

# Right vs Righteous

Australia's conflicts with Japan over whaling and southern bluefin tuna



?!

## Stock issues for whales

- See: International Whaling Commission
  - <http://iwcoffice.org/index.htm>
- Species in danger of extinction:
  - North Pacific and North Atlantic Right Whales
- Some populations in danger of extinction
- Minke whales:
  - Abundant, not in danger of extinction
  - Antarctic population possibly stock decline between 1980-2000

## Stock issues for tuna

- See: Regional Fisheries Management Organization
  - ICCAT, IATTC, IOTC, CCSBT, WCPFC
- **Skipjack:** resilient to fishing, but bycatch issues
- **Yellowfin:** overfishing in some populations
- **Bigeye:** overfishing in some populations
- **Albacore:** possibly overfishing in some populations
- **Bluefin (northern, southern):** *heavily overfished*

# To shame or not to shame?

- With Dr Charlotte Epstein  
University of Sydney
- Australia uses **shaming strategy** on whaling
- 2005-6 tuna dispute chose **not to shame**
  - Not-shaming also a diplomatic strategy
- Why the inconsistency?
  - Hypocrisy? Incompetence?
  - Two different scripts on 'responsible marine resource management'

## Australia's anti-whaling script

- Australia a staunch whaling country until 1979
- Switched to become staunchly anti-whaling
- Changing public and political mood
  - Greenpeace, Project Jonah
  - Malcolm Fraser
- To be an environmentally responsible state is to be anti-whaling
  - Domestic political capital
  - International sphere

# Sustainable tuna fishing script

- 1960s start of heavy fishing of SBT
- Late 1980s stocks collapsed
- 1994 Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT)
  - Initial members Australia, Japan, New Zealand
  - Subsequently S.Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia (Philippines, S.Africa, EC 'cooperating non-members')
- 1998-2000 dispute Japan's scientific quota
  - Shaming
- 2005-6 scandal Japan's overcatching
  - Not shaming
- 2009 pessimistic stock assessments – quota cuts
  - Not shaming

## Why does Japan whale?

- Economic reasons?
  - One company, contracted to scientific program
  - Annual sales 2007/8 USD48m (USD12m subsidy)
  - Prices falling
  - Supply exceeds demand
- Cultural reasons?
  - A few coastal communities long history
  - Industrial whaling important protein source nationally 1940s and 1950s
  - By 1975 less than 2% protein per capita, by 1980s almost zero, stayed at this low level
- Political reasons!

# Politics of whaling in Japan 1

- Powerful bureaucracy
  - Makes legislation (not politicians)
- Government agencies want to:
  - Enlarge budgets
  - Increase staff
  - Increase jurisdiction
- Ishii: MAFF, Fisheries Agency (FA)
  - Protect existing turf, increase budget through whale meat sales
  - Aim to resume commercial whaling a feint
    - Real aim for FA to retain scientific whaling program in current form
- Safe arena to say 'No' to the USA

# Politics of whaling in Japan 2

- Culturalization (depoliticization) of whaling
- To 1972 whaling was a nutrition issue
- FA employed PR company
- From 1980s whaling portrayed as:
  - Fish (whale) food culture vs meat food culture
  - Cultural imperialism
- In 2000s public opinion polls reflect the shift
- Attacks by anti-whalers on Japan confirm this view

# How effective are anti-whaling shaming strategies?

- Effective at what?
  - Getting Japan to stop whaling? Not at all
  - Making a strong environmental statement to the domestic audience? Very
- Unintended effects in Japan
  - Strengthen sense that anti-whaling is anti-Japanese cultural imperialism by meat-food countries
    - Turn whaling from a non-issue into a cultural nationalism political issue
      - Harder for the Japanese government to drop support for whaling
- Unintended effects in Australia
  - Feeds anti-Japanese sentiment

## Why did Japan overcatch SBT?

- Japanese fishers wanted more share of lucrative market
  - Race-to-fish mentality or believed sustainable?
  - Why did government let them?
    - Domestic political pressures vs script of responsible international player

# Politics of tuna fishing in Japan 1

- Like rice
  - Concerns about food security
  - Cultural nationalism re food culture
  - Political and consumer support for local industry in opposition to imports
  - Subsidies for industries based in rural areas

# Politics of tuna fishing in Japan 2

- Governance structure
  - MAFF, Fisheries Agency
  - Bureaucracy turf extended through *gaikaku dantai*
    - Industry associations: *Nikkatsuren*, OPRT, Japan Fisheries Association
  - Catches reported through industry associations to FA to calculate when reached quota
- How were they able to overcatch?
  - No independent catch statistics to check
  - *Trade* documentation scheme, not *catch* documentation

# How effective is not-shaming on SBT?

- Shaming/confrontation unlikely to work
  - CCSBT and Australia learned from damaged relations from 1999 legal action
- CCSBT still functioning
  - 2005 resolution for *catch* documentation scheme, adopted 2006
  - Japan also accepted a cut in 2009
- Recovery of SBT stocks? Not yet...

## What should we do?

- Be environmentally responsible
- Foster good relations with Japan
  - Could confrontation on whaling leak out?
    - CCSBT 1999 dispute shows confrontation can damage relations within the sector
    - Certainly damages Australian public images of Japan
- **How to be responsible re marine environments and foster good relations with Japan?**

# Working with Japan on whaling

- Cooperative rather than confrontational anti-whaling?
  - Shaming damages relations, counterproductive to reducing/reforming Japan's whaling
  - Building anti-whaling consciousness in Japan
    - Work with Japanese home-grown NGOs
    - Media campaign to counter pro-whaling cultural nationalist message
  - Identify pro-whaling and non-pro-whaling camps within the Japanese government and lobby accordingly
- Or, promote ecological sustainability in whaling?
  - Work with Japan to reform scientific whaling program
  - Consider lifting moratorium on commercial whaling with strict sustainability criteria
  - Australian government unlikely to shift from anti-whaling policy re Japan given current public opinion
    - Who will open up more room for debate in public arena?

# Working with Japan on SBT

- Support international tuna negotiations
- Encourage Japan as key market country to clamp down on imports not compliant with CCSBT
- Support Japanese NGOs to work on bluefin tuna
- Build consumer awareness in Japan re plight of stocks
- Apply corporate social responsibility pressure to tuna traders, especially Mitsubishi

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