\(74\) Consequently, MOJ’s control of the refugee category reveals that the GOJ was not ready to admit refugees or liberalize

\(^6\)\(72\) March 27, 1981, sangiin yosan iinkai daiyon bunka kai [House of Councilors Committee on Budget the Forth Division], 94\(^{th}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 1, 23.
\(^6\)\(73\) Okuno Shinsuke, March 11, 1981 sangiin yosan iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Budget], 94\(^{th}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 6, 17.
\(^6\)\(74\) Ōtaka Hiroshi, June 4, 1981, sangiin hōmu iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Judicial Affairs], 94\(^{th}\) Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 11, 9.
the immigration policy but rather agreed to resettle a very small number of Indochinese refugees for international politics.

3. Trans-Pacific Racisms

Japan’s involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem not only missed the opportunity to overcome the single race myth but also reinforced Japan’s own belief of racial superiority in Asia and the Pacific. American studies scholar Igarashi Takeshi argues that for Japanese society the post WWII period is metaphorically the second part of “exiting Asia and becoming a part of the West” (datsua-nyouu: original slogan for modernization of Japan during the Meiji Restoration of 1868). In a way, Japan once again desired to be an “honorary white” playing the role of a regional leader in Asia. This racial identity was possible because the Japanese achieved racial consciousness through modernizing the country. Japanese historian Akazawa Shiro further mentions that Japanese racial consciousness towards the West took a path from “datsua nyouou (existing Asia and becoming a part of Europe),” to “kichiku beiei (savage America and England),” to “datsua nyubei (exiting Asia and becoming a part of America).” Respect of the West was the other side of the same coin as contempt of Asia.

Even though Japan’s participation in the issue opened up racial issues in Japan, Japan did not alter its strict policy of immigration control, as I analyzed earlier. Since

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677 For example, political scientist Mun Gyong-su points out that Japan’s view on Asia has not changed a bit and in particular Japan’s view on Korea displays disrespect for Asia. Mun Gyong-su, Zainichi Chosenjin mondai no kigen, 160
public discriminatory feelings against former colonial subjects (such as Koreans or Taiwanese), special permanent residents and foreign residents in general were sustained, the Indochinese refugees who resettled in Japan were also targets of racial prejudice. They were bullied with phrases like “go home.” In this section, I will analyze the ways in which the GOJ optimized the resettlement to satisfy itself as a member of the developed nations while maintaining racial superiority against other Asians.

**US-Japan Partnership to Foster Trans-Pacific Racisms**

Because the Indochinese refugees were the first group that the GOJ officially admitted through its own resettlement plans in Japan’s post-WWII era, the Indochinese refugee resettlement enabled Japan and the US. through their partnership to carry on and nurture their mutual racisms in Asian and the Pacific. Political scientist Yukiko Koshiro calls these racisms “trans-Pacific racisms.” She points out how the U.S. and Japan mutually fostered not only their own racism but also shared racism towards Asia and the Pacific through U.S. occupation in Japan. Her international framework to analyze racism has allowed me to see that the refugee resettlement was a great chance for both countries to reproduce a global racial order. I am not trying to bind racism to a geographic region but rather expand national racism into a transnational one in order to examine the ways in which both the U.S. and Japan sustained their dominance in Asia not only politically and economically but also culturally and racially. Yukiko Koshiro suggests that the honorary white racial identity of Japan, which enabled the Japanese to behave like members of the West although they were racially categorized as Asian, “served to solidify its position in

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679 The idea of ‘trans-Pacific racisms’ was proposed by Yukiko Koshiro. Yukiko Koshiro, *Trans-Pacific Racisms and the US Occupation of Japan.*
the Western community as a junior regional representative—a permanent ‘associate’
member of the circle of Western nations.” Although Japan would never be able to be a
“full” member of the Western nations, Japan would play a superior position in Asia by
degrading other Asian countries and assimilating itself into Western countries.

Japan’s role became significant for the U.S. because the GOJ became one of the
donor countries and played an active role to facilitate the resettlement process as the U.S.
wished. For instance, Japan decided to provide strong financial support for the
establishment of Refugee Processing Centers for Indochinese refugees. In turn, the U.S.
government began emphasizing Japan’s role as more important than ever, considering
Japan “a global partner.” For instance, at the Meeting on the Establishment of a
Processing Center for Indochina Refugees, the GOJ impressed the Carter Administration
by claiming that, “We would not like to suggest that Japan has turned overnight into a
world political power, willing to act without inhibitions in any and all forums. Sparked by
the energetic verve of a world-traveling foreign minister, however, Japan has made
significant strides in the past two years and we anticipate the trend will continue.”
Americans at the conference were satisfied with the GOJ’s initiatives on the resettlement
because the Japanese delegation played “the most constructive and active role of all

680 Ibid., 203.
681 Telegram to Secretary of State to American Embassy Tokyo, May 23, 1979, “Japan, 5-9/79,” National
Security Affairs Brzezinski Material: Country File, Box 41, Jimmy Carter Library.
682 Ibid.
Trans-Pacific racisms apparently emerged through U.S. and Japan discussions about leadership in Asia regarding the refugee resettlement issue. For example, when Vice President Walter Mondale complemented Japan’s role in the Government Seven meeting, he illustrated Japan as a member of the West. He mentioned: “Before I begin let me say that the Tokyo Summit was the best of all summits. Our relations are the way relations between two great industrial democracies ought to be.”

The invocation that this was “the way relations between two great industrial democracies ought to be” enabled the U.S. and Japan to internationalize the resettlement and establish the Refugee Processing Centers in Southeast Asia, as both countries assumed the refugee issue was a security threat to the ASEAN and saw the resettlement as a moral act.

In this way, Mondale implied that as a democratic country Japan had to do what the U.S. required Japan to do. Japan’s contribution needed to reach a level that would allow first asylum countries to manage refugees in their neighboring countries and resettlement countries to admit more refugees. Thus, Mondale’s statement not only exposed his presumption that the U.S. had authority to persuade other countries but also emphasized both countries’ superior positions in Asia.

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683 Ibid.
684 The U.S. demanded that Japan share “half” of the cost of the overall program of resettlement. Although the administration avoided claiming exactly so, the U.S. relied on Japan’s financial contribution to carry out what they wanted for the Indochinese refugee resettlement.
685 Memorandum of Conversation, Luncheon Meeting with Prime Minister Ōhira, Tokyo, Japan, September 3, 1979, Declassified Documents Reference System.
686 Mondale stated: “The refugee problem marks a threat to ASEAN. Your country has contributed to building that promising institution. These first asylum countries are under pressure. We need the processing centers; in their absence, we could be in for trouble.” Ibid.
As Japan’s Prime Minister Ōhira Masayoshi appreciated Mondale’s comment, the conversation between these two countries produced Japan’s subordinate position to the U.S., the model of the industrial nations. Ōhira also recognized the fact that Japan should have admitted more refugees, but he rationalized Japan’s action of not admitting more refugees by highlighting Japan’s efforts to fund the resettlement. He promised more financial contributions if the U.S. would recognize Japan’s difficulty of increasing the admittance of refugees. This meant that the GOJ was willing to pay more money if it would be able to keep the number of refugees into the country low. Japan preferred financial contribution to refugee resettlement in Japan. This preference to pay money to keep out, rather than provide resources for refugees inside, is right in line with the one race nation myth.

The Carter administration did not push Japan too much to admit more refugees at that time because they knew that the U.S. was the most popular country among the refugees. Popularity of the U.S. was also a significant element of trans-Pacific racisms, as shown in Vice President Mondale’s statement, because it reaffirmed the U.S.-top global racial hierarchy:

There is some humor in where the refugees want to go. No one wants to go to Ireland. They have never heard of England. One lady said ‘I want to go to America, but unfortunately I am being interviewed by Australia.’ (laughter) They have a magazine once every two weeks with statements ‘come to Ireland,’ ‘go to New Zealand,’ ‘if you like cold weather, come to

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687 Prime Minister Ōhira agreed with this understanding of the issue, replying that “the United States is very seriously coming to grips with the refugee problem.” He continued: “You accommodate the most, we are thankful, you set the example.” Ibid.

688 Japan should do more, but given our social system, we are not suited to accommodating refugees on a long term basis. Accordingly, we contribute to the UNHCR. Earlier, we had indicated that Japan would pay 50% of the cost of the processing center on Magalan Island. We will give further thought to contributions for the new processing center in the Philippines.” Ibid.
Canada.’ (laughter) Then they publish letters from refugees who have resettled describing the merits of the countries they are in.\footnote{Ibid.}

According to him, those refugees wanted to go to the U.S. because they did not understand the choices that they had. This dominant preference for the U.S. allowed Mondale to laugh at the “humor.” The Refugees’ perception of America confirmed the superiority of the U.S. in the world. Furthermore, Mondale presumed that anywhere other than Vietnam, Cambodia, or Laos, would be good enough for them. Mondale’s quote reveals racial and cultural assumptions. The U.S. and Japan believed in the superiority of America, England, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada over those Communist countries of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

For that reason, refugees were assumed to be grateful for those choices of countries but they were not supposed to be picky about their destination. This conjecture was derived from a widely shared bias against the refugees and their countries, which Mondale claimed as humorous. The U.S. ridiculed the refugees’ desire to come to the U.S. by claiming that they were ignorant of other countries and their choices because of their lack of knowledge. He assumed that English-speaking countries would be all the same to the refugees (except for the weather). In this way, the U.S. ignored the refugees’ own decisions of resettlement countries because a person like Mondale thought that refugees were incapable of making such decisions. He might be suggesting that there were other options out there equally as good that the refugees were not considering, yet this logic overshadows American unwillingness to admit refugees by belittling their decisions.
Mondale’s “humor” also represents the U.S.’s pretentious pride regarding its self-perception as a world power and a member of the wealthy English-speaking countries. By depicting the refugees as fortunate to immigrate to the first world, the U.S. erased their specific cultural, political, and historical ties with Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. This not only demeans the refugees as poor and uneducated immigrants but also elides American cultural, political and military endeavors in the region. For instance, the popularity of the U.S. can be seen as its own acts of winning the trust of the people in former Indochina during the war, as President Lyndon B. Johnson created a campaign to win the hearts and minds of Vietnamese people. Therefore, the way in which the Carter Administration recuperated the refugees’ desires to go to the U.S. as a traditional immigrant narrative, affirming the U.S. as a land of opportunity, shows that the U.S. was not willing to take sole responsibility for the resettlement.

The GOJ did not say anything opposing to the U.S. statements in the meeting with Mondale. Moreover, Prime Minister Ōhira expressed his gratitude for the U.S. by respectfully acknowledging U.S. admission of refugees: “I am sure the rest of the world appreciates what the United States has done.”\textsuperscript{690} He also offered appreciation of U.S. leadership: “Japan is taking a more and more positive attitude because the United States has been pushing us.”\textsuperscript{691} Ōhira’s statement reveals that Japan accepted the U.S.’s role of guiding Japan to a moral position in the international community. It also exemplifies trans-Pacific racisms. As long as Japan obtained their political and cultural status as a U.S. partner in Asia, Japan’s administration did not care too much about American

\textsuperscript{690} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{691} Ibid.
attitudes towards the rest of Asia. For Japan, it was important to gain the position of regional leader in order to obtain more legitimacy for their own political power internationally, even if this meant remaining subordinate the U.S.

Consequently, both countries looked down on Southeast Asian countries. For instance, when Foreign Minister Sonoda questioned which island of the Philippines would be used for the Refugee Processing Center, Vice President Mondale ridiculed the Philippines: “Their price also was a little high! ... Our Ambassador said the center keeps moving; the latest site seems to be our part of Subic Bay (laughter). The first project had gold door knobs (laughter).” The U.S. represented the Philippines as greedy and indecisive this way. Because the U.S. and Japan were the main financial donors of the resettlement project, the Philippines’ contribution was considered less significant than theirs. Providing the island was assumed less important than financing the project. The quote reveals the superiority complex of the U.S. and Japan: they translated their financial powers into their national and racial dominance. Japan’s financial ability to support the U.S. in the resettlement allowed the GOJ to mock the refugees and the Philippines with the U.S. The power triangle of the U.S., Japan and the Philippines was crystallized through the resettlement efforts.

In this way, the U.S.-Japan partnership sustained and reproduced trans-Pacific racisms through the Indochinese refugee resettlement. On the one hand, the GOJ was able to obtain U.S. trust through its financial aid and to achieve political power as a moral nation by participating in the refugee resettlement. Although Japan had to meet the U.S.’s expectations that Japan supply half of the overall financial expenses, apply generous

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692 Ibid.
temporary staying policy and admit some refugees, Japan achieved the position to play honorary white nation in Asia. On the other hand, even though the Philippines collaborated with the establishment of the RPC, it could not attain the same position as Japan. Rather, both the U.S. and Japan did not greatly appreciate the cooperation and took it for granted by considering it the mandatory duty of a Southeast Asian country.

Successfully restricting the refugee category to keep Japanese citizenship as limited as possible, Japan’s participation in the refugee resettlement boosted Japan’s pride in the international community by self-praising its efforts. The Head of the group for responding to refugees in the Asia division of the MOFA (gaimusho ajia kyoku nanmin taisaku shitutyo) at that time, Imakawa Yukio, explained that Japan’s financial contribution to the UNHCR’s rescue plan for the Indochinese refugees is the number one in the world. He claimed that Japan, “as a country whose land is small and has a lot of population,” has been doing its best, since the goal of 3000 refugee admittances was the same standard that European countries provided. Officials measured Japan’s contribution by comparing it with other Western countries. Subordinating to the U.S. in the resettlement was a great opportunity for Japan to reclaim political power in Asia.

**Differential Inclusion/Exclusion**

Even though the GOJ carried out strict control of the Indochinese refugee category, Japanese society gradually embraced the refugee figure of a young student struggling through his/her life, doing what s/he can to survive. For instance, Tran Ngoc Lan was an emblematic figure of an Indochinese refugee who entered medical school and

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693 Imakawa Yukio, June 4, 1981, sangiin hōmu iinkai [House of Councilors Committee on Judicial Affairs], 94th Diet, kokkai gijiroku [Diet Records], no. 11, 5.
became a doctor. Her success story as a “refugee girl” that entered and graduated from medical school to become a doctor was well known after her book was published in 1990 and developed into a TV drama that aired in June 1992 and is consistently repeated in the Japanese media. In 2008, a retrospective news segment on a TV show again picked up the 1990 news of her story, which was about her graduation from Saint Marianna medical school. This was entitled “Fledging Spring for a Refugee Medical Student” and it was in *Asahi Shimbun* on March 11, 1990.

Tran’s life is depoliticalized through the navigation of her personal struggle from a refugee to doctor as a success story. In this way, her story is read as a metamorphosis of the “other” of Japanese society into a person with “higher status” within society. Nonetheless, her out-sidedness in Japanese culture did not disappear even when she became a medical doctor and a naturalized Japanese citizen. The Japanese media has always categorized her as “a former-refugee-turned-out-to-be-doctor,” not a “Japanese doctor.” Tran herself affirms that there is an “exclusiveness of Japaneseness.” For

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695 Omoikkiri terebi, March 11, 2008.

696 This “differential inclusion” narrative repeatedly circulates in Japan. For example, the story of Vu Dang Khoi, who is also a refugee admitted into medical school, became an article in the Sankei Newspaper in 1988. Because he could not afford to pay money to enroll in the school even though he was able to pass the entrance exam, the article was issued to raise money to help him. Vu graduated from the school and published his own memoir entitled “The Reasons Why I Became a Japanese (soredemo nihon-jin ni natta wake)” in 2001 under his naturalized name, Takenaga Ken. Since there is no multicultural discourse in Japan, such as the hyphenated identity in the U.S., in Japan his narrative emerged as why he became Japanese, as his book’s title shows. His book reveals the heart-breaking journey of his family since the end of the Vietnam War, describing how he lost hope in the new Vietnam and found hope in his new life in Japan. Takenaga Ken, *Soredemo nihonjin ni natta wake* [The Reason Why I Became a Japanese] (Tokyo: Popurasha, 2001).

697 She has always been referred to as a “refugee” in various media representations.
example, she mentioned that even someone married to a Japanese person is considered “a foreigner” and there is no ethnic community to support them.698

 Privileging stories of former refugees like Tran who suffered tragic lives yet turned out to be successful in Japanese society by and large perpetuated the “model minority” myth.699 Only in this way did they become an “object of compassion” to the Japanese people. Their political and cultural background in South Vietnam, which I call “Vietnameseness” here, was erased as they were represented as “foreigners” who were different from Japanese society yet deserved to be saved because they were valuable, like a good return on an investment. In this way, Japanese society regarded itself as superior to those “foreigners” who needed to come to Japan to live, work and study. Through the resettlement of refugees like Tran, Japanese society conveniently forgot the ambivalent role of Japan in the Vietnam War and its aftermath, playing an innocent yet generous nation.

 Furthermore, the narrative in which Indochinese refugees become Japanese citizens, especially during and after the 1980s, changed public perception of Korean Japanese resident status as “special.” For example, some people maintain that Korean Japanese status is “too special” when compared to that of other people who were admitted to stay in Japan.700 The Indochinese refugee figure obscures Japan’s colonial past in Asia and overshadows Japan’s responsibility to this former imperial population. I

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699 Although the model minority myth is based on Asian American educational success in the U.S., I apply the concept to the Indochinese, in particular, the Vietnamese refugee.
700 The organization called “zainichi tokken wo yurusanai kai (Organization Cannot Admit Privileges of Zainichi)” claimed that some of the exceptional measurements for Korean residents in Japan are “privileges” and need to be abolished. http://www.zaitokukai.info. By appropriating the Indochinese refugee figure as an object of compassion and the ideal for newly submissive Japanese citizens, Japanese society reassigned the enemy figure to Korean residents, depicting them as unwilling to assimilate.
claim that accepting Indochinese refugees gave Japanese society the opportunity to
represent the refugees as the “true” figures of victimhood and objects of compassion, thus
excluding other groups. 701

Therefore, racism—which situates Japaneseness as the norm of society and
discriminates against otherness on the basis of their non-Japaneseness—continues. The
admission of the Indochinese refugees fostered the sense of Japanese superiority in Asia,
through the exclusionary nature of the category of Indochinese refugees. By developing
the technique of this exclusionary inclusion, the GOJ refined the logic of legality on
immigration. For example, in 2006, Sarah Calderon, who was originally from the
Philippines, was arrested for “illegal entry” into Japan after fourteen years. During her
stay, she married Arlan, also from the Philippines, and had a daughter named Noriko,
who did not know her parents were from the Philippines until 2006. The family received
a deportation order from the MOJ in 2009. Although their friends collected signatures in
support for their stay as a family and they filed a law suit against the MOJ, the family had
to choose either to all go back to the Philippines or have the daughter stay in Japan. The
MOJ claimed that they could not allow the whole family to stay because both parents had
entered Japan “illegally” by using other’s passports in the 1990s. According to this
understanding, only the daughter could stay in Japan legally. In April 2009, the family
decided that Noriko would stay and Sarah and Arlan would go back to the Philippines.

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701 Even for the Indochinese refugees, the argument whether they are “economic refugees (bona-fide
refugees)” or “true refugees” often comes out in the media. Since refugees are culturally and politically
marked as victims, other immigrants including former colonial subjects are considered economically
motivated “foreigners.”
During their media exposure to seek help, they received so many criticisms for their “illegal entry” into Japan, so that they had to actually apologize for their overstay.\(^{702}\)

Until the final decision by the MOJ, I was personally surprised to see the lack of public support for the family to stay together legally in Japan. Reading the comments on the internet, I realized that even though the family only hoped to stay together, the focus of the argument became their legality of staying.\(^{703}\) “Illegal entry” was deemed as something that has to be punished and, in the Calderon’s case, this meant a separation of the family. The reason why the family could not stay together was embedded in the context of the Japanese fear of admitting “foreigners,” especially “illegal immigrants.” The argument of “legality” of entry exemplifies Japan’s limited understanding of the movement and displacement of people in Asia. “Legality” is the way for the GOJ and Japanese society to justify the racism against people in Asia.

**Conclusion**

On September 22, 1986, Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro made a controversial speech to junior members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party in Shizuoka, Japan. He claimed that Japan became a more intelligent nation than the U.S. because the U.S. had a more heterogeneous population “whose average level is extremely low.”\(^{704}\) Although the Japanese media did not pay any attention to his remarks at first, the American media


\(^{703}\) For example, comments in the Yahoo News on the official denial of the Calderons stay on February 13 mostly agree with the governmental decision, because the parents “broke the law” in the first place so they were seen as not having a right to stay. [http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/cm/main?d=20090213-00000070-jij-soci.](http://headlines.yahoo.co.jp/cm/main?d=20090213-00000070-jij-soci.)

\(^{704}\) He had an extremely racist idea of people of color in the U.S. He particularly pointed out that the “many blacks, Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in the United States” were the culprits of the educational and societal “problem.” *Asahi Shimbun*, September 25, 1986.
critiqued them as racist slurs. Thus, Nakasone apologized that “he did not mean to suggest that some American minority groups are inferior to whites, but only to note the differences in educational levels between the United States and Japan, which is racially homogeneous.” Nakasone’s quote reveals that his sense of Japanese superiority comes from Japanese homogeneity, even though Japan began admitting refugees for resettlement in 1978.

His understanding of Japanese homogeneity came not only from his downplay of the fact of the refugee admission but also from the desire to be superior to the U.S. I assert that Japan’s involvement with the Indochinese refugee problem was one of the opportunities to nurture this sense of superiority and homogeneity. Resettling even a limited number of the refugees provided a chance for the GOJ and Japanese society to consider the admittance as a contribution to the international community. The involvement advanced the internationalization of Japanese society, on the grounds of receiving Indochinese refugees. However, as I explained above, the internationalization was in fact to strengthen Japan’s international position rather than to diversify the Japanese nation.

Participating in the international resettlement efforts marked Japan’s position as playing an “international role (kokusaiteki yakuwari).” It had to indicate that not only had Japan recovered from the war and occupation but also that it had become the second largest economic power in the world at that time. Throughout the involvement, Japan joined an international humanitarian mission. However, at the same time Japan needed to

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limit the category of refugee so as not to accept the vast number of people fleeing
countries all over the world. As a consequence, Japan assigned a special category to the
Indochinese refugees, which was lenient compared to other groups of people who
claimed asylum in Japan. In this way, the Japanese government sustained their myth of a
mono-racial society. This myth surfaced especially in the 1980s as a political/cultural
narrative to declare the strength of Japanese society in contrast to American multiethnic
society.

Nonetheless, the GOJ’s contribution to the international community, such as
involvement in the Indochinese refugee problem since the late 1970s, did not help to
diminish negative images of Japan as a vicious economic power. In particular, the
Japanese government and society were shocked when the Japanese were described as
“workaholics living in rabbit hutches” in an internal memo by Sir Roy Denman (who was
Director-General for External Relations of the European Council) in 1979.\(^{706}\) The
workaholic image was the same as the economic animal description of the Japanese. This
description put a curse on Japanese society; not only was the Japanese way of living
considered less affluent and less humane, but the Japanese themselves were considered
less human when compared to the West. Racialization of Japanese life as non-Western
and animal-like had enormous effects on self-consciousness of the Japanese. After the
report in 1979, until the early 2000s, Japanese society fixated on the goal of achieving a
similar quality of housing to a European standard.\(^{707}\) In government debates as well as in

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\(^{706}\) Jean-Pierre Lehman, “France, Japan, Europe, and Industrial Competition: The Automobile Case
International Affairs,” *Royal Institute of International Affairs*, vol.68, no.1, 42.

\(^{707}\) How to overcome the living situation of “rabbit hutches” as unhealthy and uncivilized life has been a
common theme in popular media. “Hate to be in ‘rabbit hutches’? How about healthy and cultural
the Japanese media, the housing and working situation suddenly became shameful aspects of Japanese society, because they did not fulfill the standard of the West. Not to be an animal meant contributing to the humanitarian effort of the world; this had tremendous significance, especially in the 1980s. However, as we know, the Japanese economic animal image prevailed in the world, especially in the 1980s and 1990s.\textsuperscript{708}

Trans-Pacific racisms certainly bolstered Japan’s pride in Asia and the Pacific, given Japan’s good partnership with the U.S. The distinction between who deserves compassion and who does not greatly contributed to the model of “tabunka kyōsei shakai (multicultural coexisting society)” for Japanese society, which gradually emerged and became a popular slogan of the GOJ in the 2000s. Even though the slogan was inspired by American multiculturalism, it does not put an emphasis on “multicultural” aspects of society but rather was imposed on society to keep the harmony. By doing so, the GOJ has been focusing on sustaining its law and order in society. This is why the Japanese Immigration Bureau chose the phrase “Internationalization in Compliance with the Rules” as their motto.\textsuperscript{709} They claim that deporting “undesirable aliens” is a primary task of their services. The bureau has been trying to decrease the overstay of a foreign population as much as possible.\textsuperscript{710} In the name of security, the Japanese government suspends its law of human rights and manages the population as targets of control and

\textsuperscript{708} For example, Hollywood produced movies such as \textit{Gung Ho} and \textit{Rising Sun} depicted the Japanese as economic animals during this time period.

\textsuperscript{709} They explain it as follows: “By connecting Japan and the world through proper immigration control services under the motto ‘Internationalization in compliance with the rules,’ making efforts for smoother cross-border human mobility, and deporting undesirable aliens for Japan, the Immigration Bureau, the MOJ makes contributions to sound development of the Japanese society.” http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/index.html.

\textsuperscript{710} It has the absolute authority to detain the “undesirable” population and send them back to their country. http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/tetuduki/taikyo/syuuyou.html.
removal. Therefore, the GOJ continues to consider people from overseas to be the source of problems such as disturbing the safety of society. Ironically enough, admittance of the Indochinese refugees worked as a moment for the GOJ and Japanese society to justify the exclusiveness of Japanese culture and the definition of Japanese people.

711 The GOJ desires to fulfill the needs of labor without receiving people. By employing the concept from Ghassan Hage, Vietnamese studies scholar Ashley Carruthers critiques Japanese multiculturalism as a “subjectless multiculturalism” that consumes various cultural products instead of admitting people. I assert that even though Japanese society admits various people from around the world, it is still unable to recognize the nation itself as diverse, because it considers these people to be “foreign” and “non-Japanese subjects” in the first place. Ashley Carruthers, “Cute Logics of the Multicultural and the Consumption of the Vietnamese Exotic in Japan” Positions: East Asia Cultural Critique, vol. 12, no. 2 (Fall 2004), 403-404.
EPILOGUE: Formation of the Extraterritorial Detention Procedure

In its imperial overseas expansions such as the colonization of the Philippines, the U.S. has represented its colonialism and imperialism as a civilizing mission.712 This moral mission of benevolence and discipline continued under the Cold War context, as the U.S. government proclaimed itself the role of rescuer via the production of refugees as victims of Communism. Given the U.S. imperial and colonial history and the Cold War context, the refugee evacuation contained a moral value. Throughout the chapters, I explained the ways in which this moral value has been instrumental in propping up the U.S. as an imperial power as well as elevating the status of other Asian countries like Japan. In this respect, I shed light on the Indochinese refugee resettlement as an imperial racial project for and of U.S. “morality.” As I explained throughout, the legacy of the Indochinese refugee resettlement was an elaboration of a biopolitical technique that enabled the U.S. as a project. The Indochinese refugee resettlement has become not only a validation of U.S. policy in Asia but also a symbol of the righteousness of U.S. extraterritoriality not only in Asia but also in other parts of the globe.

U.S. extraterritorial asylum policies were developed in the early 1980s. It was a little bit later than the RPC and the U.S.-Mexican border arguments but I believe that all three were part of the context of U.S. border restructuring and securing. The fact that the

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712 This is not limited to the U.S. The European Enlightenment itself was based on an idea of progress. As Richard Hofstadter explains, although there were anti-imperialists who opposed the idea of the U.S. expansion in the late nineteenth century, they could not override arguments for annexation, since moral and psychological themes, “expressed in the words Duty and Destiny,” were more powerful. As Richard Hofstadter reminds us, “what might have seemed a sin became transformed into a positive obligation, a duty.” Thus U.S. imperial expansion, such as the annexation of the Philippines, was casted as a moral duty. Richard Hofstadter, “Cuba, the Philippines and Manifest Destiny” in The Paranoid Style in American Politics, and Other Essays (New York: Knopf, 1965), 174.
U.S. implemented offshore asylum procedures by processing Haitian asylum claims at sea in 1981 was not simply by chance implemented with the establishment of the RPC system, but rather a logical consequence of the development of refugee processing in Southeast Asia.\(^{713}\) Under the Reagan administration, the U.S. Coast Guard was directed to intercept boats with Haitians and to drag them back to Haiti by the President’s executive order.\(^{714}\) Ronald Reagan first employed the U.S. policy of interception-detention-deportation in 1981, George H. W. Bush reaffirmed it in 1992, and then William Jefferson Clinton continued it. In the early 1980s, the U.S. government also began using the Guantánamo Bay Naval Base to detain Cuban and Haitian refugees. According to Jana Evans Braziel, “Approximately thirty-four thousand Haitian refugees were intercepted at sea and detained at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. At the highest point, more than forty-five thousand Haitians were held in detention camps at the base.”\(^{715}\) In the 1990s, it held refugees who had fled Haiti at Camp Bulkeley until United States District Court Judge Sterling Johnson Jr. declared the camp unconstitutional on June 8, 1993. The last Haitian migrants departed in late 1995. In June 2005, the United States Department of Defense announced that a unit of defense contractor Halliburton would build a new $1 billion USD detention facility and security perimeter around the base.\(^{716}\)


\(^{714}\) Gil Loescher and John Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness*, 188.


I maintain that these developments of the “extraterritorial detention procedure” (from refugees and asylum seekers to “terrorists”) were direct extensions of the RPC. Under the ongoing War on Terror, the use of Guantánamo as a detention camp to hold detainees from Afghanistan and Iraq is the same concept of the RPC utilizing extraterritorial space to protect the nation by securing the border. The U.S. government began to use lands outside of the U.S. as an extraterritorial space such as an extraterritorial jurisdiction through the Indochinese refugee resettlement to secure the border and to avoid domestic legal limitations on the treatment of refugees.

The development of the extraterritorial detention procedure was an accidental development of the U.S. evacuation from former Indochina. As I have explained, because the U.S. government claimed a moral obligation towards the people of the region yet did not want to admit all the people who left the country into the U.S., Asia became a surrogate refuge. The Ford Administration sought a way to internationalize the refugee problem in order to solve the situation. A memorandum to the president brought up this circumstance on April 26, 1975:

We have moved to internationalize the Indochina refugee problem. We have instructed our mission in Geneva to ask the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Intergovernmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for their assistance. ICEM has responded favorably. We consider Vietnamese and Cambodians who have left their countries on their own as the responsibility of states receiving them and of international humanitarian organizations.\[717\]

This statement claims that it is not only the U.S.’s responsibility but also the international organization’s mission to help refugees. The U.S. approached the United Nations High

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\[717\] Memorandum for the President from Brent Scowcroft, April 26, 1975, “File Vietnam (21),” National Security Advisor, Presidential County Files of Asia and the Pacific, Box 20, Gerald R. Ford Library.
Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to internationalize the refugee issue, supporting the UNHCR resettlement plans for Indochinese refugees and encouraging other countries to contribute.

This extraterritoriality of the U.S. is one example of what Ann Stoler calls “imperial formations.” She writes: “[A]gents of imperial rule have invested in, exploited, and demonstrated strong stakes in the proliferation of geopolitical ambiguities.” U.S. extraterritoriality did not start with politics of domination but with sympathy for refugees. The expansion of U.S. extraterritorial jurisdiction is analogous to a broad military-technological mobilization of the U.S., because the U.S. has been creating and maintaining a global network of military bases across the globe, on which ongoing occupations have been enabled. Geopolitical ambiguities keep reproducing race and cultural difference.

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