

WORLD

The Patriot

JAPAN'S MOST POWERFUL LEADER IN YEARS, **SHINZO ABE** AIMS TO RECLAIM HIS COUNTRY'S PLACE ON THE WORLD STAGE. THAT MAKES MANY ASIANS—INCLUDING SOME JAPANESE—UNCOMFORTABLE

BY HANNAH BEECH/TOKYO PHOTOGRAPH BY TAKASHI OSATO FOR TIME



On an April morning

at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, cherry-blossom petals fall like confetti around the Shinto worshippers who have come to offer their prayers. Pilgrims approach the austere shrine, clap twice and bow their heads. They are honoring the memory of 2.5 million Japanese war dead, whose souls are enshrined at Yasukuni and are considered divine. Nearby, on the shrine's grounds, a military-history museum presents a less peaceful scene. Amid the maps and swords and glass cases containing soldiers' letters home are exhibits that glorify Japan's imperial march across Asia, justify the bombing of Pearl Harbor as a necessary response to U.S. intransigence and airbrush atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers. The Nanjing Massacre, in which Japanese troops killed, raped and rampaged across the former Chinese capital, is described as an "incident."

On Dec. 26, 2013, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, dressed in a somber morning suit, walked behind a Shinto priest and paid his respects at Yasukuni. Japan's last six leaders pointedly stayed away, mindful that conferring official recognition on a shrine that honors top war criminals among the deceased would anger Asian nations where those crimes were committed. But Abe had said that not visiting Yasukuni was the great regret of his first term in office from 2006 to '07. Predictably, his visit drew furious condemnation from China and South Korea, two nations that suffered most under Japan's expansionism. Even the U.S., Japan's staunch ally and security guarantor, expressed its disappointment.

But Abe was playing to a different audience, sending a message not about love of war but about love of country. If his critics see it as a crude bit of nationalist provocation, so be it. "I paid a visit to Yasukuni Shrine to pray for the souls of those who had fought for the country and made ultimate sacrifices," he told TIME in an interview. "I have made a pledge never to wage



Home front Abe takes a break with his wife Akie in the gardens of the Prime Minister's official residence in Tokyo

war again, that we must build a world that is free from the sufferings of the devastation of war."

Japan's transformation from an imperial aggressor to the world's second largest economy and champion of peaceful ideals was one of the most redemptive tales of the 20th century. But nearly 70 years since the end of World War II, the pistons have stalled. In 2011 the Japanese economy lost its No. 2 status to China. Beijing is flexing its muscles, aggressively pursuing territorial disputes with Japan and other neighbors. Meanwhile, Japan's population is both aging and shrinking. For all its high-tech wizardry, the country feels sapped of the motivating power that propelled its rise. The 2011 triple shock of earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis, which claimed nearly 16,000 lives, only underscored this sense of national drift.

As Japan searches for its soul, Abe—grandson of a wartime minister once arrested by the Allied powers, collector of revisionist friends and Japan's first Prime Minister born in the postwar period—has positioned himself as a national savior. Powered with a rare electoral mandate, Abe, 59, has vowed to halt Japan's slow

march toward international irrelevance. Two decades of economic deflation and the lingering weight of wartime loss, in the view of Abe and his allies, have forced the country into a submissive crouch. It was time for some backbone. The 2012 campaign slogan of Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was "Restore Japan." Even his controversial economic-reform package, dubbed Abenomics, is a projection of the PM's vision to return Japan to greatness. "I am a patriot," Abe says, explaining one of his personal motivators. "When I came to office, in terms of diplomacy and national security as well as the economy, Japan was in a very severe situation."

Whether Abe is a galvanizing change agent or a nationalist legatee who is driving his country back to the future, there is no doubt that he is Japan's—and possibly the continent's—most consequential politician in some time, having halted the revolving door that has seen six Prime Ministers come and go in as many years. With the LDP having secured a pair of electoral victories over the past two years, Abe is likely to rule until at least 2016.

This gives him latitude to tackle a long to-do list: rejuvenate the economy by

ramming through structural reform, encouraging innovation and bringing more women into the labor force; revise the postwar constitution, which was written by the occupying Americans, to allow for a more conventional military; and most of all, play cheerleader to a nation in need of a jolt of banzai self-esteem. "Abe is of the view that Japan needs to stop getting kicked around," says Michael J. Green, Asia and Japan chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, who, from his days as senior director for Asia on President George W. Bush's National Security Council, knows Abe well. "He thinks about history and world affairs, strategy—he loves that stuff. He wants to be a strategic realpolitik player."

Abe's success depends, first and foremost, on his ability to revitalize the economy. So far, the first two phases of Abenomics—fiscal stimulus and monetary easing—have coincided with an uptick in growth and stock-market sentiment. Last September, in a speech at the New York Stock Exchange, Abe even sold his namesake plan as a blueprint for global revival. But the third arrow of Abenomics will be the trickiest to fire: structural

reform aimed at dismantling business inefficiencies that hamper Japan's global competitiveness. Already, growth is tapering, and a sales-tax hike unveiled this month could dampen consumer spending.

Without an economic resurgence, Abe will have a hard time achieving his greater goal of refashioning Japan as a modern nation-state—a democratic force that can be a counterweight to an authoritarian China. Japan is now a society where even the young have downsized their dreams. "People have lost confidence," says Nobuo Kishi, Japan's Vice Foreign Minister and Abe's younger brother, who believes the Prime Minister wants to encourage "amity, love for the homeland and patriotic spirit. I think these form the basis for Japan restoring its confidence."

It is into this complicated landscape that President Barack Obama is due to arrive in late April—a long-delayed trip after plans last year were foiled by the U.S. government shutdown. Obama will spend two nights in Japan, then stop in South Korea, Malaysia and the Philippines. (Notably, he is skipping China.) "There's general excitement in the U.S. about a Japanese leader who looks like he wants to step up to challenges and is able to do it with popularity behind him," says Vikram Singh, vice president for national security and international policy at the Center for American Progress in Washington. But reservations quickly follow. "[Japan] should be proud of its postwar way of being but should be honest about its wartime history," says Singh. "And failing to do that is one of the great shortcomings of modern Japanese politics."

The Rising Son

JAPAN MAY PRIDE ITSELF ON BEING ASIA'S oldest democracy, but its networks of power are rooted in families. Few Prime Ministers have taken office without a famous forefather before him. Abe is the son of a Foreign Minister and grandson of a Prime Minister. He says the commitment of his father Shintaro Abe to securing a peace treaty with the then Soviet Union, even as he was dying of cancer, impressed upon him the importance—and the sacrifices—of public service: "I learned ...

that you may have to risk your own life to make such a historical accomplishment." His paternal grandfather Kan Abe was a rare critic of the militarist impulses of wartime leader Hideki Tojo and opposed embarking on war with the U.S.

But it is Abe's maternal grandfather who looms largest in Japanese history. Nobusuke Kishi served in the wartime Cabinet as the head of the Ministry of Munitions and directed industrialization efforts in Manchuria, the northeastern Chinese region that Tokyo turned into a puppet regime. Manchuria was ground zero for some of imperial Japan's worst crimes, from armies of forced labor to biochemical experiments on civilians. After Japan's defeat, the Allied powers locked Kishi up for three years, but he was never charged with war crimes. A decade later, he emerged as a pro-Western Prime Minister who cemented the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty. His rehabilitation, like that of many wartime political figures, was sanctioned by the Americans, who occupied Japan for seven years.

Despite his lineage, Abe is, in some ways, an unlikely figure to rebuild the nation. In 1982, after working briefly for a steel company, he joined his father, then Foreign Minister, as a secretary. He soon found his political voice—a hawkish tone born of a Thatcher-Reagan-style conviction in the clarity of conservative principles. The LDP was a big ideological tent, which has helped it rule Japan for all but a handful of the postwar years by shape-shifting to the electorate's mood. But Abe made his name on the right of the party spectrum, signing on to causes that downplayed or denied Japanese wartime atrocities.

In his earlier term, Abe was Japan's youngest Prime Minister. The voters were concerned about the economy, but Abe frittered away political capital on nationalist causes, like educational reform that would increase flag-waving in schools. A year into his tenure, he resigned, blaming his retreat on a rare intestinal ailment. In the intervening years, the LDP—and Japan as a whole—has edged closer to Abe's political moorings. One trigger was domestic, the incompetence of the vaguely left-leaning Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), whose three years in power were consumed by economic dithering and political infighting. In December 2012

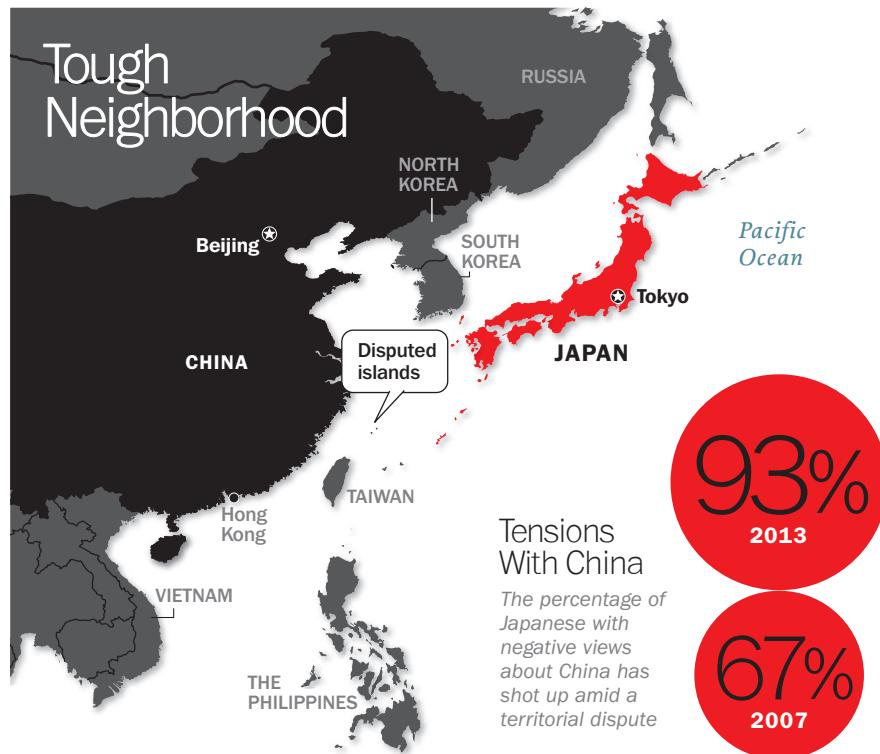
elections, the LDP crushed the DPJ by riding the protest vote and later pushed Abeonomics as a path forward. “We were frozen in a deflationary mind-set,” says Abe’s economic adviser Etsuro Honda, who thinks Japan’s economy had reached a make-or-break moment. “The Prime Minister proposed a totally unprecedented trial... that cannot be allowed to fail.”

The China Card

THE OTHER CATALYST OF JAPAN’S RIGHTWARD shift was external: the rise of China, now ruled by its own nationalist leader, President Xi Jinping. In 2012, Japan, under the DPJ, nationalized some uninhabited islands in the East China Sea that Tokyo administers but to which Beijing lays claim. Since then, Chinese military maneuvers in contested waters have increased, and in 2013, Japanese jet sorties climbed to their highest numbers since the Cold War. Last year China declared the skies above the islands as part of an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone and demanded that flights crossing the airspace notify Chinese authorities. The U.S., among other nations, has ignored this request and has criticized China for changing the status quo in such a volatile part of the world.

In 2007, when Abe left office, 67% of Japanese expressed negative views toward China, according to the Pew Research Center’s Global Attitudes Project. By 2013, that number had risen to 93%. Against China’s double-digit military-budget hikes, Abe’s calls to strengthen Japan’s armed forces didn’t sound so silly. Last year Japan’s defense budget saw its first—albeit modest—increase in more than a decade; 2014 has brought more money.

Meanwhile, Sino-Japanese relations remain in a deep freeze, although that doesn’t prevent China from serving as Japan’s largest trading partner, with more than \$330 billion in bilateral trade in 2012. Abe has never had a summit with Xi, meaning that the leaders of the world’s second and third largest economies aren’t talking to each other. Proposals by Japan to set up a hotline between the two nations over the contested islands have been rebuffed by China, which says Japan must first admit to the existence of a territorial dispute—something Tokyo refuses to do. Although the U.S. takes no position on who rightfully owns the islands, called the



Senkaku by the Japanese and the Diaoyu by the Chinese, Washington has said its security treaty with Japan covers the bits of uninhabited rock. “We have told the Chinese that risk reduction is not a concession to Japan,” says a senior U.S. Administration official, who acknowledges that unintended clashes in the East China Sea could spark a larger conflict.

Given how quickly the Japanese electorate gets disenchanting with its leaders, Abe’s popularity has proved remarkably buoyant. But support for his most hawkish goals is not assured. One of his pet projects is revising the postwar peace constitution, which was forced on the Japanese by the Americans and precludes Japan from possessing a normal military. (It does have well-funded armed forces, limited to defensive actions.) “I say we should change our constitution now,” Abe says, noting that Japan is a rare democracy to never have amended its constitution. Yet, for all their worries about China, most Japanese do not support measures for a more active military, polls show. Even LDP elders have expressed reservations about Abe’s push for what’s called collective self-defense, in which Japan could defend allies like the

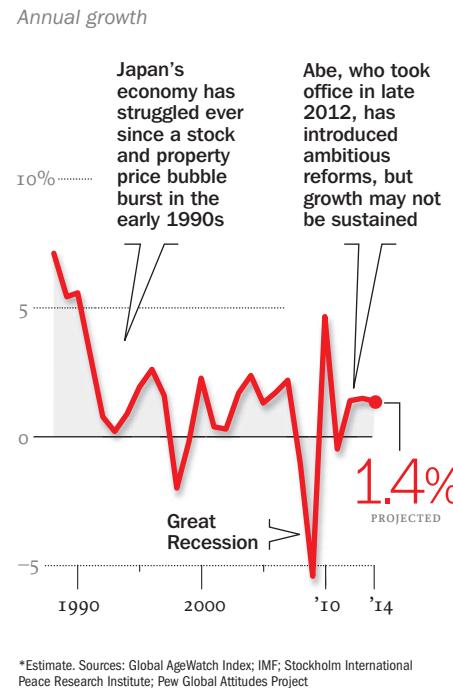
U.S. from foes like North Korea. “[Abe is] implementing his rather right-wing policy in national security and diplomacy,” says former LDP secretary general Makoto Koga. “It makes people feel concerned.”

Such criticism helps explain why Abe has backtracked on a couple of nationalist issues that played well with the LDP’s base. While campaigning in 2012, he called for a revision of the 1993 Kono Statement, the admission by a former Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary that Japan’s military forced Asian “comfort women” into sexual slavery. In late February the Abe government announced it was re-examining the way in which the Kono Statement was formulated. Abe says that during his first term, “a Cabinet decision was made stating that there was no information that shows people were forcibly recruited.” Public opinion, though, didn’t clearly support such a move. Last month the Abe administration announced it would be leaving the statement alone.

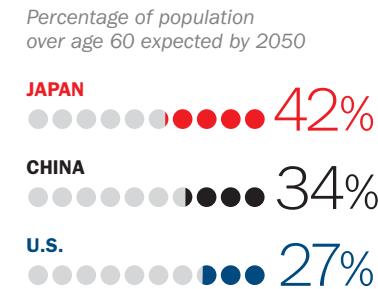
Divine Mandate

ACCORDING TO JAPAN’S FOUNDATIONAL myth, the Emperor Jimmu, a direct descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu,

Economic challenge



Aging population



Defense spending



founded the Japanese imperial house more than 2,600 years ago. Since then, an unbroken line of male heirs has tied Japan’s royal family to the divine. Shinto, in its latter state-linked form, deifies this imperial cosmology. The faith’s role in providing spiritual justification for wartime Japan—kamikaze suicide pilots dying in the name of the Emperor—tainted the state religious doctrine. In 1946, after Japan’s defeat in the war, Emperor Hirohito issued an imperial rescript that renounced “the false conception” that he was an incarnation of a god. The Americans stripped Shinto of its status as the national religion.

When Abe talks of restoring Japan, he often means economic rejuvenation. But one little-covered development of the Abe era is the renaissance of Shinto in Japanese politics. Abe is the secretary general of a parliamentary Shinto alliance, which has increased its membership from 152 parliamentarians before the LDP took power in December 2012 to 268 today. Sixteen of 19 Cabinet ministers are members; in the DPJ’s government, there were none. “Prime Minister Abe advocates breaking from the postwar regime and restoring Japan, and we share the same thoughts,”

says Yutaka Yuzawa, the administrative director of a Shinto political association, whose father was once the lead priest at the controversial Yasukuni Shrine. Last fall, Abe became the first sitting PM in more than eight decades to participate in one of Shinto’s holiest festivals, in which the Emperor’s ancestors, all the way up to sun deity Amaterasu, are honored. In a major speech this year, Abe used Shinto vocabulary to glorify his homeland.

There’s nothing wrong with celebrating a homegrown faith that worships nature alongside ancient ancestors. But some politicians pushing for a Shinto resurgence also equivocate on Japan’s responsibility for the war. It’s instructive that Hirohito stopped visiting Yasukuni in 1978, after the enshrinement of top war criminals, presumably as a protest against the shrine’s hijacking by conservative elements. Japan’s ambivalent attitude toward its wartime past is often contrasted with that of Germany, which has vocally apologized for the Holocaust and supported the construction of genocide memorials. China, for one, says Japan hasn’t adequately repented for World War II. Abe disagrees. “In the previous war, Japan has given tremen-

dous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly those of Asia,” he says. “Previous Prime Ministers have expressed their feelings of remorse and apology. In my first administration, I also did so.”

But critics point out that Abe has fraternized with deniers of history. Last year he co-wrote a book with Naoki Hyakuta, a best-selling author who believes both the Nanjing Massacre and the military’s enslavement of “comfort women” are fictitious. “Japanese feel embarrassed about our country, our national flag, our national anthem,” says Hyakuta, whose novel about a conflicted kamikaze pilot sold 4 million copies and spawned a popular film late last year. “Mr. Abe is trying to restore basic things, such as national pride.”

Just how far does Abe want to go? “I’m extremely worried,” says Koga. “I want to ask Mr. Abe, You say, ‘Break from the postwar regime.’ Do you want to say... that Japan’s peace diplomacy was a mistake and that you want to make Japan into a modern and masculine country as in the prewar era?” Political scientist Koichi Nakano, who teaches at Tokyo’s Sophia University, puts Abe’s politics in a regional context: “The hard-liners in East Asia, they need each other,” he says, speaking of Abe, Xi (son of a revolutionary leader), North Korea’s Kim Jong Un (scion of the Kim political dynasty) and South Korea’s Park Geun-hye (daughter of a former strongman). “Their dominance of domestic politics depends on foreign enemies. This is a dangerous game playing across the region.”

Indeed, Abe’s popularity at home may depend on proving that his spine is stiff enough to stand up to the likes of China. After so many years of rudderless leadership, Japan has a Prime Minister whose pronouncements are closely watched by the world. The question is whether Abe’s active sense of patriotism—not to mention his evasions of wartime history—limns Japanese sentiments. The bravest leaders, of course, can guide their people, not just submit to their wishes. “I get criticized from time to time,” says Abe, “as I try to exercise what I believe to be right.” Penitent bows just aren’t the style of Japan’s chief patriot. —WITH REPORTING BY CHIEF KOBAYASHI/TOKYO AND MICHAEL CROWLEY/WASHINGTON

Will prayer help? Han Chinese devotees offer incense at the Lama Tibetan Buddhist temple in Beijing on a Sunday morning earlier this year
Photographs by Sim Chi Yin for TIME



WORLD

TIBET'S SLOW BURN

Ever greater numbers of Chinese value Tibet's religion and culture. But their government still treats it as a subversive region to be subdued BY HANNAH BEECH/LABRANG

EVEN THOUGH HIS WORDS COULD LAND HIM IN JAIL, THE MONK ISN'T AFRAID.

We are inside his mud-brick lodgings, safe from the security cameras that track a people so desperate that about 130 Tibetans have torched their own bodies in fiery dissent since 2011. Clerics, farmers, herdsmen, teachers, even a 15-year-old schoolgirl have all self-immolated to protest Chinese rule. Here, in the hills around Labrang Monastery, one of the holiest sites in Tibetan Buddhism, a dozen people have chosen such incendiary suicide against the Chinese authorities. In the ensuing security crackdown, communist minders have instructed local clergy not to talk about politics or anything that might harm the illusion of serenity. Yet this monk, who was ordained when he was 11 years old, speaks out. “The Chinese government has stolen our holy place,” he says, “and turned it into a tourist destination.”

For much of the year, the whitewashed labyrinth of Labrang, in the barren furrows of northwest China’s Gansu province, heaves with tourists from China’s Han ethnic majority, who make up some 90% of the country’s population. Some are pilgrims searching for meaning in a society in which neither communism nor capitalism offers spiritual succor. Others are members of China’s expanding middle class, exhilarated by a newfound freedom to travel. Even the memory of the 2008 violence between Han and Tibetans, which resulted in dozens of deaths and an ensuing security clampdown, hasn’t dissuaded the domestic visitors. While overseas tourism in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) has dwindled because the government now only sporadically lets in foreigners, 13 million Han Chinese vacationed there last year, arriving via newly built roads, railways and airports. A decade ago, only 1 million visited. In the summer, the grasslands near Labrang, one of many Tibetan areas outside the TAR proper, are so crowded with Han campers that the vegetation is rubbed bare.

The grim news of Tibetans setting them-

selves on fire has forced the world to confront the intensity of despair on the high plateau. But this anguish remains a mystery to many Han. The authorities have poured billions of dollars into the region through infrastructure and investment. Tourism to Tibetan areas is seen as another key driver of growth. China’s ethnic policy—not just for Tibetans but also for the Uighurs of the northwestern region of Xinjiang—is based on the premise that financial betterment will convince minorities of the utility of Han rule. Such is the intoxicating mix of fresh air and fattening wallets that local propaganda czars have deemed the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, China’s “happiest city.”

Chinese officials—and many Chinese citizens—wonder why a dramatic increase in Tibetan living standards has not sated a people whom, the official line goes, were enslaved by god-kings until the People’s Liberation Army arrived in 1950. Beijing blames the wave of self-immolations on the current Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader who escaped to India after a failed uprising in 1959. The exiled monk maintains he has no role in orchestrating the suicides. “This is very, very sad,” he told *TIME* in February, while visiting Washington. “Human life is very, very precious.”

Government oppression of ethnic minorities is hardly unique to China. But the pace of change in Tibet and neighboring Xinjiang, where Islam is the dominant faith, has added urgency to the plight of China’s ethnic peoples. Among these minority populations, there is a sense that some of China’s borderlands are under siege by the Han, and some of those who can—which is not very many people at all—are trying to flee. Whether their destinations are Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia or elsewhere, Tibetans and Uighur refugees can find themselves forcibly repatriated—often into Chinese detention. Such is the diplomatic might of Beijing in an age of Chinese economic ascendancy.



Popular appeal Chinese tourists snap photos at the Labrang Monastery, left; a ceremony takes place at a villa outside Beijing converted into the private Shenggen Monastery, bottom



Meanwhile, ethnic violence is bubbling up, whether the inward attacks of the Tibetan self-immolators or, more troublingly, deadly assaults on civilians blamed on Uighurs. In the bloodiest terror attack this year, explosions at a market in Xinjiang’s capital, Urumqi, on May 22 claimed 43 lives, including those of the assailants. Authorities blamed the attack on Uighur separatists.

Such bloodshed has elicited harsh official reprisals. Hundreds of locals in Xinjiang and Tibetan regions have been rounded up by the authorities. Online and cell-phone communication is often severed, leaving all residents—not just those who might be guilty—in the dark. On a trip to Xinjiang in late April, China’s President Xi Jinping hailed police, who are mostly Han, as the “fists and daggers” in the battle against terrorism and separatism. “Sweat more in peacetime to bleed less in wartime,” Xi was quoted as saying in Chinese state media. Many Han—still grieving over a spree of terrorism blamed on Uighurs, ignorant of the daily repression of ethnic minorities and puzzled over their unwillingness to unite in a rising China—welcomed their leader’s strong stand.

The Money God

NO DOUBT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS transformed Tibetan areas, with billboards for iPhones towering over gold-tipped stupas. Although Han monopolize the best state jobs, Tibetans with Mandarin-language skills enjoy newfound career opportunities as guides, traders, trinket-shop owners and even lamas who can translate their faith to Han devotees. One in 10 Tibetans in Tibet is now employed by the tourism industry. “It’s naive to say that all the money is going to the Han,” says James Leibold, a senior lecturer at La Trobe University in Melbourne, who visited Lhasa last year. “Tibetans are profiting too.” The Dalai Lama told *TIME*, “We Tibetans also want more modernization.”

But money alone cannot erase the sense that Tibet is under enemy control. Power in Tibetan terrain continues to reside in

outside hands. No Tibetan has ever held the TAR's highest political position, that of the region's Communist Party secretary. Hopes that President Xi, who took power in late 2012 from hard-liner Hu Jintao, would nurture cultural reforms have stagnated. If anything, government restrictions on worship—nearly all Tibetans adhere to local Buddhist traditions—have tightened across the plateau, as security forces crack down on anyone believed to be connected to the self-immolations. Hundreds have been jailed, some just for watching the burnings, according to international human-rights groups.

In Lhasa, the region's spiritual heart, Tibetans cannot complete pilgrimages without enduring a cavalcade of police checks. Some are turned away. Meanwhile, tourists with Han faces tend to get waved through. Facing an onslaught of Han visitors—not to mention a flood of migrants from elsewhere in China who hope to make their fortunes in this harsh, distant land—some Tibetans fear they could one day become minorities in their homeland. Although 90% of Tibet is still Tibetan, only a few hundred Han lived in Lhasa before the People's Republic was formed in 1949. In January a group of Han celebrities led a power walk of 1,000 people through Lhasa. The fresh-air campaign was widely covered by state media, with one Han movie star known for his devotion to Tibetan Buddhism dubbed an ambassador for Lhasa. "Imagine, if even 10 Tibetans gathered together in Lhasa, the secret police would immediately arrest us," says Tsering Woesser, a Tibetan activist and poet who divides her time between Lhasa and Beijing. "The Han have political rights in Tibet that we lack. It makes us feel our own absence of power more strongly."

Such existential angst coincides with a fascination for all things Tibetan in the rest of China. Newly pious Han are donating money for the renovation of monasteries—some of the same monasteries whose monks have been locked up for allegedly associating with self-immolators. Rich Chinese are bidding at auction for antique *thangkas*, the Buddhist prayer paintings, and studying versions of the Tibetan faith in faraway Beijing. "The most attractive thing about Tibetan Buddhism to me is that it adores nature," says Wang Xinmin, a 29-year-old believer who worships in the



Chinese capital. "It gives you a lot of freedom." An April headline in the Communist Party-linked *Global Times* proclaimed "Young Han Chinese Turn to Tibetan Buddhism Amid Worldly Frustrations," quoting one devotee who thinks that "it is even cooler to sing Tibetan prayers in hip-hop!" Although statistics on Han converts don't exist, one Tibetan lama has more than a million followers on Weibo, China's microblogging service. Another cleric's spiritual tome sold 50,000 copies in a fortnight. Rumors proliferate about top Chinese leaders whose relatives have embraced Tibetan Buddhism—this in an officially atheist communist nation. "Tibetan Buddhist tradition is of immense benefit to millions of Chinese Buddhists," said the Dalai Lama.

Yet, when speaking to Han who have visited Tibetan regions recently, I was struck that no one knew how common self-immolations had become. With the proliferation of information available online, Chinese are increasingly adept at parsing the state media's censored coverage. Clumsy propaganda gets ridiculed, official silences are questioned. Yet such discernment doesn't often extend to Tibet. "I'm not sure if stories of people burning them-

selves are real or fake," says Gong Lin, an IT professional from the southern Chinese boomtown of Shenzhen, who visited Lhasa last year on vacation. "I think I would have heard more about it if it were true."

Most Han are ignorant about the plight of Tibetans. They don't know that at Tibetan monasteries, monks must regularly denounce the Dalai Lama in "political rectification" classes. In Labrang, government notices, written only in Tibetan, proscribe clergy from lighting incense or yak-butter lamps. Often, the men in robes don't abide by the directive—one notice I saw in a monastic compound was pasted under a picture of the Dalai Lama, which is itself a banned image. But the weight of prohibition enervates the place. Even news of a \$27 million renovation of the 300-year-old Labrang complex is freighted with bitterness. "It's just being done for tourists," says one monk, unable to see any good in Han motives. "The [Han] Chinese, they come to pray, but they understand nothing about us."

In Tibet, politics cannot be cleaved from faith. Many Han, however, embrace the instruments of Tibetan Buddhist piety—the mystical texts, the prayer wheels, the bright mandalas—without acknowledging the

desperation of monks who light matches to end their lives. Questioning Han faithful isn't fair—who am I to say who is a true believer? Han are drawn to Tibetan Buddhism for the same reason foreign seekers have long been: an aura of purity floats over Tibetan lands. Besides, if worshippers are drawn to Tibetan Buddhism precisely for its otherworldly calm, can we really expect them to adopt political outrage as a mantra? Ethnic causes court trouble in China. "There are several taboos in China, and one is the Tibet and Xinjiang issue," says Hu Jia, a Han democracy advocate in Beijing. "These places are like military occupation zones, with police and soldiers everywhere. The heavy-handed policies are even more severe than in Han areas."

The Ethnic Divide

LIKE AMERICANS FACED WITH THE CONUNDRUM of holding territory once possessed by native peoples, the vast majority of Han take as fact that Tibet is an inalienable part of China—and has been for centuries. Alternate narratives don't resonate. Complicating matters is the typecasting of Tibetans (and Uighurs, even more) as an unpredictable, martial tribe. It is true

ALL PAGES: VII MENTOR PROGRAM

Religion rules Chinese converts to Tibetan Buddhism listen to a "living Buddha" in the Shenggen Monastery on the outskirts of Beijing

that history is filled with battles between Han soldiers and Tibetan forces; over the centuries, Tibetans also clashed with Mongols, Manchus, Gurkhas, Uighurs and Muslim Hui. Wrapped in a gauze of tranquility, Tibetan Buddhism may be gaining influential Han acolytes, but Tibet itself denotes danger. Many Han tourists see the stifling security presence in Lhasa and other Tibetan sites as reassuring, not Orwellian. "The Han majority tends to carry a racist attitude toward Tibetans," says La Trobe University's Leibold. "There's a fear because they are different."

Ethnic tourism is a complicated issue for many countries—how authentic an experience is a sweat-lodge ceremony at a Native American reservation? Isn't there a whiff of exoticism about watching any people in native dress performing ancient rituals for iPhone-toting visitors? But the difference is this: most Americans, at least glancingly, know that the U.S. government's extermination of indigenous populations is a shameful part of history. Many Han tourists, by contrast, simply do not know that they are considered the colonizers.

The Dalai Lama has consistently called for a middle ground with China. "We are not seeking independence," he told TIME. "We are seeking general autonomy." Decades of propaganda about a "wolf in monk's clothing" have not dulled Tibetan reverence for him. Most self-immolators are believed to have used their dying breaths to call for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet.

'THE HAN MAJORITY TENDS TO CARRY A RACIST ATTITUDE TOWARD TIBETANS ... THERE'S A FEAR BECAUSE THEY ARE DIFFERENT.'

—JAMES LEIBOLD, SENIOR LECTURER AT MELBOURNE'S LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

For now, the exiled monk's moderate stance holds sway. But once the 78-year-old cleric passes from the scene, separatist sentiment may harden. If violence explodes, as last happened in 2008 when dozens of Tibetans and Han died, what will happen to the tourism industry that the Chinese government says is so vital to regional development?

Back at the Labrang Monastery, cement mixers churn, as the government-funded renovation proceeds. Tibetan pilgrims prostrate themselves, their bodies flung forth on dirt paths in veneration; undercover security agents, not very well disguised, watch them crawl past. A Han tourist snaps a photo. On the road into Xiahe, the town next to Labrang, I see a propaganda sign that commands, "Hold High the Flag of the Communist Party. Satisfy the People." I last visited Xiahe eight years ago. As in many places in China, the building boom is such that I recognize nearly nothing from my last visit. Then, the town was predominantly Tibetan. Today, it is neatly divided: a Disneyfied Tibetan section, with Han and Muslim Hui shopkeepers selling Buddhist amulets and yak key rings, and a Han part—tiled buildings, blue glass windows, karaoke parlors—that could be any place in China.

Across Xiahe are signs warning of imprisonment for anyone who aids self-immolations or fails to report information that could stop them. Near the junction of the two halves of town—Han and Tibetan—is the local Public Security Bureau. It was in front of this symbol of the Chinese state that a 58-year-old Tibetan farmer drenched himself with fuel and set himself on fire in October 2012. (A day before, a herdsman had self-immolated at Labrang itself.) I talk to a Tibetan monk who happened to be passing by the government office when the farmer burned himself two years ago. "I do not think he was a hero," he says, mindful of the Buddhist proscription on suicide. "But I know he was doing it for his people, and I respect his bravery." What else does the monk recall from that day? He thinks for a moment and wraps his burgundy robes around himself. "I remember," the young monk says, "that he glowed for a very long time." —WITH REPORTING BY CHENGCHENG JIANG/LABRANG AND ELIZABETH DIAS/WASHINGTON ■

WORLD

THE WORLD'S MOST DANGEROUS ROOM

THREE AND A HALF YEARS AFTER
A CATASTROPHIC MELTDOWN,
FUKUSHIMA IS FAR FROM FIXED
BY HANNAH BEECH/FUKUSHIMA
PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DOMINIC NAHR FOR TIME

Ground zero
*The abandoned control
room for Reactors 1 and 2,
both of which overheated
and suffered meltdowns*

OUR GAS MASKS ARE ON, AS ARE THREE PAIRS OF GLOVES SECURED WITH TAPE, TWO PAIRS OF SOCKS, RUBBER BOOTS, A HARD HAT AND A HAZMAT SUIT

that encases our bodies in polyethylene. Ice packs cool our torsos, but photographer Dominic Nahr, reporter Chie Kobayashi and I start sweating. Maybe it's nerves, or maybe it's just the sticky humidity of summertime Japan.

Soon we approach the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant—ground zero of the worst atomic meltdown since Chernobyl. Dosimeters around our necks record the rising levels of radiation. After the 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami on March 11, 2011, the aging plant on Japan's northeastern coast suffered a total power failure, causing the cooling system to shut down. Three of the station's nuclear-reactor cores overheated, sending plumes of radiation over a placid landscape of fishing villages, rice paddies and dairy farms. (The station has a total of six reactors. Two were in cold shutdown at the time of the accident; another, which had been defueled, suffered an explosion.) As we lumber through the plant like clumsy B-movie extras, I'm reminded that our many layers don't protect against every type of radiation. Not to worry, we are told by officials from Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO). The radiation levels in certain parts of the nuclear complex are actually lower than in some populated swaths of Fukushima prefecture. Later, as I sit in a futuristic cubicle in the plant complex, undergoing a full-body internal radiation check, the soundtrack underscores TEPCO's soothing message. A line from one song's lyrics, tinkly and sweetened: "You've got a friend in Jesus."

Three and a half years after the most devastating nuclear accident in a generation, Fukushima Daiichi is still in crisis. Some 6,000 workers, somehow going about their jobs despite the suffocating gear they must wear for hours at a time, struggle to contain the damage. So much radiation still pulses inside the crippled reactor cores that no one has been able to get close enough to survey the full extent of the destruction. Every 2½ days, workers deploy a new giant storage tank to house radioactive water contaminated after passing through the damaged reactors. We wander past a forest of some 1,300 of these tanks, each filled with 1,000 tons of toxic water, some of which was used to cool the reactors.

Leaks have plagued the site. In February, water with a radiation level several million times higher than what's safe gushed out from a storage tank near the coast on the Pacific Ocean. TEPCO said it was unlikely the water made its way into the ocean, but whistle-blower workers aren't as sure. There's the question of what will happen when—not if—another major earthquake strikes this seismically cursed land. The latest plan by TEPCO, Japan's largest power provider, is to build a wall of frozen earth around the damaged reactors and other highly radioactive areas to prevent radiation from seeping

out of the site. But even if this and other technological fixes succeed, the government estimates it will take at least 30 years to decommission Fukushima Daiichi and make the site safe from radiation.

Japan took all of its other 48 nuclear power plants off-line after Fukushima, but Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to restart some of them despite public opposition. Commissioned in 1971, Fukushima Daiichi should have been retired or retrofitted long before a 46-ft. (14 m) tsunami forced the issue. Touring the site, I'm struck by how much of the damage remains. It's not just the throbbing danger of the unseen nuclear-fuel rods. The carcasses of the reactors themselves are exposed in places like autopsied remains, stained from the soot of the hydrogen explosions that resulted from the meltdown. We walk into a building that housed the control room for Reactors 1 and 2, where a dozen workers, plunged into darkness by the power cut, labored by flashlight to try to achieve cold shutdown.

In the control room, amid the rows of screens and panels, calculations scrawled on metal by engineers represent the desperate graffiti of men who could not

halt a nuclear meltdown. Electricity was not restored until March 24, nearly two weeks after the tsunami. "We have to honestly and deeply reflect on the accident," says Takafumi Anegawa, TEPCO's managing executive officer, whose role is to shake up a utility he has accused of cozy relations with regulators and a cavalier attitude toward safety. "We should reset the level we pursue to the very highest. If we cannot achieve that level because of our capability or our culture, it means we are not qualified." Akira Ono, the plant superintendent at Fukushima Daiichi, is equally blunt—at least in a Japanese context—about the need to reassess the nation's nuclear future. "Because of the accident," he says, "nuclear energy is an issue that should be discussed again in our country."

There's no question that Fukushima Daiichi is a huge test for TEPCO—and for Japan. Yet the destroyed plant feels enervated and empty, like a Hollywood version of a nuclear wasteland. Thousands of workers may be on the payroll, but few are in evidence. The protective suits slow everyone down, masking any sense of urgency. Just outside the destroyed reactors, in a swath of

Fukushima declared uninhabitable for mankind, azaleas are in full bloom. A rabbit hops across the road—I wonder where, in this devastated landscape, it is going.

The Glow Is Off

IT'S A TRUISM, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT ANY LESS true: Japan is perhaps the world's most collectivist society. But what happens when that collective trust is so fundamentally breached? Fukushima was not just an epic natural disaster in a nation long conditioned to frequent betrayals by land and sea. It was also a man-made crisis, born of political hubris, corporate dereliction and an instinct to obscure Japan's ugliest elements that remains unchanged to this day. The Japanese, as a people, may bow before the temple of precision, fetishizing detail and safety. But Fukushima proved that no matter how many cool innovations Japanese companies churn out, a lack of oversight and emergency initiative can be deadly.

You'd think, for example, that a nation ranking as one of the world's most seismically active would take heed when building a nuclear plant on the edge of the



Wasteland
Dead cattle—
culled because
of radiation—
are buried in
pits within the
Fukushima
exclusion zone





Lasting tragedy
 Clockwise from top left: Japanese forces search for tsunami victims in 2011; a hospital in Okuma, not far from the crippled plant, in 2012; a segment of the tsunami-pounded coastline in 2011; Yaeko Watanabe, whose husband worked at the Fukushima plant after the accident and died of cancer in 2012; a 2014 memorial service; a resident of Koriyama, about 35 miles (56 km) from Fukushima, so worried about radiation exposure that she keeps a Geiger counter in her home

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NUCLEAR REACTORS IDLED
 Despite public opposition, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe wants to restart some of the shuttered plants

Pacific Ocean. Yet TEPCO's disaster plan and postaccident coordination were woeful. It had ignored a joint government and utility-company study on potential inundation by a tsunami. TEPCO's advisory ranks were weighed down with too many retired officials. But the fault went well beyond one power company. The Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission, authorized by Japan's parliament, was damning in its 2012 report on the nuclear meltdown: "What must be admitted—very painfully—is that this was a disaster 'Made in Japan.' Its fundamental causes are to be found in the ingrained conventions of Japanese culture: our reflexive obedience; our reluctance to question authority; our devotion to 'sticking with the program'; our groupism; and our insularity." The panel, composed of Japanese scientists, doctors and engineers, among others, continued with a candor exceptional for Japan: "The consequences of negligence at Fukushima stand out as catastrophic, but the mind-set that supported it can be found across Japan."

Yet the hope that Japan's nuclear crisis would spark a national reset has gone unfulfilled. The disasters of 3/11 caused the largest single loss of life on Japanese soil since the U.S. detonated atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But Japan was reborn after that catastrophe nearly 70 years ago, rising from the ashes of

defeat and building, in just a few decades, an economic powerhouse that would eventually draw a third of its energy from nuclear power. This time around, though, the phoenix never emerged. Public faith in the government's ability to ensure safety and respond to crises has eroded because of the nuclear accident, but Fukushima has not inspired new environmental or civil-society movements that can boast of major accomplishments. "Inertia is still very strong," says Akihiro Sawa, an executive senior fellow at the Keidanren business federation's 21st Century Public Policy Institute.

In the meantime, Fukushima's fallout continues to claim victims. Nearly 20,000 people—mostly in Iwate and Miyagi prefectures but also in Fukushima prefecture—were killed by the earthquake and tsunami. Yet only in Fukushima, the epicenter of the nuclear catastrophe, does the number of people who the Japanese government says have since died from causes indirectly linked to the natural disaster now exceed the initial death toll. Stress, both physical and mental, has led to a rise in suicides.

About 125,000 Fukushima residents, most of whom used to reside within an 18-mile (30 km) radius of the nuclear station, still exist as evacuees because their homes are within a government-mandated exclusion zone. Some now subsist in prefab units more evocative

of a third-world disaster zone than the world's third largest economy. In June the Ministry of Environment admitted that decontamination efforts in some towns near the stricken plant had failed; residents cannot return, even if they want to. Fear has infected other neighborhoods as parents wonder whether the radiation clouds that spewed out of the ruined reactors in the days following the tsunami harmed their children. At the disabled plant itself, many experienced employees have reached the official limit on maximum dosages of radiation—leaving critical work in less skilled hands.

Despite all this, the Japanese government's message to the world is, Trust us. Last year Prime Minister Abe visited Fukushima, flashed a grin and bit into a locally grown peach to prove that the area's produce—an economic mainstay—was safe to eat. Shortly after his fruit tasting, Abe traveled to Buenos Aires and gave a speech that propelled Tokyo to victory as the host of the 2020 Summer Olympics. "Let me assure you the situation is under control," he said. But is it? "This was a grave accident in which many mistakes were made," says Haruo Kurasawa, one of Japan's foremost TV commentators on nuclear issues. "But no one has gone to jail, and no one wants to take responsibility. Everyone still wants to look the other way. Nothing has really changed."

Hot Zone

THE ROAD TO THE FUKUSHIMA DAIICHI PLANT IS LINED with scenes of small-town Japan: a noodle eatery with chopsticks and condiments on the counter, farmhouses with shingled roofs, even a loader with a claw hanging in midair. Billboards boast of diners, bowling alleys and hot-spring resorts. But no one lives here. The area began to be abandoned on March 12, 2011, when the first of the reactors exploded and left entire towns preserved in radioactive amber.

Yukie lived in Futaba, a tidy town where many residents worked at the nearby nuclear plant. Other parts of rural Japan have been slowly depopulating as society has grayed and the young have flocked to the big cities. But Futaba survived because of atomic power. Fukushima Daiichi's history is intertwined with Yukie's family lore: her grandmother grew up on farmland that was given up for the future site of the nuclear plant, and Yukie entered an arranged marriage with a nuclear worker. (Her husband still works at the plant, which is why she doesn't want her full name used.) "We were a TEPCO family," she says. After the evacuation order went out, Yukie and her family ran home—just under 2 miles (3.2 km) from Fukushima Daiichi—to grab a few essentials, like blankets and diapers for her

\$35.4
BILLION
 Estimated direct annual impact of the nuclear shutdown on Japan

SEE MORE
PHOTOS AND
VIDEO BY
DOMINIC NAHR
AT [time.com/
fukushima](http://time.com/fukushima)

daughter. Then they piled into a car and drove northwest. Unbeknownst to them, the prevailing winds blew radiation along the very same path.

Since then, Yukie and her family have moved 10 times, from one set of cramped rooms to another. But the specter of radiation—invisible, odorless, tasteless—follows them. Yukie, 33, and her two small children now live like shut-ins on the outskirts of Iwaki, the biggest city near Fukushima Daiichi, about 25 miles (40 km) away. Earlier this year, her daughter broke out in mysterious rashes; one visiting doctor speculated that radiation could have caused the outbreaks. (Other doctors, however, blamed different causes.) Yukie suffers from frequent nosebleeds, which she says she never had before the disaster.

As yet there's no clear evidence of any connection between the Fukushima meltdown and ill health in the area, even among nuclear workers. The government has pointed out that taking an X-ray or even a long-haul flight can expose our bodies to surprisingly high doses of radiation, yet somehow we go about our lives without worrying about the risk. But even if the science says otherwise, the radiation from an accident like Fukushima feels different—and dangerous. "There's so much societal pressure to not even mention the word *radiation*," says Sachihiko Fuse, an oncologist who helps run a private medical clinic in Fukushima city. "The national and prefectural governments say, 'Please, there's no danger, live as normal.' But people are concerned."

There's no doubting the very real mental-health crisis caused by Fukushima—and no one knows exactly how stress can manifest itself in physical complaints, including nosebleeds. And sometimes the consequences are far worse. Many suicides aren't reported by families who worry about being stigmatized, say local doctors, obscuring the real death toll. Shigekiyo Kanno, 54, didn't hide his feelings. A dairy farmer from Soma who lost his livelihood because people feared his milk was radioactive, Kanno used his barn walls for his suicide note. "I've lost the will to try," he wrote, apologizing to his wife and sons before hanging himself from a rafter. "If only there was no nuclear plant." Kanno's death was not initially categorized as Fukushima-related.

Nuclear Politics

ATOMIC POWER IS ENTRENCHED IN THE JAPANESE GOVERNMENT. In 2009 more than 70% of individual donations to the now ruling Liberal Democratic Party came from current or former electric-company executives. The LDP supports restarting Japan's nuclear power plants, which were idled by a previous government. Toshikazu Okuya, director of the energy supply and demand office at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, frames the need to restart the reactors as both environmental and economic in a land starved of domestic energy resources. Japan's greenhouse-gas emissions increased by 7% from 2010 to 2012 as imported fossil fuels replaced carbon-free nuclear. The government has

estimated the direct impact of the nuclear shutdown to be \$35.4 billion a year—this at a time when Abe is trying to revive the national economy. "We cannot say there is no risk," Okuya admits of nuclear power. But "we need to try to take back public confidence."

In Fukushima, that starts with mothers, an unlikely demographic that has become politically active and increasingly antinuclear. For months after the meltdown, Kayoko Hashimoto's daughter wore a dosimeter to school, just as authorities urged. The radiation cloud had passed over the region, but locals were told the area was safe. So why was her daughter's dosimeter recording high levels of radiation? Hashimoto bought a top-of-the-line dosimeter and began testing the route her daughter took to school. To her shock, she discovered tiny hot spots of radiation throughout the community: one by a bakery, another by a dog kennel, still another in the school parking lot. These levels were even higher than in some towns that had limited outdoor playtime because of fears over radiation exposure. The health effects of such small hot spots aren't clear, but Hashimoto is worried. "People are scared of radioactivity," she says, "but they don't

want to make a fuss or draw attention to themselves."

Hashimoto has also campaigned against the storage of decontamination waste on school grounds. Piles of black plastic bags—filled with radiation-tainted topsoil and vegetation—are scattered across Fukushima. But no one wants a formal dumping ground near them. Even designating temporary storage sites for the bags is difficult, which is why schools have been used. The bags have a life span of a few years, and already some have grass and debris poking through. "It's wrong to call this decontamination," says nuclear analyst Kurasawa. "It's just moving around contaminated waste."

Some of the laborers in charge of that decontamination are poorly paid and trained; recruiters have even been known to target the homeless. At Fukushima Daiichi itself, three-quarters of the white-suited workers are subcontracted laborers. In March a contract worker died in an accident after it took an hour to get him to a hospital. "Before I was proud because I thought I was helping to save Japan," says Sunny, who uses a nickname because he still works at the plant and isn't supposed to speak out. "But it's long hours and bad pay.

The new foot soldiers don't get any training, and the media say we're constantly screwing up. I've lost my pride."

For Kyoji Konnai, a tatami-mat maker and former nuclear-plant worker, radiation isn't a concern. In April the government formally lifted an evacuation order for Miyakoji, just over a mountain road from Fukushima Daiichi, after decontamination work was carried out. Konnai and about a third of other neighborhood residents have returned and cleared the mold, vermin and ruined furniture from their homes. "I still think the nuclear industry is important," he says. "Without it, we'd have no jobs in the area." But others cannot go home. On the outskirts of Iwaki, a grim collection of metal huts is the latest temporary housing offered to 250 Futaba families. Tatsuko Shiga, 77, has pots of flowers in front of her tiny living space. A shelf holds the family altar. But there's only so much you can do with a prefab shack. Still, Shiga has no wish to return to her farmhouse, one of the few in her community to have escaped the tsunami's wrath. "That place is finished," she says. "It's only fit for ghosts." —WITH REPORTING BY CHIE KOBAYASHI AND MAKIKO SEGAWA/FUKUSHIMA ■



Marking time
Workers tend grass by hand at the Ikata Nuclear Power Station, which was idled because of Fukushima

HONG KONG STANDS UP

WHY THE TERRITORY'S FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY IS A CHALLENGE FOR CHINA BY HANNAH BEECH

People power In a massive show of civil disobedience, protesters block the multi-lane thoroughfare leading to Hong Kong's financial district

Photograph by Carlos Barria

HONG KONG'S FATE: FROM ONE MASTER TO ANOTHER

Once a British colony, now a special region under China, Hong Kong struggles for greater rights



SEPT. 22, 1982

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher goes to Beijing to discuss the future of Hong Kong, which China was forced to cede to Britain in 1842 after the First Opium War.



DEC. 19, 1984

Britain and China sign a joint declaration that Hong Kong will return to China in 1997. Hong Kong citizens emigrate in droves to countries such as Canada and Australia following the agreement.

JULY 9, 1992

Chris Patten becomes the last British governor of Hong Kong. He proposes democratic reforms for the territory; some of these are adopted in 1994.

JULY 1, 1997

After more than 150 years of British rule, Hong Kong is returned to the People's Republic of China. The framework of governance is "one country, two systems," granting Hong Kong considerable autonomy for 50 years.

MAY 24, 1998

The first post-handover election for the legislature is held, but the process is not fully democratic. The law stipulates that only one-third of the seats are directly elected.

JULY 1, 2003

More than 500,000 people march to protest, among other issues, the government's planned introduction of a national-security law. The rally forces the authorities to withdraw the legislation.



JULY 2012

The Hong Kong government says it will introduce "national education" in public schools. The proposal is scrapped after protests by students, parents and teachers, who see the plan as brainwashing by the authorities.

JUNE 10, 2014

A Chinese government white paper asserts that Beijing has "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong, and says its citizens should be patriotic.



SEPT. 22, 2014

Thousands of students begin a weeklong boycott of classes to protest an electoral-reform plan that they consider to be insufficiently democratic. The boycott eventually morphs into massive sit-ins in key parts of the city.

THE TYPHOONS THAT LASH HONG KONG make quick work of umbrellas, the squalls twisting them into Calder sculptures of disarranged fabric and metal. On the evening of Sept. 28, prime typhoon season in this South China Sea outpost, flocks of umbrellas unfurled on the streets of Hong Kong. This time, they guarded not against rain and wind but tear gas and pepper spray. One of the world's safest and most orderly cities—a metropolis of 7.2 million people that experienced just 14 homicides in the first half of this year—erupted into a battleground, as gas-mask-clad riot police unleashed noxious chemicals on thousands of protesters who were demanding democratic commitments from the territory's overlords in Beijing.

As the first rounds of tear gas exploded in Admiralty, a Hong Kong district better known for its soaring bank buildings and glittering malls, demonstrators armed with nothing but umbrellas and other makeshift defenses—raincoats, lab glasses, ski goggles, milk and plastic wrap—defied the fumes and surged forward. The protests, drawing tens of thousands of people from all walks of life, were galvanized by mounting anger over Beijing's decision in late August to deny locals the right to freely elect Hong Kong's top leader, known as the chief executive (CE), in 2017.

When the onetime British colony was reunified with China in 1997, Hong Kong was promised governance under a "one country, two systems" principle that guaranteed significant autonomy for 50 years. But residents fear that, just 17 years after the handover, the freedoms that differentiate Hong Kong from everywhere else in China are eroding. Shocked by the volleys of pepper spray and tear gas, which injured dozens, the protest movement was ener-

gized by desperation. "We are not afraid of the Chinese government," said Kusa Yeung, a 24-year-old copywriter helping to distribute water to fellow protesters just past midnight on Sept. 29. "We are fighting for a fair democracy." The Umbrella Revolution had unfolded.

Hong Kong's civil-disobedience campaign—which began Sept. 28 as the Occupy Central With Love & Peace movement, after the Central city district where it originated—soon occupied the city's downtown, along with two key shopping and tourist districts. But while the sit-ins, with their umbrellas and yellow ribbons, captured the world's attention, they will not topple China's ruling Communist Party. The People's Republic celebrated its 65th year of existence on Oct. 1 with a blaze of fireworks and militaristic pageantry in Beijing, a symbol of the party's unquestioned grip on the country—though the fireworks were canceled in Hong Kong.

Still, the protests engulfing this tiny splinter of the motherland present China's strongman President Xi Jinping with an unexpected dilemma at a time when the party is already facing scattered discontent at home. The side effects of three decades of unfettered economic growth—

'PEOPLE HERE HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. REJECTING DEMOCRACY HAS DRAMATICALLY BACKFIRED.'

—MAYA WANG, RESEARCHER, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, HONG KONG

a poisoned environment, a growing income gap, rampant corruption—have contributed to an uneasy sense that, for all of China's remarkable rise, things are not quite as they should be. "The Hong Kong protests are the last thing Xi Jinping wanted to see," says Jean-Pierre Cabestan, a political scientist at Hong Kong Baptist University. "He has so many other problems to tackle."

A canny nationalist, Xi and his coterie regularly blame "foreign forces" for fomenting social disorder in China. A scathing Sept. 29 online opinion piece in the *People's Daily*, the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpiece, accused the Hong Kong protests of being orchestrated by "anti-China forces... whose hearts belong to colonial rule and who are besotted with 'Western democracy.'" But, if anything, the mess in Hong Kong, along with other instances of social unrest, are self-inflicted by China's centralized leadership, which has done little to win hearts and minds on the country's periphery. In his National Day speech in Beijing, Xi proclaimed that China's leaders "must never separate ourselves from the people." Yet, at the same time, the authorities detained mainland activists who expressed solidarity with the Hong Kong protesters.

Instead of taking advantage of Hong Kong's inherently pragmatic temperament, the Chinese government spent the summer rubbing the territory's nose in its political powerlessness. First came a Beijing white paper that asserted the central government's "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong and trod on treasured local institutions like rule of law. Then on Aug. 31 the Chinese government ruled that Hong Kongers could vote for their CE—but only after a Beijing-backed

committee presented the electorate with two or three candidates it deemed suitable. (Currently, an electoral college selects the CE.) "Rejecting democracy in Hong Kong has dramatically backfired," says Maya Wang, a Hong Kong-based researcher with Human Rights Watch. "People here have now lost confidence in the central government. Trying to clear the protests has just led to bigger protests." Even if the demonstrators eventually disperse, this breach of trust fundamentally changes Hong Kong's political calculus.

The Umbrella Revolution

IF THE OTHER DEMOCRATIC UPHEAVALS of recent years are defined by a single season or hue, the choice of an umbrella to symbolize Hong Kong's dissent is as fitting as it is improbable. Umbrellas come in a riot of colors, matching a polyglot city that was birthed by quarreling Eastern and Western parents, neither of which gave much thought to gifting democracy to a few hunks of South China Sea rock.

Umbrellas are also a practical instrument, unsexy but vital, much like this financial hub that has long served as an entrepôt to the vast markets of mainland China. Efficiency is the city's motto. This being Hong Kong, the protesters picked up their trash after the tear gas subsided. The volunteers who ferried in donated supplies even had sparkling water on tap, offering San Pellegrino to the parched hordes at nearly 3 a.m. on Sept. 29.

Neither the lingering memory of tear gas nor the advent of the workweek in this workaholic city diminished the crowds on Monday and Tuesday. As riot police withdrew amid a barrage of criticism for their tear-gas blitzkriegs, protesters further packed what are already some of the most

densely populated places on earth, young families staking out spaces with bright parasols. William Ma, 47, brought his daughter Dorothy, 11, to one protest site on Sept. 30. "When I was young, democracy never came," he said. "Maybe I'll have died already, but she can have a better life, she can have democracy."

The weekend's anxious mood was replaced by a carnival gaiety, as stockbrokers mixed with the students who had helped kick-start the protest movement. High school kids did their homework on the pavement, squinting at their scientific calculators in the scorching sun. Some of the demonstrators admitted they were newbies, galvanized into political action by the heavy-handed police response. "[People] were just raising their hands without any weapons, and they used tear gas without any warning," said Raymond Chan, a math teacher, who joined the movement on Monday. "But the fact that they did that just makes us stronger, more unified."

Such a movement in Hong Kong threatens the national unity Xi and Co. are so keen to maintain. For all of Beijing's emphasis on enhancing national security—the surveillance apparatus gets more official funding than does the military—China's fringes are fraying. Beyond Hong Kong, the vast ethnic enclaves of Tibet and Xinjiang are rebelling, with violence in the latter largely Islamic region claiming hundreds of lives over the past year. Taiwan, the island that Beijing has desperately wanted back ever since Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists fled there after losing the civil war in 1949, has been assimilating economically with the mainland. But the Hong Kong crisis has spooked even ardent integrationists in Taiwan, making it hard for Xi to argue that "one country, two

systems" can bring the island back into the fold. Even activists in tiny Macau, the former Portuguese outpost that slid back into Beijing's embrace in 1999 even more eagerly than Hong Kong had two years before it, are demanding more latitude in choosing their local leader.

Hong Kong's cry for freedom resonates far beyond its 1,035 sq km; it directly challenges the narrative of a unified People's Republic. "The truth is Hong Kong is more than ready for democracy," wrote Anson Chan, Hong Kong's former chief secretary, the No. 2 leadership post in the territory, in an exclusive commentary for TIME. "It is China that is not ready for a democratically governed Hong Kong it fears it cannot totally control."

Alternate Universe

THREE DECADES AGO, WHEN PRIME MINISTERS Margaret Thatcher and Zhao Ziyang signed the Sino-British joint declaration setting the conditions for Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, the then colony was considered an apolitical place, a striving city of businessmen and bankers who would obey whoever was in charge—as long as there was money to be made. Back then, it was communist China that was in the throes of political tumult. Five years later, tanks crushed the pro-democracy student protests at Tiananmen. Hundreds, if not thousands, of students and other peaceful demonstrators were massacred. Political passion was cauterized on the mainland, and the Chinese leadership learned the perils of allowing idealistic students to preach reform in public places.

Xi has used nationalism to argue for an even stronger central command. As China's military chief, he has taken a more assertive stance on territorial disputes

PREVIOUS PAGES: REUTERS; 1982, 2014; BETTY IMAGES; 1997: AP

in regional waters, irritating China's neighbors. Since assuming power in late 2012, Xi has also presided over a civil-liberties crackdown, detaining hundreds of human-rights defenders, from lawyers and bloggers to journalists and artists. He has shown no allergy to repression if it means protecting the party from the people. In September, Ilham Tohti, a moderate academic from the Uighur ethnic minority that populates Xinjiang, was handed a life sentence for separatism. His true crime? Calling on the Internet for China to respect its own regional autonomy laws.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong was busy finding its political voice. Each Tiananmen anniversary, tens of thousands gather for candlelight vigils in Hong Kong, the only place in China where such remembrances are allowed. In 2012 locals balked at a proposal to incorporate patriotic dogma into their education system; a protest movement actually succeeded in scrapping that school legislation.

At the same time, Hong Kongers discovered that their territory's competitive advantages—unfettered courts, a vibrant press, financial transparency, a clean civil service and a welcoming attitude toward foreigners—were precisely what kept the enclave from becoming just another Chinese city. If Beijing threatened these core values, what were Hong Kong's prospects? "Hong Kong is still unique, but we see the relentless downhill trajectory," says Willy Lam, an adjunct professor at the Center for China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

One Country, Two Systems

IT'S EASY, NOW, TO TRACK THE SEEMINGLY inevitable collision course between Hong Kong and China, between these two vastly different systems trying to coexist in a single nation. Any attempt to narrow the gap looks clumsy. Leung Chun-ying, the unpopular, Beijing-backed Hong Kong chief executive, tried to bridge the disparity, amid calls for his resignation. "Hong Kong is a democracy within the context of 'one country, two systems,'" he said on Sept. 28, before the pepper-spray charge began. "It is not a self-contained democracy." Leung went on to characterize the

Self-preservation *The day after they are charged by police, protesters wear goggles to help guard against tear gas and pepper spray*

chief-executive selection process as "not ideal, but it is better."

Better isn't good enough, particularly for the young generation that has taken to Hong Kong's streets with the greatest numbers and the greatest passion. Like their counterparts on the mainland, these youths struggle with the realization that their material lives might not improve as expansively as their parents' once did. Hong Kong's prime method of wealth creation needs to diversify beyond real estate, just as the rest of China's must. Housing prices have spiraled so high that ordinary young people in big cities must save their whole lives to afford their own homes.

Han Dongfang, a labor activist who was jailed for helping to organize the Tiananmen protests 25 years ago and who now lives in Hong Kong, says the territory's young activists today "know more clearly what they want" than he did back when he was a youth leader. On Monday night, in the sweaty, swarming district of Mongkok, a 76-year-old tailor named To Fu-tat gave great consequence to Hong Kong's students. "They're the hope for China," he said.

Yet student activists—no matter how much civility they display with their civil disobedience—are precisely what Beijing fears most. It is within the Chinese establishment's political memory that the Tiananmen tragedy looms largest. Regina Ip was forced to resign as Hong Kong's security chief in 2003 after half a million locals marched against the anti-subversion legislation she supported. Today she is a legislator heading the New People's Party. "My own feeling is that the [Occupy] organizers have arranged the whole movement to replicate another Tiananmen incident in Hong Kong," she says. "What about the interests of Hong Kong people like us? We want peace and stability. Issues... should be resolved through constructive dialogue not through street protests."

Polls taken in Hong Kong show that a significant chunk—roughly half of the populace, by one estimate—is willing



to accept Beijing's electoral formula. Protests are bad for business and, for all the Tiananmen scaremongering, it's hard to imagine Xi ordering Chinese troops to crack Hong Kong heads. Still, given his antipathy thus far toward political reform, it's equally hard to see him ceding significant ground to Hong Kong's democratic forces. Even the protesters themselves don't imagine their full demands—both the resignation of CE Leung and true electoral freedom to

choose the territory's leader—will be met. "It's very unlikely that Beijing will reverse its position," says Audrey Eu, chair of the Civic Party, which has supported the Occupy movement. "But the people of Hong Kong must stand up and defend themselves."

The Umbrella Revolution has already gained a wider significance. "People in China think Hong Kong belongs to China," says Julian Lam, a 20-year-old student. "But people in Hong Kong think that Hong

'WE WANT PEACE AND STABILITY. IF THERE ARE ISSUES, THEY SHOULD BE RESOLVED THROUGH DIALOGUE, NOT PROTESTS.'

—REGINA IP, HONG KONG LEGISLATOR AND HEAD OF THE NEW PEOPLE'S PARTY

Kong is part of China but belongs to the world." With each Hong Kong citizen who emerged, coughing and crying, to face another round of tear gas, a conviction grew: a quest for liberty is not, as the Chinese government charges, some Western-imposed frippery designed to undermine Beijing's authority, but a universal aspiration. Let the umbrellas of the world unite. —WITH REPORTING BY ELIZABETH BARBER, RISHI IYENGAR, EMILY RAUHALA AND DAVID STOUT/HONG KONG



WORLD

BURMA'S BACKWARD STEPS

AS ITS POLITICAL REFORMS STALL, BURMA IS IN DANGER OF REGRESSING. IS DEMOCRACY ICON AUNG SAN SUU KYI FIGHTING BACK HARD ENOUGH? BY HANNAH BEECH/NAYPYIDAW

IT'S ONE OF THE LARGEST PARLIAMENTS in the world, a legislature whose colossal size stands in inverse proportion to the actual work that occurs within its marbled halls. Each morning that it's in session, busloads of military brass, who are constitutionally guaranteed a quarter of the 664 seats, roll up to the complex, its 31 spired buildings representing each plane of Buddhist existence. Then come vehicles filled with civilian MPs, the men outfitted in the jaunty headgear—silk, feathers, the occasional animal pelt—that is mandatory for male MPs not in the military. Among the last to arrive is a private sedan carrying the country's most famous lawmaker, democracy heroine Aung San Suu Kyi, known in Burma simply as the Lady.

From 1988 to 2011, the military junta that ruled Burma, known officially as Myanmar, saw no need for a legislature. But after the generals introduced a road map for a "discipline-flourishing democracy," the new parliament was built from scrubland in Naypyidaw, the surreal capital that was unveiled in 2005, complete with empty 20-lane avenues and multiple golf courses. Across the city from the assembly compound looms the Defense Services Museum, which sprawls over 603 acres (244 hectares). It is in the electoral district represented by Thura Shwe Mann, an ex-general who has refashioned himself as the Speaker of the lower house. Because Suu Kyi is constitutionally barred from becoming President in next year's elections, Thura Shwe Mann could succeed President Thein Sein—another general turned civilian leader—if Thein Sein relinquishes power as promised.

For most of our defense-museum visit, photographer Adam Dean, a Burmese friend and I are the only visitors peering at exhibits glorifying the Tatmadaw, as the armed forces are called, a 350,000-strong fighting force that has battled colonial oppressors and ethnic insurgents alike. As we enter each vast hall, a guide turns on the lights, then extinguishes them as we exit. Electricity is expensive in Burma, and only after a group of cadets arrive is the lakelike fountain in front of the museum allowed to unleash its jets of

On the march MPs representing the military arrive for a parliamentary session in the capital, Naypyidaw

water. As we leave, the guide presses us for tips on the upkeep of the museum. “Any suggestions,” he asks, “for the quality of the lighting?”

Two Burmas

SINCE SUU KYI WAS RELEASED FROM HOUSE arrest in 2010—the ruling generals locked up the Nobel Peace Prize laureate for 15 of the previous 21 years—Burma itself has been emerging from the dark. After nearly half a century of military rule, a quasi-civilian government has taken power. Suu Kyi and other members of her opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), which won the 1990 elections that the junta ignored, hold seats in parliament. In a world where democratic triumphs have become rare, Western leaders like U.S. President Barack Obama have lauded Thein Sein’s reforms and lifted some economic sanctions that had been placed on the military regime because of its atrocious human-rights record: forced labor, political imprisonment and institutionalized rape by Burmese soldiers, among other abuses. Newspapers compete with one another for the latest scoop in a country where press freedom was nonexistent a few years ago. Foreign investors looking to tap Burma’s bountiful natural resources have sent in scouts, and talismans of globalization like Coca-Cola are now available on local shelves.

But the caveats are many. For all the hype about a new frontier market, Western investors have remained cautious. In October, a Burmese journalist who once served as Suu Kyi’s bodyguard died in military custody; his body showed signs of torture. Despite three years spent advertising an imminent national cease-fire, the Tatmadaw is still clashing with ethnic militias—like the Kachin, Shan and Ta’ang—who see little point in laying down their arms and submitting to a government dominated by a single ethnicity, the Bamar, or Burman. An extremist Buddhist movement has metastasized and is pushing for a law that discourages Buddhist women from marrying outside their faith. Violence against the Rohingya, a Muslim people living in western Burma, has been labeled “ethnic cleansing” by Human Rights Watch, the New York City-based watchdog, with hundreds killed and 140,000 sequestered in ghetto-like camps.

The halo around Suu Kyi, the nation’s shining moral authority, has also dimmed. The transition from opposition

symbol to government insider is always perilous. Not that Suu Kyi is President, of course. She is constrained by a clause in the military-authored constitution that disallows anyone with a foreign family member from becoming President—a rule that seems specifically designed for her. (Suu Kyi’s two sons, like her husband, who died of cancer when she was under house arrest, are British.) Even from her perch as parliamentarian, though, the 69-year-old holds the kind of global sway rivaled only by the Dalai Lama or Desmond Tutu. When she speaks, whether in her lofty Burmese or her crisp Oxbridge English, people listen.

Yet Suu Kyi has kept largely quiet about the plight of Burma’s minorities, who together make up some 40% of the country’s 50 million-plus people. Her silence is particularly jarring when it comes to the 1 million-strong Muslim Rohingya. Suu Kyi now rarely meets with the foreign press—she declined an interview with TIME—and avoids representatives from human-rights groups that spent years campaigning for her release. Some local activists are disenchanted. “Ever since independence, we Burmese have hoped for a hero to save us,” says Phyo Phyo Aung, a 26-year-old civil-society activist who spent more than three years in jail. “I don’t want to depend on one person, one leader, one Aung San Suu Kyi.”

If next year’s polls are free and fair, the NLD will likely prevail. But the party has done little to cultivate the next generation. Ye Htut, Burma’s Information Minister, has perfected a line when it comes to the NLD. “If Suu Kyi is President, who will be the Vice President?” he asks during an hour-long conversation. “Who will be No. 2, No. 3, No. 4? Who are the other leaders in the NLD?” Ye Htut represents a government accused of backsliding on reforms—but he does have a point.

‘WE HAVE HOPED FOR A HERO. [BUT] I DON’T WANT TO DEPEND ON ONE PERSON, ONE LEADER, ONE AUNG SAN SUU KYI.’

—PHYOE PHYOE AUNG, 26-YEAR-OLD CIVIL-SOCIETY ACTIVIST

The Absence of Peace

SUU KYI’S FATHER, AUNG SAN, IS CREDITED with having formed an independent Burma by joining often feuding ethnicities into a federal state. But Aung San was assassinated before the nation gained independence from the British in 1948. Since then, some of the world’s longest-running civil wars have festered in Burma’s fringes, where ethnic peoples live on resource-rich land. Today there is little love displayed for Aung San’s daughter, a Bamar patrician, especially from those who practice faiths other than Burma’s dominant Buddhism. “For the NLD, amending the constitution so [Suu Kyi can be President] is a bigger priority than peace,” says Sai Hsam Phoon Hseng, an education and foreign-affairs officer for an ethnic Shan party. “But a big reason why this country is not developed is because of ethnic conflict. Peace should be the first priority.”

There is little peace in the sliver of Kachin state run by the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO), which controls land near Burma’s northern border with China. Since a cease-fire broke in 2011, after a 17-year pause in the fighting, more than 100,000 Kachin have been displaced with little hope of returning to land occupied by the Tatmadaw. Human-rights groups have documented rape and the deliberate shelling of civilian settlements by the Burmese army, though both sides have been accused of using child soldiers. About 8,000 Kachin villagers now live at Je Yang refugee camp. As dusk falls, Maran Kaw and her family gather in their tiny room to watch a DVD. It’s a film of KIO propaganda, a disturbing depiction of sexual assault, execution and bloodletting by the Tatmadaw, complete with spurts of red paint and torn women’s clothes. “I will get nightmares from watching this,” she says, “because it reminds me of what happened in the villages.” But her grandchildren, ages 1 and 5, are riveted.

It’s a jarring scene, especially given the serenity that surrounds Suu Kyi, with her long-standing commitment to nonviolent resistance. But Burma remains a bloody place, and Suu Kyi’s critics accuse her of resorting to phrases like “rule of law” rather than condemning the continuing ethnic brutality. Beyond Kachin, she has disappointed on the fate of the Rohingya killed in pogroms in western Burma. The ethnic Rakhine, or Arakanese—who have clashed with the Rohingya—dismiss



Struggling hero Suu Kyi leaves a June 21 political rally in Yay Tar Shay township, where she campaigned against tightening control by the country’s military

Back to the Future

CLOSE TO MIDNIGHT, THE STREETS OF downtown Rangoon are hushed, save for the scuffle of bare feet on cooling pavement. Young men are playing soccer on what during the day is a busy thoroughfare. Looming around them in this interfaith city, Burma’s biggest, are a Buddhist pagoda, a Baptist church and a Sunni mosque built by Indians who arrived during the British Raj. Around the corner from the soccer game is Sule Pagoda Road. It was on this avenue in 2007 that Buddhist monks upturned their begging bowls in a sign of defiance and marched for democracy. The columns of burgundy-robed holy men made for memorable images. So did the ensuing slaughter. Dozens, at least, were killed.

Today a billboard for a new mobile-service provider stands near the spot where a Japanese news photographer was gunned down by a Burmese soldier seven years ago. It’s a sign of Burma’s growing ties with the outside world. For all the frustration with Burma’s seeming regression, what was formerly one of the most closed countries in the world, run by a vicious military junta, has opened in ways that Burmese just a few years ago never could have dreamed. Suu Kyi, who remained a symbol of hope through those years of repression, deserves thanks for that.

How much has changed becomes clear when a man emerges from the dark. He is wearing a sarong and introduces himself as Mr. Toe. “Do you know what happened here a few years ago?” Mr. Toe asks in meticulous English. “Do you know who the Lady is?” A few years ago I would have taken him for an undercover agent, dispatched to lure sedition out of foreigners. Now it’s different. So we sit at a roadside stall, picking at tea-leaf salad and going over the army massacres of 1988, when even more civilians died, and the one nearly two decades later. He remembers the crowds of 2007, then the fierce syncopation of machine guns and the streets empty of everything but flip-flops orphaned by those who fled. “Oh my Buddha,” Mr. Toe exclaims, and we toast Suu Kyi with water, Coca-Cola and Burmese High Class whiskey. Burma’s true dawn may still be distant, but on this night, who can we honor but the Lady? ■

them as illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh rather than recognizing them as an ethnicity with long roots in the region. Anti-Muslim sentiment simmers in Burma, as does resentment that the British brought people from the Indian subcontinent to work in their colony.

When Obama arrived in Burma in November for a regional summit, he was far less ebullient than during his landmark visit two years before, noting that the nation’s reforms were by “no means complete or irreversible.” At the same time, Suu Kyi has yet to speak out forcefully against a government plan to further disenfranchise the Muslim Rohingya. “It is the duty of the government to make all our people feel secure,” Suu Kyi said on Nov. 14, when asked about the Rohingya with Obama at her side. “It is the duty of our people to learn to live in harmony with one another.” The U.S. President was more direct: “Discrimination against the Rohingya or any other religious minority, I think, does not express the kind of country that Burma over the long term wants to be.”

There’s no question that in the Buddhist, Bamar heartland, Suu Kyi’s popularity endures. Utter her name and it’s like invoking a saint. But the Burmese are also beginning to criticize her openly. Even in her constituency of Kawhmu, deep in the Irrawaddy Delta, where land speculation has driven up prices threefold in one

month, there is pushback. A self-styled real estate agent strides up, intent on selling a patch of rice paddy and banana trees for a ridiculous price in a community of wooden shacks. Mention that Suu Kyi had recently cautioned farmers against selling their land, and he shrugs. “Money is good,” he says. “She’s rich, anyway.”

She’s not, really. Suu Kyi lives in villas but hardly surrounds herself with the gilded excess of Burma’s military elite and their cronies. The choices she faces are difficult. Once confined by house arrest—and a cloistered life of academia and motherhood before that—Suu Kyi may still be unaccustomed to the hurly-burly of politics. It’s easy to criticize her for failing to defend ethnic groups, but casual racism, particularly toward the Rohingya, is so ingrained in Burmese society that she would surely lose more supporters than she would gain by defending minority rights.

Still, the world is counting on Suu Kyi to use her moral suasion to fight prejudice, no matter the political consequences. But she may feel that the NLD needs to win an election before she can instill values in her people. Meanwhile, others speak up for her. One unlikely defense comes from Wai Wai Nu, a young Rohingya activist who, like her entire family, spent time in jail. “Of course, we are disappointed in Aung San Suu Kyi’s silence about us,” she says. “But we have no choice but to support her democratic party. What other hope do we have?”