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FOREWORD

As the Middlebury Journal of Global Affairs enters its eighth year, this interdisciplinary undergraduate academic journal continues to highlight the excellent work of Middlebury students in the field of global affairs. Published by the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs and managed, edited, and designed by the Rohatyn Center Student Advisory Board, the Journal is Middlebury College's only student-run academic journal. It serves as an excellent opportunity for students of all disciplines to showcase their globally-minded or internationally focused work. Selected from the largest submission pool in recent memory, this year's pieces cover topics from counterinsurgency in Mali to the global impacts of fast fashion industry waste. These pieces are truly exemplary and we are excited to share them with the community.

While the name and the content of this year's Journal strike a familiar tone to previous editions, we took a risk with an ambitious new look. We hope that the sleek and professional style of the Journal now matches the excellence of its pieces. We see this as a new beginning for the Middlebury Journal of Global Affairs, kickstarting a drive to continuously improve its production quality.

This year's edition of the Middlebury Journal of Global Affairs would not have been possible without the support of numerous people at the College. I would especially like to thank the Rohatyn Student Advisory Board for their unceasing passion for this Journal. They edited twice as many submissions as in previous years and needed to learn Adobe InDesign; their tenacity, hard work, and perseverance continue to inspire me. I would also like to extend a thank you to Valerie Costello and the Middlebury Printing Services for their guidance, especially for the crash course in InDesign that would prove to be invaluable. Lastly, I would like to thank the staff and faculty at the Rohatyn Center, including Associate Director Charlotte Tate, Director Mark Williams, and Operations Manager Margaret DeFoor for their endless encouragement, logistic support, and wisdom.

Especially in a year of many consequential elections, it is dangerously easy to center our attention on our national interests. Recent events and conflicts remind us of the importance of engaging with the global. We hope the work highlighted in this Journal emphasizes this fact. As you read, I encourage you to engage in conversation with these pieces, hold space for the authors' voices, and emerge with opinions of your own.

Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER MARTUCCI
Director of the Rohatyn Student Advisory Board
Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs

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BEYOND BRAINWASHING
EXAMINING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROPAGANDA IN LEGITIMIZING AND STABILIZING AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES

BY WILLIAM MORTELL

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effectiveness of propaganda in bolstering regime legitimacy and stability in Russia and China. By looking both at methods of dissemination and popular reactions to propaganda in these countries and connecting them to theoretical discussions on propaganda's various functions, it seeks to uncover the multifaceted ways in which propaganda affects perceptions of the two most powerful regimes in the world. The paper concludes that propaganda fails to support regime legitimacy but fosters regime stability by reinforcing state power and creating feelings of cynicism towards politics, thus stymying dissent. It ultimately posits that efforts to combat authoritarian propaganda should focus on combating fear and cynicism rather than indoctrination.

The opening episode of the Netflix docuseries "How To Become A Tyrant" features plentiful shots of Nazi-Era Germany, probably the most well-known example of an authoritarian regime. The images depict fanatics packing stadiums decked out in party regalia, and hordes of people chanting "sieg heil" and flinging the Nazi salute. These scenes are counterpointed by Peter Dinklage's suave narrating about the importance of "branding" in maintaining and establishing authoritarian regimes. A more accurate word for Dinklage's concept of regime "branding" would be propaganda, and "How To Become A Tyrant" reflects a common perspective on propaganda: that it can "brainwash" or indoctrinate otherwise normal people into supporting an oppressive regime.[1] This paper seeks to probe the accuracy of this ideal of propaganda in the 21st century by analyzing the mechanisms and efficacy of propaganda creation and dissemination in legitimizing the regimes of two authoritarian states: China and Russia. It will argue that propaganda positively impacts regime stability while not impacting or even negatively impacting regime legitimacy.

It is useful to establish background, key definitions, and parameters that inform the scope of this paper,

1   Paul Shields, "Killing Politics Softly: Unconvincing Propaganda and Political Cynicism in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* (2021), 54–73, https://doi.org/10.1525/j.postcomstud.2021.54.4.54

first pertaining generally to authoritarian regimes, then specifically to the chosen case studies, and finally to propaganda itself. Mass support is critical to propagating authoritarian regimes, and propaganda is one of several measures, including judicial and extrajudicial violence and censorship, used to control the populace in an authoritarian regime.[2] Propaganda has been a key tool of the most infamous authoritarian regimes – Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, Maoist China – and the link between propaganda and authoritarianism has long been observed in scholarship, though propaganda is not endemic

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"... To understand how propaganda functions is to chip away at a fundamental pillar of authoritarianism."

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to authoritarian regimes. In her seminal book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, philosopher Hannah Arendt wrote, "Only the mob and the elite can be attracted by the momentum of totalitarianism itself. The masses have to be won by propaganda."[3] Arendt adroitly pointed out propaganda's use as a tool for the propagation of authoritarian regimes to control those who otherwise have little to no incentive to follow an oppressive system. Thinkers like Jacques Ellul and Noam Chomsky have also explored the power of propaganda as a coercive mechanism.[4] Propaganda is a phenomenon that has persisted from Arendt's time to the modern epoch, and to understand how propaganda functions is to chip away at a fundamental pillar of authoritarianism.

Frantz defines authoritarianism as a regime type in which decision-making power is not distributed through free and fair elections.[5] This broad

categorization can be further divided into several subtypes, e.g., personalist, military, and monarchical. The case studies selected for this essay operate under slightly different regime types. China is largely controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), so it would most accurately be classified as a strong-party dominant regime. Russia is a personalist regime under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, who is not a member of any political party, though he does maintain strong ties to the "United Russia Party."[6] Both countries, it should be noted, also mimic many procedures and features of democracy like parliaments, elections, and multiple parties, a trend common in many modern authoritarian regimes.[7] Despite the slight differences in regime type, Russia and China have notable similarities that make them suitable candidates for comparison: they are militarily and economically the most powerful authoritarian states in the world, both countries have found themselves at odds with the U.S and NATO recently, and both states have robust and extensively researched propaganda apparatuses.

Propaganda is a nebulous term that can be difficult to define precisely and distinguish from other types of communication intended to be persuasive.[8] The definition posited by Jowett and O'Donnell is useful for the scope of this paper, "Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist."[9] In this case, the propagandist(s) are Russia and China, and the "desired intent" is to legitimize and perpetuate the regime.

There are three main modes by which propaganda

2   Erica Frantz, *Authoritarianism: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

3   Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (United Kingdom: Penguin Classics, 1951), 347.

4   Jacques Ellul, *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962); Noam Chomsky, *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1992).

5   Frantz, *Authoritarianism*.

6   Erin Trouth Hofmann, "Russia's Party Problem: United Russia, Putin, and the Fate of Democracy in Russia," *Keegan Institute of the Wilson Center*, 2006, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/russias-party-problem-united-russia-putin-and-the-fate-democracy-russia.

7   Frantz, *Authoritarianism*; Ayşe Kadıoğlu, "New Authoritarian Zeitgeist: Family Resemblances," *OpenDemocracy*, 2019, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/new-authoritarian-zeitgeist-family-resemblances/; Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way, "The New Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 31, no. 1 (2020): 51–65, https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.2020.0004.

8   Viorel Tutui, "Some Reflections Concerning the Problem of Defining Propaganda," *Argumentum. Journal of the Seminar of Discursive Logic, Argumentation Theory and Rhetoric* 15, no. 2 (2017): 110–25, https://doaj.org/article/efb3861a12544d19a519c9b418452d15.

9   Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda & Persuasion*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2019.

achieves these goals: the first is *indoctrination*. Indoctrination occurs through media that convinces people to believe and embrace pro-regime ideals. It focuses mostly on "shaping perceptions" and "manipulating cognitions," aspects of Jowett and O'Donnell's definition. It is the mode most commonly associated with propaganda and one which most classical propaganda scholarship focuses on.[10] Indoctrinatory propaganda is what Dinklage refers to as "branding" in "How to Become a Tyrant" and what Arendt references in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Successful indoctrinatory propaganda serves to legitimize a regime and garner the mass support crucial to perpetuating it. The second of these modes is *signaling*. Even when propaganda is unsuccessful at indoctrinating the recipient because it is flagrantly false, inflammatory, unbelievable, or hyperbolic, it can still quell dissent by signaling the capacity of the state to control and disseminate information, regardless of its veracity or persuasiveness.[11] In other words, propaganda can be effective simply because it demonstrates the power of the regime in its ability to control the information-space even when the propaganda itself is unconvincing. The third and final mode is distraction. This simply refers to propaganda that seeks to suppress the truth or contrary viewpoints by flooding the information-space and burying any anti-regime materials.[12] This quantity-over-quality approach is especially potent as access to information has drastically increased in the digital age, and states leverage the internet as a propaganda tool.[13] The key takeaway is that propaganda does not need to be indoctrinatory to be successful; propaganda can change group behaviors without necessarily altering group beliefs.[14]

This paper posits that state propaganda in both Russia and China is effective at maintaining regime stability, but fails to bolster and, at times, even negatively affects regime legitimacy. In these states, propaganda is more successful at signaling and distraction than indoctrination.

CASE STUDY I: CHINA

The Chinese Government features a highly developed state propaganda machine that demonstrates a large-scale commitment to disseminating propaganda. Propaganda has played a key role in CCP strategy since the party's rise to power under Mao Zedong, who was heavily involved in promulgating myriad forms of propaganda during and after the 1949 Cultural Revolution.[15] While China's involvement in propaganda has since scaled back, the CCP's current propaganda system is a "sprawling bureaucratic establishment."[16] The CCP Propaganda Department (CCPPD) controls tens of thousands of TV stations, newspapers, periodicals, publishing houses, radio stations, and more. An intricate network of government organs oversees these media producers, some examples of which include the State Council Information Office, the Ministry of Culture, and the State Council General Administration of Press and Publications, all of whom interface with the CCPPD. The internal structure of the CCPPD itself remains somewhat murky, as the organization is highly secretive. There are tri-pronged foci within the CCPPD, focusing on intra-party propaganda, mass propaganda, and external propaganda meant to influence China's reputation abroad. The external propaganda is handled by the External Propaganda Leading Group and intra-party propaganda is primarily driven by written media distributed via CCPPD-overseen newspapers, publishing houses, etc. Perhaps the paragon example of mass propaganda is the Xinhua News Agency, which itself comprises more than 17 internal units.[17] This intricate network of dissemination demonstrates how much value the CCP places on propaganda as a political tool and crystalizes the inextricable link between modern authoritarian states and propaganda.

10   Shields, "Killing Politics Softly."

11   Haifeng Huang, "Propaganda as Signaling," Comparative Politics 47, no. 4 (2015): 419–37, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43664158.

12   Shields, "Killing Politics Softly.

13   Rogier Creemers, "Cyber China: Upgrading Propaganda, Public Opinion Work and Social Management for the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 103 (2017): 85–100, https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1206281; Dominique Geissler et al., "Russian Propaganda on Social Media during the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine," *EPJ Data Science* 12, no. 1 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1140/epjds/s13688-023-00414-5; Seva Gunitsky, "Corrupting the Cyber-Commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability," *Perspectives on Politics* 13, no. 1 (2015): 42–54.

14   Andrew T. Little, "Propaganda and Credulity," *Games and Economic Behavior* 102 (March 2017): 224–32, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geb.2016.12.006.

15   Hung, Chang-Tai. *Mao's New World: Political Culture in the Early People's Republic*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2011.

16   David Shambaugh, "China's Propaganda System: Institutions, Processes and Efficacy," *The China Journal* 57 (2007): 25–58, https://doi.org/10.2307/20066240.

17   Ibid.

While China evidently invests in propaganda distribution, the efficacy of said propaganda is more dubious. Much Chinese propaganda can be described as *hard propaganda*. According to Haifeng Huang, hard propaganda is heavy-handed, obvious in its intention, and hyperbolic or discreditable. This hard propaganda often decreases public opinions of the Chinese regime, even as it increases regime stability. A perfect example of this is the news channel Xianwen Lianbo. It mostly shows footage of party members in meetings, receiving foreign dignitaries, and officiating ceremonies, with narration in stiff, formal language. It is displayed on most provincial TV Stations at 7:00 p.m. (typical Chinese dinnertime) at the behest of the CCP. Huang found through survey-based research that hard propaganda like Xianwen Linbao was not likely to make people more favorable to the regime. It actively decreased subjects' opinions of China and made them more interested in leaving the country. However, he found that it did increase belief in the strength of the state and its ability to maintain order, thus reducing the likelihood of expressions of dissent. This phenomenon would be an example of signaling theory: even though people are unconvinced by hard propaganda, the fact that Xianwen Lianbo is on every television every night at 7:00 p.m. demonstrates a tremendous capacity to control and disseminate information.

CASE STUDY II: RUSSIA

Russian propaganda follows similar contours to its Chinese counterpart. Just as Huang's signal theory showed how unconvincing but effectively disseminated propaganda suppressed dissent in China, Shields argues that unconvincing propaganda in Russia has exacerbated a sense of cynicism and mistrust that serves as a similar political soporific. Shields' interviews with Russian Citizens demonstrated a consistent mistrust and derogation of politics after exposure to national propaganda. Participants who were asked to react to state news clips often viewed them as an extension of the corrupt but immutable state system. Despite the interviewees' professed mistrust of federally produced television, a majority said they still consume it regularly. Shields theorizes that this unconvincing propaganda does not create cynicism

in and of itself, but that it amplifies pre-existing cynicism. Thus, the more deeply entrenched an authoritarian regime is, the less persuasive propaganda can be whilst staying effective.

"Russia, also like China, has built a powerful internet propaganda machine. However, whereas Chinese propaganda seems to mostly work by signaling, Russia's digital propaganda is characterized by use of distraction tactics."

Russian views on patriotism further explain how propaganda contributes to regime continuation irrespective of its indoctrinatory effectiveness. Patriotism, the idea of "loving the motherland," is viewed as something passed down from above, i.e., from the government to the people.[18] Russians are cognizant of the weaponization of patriotic ideals in propaganda to deflect negative attention from the regime. At large, heavily propagandized events like the Olympics, there is a tendency to view displays of patriotism as false, performative, and imposed by the government. There is a tendency to decry patriotism imposed from above even among those who would support more organic acts of patriotism that hold more agency, further demonstrating how propaganda can negatively affect perceptions of the state. The key finding regarding regime tolerance is that Russians tend to view others as both more patriotic and more susceptible to propaganda than themselves.[19] This finding points to how the perception of propaganda as an indoctrinatory force can be effective in suppressing anti-regime ideals. Even if the propaganda itself fails to be persuasive, if people are convinced that it has indoctrinated those around them, it can still curb mass resistance.

18   Paul Goode, "Love for the Motherland," *Russian Politics* 1, no. 4 (2016): 418–49, https://doi.org/10.1163/2451-8921-00104005.
19   Ibid.

COMPARISON OF CASE STUDIES

Russia and China share many key similarities in their deployment of propaganda. Both states have notably leveraged the internet as a potent propaganda tool, though they utilize different modes of propaganda to do so. China's intricate propaganda bureaucracy has evolved into a sophisticated wing targeting the internet. While much focus is placed upon China's internet governance regarding censorship policies, the CCPPD has also begun to focus on creating proactive digital propaganda. Notably, this involves the use of data and algorithms to mathematically optimize digital propaganda.[20] Russia, also like China, has built a powerful internet propaganda machine. However, whereas Chinese propaganda seems to mostly work by signaling, Russia's digital propaganda is characterized by use of distraction tactics: inundating information channels like Twitter with so much propaganda that it hampers the possibility of finding content contrary to regime goals. The primary tool Russia utilizes for this is bots. Although bots typically do not create content on their own, they are able to make thousands of accounts at a time and use these to like, comment, and retweet a chosen type of content. These bots can artificially amplify pro-regime content, making it appear far more impactful on social media sites than it is.[21] By artificially manipulating what users see through pretenses of virality, Russian propaganda can flood the feeds of users and thus reduce the perceived impact of anti-regime content a user might stumble upon.

In summary, both Russia and China have highly developed propaganda machines that leverage (among other media) the internet as a propaganda tool and disseminate both internal and external-facing propaganda.[22] The major difference is that Chinese propaganda is most successful at signaling through media like Xianwen Lianbo, whilst Russian propaganda focuses more on distraction.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines propaganda in Russia and China and argues that in both cases, pro-regime propaganda is more effective at signaling and distracting than indoctrinating. Researching propaganda and how it works is a key part of successfully combating authoritarianism, especially with growing global trends of democratic backsliding and an increase in competitive authoritarianism.[23] Russia and China's prominence in the global sphere and their substantial military and economic power, as well as Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine, make undermining this key weapon of authoritarianism more prescient than ever. The implications of this research could inform potential strategies to combat propaganda that focus on fighting fear and cynicism rather than outright indoctrination such as grassroots efforts to promote political engagement and/or cyber-based efforts to ensure free access to sources of information from varied perspectives. Russia and China's similarities and geographic proximity make them excellent to compare but also open the door for plenty of future research in the same sphere. For example, how would a state's relationship with propaganda change under a different subtype of authoritarianism (monarchy or military regime) or region of the world (Middle East or Africa)? Propaganda is an issue that has deep impacts on the political contours of the globe, and understanding it is key to creating a more democratic and free world.

20   Creemers, "Cyber China."

21   Geissler et al., "Russian Propaganda on Social Media during the 2022 Invasion of Ukraine.".

22   Erin Baggott Carter and Brett L. Carter, "Questioning More: RT, Outward-Facing Propaganda, and the Post-West World Order," *Security Studies* 30, no. 1 (2021): 49–78, https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2021.1885730 ; Creemers, "Cyber China."; Gunitsky, "Corrupting the Cyber-Commons."

23   Nancy Bermeo, "On Democratic Backsliding," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 1 (2016): 5–19, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/607612; Frantz, *Authoritarianism*; Kadıoğlu, "New Authoritarian Zeitgeist."

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GLOBAL THREADS UNRAVELED
TRACING FAST FASHION'S WASTE FLOWS THROUGH A MULTI-NATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

BY ROBERT AMBAT, KAYDEN LEMEE, MADAKET RZEPKA

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the less-explored environmental and socioeconomic facets of the global clothing waste crisis across three distinct regions: Cambodia, Zambia, and Chile's Atacama Desert. In Cambodia, scraps and offcuts discarded by garment factories are funneled to kiln factories, which accelerates Phnom Penh's environmental degradation and health hazards. Meanwhile, the influx of second-hand clothing has severely debilitated Zambia's economy, overwhelming local industries and spurring unemployment. The Atacama Desert in Chile serves as a distressing repository for imported clothing waste, highlighting the rampant impunity of major global brands in perpetuating this crisis. This paper emphasizes the dire need for comprehensive policy interventions that urge global economic powers to assume responsibility for their companies' waste management practices, alongside instituting transparent and sustainable practices across the fashion industry's supply chain. Without such interventions, the Global South will remain disproportionately ravaged and globally condemned for this crisis's worsening environmental, economic, and sociopolitical repercussions.

Each year, the average American disposes of about 81.5 pounds of clothes, and every second, a garbage truck's worth of clothing ends up burned or in a landfill.[1] Collectively, the world's fashion industry produces approximately 109 million tons of textile fiber a year and accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions.[2] This reality underscores a pressing concern for the environmental implications of such incessant production and the skewed socioeconomic landscapes it begets. More importantly, the global flows of clothing implicate a broader system of power dynamics between the Global North and South, where economic agents rooted in industrialized countries prompt overproduction with little concern for how the surplus desecrates local industries, environmental landscapes, and public health in

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1   World Economic Forum. "These Facts Show How Unsustainable the Fashion Industry Is," January 31, 2020. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/fashion-industry-carbon-unsustainable-environment-pollution/; World Economic Forum, "These are the economic, social and environmental impacts of fast fashion," January 11, 2019.

2   World Economic Forum, "These Facts Show How Unsustainable

the Fashion Industry Is"; "The Impact of Textile Production and Waste on the Environment (Infographics)," *European Parliament*, 2020.

developing countries. By delving into real-world case studies across three regions, this paper aims to explore the intricate web of global clothing waste and dissect the environmental and economic repercussions of the fashion industry's production and consumption patterns.

PRE-CONSUMER GARMENT WASTE IN CAMBODIA

Although textile waste is commonly associated with used or surplus clothing, a significant contributor to the fashion industry's "discardscape" is pre-consumer textile waste.[3] In fact, the cutting and sewing process alone leaves around 15 percent of the fabric as scraps or offcuts.[4] Garment factories regularly order excess fabrics to account for the possibility of defective fabrics and manufacturing errors.[5] Despite this, the exact magnitude of waste generated during manufacturing remains unclear, primarily due to the lack of transparency by global fashion brands about their operations.[6]

Most garments are produced in the Global South, more specifically in Southeast Asian countries like Myanmar, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The prevalence of exploitative labor practices, low wages, and minimal regulatory oversight make these countries attractive to major global clothing brands looking for cheap and exploitable manpower.[7] Cambodia, whose garment industry accounts for around two-thirds of its exports, is a country that grapples with severe environmental repercussions in sustaining the relentless demands for mass production operations by global fashion giants.[8] Instead of proper disposal systems,

scraps are turned into cheap sources of fuel in brick factory kilns.[9] Multiple investigations discovered that garment waste composed of materials such as fabric, rubber, and plastic was being burned at various brick kilns around the capital Phnom Penh, with scraps from brands like Reebok, Old Navy, Marks & Spencer, and Adidas visible in photographic documentation.[10] Waste collectors supplied these kilns by bribing access to a private dump that served as an independent subcontractor that garment factories hire to handle their waste disposal.[11] Due to the proximity of garment factories, most brick kilns in the capital

Source: LICADHO, in Goldstein & Nimol, CamboJA News, 2023

saw offcuts as affordable alternatives to wood that could increase their profit margins.[12]

Given the vast majority of today's fabrics are manufactured using polyester and processed with toxic chemicals such as formaldehyde, ammonia, and PVC, burning textile waste has had grave impacts on

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3   Philip Crang et al., "Discardscapes of fashion: commodity biography, patch geographies, and preconsumer garment waste in Cambodia," *Social & Cultural Geography* 23, no. 4 (2022): 541–542, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2020.1777322.

4   Timo Rissanen, "From 15% to 0: Investigating the creation of fashion without the creation of fabric waste," *Creativity: Designer meets Technology Europe* (2005), 1.

5   Amanda Kaufmann, "Out of fashion," *Southeast Asia Globe* (2019). https://southeastasiaglobe.com/out-of-fashion/.

6   Crang et al., "Discardscapes of fashion," 544.

7   Enrico D'Ambrogio, "Workers' conditions in the textile and clothing sector: just an Asian affair? Issues at stake after the Rana Plaza tragedy," *European Parliament Research Service* (2014), 1-2. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/EPRS/140841REV1-Workers-conditions-in-the-textile-and-clothing-sector-just-an-Asian-affair-FINAL.pdf.

8   Han, Yoon Seon, and Jai S. Mah. "Preferential Trade Treatment and Industrial Development: The Case of Cambodia's Garment Industry." *South East Asia Research Service* 23, no. 1 (2015), 122, https://www.jstor.org/stable/26371946; Goldstein, Leila and Seoung Nimol. "NGO Licadho Finds Child Labor, Debt Bondage in Cambodia's Brick Factories," CamboJA News, November 20, 2023, https://cambojanews.com/ngo-

licadho-finds-child-labor-debt-bondage-in-cambodias-brick-factories/.

9   Goldstein and Nimol, ""NGO Licadho Finds Child Labor."

10   Crang et al., "Discardscapes of fashion," 548; Goldstein and Nimol, "NGO Licadho Finds Child Labor."

11   Crang et al., "Discardscapes of fashion," 551.

12   Ibid, 548.

Phnom Penh's state of environmental health. Both Crang et al. and LICADHO found that kiln workers suffered a variety of respiratory ailments due to prolonged exposure to toxic fumes.[13] In fact, brick kilns utilizing textile offcuts are visually notable on Phnom Penh's landscape due to the black smoke emitted by combusting plastics.[14] Despite such corrosive effects on their health, workers are tied to these toxic environments due to the pervasive poverty and lack of employment opportunities in their hometowns and, more prominently, their bondage to brick kiln owners to pay off their microfinance debts.[15]

Such hazardous discardscapes in Cambodia reveal a pressing need to critically revisit textile waste not solely as an issue of disposal post-use, but as an issue of mass overproduction and neglect at the manufacturing stage.

SALAULA: THE SECONDHAND CLOTHING MARKET IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

In recent decades, Zambia's textile industry has undergone a significant shift with the rise of the "salaula" trade, which involves the buying and selling of second-hand clothing, especially imports from the West.[16] This transformation, while appearing to encourage a circular economy for garments, has had profoundly detrimental economic consequences, most notably the decline in domestic textile manufacturing.[17] Despite thriving during the Import Substitution Industrialization era from the 1960s to the mid-1980s, the textile industry faced challenges due to falling copper earnings and IMF-imposed economic structures in 1990.[18] The shift from a protected industry to one with international competition forced Zambia's domestic garment industry to compete with extremely cheap imported second-hand clothing

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13   Ibid, 549; "Workers in Cambodia Made Ill by 'Toxic' Fast Fashion Waste," *Asia Financial*, 2023.

14   Crang et al., "Discardscapes of fashion," 549-550.

15   Crang et al., "Discardscapes of fashion," 545-546.

16   Karen Tranberg Hansen, "Second-Hand Clothing Encounters in Zambia: Global Discourses, Western Commodities, and Local Histories," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 69, no. 3 (1999), 343, https://doi.org/10.2307/1161212.

17   Grayson Koyi, "The Textile and Clothing Industry in Zambia," in *The Future of the Textile and Clothing Industry in Sub-Saharan Africa*, eds. Herbert Jauch and Rudolf Traub-Merz (2006), 263-264, https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/03796/18zambia.pdf.

18   Ibid, 259-260.

Photo by Thomas Cristofoletti; copyright RHUL
Adapted from Philip Crang, et al., "Discardscapes of fashion," 2022.

Photo from Lusaka Times,
"570 bales of Salaula intercepted by ZRA," February 24, 2022

from Western countries, resulting in the mass closure of garment factories – from 140 in 1991 to just 8 in 2007.[19]

The profound impact on Zambia's economy is vividly illustrated by the case of Swarp, a once-thriving clothing manufacturer that employed over 200 individuals and produced a remarkable 2,400 shirts daily.[20] Today, Swarp's workforce has decreased to around 20 employees. The transformation is stark—instead of crafting tailored shirts, the company's primary business now revolves around producing generic cloth, which fetches meager returns in the market.[21] The adverse effects of these policy shifts extend far beyond Swarp's factory floor. As articulated by Pete Hardstaff, the Head of Policy at the World

Development Movement, the textile industry in Zambia has been crushed by trade liberalization, forcing the nation to replace "real jobs and livelihoods with charity."[22] Over a span of eight years, approximately 30,000 jobs vanished, leading to a cascading series of consequences, including a substantial loss of employment opportunities, a decline in tax revenue, and a shift towards an informal economy.[23]

The environmental impact of the second-hand clothing trade in Zambia is also noteworthy. The majority of imported clothing is often improperly sized or culturally inappropriate, so nearly 40% of the clothes are deemed worthless and discarded. Because these end up in landfills or are openly burned, they only further exacerbate the plastic waste crisis in the region.[24] Up

19   "Zambia Textiles Value Chain Study Final Report," *The Competition & Consumer Protection Commission*, March 2019, 7, https://www.ccpc.org.zm/media/research/Textiles-Value-Chain.pdf.

20   Nick Mathiason, "Cast-off UK clothes make Zambia poor." *The Guardian*, May 22, 2004.

21   Ibid.

22   Ibid.

23   Jon Jeter, "The Dumping Ground." *The Washington Post*, April 22, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2002/04/22/the-dumping-ground/24b713e8-e55f-42cd-849f-2305fcab117b/.

24   Madeleine Cobbing, Sodfa Daaji, Mirjam Kopp, and Viola Wohlgemuth, "Poisoned Gifts: From donations to the dumpsite: textile waste disguised as second-hand clothes exported to East Africa," *Greenpeace*,

to 69% of the fibers used in these clothes are synthetic, mainly polyester, posing significant challenges for biodegradability and releasing harmful microplastics into the local environment.[25] Textile waste in landfills also poses a significant challenge, as it takes hundreds of years to decompose and release harmful chemicals into the air when burned. Despite the economic challenges and environmental consequences, the popularity of "salaula" persists in Zambia due to its affordability, accessibility, and perceived value for money. Zambia's case reflects the complex dynamics of the second-hand clothing industry in the country and across many regions globally.

POST-CONSUMER GARMENT WASTE IN THE ATACAMA DESERT

Similarly, the Iquique Port, located in the northern part of the Atacama Desert in Chile, attracts not only tourists but 59,000 tonnes of unwanted clothes

every year from the United States, Europe, and various parts of Asia, like China and Bangladesh.[26] In 2021, Chile was the fourth largest importer of such clothing globally.[27] Upon their arrival, these items of clothing undergo categorization into "new", "like new", "fair", and "trash".[28] Much of the reusable clothing is resold across Latin America.[29] However, of this clothing, 39,000 tonnes are imported in conditions deemed impossible to sell under any conditions. [30]Despite the Chilean Government's prohibition on dumping clothes in landfills due to their non-biodegradable nature and chemical content, a clandestine operation unfolds

April 2022, 6, https://www.greenpeace.de/publikationen/220421-greenpeace-factsheet-textile-waste-east-africa-english.pdf.

25 Ibid, 11.

26 Zea Tibisay. "Fast Fashion Is Causing an Environmental Disaster in Chile's Atacama Desert." *The World from PRX*. Accessed December 14, 2023. https://theworld.org/stories/2022-11-01/fast-fashion-causing-environmental-disaster-chiles-atacama-desert; "Chile's Desert Dumping Ground for Fast Fashion Leftovers," *Al Jazeera*, November 8, 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2021/11/8/chiles-desert-dumping-ground-for-fast-fashion-leftovers.

27 "United Nations Will Launch a Study on Global Second-Hand Clothing Trade and Disposal in Chile," *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe*, May 19, 2023. https://unece.org/circular-economy/news/united-nations-will-launch-study-global-second-hand-clothing-trade-and.

28 Zea, "Fast Fashion."

29 Al Jazeera, "Chile's Desert Dumping Ground."

30 Ibid; Zea, "Fast Fashion."
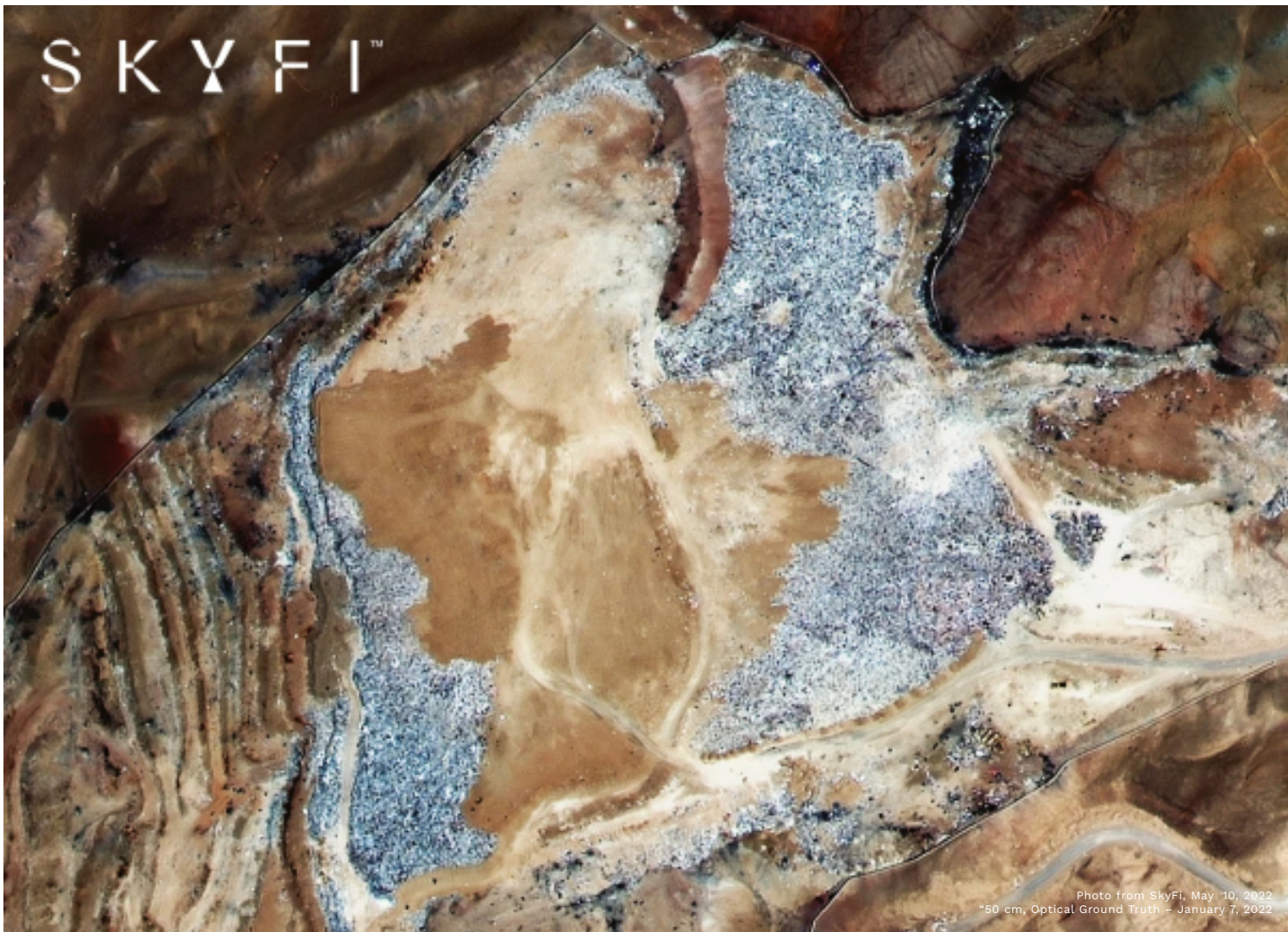
at night, transporting the discarded clothes to the desert, where their disposal is equally unlawful.[31]

The involvement of major clothing companies, including Old Navy, Nike, H&M, Adidas, Zara, Hollister, Levi's, Calvin Klein, Hugo Boss, and Chanel, significantly contributes to this mounting clothing waste dilemma. About 85% of the clothing waste accumulating in heaps in the desert are brand-new garments discarded from these companies' inventory, while only 15% have been previously owned.[32] The repercussions of this global waste intensified when these discarded articles of clothing caught fire in Paso de la Mula in Alto Hospicio, a municipality in Chile, burning for two weeks straight, emitting toxic smoke and polluting nearby communities.[33]

The absence of ownership and responsibility for this clothing waste, compounded by countries' reluctance to pay the necessary tariffs for clean-up, results in an unregulated build-up that either gets buried or burned. This lack of regulation and liability perpetuates the environmental damage and endangers the health of the surrounding populations.[34]

In spite of this gloomy narrative, some Chileans are motivated to change global clothing waste practices. Rosario Hevia helped found Ecocitex, a company that turns used clothing into yarn. They employ women, including women in prison, to help sort this clothing by color and cut it into strips that can be turned into yarn or other products, like toys and bags. These women give this discarded clothing a new purpose, ensuring that, at least for now, it will not end up in a landfill, the desert, or burning.[35]

CONCLUSION

Developed countries, which often possess better technological capabilities to process waste, relegate the copious amount of waste they generate to developing countries due to the relaxed environmental standards that make outsourcing waste processing more affordable. The majority of this global clothing waste ends up in landfills, where it will take centuries to biodegrade, releasing toxins into the surrounding environment. Microplastics end up in the soil and enter waterways—introducing plastics into marine ecosystems—and are ignited into toxins that enter the atmosphere and diminish the air quality of nearby communities.

The environmental hazards of global clothing waste are inextricably coupled with the destabilization of socioeconomic systems. Local textile markets are swarmed by the surplus of imported cheap goods. Opportunities for labor are overrun by multinational corporations that create the political and economic dependency of these local economies. The dependency of these nations on global economic superpowers prohibits most negotiations on accountability at all stages in the global flow of garment waste from production to post-consumption. These nations, incapable of advocating for themselves, are internationally accosted for the landscapes of waste that have infiltrated their borders. It is at the behest of global economic superpowers to initiate changes in this process, or else this waste will continue to permeate all aspects of life across the Global South. Lastly, while reporters uphold a noble front, attention to this issue can only be held up by journalism for so long. Formal research that pushes policy towards greater transparency will be the key to attracting meaningful global attention and inciting effective global change.

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31   Al Jazeera; Zea; Daphne Chouliarki Milner, "From Attire to Ashes: Clothing Waste in the Atacama Desert," *Atmos*, 2022).

32   Milner, "From Attire to Ashes."

33   Zea, "Fast Fashion."

34   Tiffany Duong. "Chile's Atacama Desert: Where Fast Fashion Goes to Die." *EcoWatch*, November 15, 2021. https://www.ecowatch.com/chile-desert-fast-fashion-2655551898.html.

35   Sarah Johnson. "'We Turn Waste into Something Golden': The Creatives Transforming Rags to Riches." *The Guardian*, August 16, 2023, sec. Global development, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/aug/16/textile-waste-landfill-creatives-transform-rags-to-riches-upcycling-ghana-chile-pakistan.

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PROTECTING HUMANITY
THE LIMITS OF R2P IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR

BY DOUAE LKHEIRE LOUKILI

ABSTRACT

This research delves into the gap between the ideals of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine and its practical implementation, using the Syrian Civil War as a critical case study. In the aftermath of harrowing atrocities in the late 20th century, R2P emerged as a mechanism for the prevention of mass crimes against humanity. However, despite its global endorsement, the Syrian conflict has exposed profound limitations in R2P's efficacy, prompting skepticism about its legitimacy. With over 300,000 lives lost and millions displaced, the Syrian crisis challenges the international community's commitment to human rights. This essay seeks to unravel the complexities surrounding R2P's application, scrutinizing its theoretical foundations against the stark realities of the Syrian Civil War. By examining diverse perspectives and ideologies, it aims to shed light on the geopolitical dynamics influencing the prioritization of state interests over human lives, ultimately striving to identify critical flaws in R2P for the prevention of future humanitarian catastrophes.

During the end of the 20th century, post-Cold War, the world experienced some of the most gruesome crimes against humanity ever recorded. A pressing need arose for a mechanism to uphold International Law effectively and bolster the enforcement of human rights amidst oppression and massacres.

After several attempts to instill a legal framework aiming to prevent further mass atrocities, human rights violations, and rising intrastate aggressions, the Responsibility to Protect doctrine was presented by members of the United Nations at the International Committee on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001 and unanimously adopted at the 2005 UN World Summit.[1] In response to the lack of effective commitment to preventing atrocities in Somalia, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and/or Kosovo during the 1990s, the concept of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) was drafted.[2] This initiative was

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1   "What is R2P?" Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, n.d., https://www.globalr2p.org/what-is-r2p/.

2   "Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect." *United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect*, n.d., https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/about-responsibility-to-protect.shtml.

rooted in the diplomatic paralysis caused by disagreements over national sovereignty. R2P is now regarded as one of the most significant principles of International Law to have emerged in recent centuries.[3] It targets four types of mass atrocities: genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.[4] Certainly, R2P represents the policy realization of the statement "Never Again."[5] These atrocities prompted the urgent need for a mechanism to enforce International Law and strengthen the application of human rights.

Although acclaimed for poignantly endorsing and promoting the application of human rights, many critics have described the doctrine as the archetype of the complacent bureaucracy of the United Nations due to its symbolic nature and failure to fulfill its purpose in practice. Indeed, its inherent weakness lies in the vagueness and lack of austerity of its institutional frameworks, which create a significant "discrepancy between the moral and theoretical principles of the R2P doctrine to its practical application."[6] Despite the pledge to commit to the protection of civilians, devastating crimes that fall under R2P continue to plague many societies, especially Syria, where the widespread and systematic violations of international humanitarian and human rights law have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and left millions in need of urgent humanitarian assistance.[7] According to Stewart Patrick, director of CFR's International Institutions and Global Governance program: "The UN Security Council's failure to pass a proposed resolution on Syria has put the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine in major crisis," transforming the "Never Again" rhetoric into "Yet again" and casting a shadow over the future application of human rights.

The Syrian Civil War has been one of the most documented wars in history due to the widespread use of smartphones and social media. Since its onset in 2011, there has been a great loss of human capital and collateral damage. The deliberate targeting of civilians by the Government has been explicitly filmed through smartphones, sharing the atrocities with the rest of the world in order to incite a response. As of June 2022, the United Nations Human Rights

> "As of February 2022, 14.6 million people were in dire need of humanitarian assistance, and more than 90 percent of the population is now estimated to live below the international poverty line."

Office estimates the death toll to be more than 300,000 people. Furthermore, more than half of the country's pre-war population of 22 million Syrians has fled their homes with no prospects for return in the foreseeable future, engendering one of the biggest refugee crises in the world.[8] In fact, the crisis is considered the world's worst humanitarian crisis since World War II by UNICEF.[9] Not only has it impacted the Syrian population, but it has additionally created a regional conflict and subsequent refugee crisis, menacing the political climate and inciting waves of xenophobia around Europe, Lebanon, and Turkey.[10] Inside the country, conditions are no better. As of February 2022, 14.6 million people were in dire need of humanitarian assistance, and more than 90 percent of the population is now estimated to live below the international poverty line.[11]

3   Jonathan Web, "Evolving Norms: How the Libyan & Syrian Conflicts Have Affected the R2P," *E-International Relations,* January 26, 2016, https://www.e-ir.info/2016/01/26/evolving-norms-how-the-libyan-syrian-conflicts-have-affected-the-r2p/.

4   "Losing Paradise," *Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect*, 2012.

5   Thomas G. Weiss and Ramesh Thakur, "The Responsibility to Protect: Challenges & opportunities in light of the Libyan intervention," Creative Commons, November 2011, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/181082/R2P.pdf.

6   Sophia Gore, "Does the R2P Doctrine Represent a Positive Step for Human Rights?" *E-International Relations*, February 22, 2014, https://www.e-ir.info/2014/02/22/does-the-r2p-doctrine-represent-a-positive-step-for-human-rights/.

7   Charles T. Hunt and Phil Orchard, "Constructing the Responsibility to Protect: Contestation and Consolidation," *E-International Relations*, September 2022, https://www.e-ir.info/2022/09/14/review-constructing-the-responsibility-to-protect/.

8   USA for UNHCR, "Syria Refugee Crisis," *The UN Refugee Agency*, last modified 2022, https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/syria/.

9   UNICEF, "A Timeline of the Syrian Civil War and Refugee Crisis," *UNICEF*, last modified 2020, https://www.unicef.ie/stories/timeline-syrian-war-refugee-crisis/.

10   Anne Applebaum, "Syria's Refugee Crisis Is Now a European Emergency," *Slate*, November 23, 2015, https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/11/syrias-refugee-crisis-is-a-european-emergency-far-right-parties-are-rising-and-the-eu-may-cease-to-be-itself.html.

11   "Why has the Syrian war lasted 11 years?" *BBC News*, May 2, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-35806229; United Nations - Syrian Arab Republic, "Humanitarian Needs Overview Syrian Arab Public," *United Nations*, March 2021, https://syria.un.org/sites/

THESIS

All these staggering numbers and the severity of the situation lead us to question the reasons for the lack of R2P application in the Syrian Civil War, eventually raising doubts about the legitimacy and strength of the doctrine. Therefore, this essay will attempt to uncover the limitations of the application of R2P in the Syrian Civil War through the following research question: To what extent does the Syrian Civil War reflect the limitations of the Responsibility To Protect doctrine?

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer this question, many factors should be taken into consideration, including the criticism regarding R2P and the characteristics inherent to the Syrian Civil War that might have hindered its operationalization. This essay primarily aims to investigate the extent to which the Syrian Civil War has influenced the applicability and credibility of the Responsibility To Protect doctrine through a contrast of the theory and practice of R2P. Additionally, this paper will evaluate and analyze the issue from different sources exploring both liberalist and realist angles as well as "Western" and "non-Western" ideologies in attempts to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the doctrine.

The concerns will be approached through:
1. A literary review of the criticism regarding R2P through an analysis of the impact of geopolitical tensions on the implementation of the doctrine. The dissertation will concentrate on two main targets of judgment:
    a. The debate over Westphalian sovereignty and intervention
    b. The politicization of R2P
        1. The diplomatic deadlock of the United Nations Security Council
        2. Assessment of the Libyan intervention as a case study of the politicization R2P can be subjected to
2. An analysis of the different characteristics that further contribute to the political stagnation preventing the implementation of the doctrine.

According to Ramesh Thakur, former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations, many key characteristics inherent to the Syrian conflict have prevented the international community from effectively intervening and responding.[12] This essay will focus on two essential points which will be further developed, including:
    a. The regional and international actors involved
    b. Prospects of a military intervention - Just War Theory

It is important to mention that the R2P is based on three dimensions of R2P – the responsibility to prevent, the responsibility to react, and the responsibility to rebuild. In this essay, we will specifically be focusing on the second pillar, responsibility to react.

Besides scholarly endeavors, the purpose of this paper will aim to identify flaws in R2P in order to counter potential humanitarian disasters and mass atrocities in the future.

LIMITATIONS OF R2P

THE WESTPHALIAN SOVEREIGNTY DILEMMA

There has been a paradigm shift in our understanding of Westphalian sovereignty, a concept based on the principle of non-interference in another country's domestic affairs and the assumption that states are the best protectors of their citizens, caused by the fact that more people become aware of governments committing mass atrocities against their own citizens.[13] This development in our understanding of sovereignty has led to the adoption of R2P, which has marked "the end of a 350-year period in which the inviolability of borders and the monopoly of force within one's own borders."[14]

Nonetheless, despite the stance of ICISS and the shift in our understanding of sovereignty, R2P still raises many concerns, as some politicians, including the

default/files/remote-resources/8a8e28f719f7a06cd4098ccd03bc6d03.pdf.

12   Ramesh Thakur, "Syria and the Responsibility to Protect," *E-International Relations*, February 4, 2014, https://www.e-ir. info/2014/02/04/syria-and-the-responsibility-to-protect/.

13   ER Services, "The Peace of Westphalia and Sovereignty," *Lumen Learning*, n.d., https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-hccc-worldhistory/ chapter/the-peace-of-westphalia-and-sovereignty/; Web, "Evolving Norms."

14   "Humanitarian Intervention Reading Pack," *UWC Costa Rica*, n.d.

head of State of Syria, Bashar al-Assad, still approach the concept from a Westphalian lens. Al-Assad and his allies base their arguments on Resolution 46/182 of the General Assembly, which reiterates that "sovereignty, territorial integrity and national identity unity of states must be fully respected..."[15] This particular argument is, on various occasions, employed as a scapegoat by oppressive governments to prevent external intervention while ignoring the responsibilities that legitimate sovereignty entails.

In one interview, Al Assad declared that he hopes that "history will see him as the man who protected the sovereignty of Syria from intervention."[16] Furthermore, other Syrian representatives frequently remind the international community that any approach in dealing with the crisis that undermines their sovereignty will not be welcome. Indeed, as the Syrian ambassador to the UN, Bashaar al-Jaafari, said, "We are speaking the language of the UN: territorial integrity of states, political independence of states, sovereignty of states..."[17] These actions have been further supported by Syria's closest allies, who reiterate the importance of putting an end to the "interference into internal affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic."[18]

This dispute between sovereignty and intervention arguably mirrors the polarization between liberalist and realist thinkers. A realist perspective would argue the inviolability of sovereignty, while a liberal perspective would advocate for the necessity of external intervention. However, this dispute goes beyond ideological discrepancies and translates into wider geopolitical considerations, which will be explored in the following section of the essay.

It is imperative to emphasize that this abstention from the implementation of R2P in the two countries might not originally stem from a genuine principle of non-interference in other state affairs. Russia itself is currently operating a full-fledged military intervention in Ukraine, justified by a need for protection of the Russian citizens in Ukraine who are allegedly the object of ethnic cleansing.[19] Then, why is it abstaining from intervening in Syria?

This will be explained through how the Syrian Civil War's complexities are mingled with the presence of several geopolitical interests, highlighting the difficulty of reconciling humanitarian ideals with wider geopolitical considerations.[20]

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL

A recurring criticism of R2P is how often the doctrine is politicized by powerful countries that serve their political interests in its name. This claim will be assessed through a review of the impact that the 2011 multi-state NATO-led implementation of R2P in Libya has left on any prospective application of R2P in the Syrian context.[21]

Some non-Western states argue that UNSCR 1973 has been manipulated by Western powers in order to justify externally enforced regime change and take hold of Libyan oil reserves. These parties, therefore, aim to delegitimize the concept of R2P, which they view as a disguise for hegemonic aspirations by the West.[22] More specifically, it is argued that in the absence of an impartial mechanism for deciding when humanitarian aid is permissible, the institutionalization of the R2P doctrine has served to legitimize instruments of Western interventionism.[23]

The legacy of Resolution 1973 in Libya, has loomed upon the Syrian crisis and played a significant role in the lack of implementation of R2P in Syria. Namely,

15   "What is General Assembly resolution 46/182?" *OCHA*, last modified March 2012, https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/Documents/120402_OOM-46182_eng.pdf.

16   Bill Neely, "Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad Speaks to NBC News," *NBC News*, July 13, 2016, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/syria-s-president-bashar-al-assad-speaks-nbc-news-n608746.

17   Syria Support Movement, "Losing Paradise," YouTube, 2012, https://syriasupportmovement.org/2015/01/18/syrian-ambassador-to-the-un-bashar-al-jaafari-on-sovereignty-terrorism-and-the-failure-of-the-un/.

18   Christian Harraway, "Syria: Universal Human Rights And The State Of Sovereignty," *The Organization for World Peace*, March 29, 2017, https://theowp.org/reports/syria-universal-human-rights-and-the-state-of-sovereignty/.

19   Kelsey Vlamis, "Why Russia Is Attacking Ukraine: Putin's Justifications for Invasion," *Business Insider*, February 24, 2022, https://www.businessinsider.com/why-russia-is-attacking-ukraine-putin-justification-for-invasion-2022-2.

20   Jon Alterman, "The Politicization of Aid in Syria," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, last modified June 29, 2021, https://www.csis.org/analysis/politicization-aid-syria.

21   Sally Khalifa Isaac, "NATO's Intervention in Libya: Assessment and Implications," *European Institute of the Mediterranean*, 2012, https://www.iemed.org/publication/natos-intervention-in-libya-assessment-and-implications/.

22   KJ Wetherholt, "The Absence of R2P in Syria," *HuffPost*, April 12, 2013, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/the-absence-of-r2p-in-syr_b_3061332.

23   Ameya A. Naik, "Syria and the Crisis of Sovereignty," *IPI Global Observatory*, April 7, 2017, https://theglobalobservatory.org/2017/04/syria-assad-chemical-weapons-idlib-sovereignty/.

it has led to a disruption of consensus on R2P within the Security Council and a confirmation of the suspicions of developing countries that accused R2P of being a new cover for Western neo-imperial domination. Moreover, critics have argued that humanitarian aid and R2P are part of a larger strategy of consolidating global hegemony and securing oil supply.[24] As a consequence, China, Russia, and several other countries—including Iran and emerging powers such as Brazil or India—have become reluctant to approve humanitarian intervention in the context of the Syrian Civil War. Additionally, Russia and China have vowed to block any further Security Council-endorsed intervention, not only as a result of their long-standing non-interference policy, but also due to the politicization of R2P in Libya.[25]

On the other hand, Western powers deem regime change as indispensable, as al Assad's regime is unquestionably illegitimate due to its several categorical breaches of International Law and lack of measures to protect citizens. According to David Rieff, a policy analyst focusing on humanitarian issues, "these interventions have to be about regime change if they are to have any chance of accomplishing their stated goal."[26]

Moreover, this lack of agreement amongst the UN Security Council members stems from not only the challenge of translating R2P from a humanitarian concept to political practice, but also a conflation of political and humanitarian objectives. Therefore, we can conclude that the dynamics of the UN Security Council are a major obstacle in the implementation of R2P in Syria to the emergence of a polarizing division within the Security Council formed by a Western pro-interventionist block and a non-Western pro-sovereignty block.

All these intricacies serve to portray the conflicts and challenges posed by humanitarian intervention. Now that we have assessed the challenges of translating R2P from a humanitarian concept to a political

practice, we will further evaluate the inherent characteristics of the Syrian Civil War that have hindered the operationalization of R2P in this specific context.

COMPLEXITIES OF THE SYRIAN CIVIL WAR
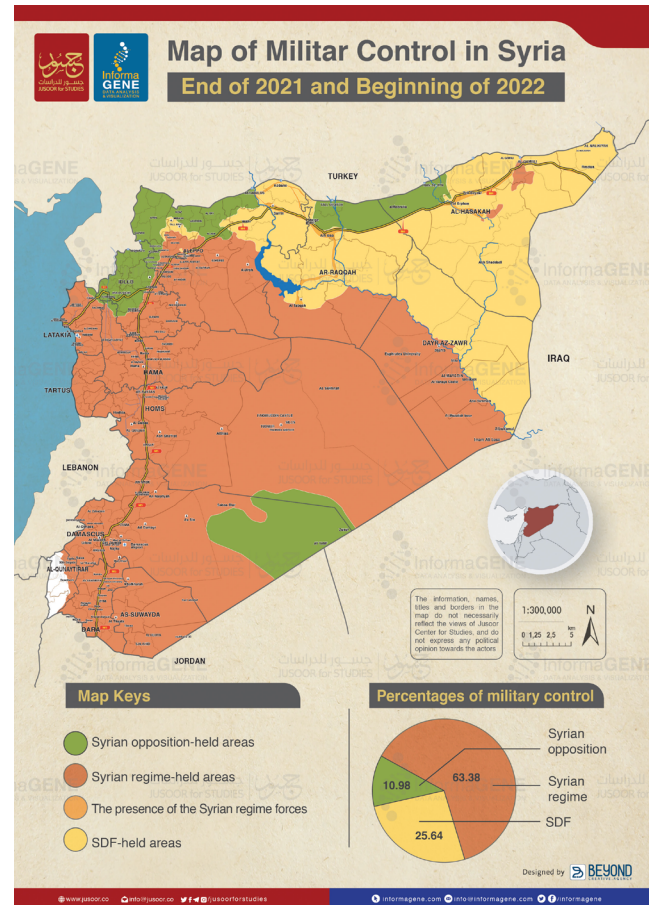
Source: Jusoor, December 24, 2021

PROXY AND INTERNATIONAL WAR

Understanding the nature of the Syrian Civil War is crucial for understanding the difficulty of the implementation of R2P in this specific case. One of the main characteristics inherent to the Syrian Civil War is its mix of proxy regional and international wars, civil wars, and popular uprisings against authoritarianism.[27] Some have described the conflict as a microcosm of a broader international dispute due to the regional dynamics, including both state and non-state actors.[28] The following map allows us to observe the fragmentation of power and all actors

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24   Andrew Heywood, "Global Politics," *Palgrave Foundations*, last modified 2011.

25   Web, "Evolving Norms."; "Humanitarian Intervention Reading Pack," UWC Costa Rica

26   David J. Scheffer, "The Dilemma of Humanitarian Intervention," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 12, 2013, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/dilemma-humanitarian-intervention.

27   Sameera Khalfey, "The Duality of Syria: Civil War and The War on Terror," *E-International Relations*, September 6, 2013, https://www.e-ir.info/2013/09/16/the-duality-of-syria-civil-war-and-the-war-on-terror/.

28   David Carment and Joe Landry, "R2P in Syria: Regional Dimensions," *E-International Relations*, February 8, 2014, https://www.e-ir.info/2014/02/08/r2p-in-syria-regional-dimensions/.

disputing dominance in the Syrian territories.

On one side, we have major state actors involved, which can be divided into two groups. The group backing al-Assad's regime, supported by powers such as Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran, among others, endorses a pro-sovereignty approach. They actively prevent and vote against any type of intervention against the government. The other group opposes al-Assad's regime due to his illegitimate rule and lack of protection of populations. Countries such as the US, Turkey, the EU, and the UK, among others, advocate for a pro-interventionist approach and aspire for a regime change as the only measure to alleviate the suffering inflicted on Syrian citizens. The polarization slightly mirrors the Cold War two-block dynamics, thus explicitly reflecting, yet again, a division of what can be identified as an ideological war between the non-Western and Western states.[29]

A legitimate application of R2P endorsed by International Law demands an agreement between members of the Security Council. However, when the members of the Security Council themselves are involved in opposing lineups of the conflict, it is unrealistic to expect successful negotiations or the approval of an intervention-endorsed resolution.

Another major component of the complexities of the Syrian crisis is the proliferation of non-state actors, particularly armed rebel groups, who pose a major threat to both local and international security. Indeed, the political fragility and instability in Syria have led to a prevalence of these violent NSAGs that further contribute to the escalation of human rights violations and the presence of a dual security challenge threatening peace and security.[30] Moreover, in this unstable context, these violent groups have not only violated and infringed International Law through deliberate kidnappings, torture, and killings of citizens, and the use of child soldiers, but have

additionally been able to radicalize a generation of young Muslims in the region and abroad through the active recruitment of fighters.[31] The use of social media and refugee flow out from Syria have contributed to the propagation of terrorism in a wider context, threatening international stability.

In attempting to implement small-scale R2P measures to combat these non-state actors, the US has tried to reduce its power by arming other rebel groups not associated with extremism. However, can we be confident that these groups that the US is funding are not part of other violent organizations that jeopardize international security? The US has been accused by Russia and Turkey of allegedly supporting terrorist groups such as ISIS without prior knowledge of the intentions of the group.[32]

MILITARY INTERVENTION

In the wake of myriads of failed negotiations and peaceful measures, fruitless economic sanctions, and a lack of response from the al-Assad Regime, the guidelines established under R2P stipulate that the implementation of military intervention is justifiable as a last resort. In this section, we will employ the Just War Theory — a doctrine aimed at ensuring the moral and, to a certain extent, legal justifiability of war or military intervention.[33] We will use it to assess the factors that have impeded military intervention in Syria by examining some of the core foundations of "Jus ad Bellum" that conflict with the limitations of R2P discussed earlier: right intent, consequences of intervention, and proper authority."[34]

1. **Right intent** - The primary goal of military intervention must be the protection of civilians. However, cases such as Libya demonstrate that states do not intervene for primarily humanitarian reasons or the wellbeing of the victims in whose name the intervention is being carried out but are instead guided

29   Nataliya Vasilyeva, Fraser Nelson, Craig Simpson, Joe Barnes, and Camilla Turner, "The Cold War never ended...Syria is a Russian-American conflict' says Bashar al-Assad," *The Telegraph*, October 14, 2016, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/14/the-cold-war-never-endedsyria-is-a-russian-american-conflict-say/.

30   Laurel Hart, "Syria's non-state armed groups: a state or UN problem?" *UNA-UK*, March 23, 2017, https://una.org.uk/magazine/1-2017/syrias-non-state-armed-groups-state-or-un-problem/.

31   Emily Lieberman, "Assessing International Diplomacy on Syria," *Council on Foreign Relations*, January 28, 2016, https://www.cfr.org/event/assessing-international-diplomacy-syria.

32   "Russia, Turkey: US supporting Syria 'terrorist' groups," *Al Jazeera*, December 28, 2016, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/28/russia-turkey-us-supporting-syria-terrorist-groups/.

33   Scott A. Silverstone, "Just War Theory - International Relations," *Oxford Bibliographies*, March 2, 2011, https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0050.xml.

34   "Ethics Explainer: Just War Theory," *The Ethics Centre*, last modified July 19, 2016, https://ethics.org.au/ethics-explainer-just-war/.

by national interest."[35] In this case, the lack of right intent shows how the vagueness of its theoretical frame leaves a great space for manipulation to satisfy national interests. According to critics of R2P, the right to intervention does not create more 'genuine' humanitarian action, because self-interest has traditionally been the main barrier to intervention."[36] This limitation of R2P translates into its absence in Syria. States such as the US have no geopolitical interests in deploying their troops in Syria, and states such as Russia or China have geopolitical interests in not intervening. Therefore, although the atrocity threshold is met and military aid is urgently needed, the lack of self-interest prevails in a system guided by the overriding pursuit of national ambitions.

2. Right Authority - Without UNSC endorsement, any collective intervention would be technically illegal. Since the UNSC is paralyzed at the moment, no resolution regarding the implementation of R2P can be passed.[37] Furthermore, such intervention must be authorized by the Security Council on a case-by-case basis in accordance with Chapter VII of the UN Charter."[38] This reflects the reliance and dependency of R2P on the members of the UNSC, which constitutes one of the biggest limitations of the doctrine. According to Article 42 of the UN Charter, the UNSC is allowed to employ military intervention 'to maintain or restore international peace and security.' Nonetheless, such authorization will be inconceivable should any of the P5 choose to exercise its veto.[39] Moreover, the power to determine the legitimacy of an intervention and save an entire

population from suffering lies in the hands of five permanent state actors, from whom many possess a dark history of human rights violations

3. Consequences of intervention - Due to the compelling interests in the region and clashing groups, a reaction to military intervention would result in explosive consequences. Regardless of the moral legitimacy of potential interventions, external military action would presumably engender a wider regional conflict.[40] Given the previously assessed characteristics that contribute to the complexity of the Syrian Civil War, military intervention might: amplify the already existing clashes, contribute to a further escalation of human rights violations, aggressions, and collateral damage and disturb regional stability.

Adding to the political deadlock induced by the systems underpinning R2P, applications of the doctrine within the Syrian Civil War could cause more harm than benefits. Therefore, we can conclude that the combination of the complex nature of the Syrian Civil War and the limitations of R2P make a potential implementation of R2P nearly impossible.

CONCLUSION

Although only the second dimension of R2P (Responsibility to React) has been assessed, upon investigation, we can assert that the Syrian Civil War exposes the limitations of R2P. Taking into consideration the complexity of reaching a definite conclusion to such a controversial dilemma in International Relations, after having delved into the intricacies inherent to the structure of R2P and the particularities of this crisis, we can establish that the Syrian Civil War is a demonstration of how the implementation and success of R2P intervention is restricted to particular cases where the strategic benefits and interests of countries involved outweigh the potential costs. Furthermore, the absence of R2P in Syria sheds light on the lack of genuine motivation of the international community

35   Vladislav B. Sotirovic, "Humanitarian Intervention" And The New World Order: Violation Of The International Law (III)," *Oriental Review*, 2019, https://orientalreview.org/2019/02/18/humanitarian-intervention-and-the-new-world-order-a-violation-of-the-international-law-iii/.

36   Rajan Menon and Sam Haselby, "Why humanitarian intervention goes horribly wrong," *Aeon*, March 29, 2016, https://aeon.co/ideas/why-humanitarian-intervention-goes-horribly-wrong/.

37   Stewart M. Patrick, "RIP for R2P? Syria and the Dilemmas of Humanitarian Intervention," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 12, 2012, https://www.cfr.org/blog/rip-r2p-syria-and-dilemmas-humanitarian-intervention.

38   "Why Syria Necessitates the R2P Framework," *Jindal Forum for International and Economic Laws*, May 3, 2020, https://jindalforinteconlaws.in/2020/05/03/syria-necessitates-r2p-framework-gursehaj-singh/.

39   Gehan Gunatilleke, "R2P and the Normative Accountability of the UN Security Council," *E-International Relations*, September 9, 2016, https://www.e-ir.info/2016/09/09/r2p-and-the-normative-accountability-of-the-un-securit y-council/.

40   Web, "Evolving Norms."

to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people and illustrates the dominance of pragmatic realpolitik in the international system. An interplay of superpower polarization, geostrategic competition, International Law, and political context will determine the success of potential interventions, or lack thereof.

Though the doctrine is rooted in an altruistic desire to halt imminent mass suffering at the hands of irresponsible states, we can observe how these idealistic intentions do not translate smoothly in practice. Hence, we can conclude that R2P presents a critical gap between its theoretical framework and its application in real-world situations.

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RESILIENCIA REGIONAL
LA LUCHA DE CATALUÑA Y EL PAÍS VASCO POR SU IDENTIDAD

POR SHAYAH KOSAK

RESUMEN

Las revoluciones catalana y vasca han sido episodios fundamentales en la historia de España, marcadas por la resistencia de estas regiones en busca de su identidad, autonomía y derechos. Este trabajo explora las complejidades históricas de dichas revoluciones, analizando la represión bajo la dictadura de Franco que suprimió las identidades regionales y culturales. Se destaca cómo, tras décadas de lucha y resistencia, la transición democrática abrió nuevas perspectivas para la autonomía regional. El estudio profundiza en los procesos de restablecimiento de instituciones autonómicas, evidenciando cómo Cataluña y el País Vasco han moldeado activamente su futuro, resurgiendo de una historia marcada por la represión hacia una búsqueda decidida de identidad y autogobierno.

A lo largo de los siglos, España ha sido un tapiz en el que se han entrelazado y transformado diversas influencias culturales, idiomas y tradiciones. Desde la rica historia de la España musulmana y judía, hasta la fusión de culturas que prosperaron en la Península Ibérica, el país ha sido el hogar de varias identidades regionales y culturales en constante transformación. No obstante, durante una gran parte del siglo XX, la dictadura de Francisco Franco impuso una centralización estricta del poder en Madrid, lo que suprimió, en muchos casos, las diversas identidades regionales y culturales que habían caracterizado a España en el transcurso de su historia. Fue en este contexto de uniformidad impuesta cuando se desarrolló un acontecimiento fundamental para la identidad española actual: las revoluciones de las comunidades autónomas.[1] Estas revoluciones, encabezadas por regiones como el País Vasco y Cataluña, no solo representaron una lucha por la autonomía política, sino también un intento de preservar y reanimar sus identidades culturales únicas en un momento en que estaban en peligro de desaparecer por la imposición del nacionalismo español.

Durante la dictadura, "la estructura de la sociedad española fue centrípeta, girando en torno a un Estado que monopolizaba el poder en todas sus vertientes."[2]

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1   Fernando Operé y Carrie B. Douglass, *España Y Los Españoles de Hoy: Historia, Sociedad Y Cultura* (Prentice Hall: 2008).

2   Operé y Douglass, "España Y Los Españoles de Hoy," 105.

El régimen buscó consolidar una identidad española singular, promoviendo el nacionalismo español y restringiendo la autonomía y el reconocimiento de las identidades regionales. El régimen franquista impuso medidas draconianas sobre Cataluña, como señala Agustí: "se prohíbe el uso de la lengua catalana en la vida pública, al igual que la bandera y, por supuesto, el himno catalán."[3] El franquismo no sólo suprimió la identidad catalana, sino que también influyó en la economía. El gobierno central de Franco implementó una serie de políticas y prácticas que tuvieron un impacto adverso en la economía de Cataluña, a pesar de que esta región había sido históricamente una de las más industrializadas y económicamente avanzadas de España. Había una serie de regulaciones y restricciones que limitaban la capacidad de Cataluña de llevar a cabo actividades económicas de manera independiente. Esto incluía el control de precios, intervenciones en mercados y restricciones de inversión extranjera en la región.[4]

A pesar de los esfuerzos del régimen franquista por eliminar cualquier tipo de expresión catalan, los catalanes protestaron contra la dictadura que le había causado tanta miseria y que le había puesto en un estado de sujeción. En los años cincuenta y sesenta, los catalanes promovieron luchas sociales esperando obtener mejores condiciones laborales, y con ganas de que algún día logren una Cataluña libre.[5] Esta resistencia tenaz, marcada por la valentía y la determinación de la sociedad, simbolizó lo importante que es la soberanía y la capacidad de ejercer la libre voluntad en la toma de decisiones. Tras ese período de lucha y resistencia en el que los catalanes anhelaban la recuperación de su autonomía y libertades, la llegada de la transición democrática de España abrió un nuevo capítulo en la historia de Cataluña. Durante este proceso, la región se embarcó en un camino hacia la recuperación de sus instituciones autonómicas y la promoción de su identidad cultural y lingüística.[6] Durante la transición democrática, que tuvo lugar principalmente en la década de 1970, Cataluña desempeñó un papel fundamental en la configuración del nuevo orden político y en la restauración de sus instituciones autonómicas. Una de las primeras acciones que se llevaron a cabo en la transición fue el restablecimiento de la Generalitat de Cataluña, el gobierno autonómico de la región. Esto permitió que Cataluña recuperara un alto grado de autonomía y la capacidad de tomar decisiones en asuntos locales.[7]

La experiencia de Cataluña durante la transición democrática destaca la vitalidad y la persistencia del sentimiento nacional catalán en un contexto de cambio político y social. La resurgencia del nacionalismo catalán subraya la importancia de la identidad regional y el anhelo de autogobierno dentro de una nación diversa como España. Más que un simple episodio histórico, la revolución catalana sigue siendo relevante en la actualidad, reflejando la continua búsqueda de autonomía y reconocimiento dentro del panorama político español. En palabras de Operé y Douglass, "el nacionalismo catalán está más vivo que nunca," lo que confirma la persistencia de estos valores y aspiraciones en el tejido político y social contemporáneo.[8]

> "El euskera estaba restringido y desalentado en la vida pública y la educación. Se promovia el uso exclusivo del español en estas áreas, lo que limitaba la capacidad de los vascos de mantener y transmitir su lengua y cultura."

En paralelo a la revolución catalana y en un contexto similar de represión, se desarrolló un proceso político y social en el País Vasco. Los vascos son un grupo muy distinto, con una historia más antigua que la del resto de España. Una de las diferencias más notables es la existencia del euskera, una lengua única que se habla en el País Vasco. El euskera no es una lengua romance, lo que significa que no tiene similitudes lingüísticas

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3   David Agustí, "El Franquismo En Cataluña," *Sílex* (2013), 20.

4   Ibid, 33.

5   Ibid, 183.

6   Operé y Douglass, "España Y Los Españoles de Hoy," 113.

7   Ibid.

8   Ibid.

con el español ni con otras lenguas romances. La importancia de esa lengua es profunda, ya que "el euskera es el idioma propio y un patrimonio específico de los vascos y su seña de identidad cultural más marcada."[9]

Durante el franquismo, el País Vasco, al igual que otras regiones con identidades culturales y lingüísticas distintivas, se enfrentó a una serie de medidas de represión y opresión por parte del gobierno central. El euskera estaba restringido y desalentado en la vida pública y la educación. Se promovia el uso exclusivo del español en estas áreas, lo que limitaba la capacidad de los vascos de mantener y transmitir su lengua y cultura. Esa cultura vasca, "fue odiada y reprimida con singular saña por el franquismo."[10] Como respuesta a la represión por parte del franquismo, apareció ETA (Euskadi Ta Askatasuna), un grupo separatista vasco que se involucró en actos de terrorismo en busca de la independencia del País Vasco y Navarra. ETA representó un desafío significativo tanto para la región vasca como para el gobierno central de España, y su existencia marcó un período de violencia y conflicto que dejó una profunda huella en la historia de la región y de España en su conjunto.[11]

Durante sus décadas de actividad, ETA empleó diversas tácticas con el objetivo de presionar al gobierno central español y a la sociedad en general. Estas tácticas incluían desde ataques con explosivos y tiroteos hasta secuestros y extorsiones. ETA también llevaba a cabo campañas de propaganda y reclutamiento, utilizando medios como panfletos, comunicados públicos y entrevistas en medios de comunicación. Además, el grupo se involucraba en acciones de sabotaje y vandalismo, dirigidas tanto contra objetivos gubernamentales como contra empresas e infraestructuras que consideraba representativas del sistema establecido. Un ancontecimiento muy destacado fue el asesinato de Luis Carrero Blanco en un atentado perpetrado por ETA en 1973.[12] Durante sus décadas de actividad, ETA "llevó a cabo más de 3.000 atentados que provocaron la muerte de 853 personas

e hirieron a más de 6.000."[13] Las acciones violentas de ETA causaron la muerte y el sufrimiento de muchas personas, además de socavar la estabilidad y la seguridad en el País Vasco y en toda España. Estos actos generaron tensiones políticas y sociales significativas en la región y en el país, y llevaron a una respuesta firme del gobierno central y de la sociedad en general. En 2006, ETA anunció un alto el fuego permanente,[14] y en 2018, declaró oficialmente su disolución.[15] Aunque ETA ya no está activa, su legado sigue siendo relevante en la política y la sociedad del País Vasco y España.

> "Mientras Cataluña ha enfocado sus esfuerzos en la promoción de su lengua y cultura, ... el País Vasco ha enfrentado el desafío de la violencia y la insurgencia armada como respuesta a la opresión franquista."

Las revoluciones catalana y vasca representan capítulos cruciales en la historia de España, marcados por la tenaz lucha de estas regiones por su identidad, autonomía y derechos. Desde enfrentar la represión del franquismo hasta desafiar los límites del sistema democrático durante la transición, Cataluña y el País Vasco han protagonizado una búsqueda incansable de reconocimiento y autodeterminación. Esta historia es un poderoso recordatorio de la complejidad de la política y la identidad en un país tan diverso como España.

En su lucha, tanto Cataluña como el País Vasco han adoptado estrategias distintivas, cada una reflejando las particularidades de su contexto histórico y cultural. Mientras Cataluña ha enfocado sus esfuerzos en la promoción de su lengua y cultura, así como en la

9   Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, *Conocer El País Vasco: Viaje al interior de su cultura, historia, sociedad e instituciones* (2009).
10   Imanol Villa, "Historia Del País Vasco Durante El Franquismo," (Sílex: 2009).
11   Servicio Central de Publicaciones, "Viaje al interior," 15.
12   Operé and Douglass, "España Y Los Españoles de Hoy," 117.
13   Alba Fernández Candial, "El fin de ETA," *La Vanguardia*, Octubre 20, 2021, https://www.lavanguardia.com/vida/junior-report/20211020/7800714/diez-anos-fin-eta-lucha-armada.html.
14   Operé and Douglass, "España Y Los Españoles de Hoy," 121.
15   Euskadi Ta Askatasuna, "Declaración final de ETA al Pueblo Vasco," 2018.

búsqueda de un mayor grado de autonomía política, el País Vasco ha enfrentado el desafío de la violencia y la insurgencia armada como respuesta a la opresión franquista. Estas diferencias subrayan la complejidad del paisaje político español y la diversidad de enfoques utilizados por las regiones en su búsqueda de un futuro más justo y equitativo.

A medida que España avanza en el siglo XXI, la gestión de esta diversidad y la búsqueda de un consenso político siguen siendo desafíos cruciales. La capacidad de reconocer y abordar las aspiraciones regionales dentro de un marco de respeto mutuo y diálogo constructivo será fundamental para crear un futuro estable y próspero para la nación española y sus diversas regiones autónomas.

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Photo by Camilo Gonzalez-Williamson

EUROSCEPTIC RIGHT-WING POPULIST LEADERS

THE WINNERS AND LOSERS

BY CAMILO GONZALEZ-WILLIAMSON

ABSTRACT

Right-wing populism has become an acknowledged trend in the European Union, and the recent election of Giorgia Meloni in Italy and the gains made by the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands show that these politicians can be very successful electorally. However, their success has neither been consistent nor simultaneous. Focusing on the leadership dimension, I seek to address why certain right-wing populist challengers in Europe achieve electoral success while others fail. This paper combines existing literature on supply and demand with Benjamin Moffit's framework on the populist performance of crisis, aiming to connect the study of populist leaders with crisis dynamics. Utilizing the four cases of Victor Orbán, Giorgia Meloni, Marine Le Pen, and Santiago Abascal, this paper examines how steps one and five of Moffit's framework are crucial for populist leaders and emphasize the role political context and incumbent characteristics play in shaping the success or failure of populist leaders in performing crises.

It is indisputable that, especially since 2008, Eurosceptic right-wing populism has been rising in Europe. The recent gains made by parties have become a trend many find concerning for the EU. Many populist leaders challenge long-held ideas of liberal democracy and are advancing agendas against civil rights promoted by the EU. Further, the anti-liberal international order and anti-globalization sentiments of right-wing populist leaders in the EU have been viewed as a new and mounting obstacle to the European Integration project.

The literature establishes that these Eurosceptic right-wing populist leaders share political ideology, often share a style of leadership, and exploit crisis as a central factor in their politics. However, despite the recent wave of right-wing populism, certain countries have resisted the trend, and not all right-wing populists are winning their respective elections. Thus, why are some right-wing populist challengers in Europe very successful while others fail to secure power through the "performance" of crises?

I examine this question at the level of individual political leadership and build upon Moffit's theory of the populist performance of crisis. Through this examination, I test my hypothesis that the electoral success of right-wing populist challengers is increased when, in their performance of crisis, a leader utilizes political turmoil, takes advantage of incumbent weakness, and displays stronger leadership than their opponent.

LITERATURE
Right Wing Populism

The term "populism" has been used to define a range of movements and politics, and there is debate about how best to define it; however, the central tenet of this concept is the idea of its politics representing the "people" against the "elite." Mudde and Kaltwasser define populism as a "thin-centered" ideology that separates people into homogeneous and antagonistic camps of "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite." They attribute the flexibility of the ideology to fit vastly different political contexts and its pairing with political ideologies to this thin center.[1] Müller also takes the ideological approach, defining populism as an ideology that pits a people seen as morally pure against an elite that is morally corrupt and the source of sociological issues.[2]

> "... populism latches onto the affinities of citizens who feel alienated or unrepresented by current political institutions and outlines that crisis creates the demand for change..."

Judis pushes back, defining populism not as an ideology but instead as a "political logic" because of its inconsistencies. Like Mudde and Kaltwasser, Judis

posits that, due to these inconsistencies, the "people" and the "elite" can take many forms, and there are no unified definitions of either within this political logic.[3] These elites can take many forms and change over time; while out of power, the "elite" are usually defined as the party in power, but once populists are elected, this designation can change so the dichotomy of "people" vs. "elites" can still be utilized by populist politicians.[4]

Judis also identifies two prominent subtypes on the opposite sides of the political spectrum. Left-wing populism is dyadic between the people and the elite; however, right-wing populism is triadic. Specifically, it introduces a third element in the struggle between the "people" and the "elite," which is an outgroup that is looked down upon and accused of being prioritized by the elite over the "true people" .[5]

Populism and Crisis

One of the most prominent explanations for a rise in populism is crisis and backlash to crisis. As Judis points out, "In the wake of the Great Recession, populist parties and candidates were on the move in the United States and Europe in 2016".[6] Many have drawn this connection, the prominent perspective being the Essex School perspective initially developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. Laclau focuses on political discourse and affirms that crisis is a prerequisite for populism and emerges because of it. Further, Laclau specifies that the crisis is a crisis of the "dominant ideological discourse, which in turn is part of more general social crisis."[7]

This observation between crises as a prerequisite has also been touched upon by Kenneth Roberts, who defines it as a triggering mechanism.[8] Roberts argues that it is a crisis of representation that can trigger

1   Cas Mudde and Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, "Populism: A Very Short Introduction" in *Very Short Introductions.* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

2   Jan-Werner Müller. *What Is Populism?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

3   John B. Judis, *The Politics of Our Time.* (Columbia Global Reports, 2021). http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2dzzqsn.

4   Müller, *What is Populism?*

5   Judis, *The Politics of Our Time*, 42.

6   Ibid, 40.

7   Benjamin Moffitt, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition* 50, no. 2 (2015) https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2014.13.

8   Paulina Ochoa,, Andrew Arato, Benjamín Arditi, Kenneth Roberts, Robert Jansen, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, George Michael, et al, *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*, Edited by Carlos de la Torre (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015).

populist mobilization in different ways. He states that populism latches onto the affinities of citizens who feel alienated or unrepresented by current political institutions and outlines that crisis creates the demand for change that is then met with the supply of anti-elite and anti-establishment policies found in populist movements. Thus, crises pre-exist populist movements that are then shaped by the crisis at hand.[9]

Populist Leadership

When discussing leaders themselves, most explanations focus on supply-side factors such as the politicians and parties themselves that can be elected. Kaiser and Hogan write that leadership is about the performance of teams, groups, and organizations.[10] They state that personality predicts leadership and further good leadership promotes effective team performance that is crucial to the success of incumbents.

A prevalent argument surrounding populist leaders is Weber's charisma thesis in which an emphasis is placed on charisma as a key trait in effective leaders. Brug and Mughan contradict this, finding little support for it. Pappas also found that "the hitherto presumed linkage between populism broadly defined and charismatic leadership is, at best, a weak one."[11] However, in examining how charisma affects electoral success specifically, Kestila-Kekkonen and Soderun found that party leader characteristics, specifically charisma, were strong predicting factors for the success of populist parties.[12]

Additionally, a study examining the personality traits of populists and mainstream politicians found that the populists in their sample scored significantly higher than mainstream candidates on extraversion and charisma, narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. These candidates also scored significantly lower on agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional

stability, and openness.[13] In contrast, demand-side hypotheses usually explain the demand for populist policies specifically. An example is Guiso et al., who explain that government dissatisfaction or frustration will lead voters to favor the easy protectionist strategies offered by populists.[14]

However, this and other demand-side explanations are broad and do not focus specifically on creating demand for populist leaders themselves but for their policies. Government dissatisfaction and voter frustration tie into the argument that populist candidates win based on the incumbent opposition because they do better as challengers than incumbents themselves.[15]

MOFFIT'S PERFORMANCE OF CRISIS

In his paper *How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis and Contemporary Populism*, Benjamin Moffit marries the perspective of crisis as a prerequisite to populism and the study of populist leadership. He argues that these perspectives are insufficient as they only view crisis as external to populism. Moffit posits that crisis should be seen not only as an external causal factor of populism but also as an endogenous one. Further, he posits that populist actors perform a crisis in addition to reacting to it.[16]

He defines the performance of crisis as a six-part framework. The first three points encompass the identification and elevation of a failure to crisis, the framing of "the people" in contrast to those who have caused the crisis. The last three outline that there must be a use of media to propagate this messaging of political turmoil, the presentation of simple solutions and strong leadership as the sole solution to the crisis, and lastly, the continued propagation of emergencies to continue the justification of the

9   Roberts, *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*, 140-58.

10   Hogan, Robert, and Robert B. Kaiser, "What We Know about Leadership." *Review of General Psychology* 9, no. 2 (2005): 169–80. https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.2.169.

11   Takis S Pappas, "Are Populist Leaders 'Charismatic'? The Evidence from Europe." *Constellations* 23, no. 3 (2016): 378–90. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12233.

12   Elina Kestilä-Kekkonen, and Peter Söderlund, "Party, Leader or Candidate? Dissecting the Right-Wing Populist Vote in Finland." *European Political Science Review* 6, no. 4 (2014): 641–62. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755773913000283.

13   Alessandro Nai, and Ferran Martínez i Coma, "The Personality of Populists: Provocateurs, Charismatic Leaders, or Drunken Dinner Guests?" *West European Politics* 42, no. 7 (2019): 1337–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2019.1599570.

14   Luigi Guiso, Helios Herrera, Massimo Morelli, and Tommaso Sonno, "Demand and Supply of Populism," *EIEF Working Papers Series* (February 2017) https://ideas.repec.org//p/eie/wpaper/1703.html.

15   Kurt Richard Luther, "Of Goals and Own Goals: A Case Study of Right-Wing Populist Party Strategy for and during Incumbency," *Party Politics* 17, no. 4 (2011): 453–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068811400522.

16   Moffitt, "How to Perform Crisis: A Model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government and Opposition* 50 (2): 189–217. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2014.13.

need for the populist party's intervention.[17] This last element specifically sees the deliberate changing of the definition of what the crisis is and who the elites are to propagate interest in the populist party.[18]

ARGUMENT AND METHODS

Combining the current literature focusing on supply and demand and utilizing Moffit's performance of crisis framework, I aim to deepen the integration of the study of populist leaders with the extensive body of work that regards crisis as essential to this political strategy. Through the examination of four right-wing populist leaders—two winners, Victor Orbán and Giorgia Meloni, and two losers, Marine Le Pen and Santiago Abascal—I posit that within Moffit's framework, Steps One "Identify failure" and Five "Present simple solutions and strong leadership" are crucial for a leader to manipulate supply and demand factors needed for electoral success. Additionally, I utilize these cases to see if electoral success is increased when these steps take advantage of political turmoil, turn the incumbent into the central crisis they are "performing," and display more charismatic and legitimate leadership than the incumbent.

This paper follows my examination of step one, "Identify failure," and step five, "Present simple solutions and strong leadership," of Moffit's framework in relation to the election of Viktor Orban in 2010, Giorgia Meloni in 2022 and the losses of Santiago Abascal and Marine Le Pen in 2023. For step one, I examine not only what the leader identifies as the crisis, but also the political context in which they employ this framing. For step five, to focus more on the supply side in relation to the candidates themselves, I focus more heavily on its strong leadership aspect rather than simple solutions. I examine leadership style by employing the personality study conducted by Kestilä-Kekkonen and Söderlund, in addition to examining each leader in relation to their competition.

FINDINGS

Step 1. Identify Failure.
A great deal of the momentum that aided Orban's campaign in 2010 is attributed to the great unpopularity of the incumbent and the 2008 financial crisis. His campaign followed the Őszöd speech scandal in which the recording of the May Congress, where the Prime Minister criticized his party and coalition for misleading the public regarding the economic situation in Hungary, was leaked and broadcast to the public. This was followed by nationwide protests and furthered the already great dissatisfaction the public felt towards the socialist party in power, MSZP.[19]

Utilizing this scandal, Orbán identified the failure and crisis as the socialist party itself. He called for the dismissal of the current prime minister and centered his campaign around the issue of the ruling party and politics itself rather than any specific social or economic issue. Taking an anti-politics tone and tying it to the 2008 economic crisis, his campaign utilized the election slogan "'it's about time," which directly echoed the calls for ending the period of 8-year rule by the MSzP and SzDSz parties.[20]

> "A candidate may be aided more by a "real" failure that creates demand despite what they simply choose to identify as a crisis."

While Meloni's campaign followed a 2022 Italian government crisis that triggered new elections, unlike Orbán, Meloni's platform did not identify the previous government as the primary failure in her performance of crisis. Instead, similar to many right-wing populists, she identified the critical failure by focusing on the immigration crisis and a crisis of values. Specifically, her platform centered on anti-immigration sentiments and the preservation of traditional values by attributing the perceived downfall of

17   Ibid.
18   Ibid, 19.

19   Sebastian Kubas,and Anna Czyż, "From a Liberal Opposition Party to a Right-Wing Party of Power. Three Decades of the Hungarian Fidesz (1988-2018)," *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Sklodowska, Sectio M – Balcaniensis et Carpathiensis* 3 (July 2019): 52. https://doi.org/10.17951/bc.2018.3.47-65.
20   Ibid, 51.

Italy to immigration and the loss of Italy's isolationist policies.[21]

However, like Orbán, Meloni's party, The Brothers of Italy were seen as fundamentally separate from the current failing government. Specifically, her party, unlike other right-wing populist parties of Lega and Forza Italia, never supported the previous government. Further, this separation is pointed to in explaining how the brothers of Italy became the new leaders of the right-wing coalition.[22] Thus, both Orban and Meloni benefited from their parties being seen as separate from a real national crisis.

Unlike Orban and Meloni, while Santiago Abascal and Marine Le Pen's states had government troubles, these did not rise to the same level of a national government crisis as in Hungary or Italy. Meloni won during a crisis, but did not identify the incumbent leading party (The Five Star Movement) as the failure, which suggests that the political context may have more influence than what a populist politician decides to identify as the crisis. However, we see with Orbán that identifying the incumbent party as the failure, upon which he built his performance of crisis, aided his campaign greatly. Overall, in both cases, we see that these leaders can take advantage of a government crisis to win elections, whether they do so explicitly or not.

These cases exemplify how step one is important for manipulating demand-side factors. In each case, step one was pivotal because the identified failure informed what was raised to the level of crisis and centered in a campaign. However, in context and in terms of electoral success, the gravity of this step may be more complicated. As Orbán shows, a leader can be very successful when the "real failure" is the same as the one they identify and perform crisis around. Alternatively, Le Pen and Abascal demonstrate that not having national crises to rally around may negatively impact the success of the populist performance of crisis. Thus, a candidate may be aided more by a "real" failure that creates demand despite what they simply choose to identify as a crisis.

Step 5. Present simple solutions and strong leadership
Examining all four cases, I found that populists can use the demand they create in step one if they carry out the fifth step with a style that is more competent and charismatic than the opposition. In my examination of these four leaders, I found that the "strong leadership" element of step 5 was consistent across all cases. Simply put, all four followed the common populist leadership style of charisma and projecting strength. Additionally, despite variations in gender, all utilized a strong masculine style, as Le Pen and Meloni took on a "strongwoman" trait. The populist "strongwoman" was coined to describe female leaders in the populist radical right, who adopt "typically masculine connotations combined with feminine traits."[23] Where the winners differed from the losers was in how this charisma and personality related to the incumbent.

Comparing a "winner" Orbán and a "loser" Le Pen, one sees a clear difference in how charisma and a strong populist personality helped Orbán but was not sufficient for Le Pen because of the incumbent she was challenging. For Orbán, his challenger was a replacement for a disgraced party. In contrast, Emmanuel Macron is a very charismatic and young career politician. Le Pen didn't acquiesce his voter base the way Orbán did to his opponent despite having a very strong public leadership style as well. Thus, despite there being deep dissatisfaction with his government, people are still inclined to support Macron as the lesser of two evils.[24] This shows Le Pen didn't perform crisis to the point where Macron and his government were tranformed into greatest threat to the country in the same way Orbán framed his opposition.

A common link between "winners" Meloni and Orbán in step five was that their leadership was more charismatic and emotionally rousing than the

21 Barbie Latza Nadeau,"Femme Fascista: How Giorgia Meloni Became the Star of Italy's Far Right." *World Policy Journal* 35, no. 2 (2018): 14–21.

22 Ian Bremmer, "What Italy's Political Chaos Means for Europe," *TIME*, July 23, 2022. https://time.com/6199642/italy-politics-turmoil/.

23 Marianna Griffini, and Laura Montecchio, "Strongwomen? A Comparative Analysis of Gender Discourse in the Electoral Campaigns of Marine Le Pen and Giorgia Meloni." *APSA Preprints* (2023): 3. https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2023-l2zzc.

24 Kim Willsher, "Fear of Neofascism Keeps Emmanuel Macron Ahead of Marine Le Pen" *The Observer*, April 29, 2017, sec. World news. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/29/france-election-neofascism-le-pen-macron.

incumbent. Thus, regardless of the simple solutions they platformed, they were presenting their election and the ousting of the old guard as simple solutions to all. Orbán especially offers a case to show that framing his election as the solution to the nation's ills and pairing it with a strong, charismatic, and competent leadership style expertly met the demand for a new government, which he helped create.

Additionally, a finding that wasn't included in my initial argument was that, although winners presented a large change, this change could not become uncomfortable or be seen as too subversive. As stated before, Le Pen is still seen as a very radical candidate; many voted for Macron as the lesser of two evils rather than political alignment. Abascal's Vox party is also substantially more extremist than the current conservative party, and many conservative voters stuck with the dominant party on the right in part because the party is so new, unorthodox, and untested in government.

In contrast, during the 2010 Hungarian election, the only alternatives to the disgraced incumbent other than Orbán were a vague new liberal party (LMP) and the neo-nazi Jobbik party. This political landscape of the opposition thus made Orbán's platform, despite its boldness, seem not as radical in comparison.[25] Furthermore, concerning Meloni's election, it is noteworthy that the incumbent held populist views, and there were already center-right populist parties in power prior to her assumption of office. Thus, her election did not constitute the most significant shift from the existing landscape. This further demonstrates the importance of the incumbent to the performance of crisis and highlights how important strong leadership and communication are. If the political landscape is not aiding you, such as when the opposition collapses or is disgraced, and you can't effectively portray your opponent's election as a path that would be more catastrophic than your unorthodox solutions, you lose. As demonstrated by our winners, success becomes far more attainable when both factors align in your favor.

CONCLUSIONS

These four cases demonstrate that utilized together, steps one and five in Moffit's framework are very important, but no single step determines success or failure. Orbán and Meloni, despite different approaches in step one, capitalized on political crises to generate demand. Success hinged on establishing a solid foundation of demand for their leadership and populist policies, surpassing the incumbent or other challengers. While Orbán's case illustrates leveraging political turmoil to elevate opposition, Meloni's successful election on a very different platform contradicts this trend. The cases taken together also demonstrate that the political context and the incumbents themselves play a large role in the success or failure of each step.

Further, successful challengers prevail by highlighting government shortcomings and elevating problems to a level of emergency, creating demand for their leadership and unorthodox solutions. In summary, successful populist leaders exploit situations and tailor their leadership to meet unmet demands and demands they help incite, accounting for the political context.

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25   Kim Lane Scheppele, "How Viktor Orbán Wins."
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COUNTERINSURGENCY IN MALI
COMPARING FRENCH AND WAGNER GROUP MODELS

BY ABSHIR ADAM

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a comparative analysis of the French and WG Group's counterinsurgency (COIN) models in Mali, focusing on their operational tactics, impact on security outcomes, and the sustainability of these strategies. It scrutinizes both actors' reliance on military tactics—France's ostensible application of evidence-based COIN and WG Group's deployment of hybrid warfare and immediate force application. Despite eliciting short-term tactical gains, neither approach has effectively addressed the underlying political grievances fueling insurgency, thus failing to break the cycle of violence and instability. This analysis argues for a more holistic COIN strategy that goes beyond military action to include comprehensive political solutions to the root causes of conflict. As insurgent activities persist in Africa and the Middle East, this analysis hopes to provide timely insights for achieving more effective COIN campaigns.

The growing global presence of the Wagner Group (WG) has been cause for concern among world leaders. The private military organization's ongoing operations in Africa and the Middle East have generated considerable scholarship on the group as a proxy for Russian external interests. Less is known, however, about its activity in Africa and its implications for African states. This work seeks to fill this knowledge gap. Specifically, it aims to address two fundamental questions: First, how have WG's counterinsurgency (COIN) operations affected security outcomes in African partner countries? Second, to what extent does WG operate on a distinctive

model of COIN as compared to state actors? In wake of France's departure from Bamako, the entry of WG in 2022, and as a regional resurgence of anti-colonial sentiment lends newfound appeal to Russian-borne security services, an assessment of the characteristics and efficacy of these services is warranted.

This paper is organized as follows: The first section presents a literature review offering a framework to evaluate the effectiveness of COIN campaigns. It identifies two criteria for successful counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts: neutralizing the military threat posed by insurgents and addressing their underlying

grievances. This discussion proceeds to describe the historical features of French and WG models of COIN outside of Mali, culminating with an assessment of their efficacy. It finds that the French COIN model, having evolved to address political grievances, may face limitations due to its reliance on the stability and cooperativeness of local governments. Meanwhile, WG's approach, marked by its use of hybrid warfare tactics, suggests disinterest in addressing the root causes of insurgencies in a manner that achieves lasting security solutions. The second section presents a critical comparison of contemporary French (2013 – 2023) and WG (2017 – present) COIN campaigns in practice in Mali that also assesses the degree to which they align with the criteria for successful COIN. It finds that both the French and WG's counterinsurgency efforts in Mali reveal distinct strengths and weaknesses. Both France and WG, while adept at achieving immediate combat victories, failed to effectively address underlying socio-political issues. This was especially the case for WG due to its short-term military focus. Both actors' approaches highlight the crucial nature of integrating military action with long-term political solutions to ensure lasting peace and stability. These findings underscore the importance of addressing deep-seated grievances in an effective COIN campaign.

METHODS

This work adopted a case study methodology with Mali as the central example. Mali presents a unique opportunity for analysis as a country that has hosted counterinsurgency campaigns by both France—a state which presents itself as a champion of international law—and WG, a private military contractor with ties to the Russian Kremlin. Both parties entered respective partnerships with the Malian government to engage in a joint COIN campaign. This allowed for control of geographical, cultural, and historical variables, allowing for a clearer perspective on the prospective impact of each external actor's intervention on security outcomes. To inform the analysis, this research drew from a range of sources, including foundational texts on COIN theory, academic evaluations of the COIN strategies employed by France and WG, and comparative studies of their activities across different countries. Additionally, news reports

on both actors' involvement in Mali were used to supplement the paucity of academic material on this developing case of COIN, offering a provisional account of their impacts in the region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Counterinsurgency Theory
Notwithstanding an overarching debate between advocates for using standardized principles to address irregular warfare and their critics who argue for more context-specific tactics,[1] the overall consensus in COIN theory calls for the integration of military and political means. As Ethan Kapstein argues in his 2017 review, the evolution of modern COIN theory has been demarcated by two phases. The first was the "classic" form of COIN doctrine which emerged during the Cold War, where it aimed to overcome communist and anti-colonial rebellions by fortifying fragile governments, which were often viewed by as illegitimate by a significant portion of the population in the host country.[2] As Kapstein describes, classic COIN fell into disrepute in response to the lessons learned from US-backed counterinsurgencies in places like Vietnam, where it failed to address the structural issues that drove support for the NVA. According to Kapstein, the main reason insurgents were resisting the U.S. and the South Vietnamese government during the Vietnam War was the deep-rooted rural tenant farmers' struggles with high rents and limited prospects for land ownership, fueling support for the Viet Cong, who promised land reform and lower rents. Rather than prioritizing this grievance, the U.S. focused on propping up an unpopular government and imposed military solutions that did not tackle the root causes of the insurgency.

The second phase of COIN theory emerged to address this weakness. Compiling insights from recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, along with lessons from historical French and British counterinsurgency efforts, "neo-classical" COIN aimed to develop a standard model of best COIN practices

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1   Fuji, George. "Article Review 816 on Ethan Kapstein. 'Success and Failure in Counterinsurgency Campaigns: Lessons from the Cold War.'" 2018.

2   Cancian, Matthew. "FM 3-24-2.0? Why US counterinsurgency doctrine needs an update." *Modern War Institute at West Point,* February 21, 2017.

to apply to the post-9/11 insurgent movements.[3] The major tenets of neo-classical COIN were crystallized in the US Army Field Manual 324, "Counterinsurgency," which were distinguished by their acknowledgement of insurgencies as "a signal of an illegitimate government with strong leadership in-

> "PRESTER also bears ethical implications for military doctrine, pivoting from the traditional concept of simply 'winning hearts and minds' to a strategy focused on 'liberating hearts and minds.'"

terests in an unrepresentative distribution of wealth and power."[4] Appreciating the political elements of insurgencies, neo-classical COIN shifts the focus of counterinsurgency to a population-centric approach, moving the central emphasis from targeting enemies to serving and securing the population, highlighting the primacy of political over military objectives in achieving long-term effectiveness.[5] In this way, the modern history of COIN has reoriented US strategy away from the top-down approach of propping up local regimes by simply crushing resistance through outsized military means to one that incorporates cooperation at the grassroots level to resolve the issues that produce insurgencies in the first place.

French Counterinsurgency
The French model of counterinsurgency (COIN) can be similarly characterized by two distinct phases, in its case demarcated by its colonial and post-colonial periods. The colonial period was heavily shaped by military campaigns in regions such as French Indochina and Algeria. The strategy utilized in this period bore similarities to the "classical" COIN used

by the US during the Cold War as it had a strong reliance on traditional military tactics. However, a crucial difference was that France acted as the incumbent government in these conflicts, unlike the United States, which served as an external supporter of local governments. France's combination of military, espionage, and extensive psychological tactics was especially pronounced in Algeria, where it was used to effectively neutralize the morale and fighting capacity of the National Liberation Front (FLN).[6] While one hand, the French military managed to break the FLN's operational strength through relentless military and psychological pressure by targeting its personnel network, infrastructure, and support systems, significantly disrupting their ability to wage a sustained military campaign,[7] this tactical success only forestalled Algeria's ultimate independence in 1962. This was because the widespread desire for national self-determination among a critical mass of Algerians civilians was a sentiment that went beyond the military strength of the FLN.[8] The potency of nationalist elements in Algeria were only exacerbated by the harsh methods used by the French, including reports of torture that alienated not only Algerians but also the international community. This growing discontent amplified the Algerian push for independence and weakened France's moral standing globally.[9] Alongside the loss of Indochina, the Algerian experience positioned the French military to revamp its COIN doctrine toward a new model.

These efforts are reflected in France's PRESTER framework, an acronym that stands for PRÉparer (prepare), SÉcuriser (secure), TEnir (hold), and Reconstruire (rebuild).[10] This framework highlightings the need for a balanced strategy that not only focuses on military action but also securing and rebuilding conflict-affected areas. PRESTER also bears ethical

3   Ibid.

4   Biddle, Stephen. "The New US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis." *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (June 2008): 348.

5   Miron M. "How radically did FM 3-24 alter the US military's counter-insurgency theory and practice in Iraq?" Working Paper. Bogota D.C.: Escuela Militar de Cadetes Cordova, 2019. http://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/247QD.

6   Pahlavi, Pierre. "Political Warfare Is a Double-Edged Sword: The Rise and Fall of the French Counter-Insurgency in Algeria." *Canadian Military Journal* 8, no. 4 (2007): 53-62.

7   Alexander, Martin, and John F.V. Keiger. "France and the Algerian War: Strategy, Operations and Diplomacy." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 2 (2002): 1-32.

8   Whitfield, Lee. "Algeria in France: French Citizens, the War, and Right-wing Populism in the Reckoning of the Republic in Languedoc, 1954-1962," *Journal of the Western Society for French History* 33, (2005): 412-432.

9   Merom, Gil. *How Democracies Lose Small Wars: State, Society, and the Failures of France in Algeria, Israel in Lebanon, and the United States in Vietnam*, (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

10   Strnad, Jan. "French Counterinsurgency: Case Study of Mali." 2022.

implications for military doctrine, pivoting from the traditional concept of simply "winning hearts and minds" to a strategy focused on "liberating hearts and minds."[11] This evolution in thought reflects a shift moving away from the colonialist view of civilians as assets held in line by fear toward a stance of cultivating legitimacy with local populations. This emphasis is evident in French operations in Afghanistan and the Sahel region. In both instances, France participated in multilateral COIN campaigns, cooperating closely with local governments and militaries.[12] Additionally, French forces maintained a strong commitment to understanding the unique aspects of each operational context, ensuring operational flexibility.

Although contemporary French COIN addresses the central role of local grievances in fostering insurgencies, it may be constrained by its collaborative approach. The PRESTER framework relies considerably on the host nation's political cooperation for it to succeed. This strategy, focusing on transitioning control to local forces, essentially positions French forces in a supportive, 'bodyguard' capacity. Such an approach is deeply contingent upon the host government's commitment as well as its military and political capital to meet the insurgent threat and neutralize its political base. This reliance on collaboration may pose challenges in contexts where the host nation's alignment with French objectives is not guaranteed. Indeed, credible reports point out France's own concerns over the Malian junta's inadequate efforts against insurgents, which may have initiated the split between Bamako and Paris that led to the beginning of French withdrawal in February 2022 and WG's subsequent entry into the emerging security vacuum.[13]

WG Group Counterinsurgency

WG's position in the liminal zone between a state and non-state actor might also shape its COIN strategy. In its short history, it has largely served as a proxy institution of the Russian state. Like other PMCs, WG serves this purpose by minimizing costs and casualties in Russian foreign interventions in areas like Eastern Syria, Africa, and Ukraine.[14] They are distinguished, however, by an "arm-length relationship" with the Kremlin which maintains a degree of plausible deniability.[15] Theo Neetling thus characterized WG as a "de-facto foreign policy instrument" of the Russian government.[16] This relationship allows the Russian government to exert influence and pursue its geopolitical objectives in these regions without overtly deploying its military forces, thereby avoiding direct international confrontation and scrutiny.

While all PMCs are soldiers of fortune, WG's foreign deployments are distinguished by the extraction of natural resources, which may give it vested interest in maintaining instability to prolong its profit-making. In Libya, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali, the interests of WG and the Russian state have converged on a range of issues including control of significant oil reserves, mining rights in diamonds and gold, as well as increasing Russia's foothold in the region more generally.[17] While this dynamic might provide short-term security solutions or financial benefits to Russian interests and local partner governments, it might also jeopardize long-term stability and prospects for peace.

Marek Górka (2023) outlines how WG's actions extend beyond straightforward military engagements to include securing access to valuable mineral resources and influencing local governance.[18] In Libya, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Mali, the interests of WG and the Russian state have converged on a range of issues including control of significant oil reserves, mining rights in diamonds and gold, as well as increasing Russia's foothold in the region more generally.[19] While this dynamic might provide short-term security solutions or financial benefits to

11   Ibid.

12   Taillat, Stéphane. "National Traditions and International Context: French Adaptation to Counterinsurgency in the 21st Century." *Security Challenges* 6, no. 1 (2010): 85-96.

13   King, Isabelle. "How France Failed Mali: The End of Operation Barkhane." *Harvard International Review*, 2023.

14   Marten, Kimberly. "Russia's use of semi-state security forces: the case of the Wagner Group." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 35, no. 3 (2019): 181-204.

15   De Melo, Royce. "The Implications of the Wagner Group in Africa and the Middle East." *The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare* 6, no. 1 (2023): 53-57.

16   Neethling, Theo. "Russian Para-Military Operations in Africa: Wagner Group as a De Facto Foreign Policy Instrument." *Scientia Militaria: South African Journal of Military Studies* 51, no. 1 (2023): 1-23.

17   Ibid.

18   Górka, Marek. "The Wagner Group as a Tool of Russian Hybrid Warfare." *Polish Political Science Yearbook* 52, no. 2 (2023): 83-98.

19   Neethling, Theo, "Russian Para-Military Operations."

Russian interests and local partner governments, it might also jeopardize long-term stability and prospects for peace.

WG applies a flexible approach to its security service operations. Raphael Parens (2022) evaluated the group's activities in Mali, which demonstrate a willingness to engage in the sort of 'hearts-and-minds' campaigns advocated by Sepp and Kapstein, as well as direct military engagement with the opposition.[20] These efforts are also distinguished by their employment of "hybrid warfare" techniques. Consider WG's combined use of orthodox military counterinsurgency and political efforts during its engagements in Mali, including disinformation campaigns replete with fake polls to bolster host governments.[21] The group also orchestrated social media campaigns in favor of the post-coup military junta during France's withdrawal from Bamako and also in the Central African Republic, where it installed a pro-Russian radio station and filmed a movie in praise of its presence in the country.[22] The narrative propagated by WG and Russian media framed their mercenaries as "Russian instructors," contributing to a broader disinformation campaign aimed at legitimizing their presence and discrediting Western entities. Ultimately, this hybrid strategy is not only about bolstering up partner governments but also about securing economic advantages.

Although the Wagner Group may engage in hearts-and-minds operations in the capitals of host countries, WG's approach in the field starkly contrasts with more conventional counterinsurgency tactics, primarily relying on overwhelming force to manage conflict zones. Their operations are characterized by indiscriminate violence against civilians, as seen in their accused massacres and crimes against humanity during counter-extremism missions in the Sahel.[23] This strategy utilizes sheer power to quell and deter military resistance to ensure civilian obedience.[24] Other reports of human rights violations include harsh treatment of prisoners and non-combatants, including severe interrogation and harsh discipline, particularly during operations in challenging areas such as Syria and the Central African Republic.[25] These instances suggest that while WG's tactics might secure temporary control or compliance, by exacerbating instability and provoking resentment among local populations it may impede neo-classical COIN's aim of adequately balancing military and political means. Without the sort of community-focused engagement strategies seen in other contemporary approaches to COIN approaches WG's methods might risk not only failing to achieve sustainable peace but also potentially deepening the divisions and conflicts they ostensibly aim to resolve.

THE CASE OF MALI

France in Mali (2013 – 2022)

The 2013 French intervention in Mali was the culmination of a protracted Malian domestic conflict that had been developing since independence in 1960, in which Mali's nomadic northern Tuareg ethnic groups have engaged in multiple armed anti-government resistance movements. These tribal groups find themselves increasingly alienated from the government in Bamako as well as the sedentary Bambara ethnic group that predominates southern Mali.[26] Their bid for autonomy is a product of their perceived marginalization by the central government, pointing to the allegedly deliberate underdevelopment of Mali's northern regions as well as government corruption. Tuareg uprisings have historically been met with harsh repression, exacerbating resentment towards the government. Despite multiple efforts in 1991, 1992, and 2006 to pacify and integrate rebels into the Malian army, these initiatives largely failed as the government was unable to implement them in a manner that adequately met the Tuareg's demands.[27]

After a dormant period, the Tuareg problem escalated into a full-scale insurgency in 2012. The influx of Tuareg fighters and arms from Libya in 2011 and the

20   Parens, Raphael. "The Wagner Group's Playbook in Africa: Mali." 2022.

21   Ibid.

22   Górka, "The Wagner Group."

23   Kumar, Riza. "The Wagner Group in the Central Sahel: Decolonization or Destabilization?" 2023.

24   Ibid.

25   Ibid.

26   Boeke, Sergei, and Bart Schuurman. "Operation 'Serval': A Strategic Analysis of the French Intervention in Mali, 2013–2014." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 6 (2015): 801-825.

27   Ibid.

formation of the secessionist Mouvement National pour la Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA) reignited the simmering conflict.[28] The power vacuum left by the collapse of the Ghaddafi regime in Libya also enabled the spillover of heavily armed jihadist groups into the Sahel, which remain significant anti-government belligerents to date. The Malian Army's collapse under the MNLA's advance led to a coup in March 2012, disrupting two decades of democracy and hastening the loss of control over the North to at least four different Islamist groups. In early 2013, the Islamist forces controlling Northern Mali initiated an offensive towards the government-held southern regions.

The Franco-Malian Operation 'Serval' was launched to counter this escalating security crisis. Given the backdrop of entrenched regional grievances, the operation aimed not only to quell the immediate threat to its partner and ally but also to establish sufficient stability for Mali's upcoming elections.[29] On the first count, Operation Serval (2013 – 2014) delivered the swift intervention of French military forces, combining air strikes and Special Forces operations, and successfully stalling the insurgent advance.[30] This led to the rapid recapture of key cities in the north previously held by the militants, including their historical stronghold of Kidal, forcing the remaining insurgents to retreat to the remote mountainous regions along the borders with Algeria and Niger. Over the following months, French troops, alongside African allies, pursued the insurgents in a series of intensive ground engagements. Nearly 700 of the roughly 2,000 Islamist combatants were eliminated, and around 430 were captured. Many of the remaining fighters escaped to neighboring Niger and Libya or blended into local communities in Mali.[31] The conflict incurred significant casualties, with six French soldiers and 38 Chadian troops losing their lives during these combat operations. In three months, French forces successfully liberated key towns and dismantled jihadist strongholds in northern Mali,

inflicting significant casualties and disrupting terrorist infrastructures.[32] This military success not only ended jihadist governance in liberated territories but also enabled free elections in July 2013 and August 2014.[33] These statistics led the French leadership to deem Serval a "success" (EURACTIV, 2023). Notably, Serval enjoyed substantial support from the Malian citizenry, although it is difficult to pinpoint the proportion of this that came from the south.[34] Notwithstanding this early military victory, the work of French and Malian forces during this campaign may have grossly underdressed the question of political grievances to the detriment of their military mission. In many ways, their subsequent COIN campaign in the region was an attempt to remedy these faults.

Operation Barkhane (2015 – 2022) consequently aimed to address the fact that regional violence had heightened despite Operation Serval's tactical successes. While the precise cause of this second wave of violence is not precisely known, it is believed that acts of retribution by the Malian army en route through local towns near northern combat areas generated newfound grievances against Bamako.[35] This included acts of wanton killing and harassment of civilians for their alleged support of insurgents. These incidents may have contributed to an uptick in the recruitment of young males into these groups. In this context, the Franco-Malian coalition launched a renewed effort to quell the violence in the region.[36] Previous work has divided the subsequent Operation Barkhane into four stages: The initial phase spanned from its inception on August 1, 2014, until the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APR) was signed in May and June 2015.[37] The subsequent phase extended from the APR's signing through the end of 2017. The third phase commenced in early 2018, culminating with the Pau Summit on January

28   Thurston, Alex. "Mali: The Disintegration of a 'Model African Democracy'" *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 2, no. 1 (2013).

29   Tramond, Olivier, and Philippe Seigneur. "Operation Serval." *Military Review* (2014).

30   Strnad, "French Counterinsurgency."

31   Ibid.

32   Tramond and Seigneur, "Operation Serval."

33   Ibid.

34   Godo, Judit. "In the Shackles of Instability: Challenges of Operation Barkhane in the G5 Sahel Countries." *Hungarian Journal of African Studies* 15 (2021): 53.

35   International Crisis Group. "North Mali: A Confrontation That No One Will Win." July 6, 2016.

36   Charbonneau, Bruno. "Intervention in Mali: Building Peace between Peacekeeping and Counterterrorism." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35, no. 4 (2017): 415-431.

37   Strnad, "French Counterinsurgency."

13, 2020. Finally, the fourth began on March 27, 2020 with the initiation of Operation Takuba, which culminated in June 2022. As before, French forces maintained their emphasis on eliminating insurgents.[38] The first stage is particularly important, as it was in this period that two primary peace agreements were formed in Mali, leading to the signing of the Algiers Peace Accord (APR) in 2015. Both coalitions, representing Arab and Tuareg groups, participated in the Algiers Accords peace talks. These talks effectively served as a conciliatory measure intended to de-escalate regional intentions. As such, measures were put in place to grant ethnic Tuaregs local autonomy, a decision that has been cited as giving crucial ground that contributed to Tuareg forces quietly retaking their stronghold in Kidal.[39] Notably, major jihadist groups were absent from these agreements.

Under the banner of Operation Barkhane, French forces did not directly engage in implementing the Algiers Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (APR) between 2015 and 2017. This period was characterized by a shift in the dynamics of radical groups, notably with the emergence of a new jihadist entity, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM). Despite the APR's signing, there was a notable increase in violence, prompting France to escalate its military presence. This surge continued through 2020 with many attacks attributed to JNIM causing significant casualties across all factions, including French forces. In rense, the French military slightly decreased its troop strength but maintained its operational tempo, achieving notable success in neutralizing key jihadist figures.[40] The Pau Summit in 2020 represented a significant turning point, leading to an increased French military commitment and the launch of Operation Takuba, a complementary mission to Barkhane that coordinated strikes with European special forces. This period is particularly notable not just for the political instability marked by two coups, but also for illustrating both the tactical successes and significant shortcomings of

French counterinsurgency efforts in Mali.

Compared to its predecessor, Operation Serval, the military efficacy of Operation Barkhane was mixed. Barkhane employed a combination of rapid assault tactics, coalition efforts, and intelligence-driven operations, effectively neutralizing numerous high-value targets. This strategy, while mirroring the dynamic and agile approach of Operation Serval, was adapted to suit Barkhane's more extensive and long-term objectives. However, French-aligned forces made a strategic mistake by failing to adapt effectively to the evolving nature of the conflict, which shifted from terrorism and quasi-conventional warfare to a guerilla-type insurgency. While France remained focused on counterterrorism, this approach was not aligned with the new challenges posed by the insurgency, leading to a maladaptation of its military strategy. In conjunction with France's reliance on local paramilitaries for population-centric elements of its strategy, this led to a failure in improving the security situation for most of the population. As violence in the country grew, France's reputation became tainted by this apparent mishandling of regional violence, a point quickly taken up by those critical of its colonial history.

Thus, beyond the military question, the French strategy in Mali effectively fostered a domestic political problem for itself. Beyond this, Operation Barkhane's non-interventionist political stance, evident in its handling of the APR, the military coups, and the growing local discontent, underscored a persistent reluctance to engage comprehensively with the complex political landscape. This approach, while militarily successful, potentially compromised the prospects for enduring stability in the region. Indeed, the Malian army's inability to deliver on its security promises during this period has been cited as a contributing factor to ongoing anti-French sentiment in post-coup-era Mali, the rift between Bamako and Paris, and WG's entry into the resulting security vacuum.[41]

38   Bertrand, Eloïse, Tony Chafer, and Ed Stoddard. "(Dis) Utilities of Force in a Postcolonial Context: Explaining the Strategic Failure of the French-Led Intervention in Mali." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2023.

39   Oxford Analytica. "Kidal Will Be Test of the State's Return to North Mali." *Emerald Expert Briefings oxan-db*, 2020.

40   Strnad, "French Counterinsurgency."

41   Elischer, Sebastian. "Populist Civil Society, the Wagner Group, and Post-Coup Politics in Mali." 2022.

WG in Mali (2021 –)

In many ways, both of Mali's subsequent juntas have turned to WG as an answer to widespread security concerns. Since the group's arrival in 2021, it has been tasked by the government to fill the void left by the French withdrawal around that time, in exchange for a monthly $10.8 million payment as well as access to Malian gold deposits).[42] On one hand, this bears formal resemblance to previous French activity. For instance, WG personnel oversaw training and operational integration where it emphasized direct, hands-on training with the Malian army.[43] Despite these similarities, WG's Malian operation has displayed important functional differences from the French. For one, it conducted joint operations with the Malian army more frequently than French troops did during Operation Barkhane, potentially fostering greater mutual respect and operational integration between WG and Malian forces.[44] WG also introduced and encouraged combat tactics that closely mirror those of insurgents, including the use of booby-trap devices.[45] This introduction of new methods, previously employed in other African countries where WG is present, indicates small but tangible shifts in their military operational strategy.

"Generally, the group's counterinsurgency efforts in Mali, unlike France's previous decade-long intervention, have produced a mixture of enhanced stability.'"

WG's COIN in Mali also bears more substantial tactical differences from that of France. Foremost among these is its method of intelligence gathering. These tactics in Mali have been marked by allegations of violence and abuse, as in the Dybala and Sofara military camps, where the execution and disappearance of dozens of civilians were reported.[46] Such methods starkly contrast with the official policy of French forces, which, being representatives of a democratic regime, maintained a stance against human rights violations. Importantly, while they are also instances of indiscriminate killing by a paramilitary group, they are also distinct from previous such acts by the Malian army because WG uses them as part of an explicit strategy. While WG's willingness to engage in unabashed acts of mass violence might lend it the immediate acquiescence of local populations, it may also hinder its own reputation in comparison to the French. This is especially concerning given their prevalence in the north and central regions), historical strongpoints for Mali's insurgencies.[47]

Another distinct tactic employed by WG is the use of social media disinformation campaigns. Some of these have been undertaken to shore up domestic support for the organization. These include a survey disseminated by the Malian Foundation for National Values Protection (FZNC) alleging that 87% of Malians supported their government's collaboration with WG.[48] This move, along with an interview given by Prigozhin's other associate, Alexandre Ivanov, to the Malian media, highlighted WG's efforts to boost its image in Mali. While more time is needed to appreciate the long-term impacts of WG's irregular methods on COIN operations in Mali, a provisional appraisal of its combat success remains possible if limited.

Given the shorter duration of its operations in the country, and a relative paucity of information as to its activities, it is difficult to prepare an exhaustive account of WG's security outcomes. Generally, the group's counterinsurgency efforts in Mali, unlike France's previous decade-long intervention, have produced a mixture of enhanced stability. While on one hand, it has produced significant insurgent casualties and has even returned the city of Kidal under government control for the first time in nearly a decade, WG's tenure in Mali has yet to produce a tangible

42   Doxsee, Catrina, Jared Thompson, and M. Harris. "The End of Operation Barkhane and the Future of Counterterrorism in Mali." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, November 11, 2022.

43   Ibid.

44   Murgia, Nicolò. "The Wagner Group's Counterinsurgency Operations in Mali." 2023.

45   Ibid.

46   Ibid.

47   Human Rights Watch. "Mali: Army, Wagner Group Atrocities Against Civilians." March 28, 2024.

48   Parens, "The Wagner Group's Playbook."

reduction in violence.[49] Since WG's involvement, Mali has seen a nearly 100 percent increase in jihadist attacks and a four-fold increase in civilian deaths.[50] Additionally, territories reclaimed from insurgents often fall back into militant control due to WG's inability to maintain long-term security. If these events are emblematic of Mali's historical woes, WG's operations can at least be said to exacerbate the issue, as it has been estimated to target civilians in approximately 70 percent of its operations. While it is difficult to account for why this may be, one explanation offered has been that, unlike French interventions, WG's involvement in Mali did not include efforts to reform or restructure the Malian armed forces. This absence of initiatives toward structural reform highlights a focus on immediate tactical gains rather than long-term strategic planning. Moreover, the ongoing difficulty in maintaining stability in recaptured territories, a problem also encountered during French operations, continued under Wagner Group's leadership, highlighting the ongoing struggle to secure enduring peace. Indeed, the uncertain future of both the Malian junta, amid strained international relationships, and security services post-French-withdrawal, may render Mali a "safe haven" for terrorist activities.[51]

CONCLUSION

The present work attempted to compare the characteristics and relative efficacy of the French and WG Group's models of COIN in the case of Mali. Its analysis found that both France and WG Group's counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies in Mali showcase distinct advantages and limitations. France's approach, although tactically successful in the short term, failed to adequately address and may have fueled civilian-government political grievances, provoking social instability that hindered its initial successes and persists to date. Inheriting these circumstances, WG Group employed a model similarly focused on swift military action, although being distinguished by hybrid tactics such as disinformation, and unabashed

large-scale acts of violence. In this way, both actors have, at times, overlooked COIN's political intricacies, leading to temporary military gains but further distancing the goal of sustainable peace. Importantly, WG's reckless behavior may compromise its legitimacy among the local population in a manner similar to France's. Finally, reason exists to question whether WG has a vested interest in protracted instability in the Sahel. Indeed, whereas France saw a strategic threat to its national security in regional violence (due to its proximity to a major source of uranium as well as the prospect of an emerging jihadist haven), WG Group may seek to benefit from the continuation of Mali's conflict insofar as it extends its payments and access to lucrative natural resources. It remains to be seen whether this aspect may undermine Mali's security and political agency in the long-run.

49   Oxford Analytica, "Kidal Will Be Test."

50   Kunkel, Sky, and Matthew Kyle Ellis. "Violence as a Condition: The Threat Posed by Quasi-PMCs." 2023.

51   Besenyő, János, and Andrea Hanna Sólyomfi. "Mali: Safe Haven to Terrorists?." In *Terrorism and Political Contention: New Perspectives on North Africa and the Sahel Region*, 153-167. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024.

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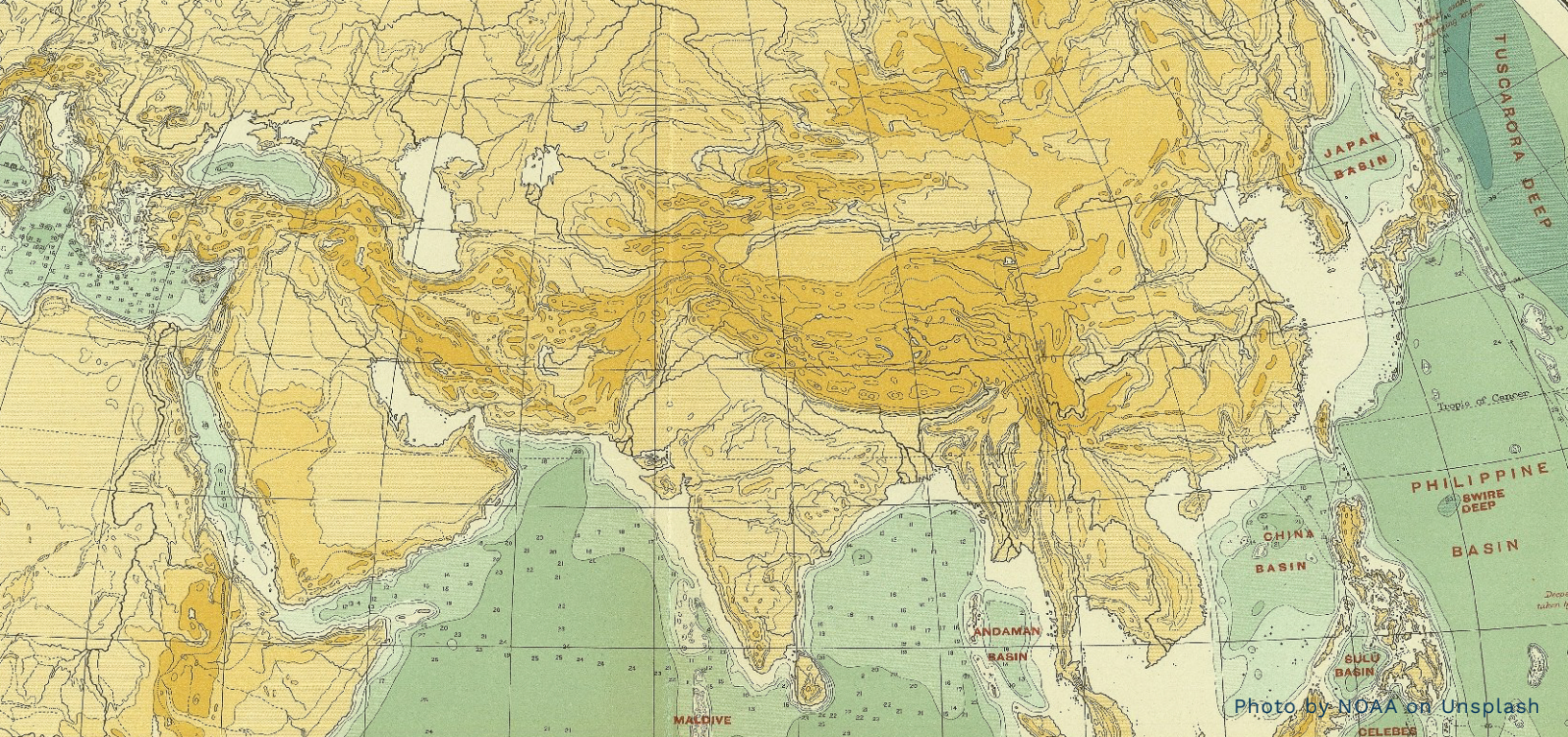
THE TRIANGULAR NUCLEAR STANDOFF IN SOUTH ASIA

BY SHAYIQ SHAH

ABSTRACT

The Nuclear Standoff in South Asia places India, Pakistan, and China at nuclear crossroads in South Asia and has emerged as one of the greatest contemporary global security threats. These states share a competitive nuclear environment with potential of further vertical proliferation in each state to balance the arsenal of the others. Furthermore, being involved in low level conflict in close geographical proximities to each other has raised the threat of inadvertent nuclear escalation in the region. Such distinct attributes of this triangular nuclear arrangement cause it to conceptually deviate from the US-USSR rivalry during the Cold War. Therefore, our conventional understanding of de-escalation measures stemming from the lessons of the Cold War are ineffective in achieving effective nuclear risk reduction in South Asia. Rather, the nuclear standoff in South Asia warrants individual emphasis.

The Cold War era between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics has been the focal point for studying nuclear relations between states. Most, if not all, of the historical scholarship around nuclear power theories has been derived by analyzing the factors that drove the US-USSR nuclear rivalry, the conditions that perpetuated it, and the mechanisms used to mitigate it. However, this paper finds that such treatment of the Cold War as the sole source of our theoretical understanding of nuclear power relations and nuclear risk reduction is a risky proposition. Contemporary nuclear rivalries have emerged elsewhere in the world that deviate conceptually from the former US-USSR rivalry. Such

deviation means that the nuclear challenges faced by the international community in the 21st century are much different from the Cold War era. Consequently, this paper argues that the effectiveness of Cold War nuclear risk reduction strategies in mitigating contemporary nuclear challenges is minimal. Therefore, we must revisit our understanding of nuclear relations by deploying a revisionist approach and emphasizing diversification of our nuclear case studies.

Among these contemporary nuclear case studies, the Triangular Nuclear Standoff in South Asia between India, Pakistan, and China warrants the most revisioning. Some scholars have come to refer to this

contemporary nuclear rivalry as the "Nuclear Trilemma" in South Asia.[1] Although some historical scholarship has argued that a comparative analysis can exist between South Asia's Nuclear situation and the 20th century Cold War, this paper aims to critique that stance. The South Asian Nuclear Trilemma may share similar patterns of a breakdown of communications, a shared nuclear rush and paranoia, and the intended development of brutal retaliatory mechanisms such as in the Cold War. However, it poses a novel challenge to world peace and nuclear non-proliferation. There are three fundamental differences between the Cold War and the contemporary South Asian nuclear standoff. These differences lie in the power polarity, nuclear doctrines, and chances of escalation.

THE QUESTION OF POLARITY: COLD WAR DILEMMA AND SOUTH ASIAN TRILEMMA

The Cold War world was a bipolar world with the US and USSR concentrating power in this bipolarity. Although there were other nuclear powers, none had the capability or the perceived threat to match the US or the Soviet Union. The dual nature of this polarity played a significant role in two aspects of the Cold War. First, in the act of balancing, and second, in the potential of risk reduction through arms limitation talks. Duality made balancing grossly competitive and yet predictable. The US and USSR attempted to balance each other in matters of nuclear and conventional weaponry in a way that perpetuated the arms race but never gave either side a clear advantage or a self-perceived disadvantage. Moreover, the duality of the rivalry also facilitated easier transitions into bilateral talks as the interests of only two parties, both of which wanted de-escalation, needed to be preserved. Conversely, in contemporary South Asia, triangular nuclear possession in Pakistan, India, and China has made the region into a multipolar power sharing arrangement. All three nuclear states share borders with each other and are threatened by their adversaries' nuclear and conventional weaponry presence in immediate geographical proximity to their own. Such an arrangement makes the act of balancing tricky as the powers of one state can raise the insecurities of the other. It is difficult for Pakistan to evaluate whether

India's continued amassing and development of conventional weaponry is India's balancing act against China or an attempt to reaffirm its resounding conventional superiority over Pakistan.

India regards China as its greatest long-term threat.[2] It views itself as a balancing agent in South Asia against Chinese ascendancy to power. The development of the Indian nuclear weapon itself was a similar balancing policy against the Chinese bomb. In a 1964 confidential report by K. R Narayanan, the Director of the China division of the Ministry of External Affairs in India after the Chinese nuclear test, the fear of the Chinese bomb was evident. The Chinese nuclear test served as a warning for the impending disbalance of power in South Asia.[3] The Director recognized that the political costs of not allying with China had now risen significantly for India and any other friendly nation sympathetic to the Indian cause of balancing against the Chinese. Therefore, he concluded his argument with a call to action: India must build its own nuclear device to balance against China's nuclear status.

> "Can India's deterrent force maintain a "credible" stand against China, while at the same time remain "minimum" against Pakistan?"

India also perceives there to be a technological and military inferiority with regards to India's weaponry when compared to China's conventional armed forces, especially with China's highly developed navy operating in the South China Sea. It is in India's interest to mitigate this condition and pursue parity with China in their conventional weaponry. India

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1   Tanvi Kulkarni, "Managing the China, India, and Pakistan Nuclear Trilemma," *Asia Pacific Leadership Network Special Report 2022*, July 2022.

2   Robert Einhorn and WPS Sidhu, "The Strategic Chain: Linking Pakistan, India, China, and the United States," *Brookings Institution*, March 2017, https://www.brookings.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2017/03/acnpi_201703_strategic_chain.pdf.

3   K.R. Narayanan, "India and the Chinese Bomb," *Wilson Center Digital Archive*, https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/kr-narayanan-india-and-chinese-bomb.

has invested heavily in both missile systems with accurate payload technologies that can reach targets in China and the development of nuclear deterrent options on the seas. Such measures are in accordance with India's declared policy of "credible minimum deterrence".[4] The policy warrants India to maintain a credible, potent, and yet limited deterrent force against its adversaries. However, can India's deterrent force maintain a "credible" stand against China, while at the same time remain "minimum" against Pakistan?

Pakistani governments have treated this threshold of the "minimum" Indian deterrent as a cover for the desire for South Asian hegemony. Pakistan claims that India pursues great power status and that in such pursuit, India is excessively spending to advance its conventional and strategic forces way beyond its regional security needs. Pakistan, thus, continues to be insecure of the might of the Indian conventional forces. It perceives the growing economic and conventional asymmetry between itself and India as a national security threat.[5] To mitigate that, Pakistan has come to increasingly rely on its nuclear deterrent which it deems as a cost-efficient "factor of stability" and a "durable instrument of peace" that secures the Pakistan state.[6] Thus, it has accelerated its process of

> "The doctrine meant that both states developed comprehensive retaliatory strike capabilities which served as a deterrent against a first strike from the other state."

proliferation with no end in sight, making a nuclear outbreak in South Asia more likely. Such a triangular nature of insecurities and nuclear fears also creates an environment unsuitable for direct bilateral talks for nuclear risk reduction. Diplomatic progress between

any two states will be perceived as a threat by the other. India has long been troubled by the political partnership between China and Pakistan and fears the development of a military alliance between the two. Such a military alliance would result in India fighting a two-front war. A State Department Brief, from 1983, titled the "The Pakistani Nuclear Program" justifies India's concerns as the US concluded that China was actively assisting Pakistan's nuclear program.

Thus, the South Asian trilemma, just by nature of being a triangular standoff, involves different balancing and diplomacy concerns from the Cold War. Any state's action to balance against the other can be viewed as an act of aggression by the third state that perpetuates the standoff. Furthermore, such a standoff also cannot be mitigated by bilateral talks as even if the talks produce diplomatic gain between two states, the overall situation in South Asia will worsen with the third state being increasingly insecure of its state security.

THE QUESTION OF NUCLEAR DOCTRINES: COLD WAR CONSISTENCY & SOUTH ASIAN INCOMPATIBILITY

The US and USSR were fierce nuclear rivals; however, their rivalry shared a common nuclear doctrine–Mutual Assured Destruction. The doctrine meant that both states developed comprehensive retaliatory strike capabilities which served as a deterrent against a first strike from the other state. The sharing of this common doctrine not only gave common ground for the US and USSR to facilitate their Strategic Arms Limitation Talks or SALT and other agreements of denuclearization in certain offensive abilities, but it also made the existence of the two nuclear states compatible. The US and USSR could exist in a bi-polar nuclear world with the understanding that any nuclear attack by one on the other will result in total mutual destruction.

While some would argue that total destruction is still assured in the retaliatory capabilities of the South Asian nuclear nations, one can observe South Asia to currently possess three divergent nuclear strategies.[7]

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4   Kulkarni, "Managing," 4.

5   Einhorn and WPS Sidhu, "The Strategic Chain,", 7.

6   Ibid, 8.

7   Thomas W. Graham, "Nuclear Weapons Stability or Anarchy in the 21st Century: China, India, and Pakistan," in *The Next Arms Race* (2011): 261-304.

India has formally declared their Non-First Use policy wherein they maintain they shall only use nuclear weaponry upon bearing a chemical, biological, or nuclear attack. China has had a tacit Non-First Use policy for over five decades. It has maintained a nuclear strategy that has been centered around a relatively small operationally deployed force and no first use. Conversely, Pakistan falls under what scholarship terms as a nuclear "maximalist state". A maximalist state, "embraces the broadest possible function for nuclear weapons".[8] Such emphasis by Pakistan on its nuclear capability puts the nuclear option at the forefront of its conflict with India with the idea of "full spectrum deterrence." Pakistan seems to treat its nuclear capability as its single essential military capability that protects the Pakistani state from the conventional superiority of the armed forces of India. Therefore, Pakistan has placed all its strategic eggs in its nuclear basket which only leads to further vertical nuclear proliferation in Pakistan and as a result, in all South Asia. Such vertical proliferation will force India and China to also look to advance their quantitative and qualitative nuclear strength.

Kulkarni furthers this notion of divergent nuclear strategies and claims that not only are they divergent but also incompatible.[9] An interview with Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, conducted less than a week after the first Indian test in 1998, revealed an early insight into the Pakistani nuclear policy. Sharif goes on to state in the interview that he now claimed a legitimate security concern as India has thrown the two states into an "arms war."[10]

 Sharif also quoted that any further nuclear escalation that Pakistan will have to deploy will be to safeguard its security interests in a South Asian environment that has been purposefully disbalanced by India. Thus, Sharif and the Pakistani nuclear policy since has painted an image of Pakistan's nuclear hand being forced by India. With its willingness to place strategic nuclear weapons as its first line of deterrence against any conventional force, Pakistan holds onto

its First Use Option.

Not only is the formation of the different doctrines but their present-day control by differing state agencies in these three states is also incompatible. The

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> "The incompatibility of the nuclear doctrines adopted by the three states of the trilemma further differentiates the South Asia nuclear standoff from the Cold War."

Pakistani military assumes major control over the country's nuclear stockpile, whereas the Chinese Communist Party does so in China, and India extends some level of civilian control over its arsenal. Another theoretical correlation has been found in the possession of nuclear weapons and survival of authoritarian regimes.[11] With the presence of de-facto authoritarian regimes in two of the three states, Pakistan, and China, along with India's plummeting in the global freedom index, nuclear weapons are likely to play an even increased role in the South Asian future. Therefore, the incompatibility of the nuclear doctrines adopted by the three states of the trilemma further differentiates the South Asia nuclear standoff from the Cold War. Nuclear risk reduction strategies of reduction of arms talks cannot carry the same effectiveness in an arrangement of opposing nuclear doctrines as it did in the Cold War.

THE QUESTION OF ESCALATION: COLD WAR'S SEPARATION AND SOUTH ASIA'S PROXIMITIES

Strategically, the US and USSR were physically separated and geographically distant throughout the Cold War. They shared the same nuclear theater in Europe because of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, however, these were still extended borders. The territorial sovereignty of either the US or USSR was

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8   Ibid, 269.

9   Kulkarni, "Managing," 9.

10   AP Archive, "Pakistan - Sharif speaks on nuclear testing," *YouTube*, July 21, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQcrrVa39QU.

11   Graham, "Nuclear Weapons Stability," 271.

seldom jeopardized. Such moments of jeopardization of territorial sovereignty led to crises such as the Cuban Missile Crisis. Invasion and low-scale localized combat was never a strategic reality between the two states. Even though they might have engaged in proxy wars, their militaries did not engage each other in a localized conflict that included low stakes.

In 1965, Herman Kahn extended his earlier 16 step nuclear escalation ladder to a 44 step escalation ladder. This included the various steps involved in escalation of a conflict to a global nuclear exchange. At the same time, it also highlighted the various stages as opportunities for de escalation before a world ending nuclear exchange. His theories formed a major part of the United States' nuclear doctrine and could successfully provide scholars a framework to understand and mitigate potential avenues for escalation between the US and USSR. Whereas on the other hand, Pakistan, India, and China all share borders and have engaged in wars and other local low-scale border skirmishes over the years. Low scale conflict is still a viable option for these states to extend their political will, which, given Pakistan's development of tactical nuclear weapons and lack of No-First Use heightens the likelihood of escalation to nuclear conflict by lowering the nuclear threshold. In such close geographical proximity, Kahn's escalation ladder does not hold any significance as escalation can happen abruptly and quickly.

Kapur has argued that the stability-instability nuclear paradox does not conventionally apply to South Asia and the paradox itself is reversed.[12] With greater instability, the region becomes even more unstable rather than achieve nuclear power parity and stability. This can be seen in the greater propensity shown to the use of force in recent times, especially between India and Pakistan. The Balakot/Pulwama crisis, 2019, was the first incident where a nuclear state conducted air raids in undisputed sovereign territory of another nuclear-powered state. Indian airstrikes in Balakot reveal how the presence of non-state actors further complicates South Asian borders. Between India and Pakistan, there have existed several non-state actors,

mostly in the border areas that have been sponsored by both states to form separatist or militant groups responsible for carrying out acts of terror in the other country. The Pakistan-backed group Lashkar-E-Taiba claimed responsibility for the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, the 2016 Uri attack, and the 2019 Pulwama attack. In response, New Delhi claims to have carried out a "surgical strike" targeting militant camps in Pakistani territory in 2016 and conducted air raid in Balakot in 2019. China and India have had their share of border skirmishes over disputed territories. Proximity increases friction but also competition. India's membership in military exercises such as the Quadrilateral Agreement (QUAD) with the United States, Japan, and Australia threaten China due to its interests in the South China Sea. Pakistan's cooperation with China on the Belt Road Initiative similarly threatens India. Therefore, the instability-stability paradox does not seem to be reflected in the South Asian Nuclear standoff.

Therefore, we observe that on the questions of polarity, nuclear doctrines, and possibility of local conflict escalation, the South Asian Nuclear standoff poses a novel threat to the international global order. Such novelty of this threat renders lessons from the Cold War futile for nuclear risk reduction strategies in South Asia. Individual emphasis on South Asia is warranted in our pursuit for nuclear risk reduction in the 21st Century. With conventional understandings of de-escalation measures proven to be ineffective, diplomatic efforts are required to formulate new practices and measures, ones that are aimed specifically at mitigating the risk of nuclear escalation in South Asia. The most populated region in the world continues to be at a greater risk of inadvertent or advertent nuclear exchange with the potential of spiraling into a global nuclear escalation.

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12   S. Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 127-152.

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Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs
Robert A. Jones '59 House
148 Hillcrest Rd
Middlebury, VT 05753