



MIDDLEBURY

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# FOREWORD

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As the Middlebury Journal of Global Affairs enters its ninth year, this multidisciplinary 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 Student Advisory Board, the Journal is Middlebury College's only student-run academic journal. It serves as an excellent opportunity for students of all academic disciplines to showcase their globally-minded or internationally focused work, particularly in this political moment. Selected from a competitive pool, this year's pieces cover diverse topics from the R2P doctrine to gold mining in Venezuela.

Our team and the authors worked hard, but that did not mean that this edition did not have its hiccups. For personal reasons and political risk, some authors decided it was unsafe for them to publish their papers relatively late in the process. As a Board we have supported them whole-heartedly, but as a result this edition published slightly fewer papers than we were hoping for. However, the quality of the pieces in this edition are truly remarkable, and I hope you give them a read.

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. First and foremost, I would like to thank the authors of the papers for their submissions. Without them, we would have no Journal to publish. Second, I would like to thank the Rohatyn Student Advisory Board for their unceasing dedication for this Journal. They spent many hours editing with authors to help them make their pieces as excellent as they could be, formatting the pages, and sitting through many meetings with me. I would also like to extend a thank you to the entire Printing Services team at Middlebury College for their guidance. Lastly, I would like to thank the staff and faculty at the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs, including Associate Director Charlotte Tate, Interim Director Nadia Horning, and Operations Manager Margaret DeFoor for their encouragement, support, wisdom, and willingness to be flexible.

Given the tumultuous times that we find ourselves in, it is important to continue publishing meaningful work. Recent events in national and global politics have had a chilling effect, even affecting this Journal's process. As in the eight years before this Journal, however, we will continue to publish. We need to hear what these authors have to say about our global community now perhaps more than any time in recent memory.

Sincerely,

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

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# CONTOURS OF CONTROL

## AMERICAN ECONOMIC NATION-BUILDING AND COLD WAR INTEGRATION STRATEGIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

BY ROB AMBAT

### ABSTRACT

This paper explores how the United States positioned economic integration as a central Cold War strategy for both nation-building and containment in the postcolonial Asia-Pacific. By examining free-market policies promoted in Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, it argues that U.S. integrationist efforts were not merely motivated by developmental or humanitarian causes, but served to suppress communist tendencies, which was feared under the logic of the domino theory, and foster compliance to liberal market principles. Such strategy involved crafting a Pacific regional order of interdependent nation-states with distinct roles: Japan as industrial core, Southeast Asia as supplier of raw materials and consumer market. This vision would also be indirectly operationalized by the Asian Development Bank, which was established to implement infrastructure and economic governance projects across the region. Overall, this paper argues that U.S.-led integration was not a neutral process but an ideological project—one that mandated free-market norms in the guise of “mutual benefit” rhetoric to entrench fundamentally asymmetrical dependencies and suppress adversary ideologies in the region.

The heightened Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union in the 1950s prompted multiple dialogues among policymakers to chart the trajectory of American foreign policy towards its allies across the Pacific. At the time, American institutional sentiment was shifting towards a recognition of the need for interdependence as its guiding pillar. As State Department official Francis Wilcox proclaimed to an audience of

educators in 1957, there was a burgeoning need to cultivate “closer economic, political, and cultural ties with the people of Asia and Africa” (Wilcox 1957, quoted in Klein 2003, 21). However, this notion of greater interdependence amongst nations was not shared by many countries, particularly the United States’ Asian allies that were hosting a substantial number of U.S. troops and government officials (Klein 2003, 19). Pacific allies such as Japan and China remained wary of American

American military presence, believing they could be utilized as leverage for establishing free-market policies within their shores. The United States was then faced with the challenge of subduing this apprehension through other means.

In response, the United States pursued the creation of an international community of nations as a deliberate philosophy centered around the diffusion of shared political and economic principles. Through policies promoting trade liberalization and economic development across East and Southeast Asia, American-imposed social institutions became instrumental in instilling common goals of prosperity that bound nations into a coherent regional network. As such, the United States' nation-building efforts in the Asia-Pacific—framed as a benevolent imperative to promote and protect stable democracies—relied on the construction of complementary economic structures. Such structures not only supported development but also laid the groundwork for a self-perpetuating containment mechanism against communist expansion (Klein 2003, 46). This paper aims to explore the nuances of these economic structures instituted by the United States through the overarching ideological framework of integration, particularly in relation to the U.S.'s twin aspirations of becoming a decolonial and anti-communist superpower (41-49). It aims to dissect the American paradigm for economic nation-building, particularly (1) the ideology of constructing a regionally integrated community implemented through the use of violence, and (2) the uneven power dynamics inherent to the construction of a United States-led economic order. Through a comprehensive analysis of scholarly theory and case studies of American policies and interventions in Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, this paper delineates the impact of American hegemony on the socioeconomic development and geopolitical dynamics of the Asia-Pacific region.

**Forced Open: The Illusive Concept of**

## Integration

Throughout the 19th century, the United States made several early attempts to assert its presence within commercially significant Pacific nations, exemplified by Commodore Perry's arrival in Tokyo Bay in 1853 and, later, Secretary Hay's 1899 Open Door Notes, which specifically called for equal trading rights and coordination among European powers operating in China (Lee 2016, 110). Although these actions signaled a growing American interest in the Pacific, it was only the 20th-century geopolitical developments of Japanese reconstruction post WWII and the ideological "loss" of China to communism that cemented the United States as a regional economic superpower (Schaller 1982, 393-394). Against the backdrop of escalating Cold War tensions with the Soviet Union and Communist China's triumph over Chiang Kai Shek's American-backed government, the United States also felt increasingly compelled to adopt more aggressive stances in safeguarding its own political and economic freedom as a capitalist empire, particularly in securing unimpeded access to global markets (Klein 2003, 25).

Christina Klein, a scholar at Boston College and author of *Cold War Orientalism*, formulates the United States' postwar foreign policy as a function of two complementary ideologies: containment and integration. While containment was focused on forceful political and military counteraction to the global spread of communism, integration was rooted in the fundamentally American understanding that political democracy was inherently inseparable from economic freedom. Furthermore, integration posits that to sustain a healthy national economy, a country must "continually expand and integrate new markets and sources of raw materials" (24). This expansionary ideology was instrumental in garnering support for consolidating an international free-market economy that

extended beyond continental America toward the greater Pacific. By extending the scope of free-trade capitalism to the Asia-Pacific region, the United States strived to attain a global economic condition wherein “each nation would have unrestricted access to the markets and raw materials of all the others, while capital, goods, and people would move freely across national borders” (25). This goal largely defined the approach spearheaded by President Dwight Eisenhower in establishing a system for international cooperation, who similarly believed that the stability of a “free world” depended on the “economic, political, and military integration” of nations into an interdependent regional community (41-44). Integration was to be achieved through an array of economic policies, such as extending the 1934 Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act and implementing the provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), both of which would significantly reduce tariffs and other trade barriers (Kaufman 2019). These

policies were centered around the overarching goal of “reducing obstacles of trade, increasing overseas capital investment, and stimulating foreign economic growth with infusions of aid” (46).

A cornerstone of Eisenhower’s integration framework was the realignment of the United States as anti-communist and supportive of decolonization efforts. Despite Eisenhower outright proclaiming that his administration’s primary motive for deepening trade with the East was the maintenance of access to crucial sources of raw materials, his language surrounding integration purposefully included yearnings for liberation and intertwined economic interdependence with the goal of establishing a global community (Klein 2003, 46). This moral positioning enabled the United States to outright condemn uninterested Third World nations as being self-centered or exhibiting communist tendencies —as evident in their skepticism towards the 1955 Bandung



Conference calling for non-alignment —while elevating the United States as a benevolent entity whose main interest was the collective progress of all developing nations (48).

However, Eisenhower and succeeding administrations' approaches to integration would not be fully international and were instead purposefully selective, as their underlying agenda was to impede the growth of communist regimes, especially Chinese Communism under Mao, by withholding economic activity (Mao 2024, 13). The economic policy of the opposing Soviet party and the broader communist sphere was presented abstractly as rigorously restricted with “iron and bamboo curtains,” which was in stark contrast to the U.S. philosophy of unimpeded multidirectional flows of goods and ideas (Klein 2003, 47-48). Such dichotomous rhetoric then justified an international economic order that American historian Bruce Cumings called “second-best internationalism,” whereby economic prosperity from the “free world” was intentionally restricted to nations that subscribed to free market capitalism (25, 32). Similarly, under the logic of integration, dissolving protectionist policies would also discourage any domestic infant industries in developing countries from maturing before facing competition from foreign entities. By ensuring that countries did not become self-sustaining, the U.S. would be able to cultivate strong supply chain dependencies for industries across the Asia-Pacific and within its own borders, which would only deepen as their national infrastructures conformed to this regionally interdependent system. In theory, the spread of communism would then be contained under this self-regulating mechanism.

At its onset, however, the integration ideology lacked the necessary network effects to perpetuate and proliferate free trade, given that many nations had recently emerged from colonial rule and were un receptive towards

external intervention as they developed national institutions. As such, implementing this doctrine required substantial external force. By framing integration ideology as a collective responsibility among nations, Klein (2003, 25, 41) asserts that the ideal of interdependence created an internal logic that necessitated the unconditional participation of all countries to uphold their collective security. The security offered by participation was meant to appeal particularly to decolonizing countries that were both replete in natural resources and keen on fostering a prosperous postcolonial society. As a result, the United States judged countries’ stances on global integration through a stark binary during the Cold War. Any form of non-participation in the ongoing integration led to a state being designated as a threat to global stability.

The case study of U.S. intervention in Vietnam helps exemplify the aggressive political and military action that the framework of integration enabled American leaders to take against countries unwilling to open themselves up to the global free market (Klein 2003, 25-26). This two-pronged effort of “forcing open” national economies using military intervention consummated the United States’ policy in nation-building across Southeast Asia during the Cold War (Mao 2024, 8). The initial support that the U.S. lent to France’s efforts to quell Ho Chi Minh’s communist-nationalist revolution in Vietnam was fueled by the desire to retain Indochina under capitalist control. U.S. policymakers believed that its economic openness was indispensable in supplying the raw materials for sustaining the post-war industrialization in Japan, a key industrial node in the vision of an integrated system, and hampering regional trade flows that benefited Mao Zedong’s communist regime in China, as supply could be controlled and redirected. Thus, Vietnam became a key site of “global confrontation between democratic capitalism and international communism”

(Lawrence 2008, 28) and emerged as a vital component of a broader U.S. agenda for establishing influence as a Pacific power. Since then, succeeding U.S. administrations, such as Eisenhower's and Kennedy's, focused on further integrating key regional actors such as South Vietnam by expanding foreign aid programs and nation-building efforts in those areas, while also attempting to undermine governments that proved uncooperative to the "free world" system, such as Sukarno's Indonesia (Klein 2003, 44). What unfolded in Vietnam was thus a blueprint for broader U.S. ambitions in the Pacific.

### Shifting Incentives and Preferential Treatment

Japan was a matter of great importance to the United States' post-World War II agenda in Asia due to its centrality in economically and geographically containing communism in the Pacific front. The United States sought to elevate Japan's trade relationships into

most-favored-nation status—denoting the best terms of trade offered—with its neighboring countries while ensuring that its economic development remained closely aligned with American values of free market capitalism (Schaller 1982, 399). The project of Japan's rapid postwar development was sparked by American nation-building efforts that concentrated on expanding industrial capacities to transform Japan into a "catalyst for Asian development" and would "function as an American satellite" (Schaller 1982, 395; Treaty drafts by John Davies and the Policy Planning staff, boxes 19 and 32, as found in Schaller 1982, 396). Due to its existing trade agreements with nearby Asian countries, the United States saw the potential of acting as an intermediary that organized an integrated trade system, wherein raw materials are funneled from Southeast Asia into Japan for industrial processing. Despite its acknowledgment of possible "aspirations of SEA countries for some diversification of their economies," the United States's policy,



as detailed in the Policy Planning Staff Paper on United States Policy Toward Southeast Asia (PPS 51) in 1949, envisioned the “dependence between SEA as a supplier of raw materials, and Japan, Western Europe and India as suppliers of finished goods” (Schaller 1982, 403).

In essence, American machinations cultivated Japan into an integral node of the “Great Crescent” of Asian economic defense against communism. The State Department and Economic Cooperation Administration designated the country as the region’s major exporter of manufactured goods, bestowing more or less equal preferential status as Western Europe in terms of global trade. In 1950, under President Harry Truman’s guidance, the United States orchestrated the requisite aid programs and technical assistance to actualize this role (409-410). As a result, Japan’s eventual position in the global supply chain allowed it to reap the rewards of large-scale shifts in market demand, such as that for artillery and weapons during the Korean War from 1950 to 1953. As American military forces rushed into South Korea, an equally significant amount of investments rushed into Japan to manufacture military armaments for its troops (414). By essentially acting as the primary node in the Pacific for industrial processing, Japan became perfectly positioned to experience an economic boom that propelled its assertion of global economic and cultural influence, extending well into the 70s and 80s. The success of the United States’ grand calculus for postwar restructuring in Japan then lent some legitimacy to their intentions, with Japan serving as a prime example of the potential for prosperity that nations, particularly those in Southeast Asia, could achieve under an integrated economic order.

However, the example of the Philippine independence movement demonstrates that not all countries in this network of regional integration stood on equal footing within this grand

economic paradigm. While the principles of free trade and open access to resources were upheld in the cases of Japan and Vietnam, free trade between the Philippines and the United States was rapidly confronted with the threat of obstruction in the 1930s. Since 1909, as members of an unincorporated territory of the United States, Filipinos had enjoyed tariff-free trade and unhampered mobility with the United States. However, amidst the Great Depression of the 1930s, beet farmers and other agricultural stakeholders became increasingly agitated by the competition they faced from Philippine-grown produce such as cotton, sugar, and hemp—all of which freely flowed into the continental U.S. (Immerwahr 2022, 225). Their frustration sparked campaigns in the United States advocating for Philippine Independence. The economic inconveniences of the Philippines’ status as a territory propelled the passage of the 1934 Tydings-McDuffie Act, which granted a 10-year transitional period before full independence in 1944. However, the eventual sovereignty of the Philippines confronted local sugar farmers with the worry of losing their largest export market, the U.S., which made up 80% of Philippine export revenue. Concerns were not confined to the agricultural sector, as the Senate was also preoccupied with being practically defenseless against threats of foreign invasion once American military protection was withdrawn (227).

As American historian Daniel Immerwahr points out, dominant opinions surrounding Philippine independence in the United States did not have a consistent trajectory, owing primarily to the shifting economic incentives that manifested themselves throughout the 1930s and 1940s. The advent of World War II turned the Philippines’ stock of minerals into a valued resource for the United States military, prompting American officials to advocate against Philippine independence (Black 2018, quoted in Immerwahr 2022, 231). Following the archipelago’s

hard-won liberation from the Japanese, the reconvened Philippine Commonwealth voted to grant full independence in 1946 to comply with the already overdue timeline set by the Tydings-McDuffie Act. However, substantial hesitations remained throughout the process of finalizing Philippine independence due to the strategic advantages of keeping the Philippines amidst post-war sugar shortages and the prospect of maintaining a prominent presence in the Pacific (Cullather 1994, quoted in Immerwahr 2022, 235–236). Following the 1946 independence, the United States passed the Bell Trade Act, which entitled the United States to rights over Philippine natural resources and facilitated the gradual increase of tariffs on Philippine exports to the United States over the next 20 years. Post-war reconstruction aid of about 620 million dollars promised to the Philippines was made conditional on the acceptance of the Bell Trade Act's terms, forcing the war-torn and newly independent Philippine government to acquiesce to the US's conditions (Jimenez 2020, 1-3).

Later, under the same “Great Crescent” scheme, not only was Southeast Asia designated as the “principal source of raw materials” for Japan, but the Philippines—alongside Indonesia, South Korea, and India—was envisioned as a principal trading area that would sustain Japan’s industrial growth (Schaller 1982, 408-410). Hence, as an export-dependent country that sent raw materials to the United States and, later, to Japan, the Philippines did not enjoy the same economic benefits within a regional free-trade economy under U.S. policy. Instead, it functioned largely as a vassal state, supplying the raw materials necessary for the economic prosperity of designated industrial nodes such as Japan.

## Regional Development and Lasting Integration

Eventually, a model for the product of United States integration was fully realized with Japan’s transition from being a stewarded industrial economy towards a robustly developed proxy for democratic capitalism in the Pacific. Aspirations to replicate this in neighboring countries were solidified with the foundation of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1965. The bank was built primarily with the purpose of “[contributing] to the acceleration of the process of economic development of the developing member countries in the region of Asia and the Far East” (Asian Development Bank 1965, Article 1). The bank’s objective was grounded in a fundamentally capitalist conceptualization of Asian modernization, inherently rooted in the model for economic development proposed by Walt Whitman Rostow, U.S. National Security Adviser to President Lyndon B. Johnson. This model placed nations into a linear progression of five phases of growth: traditional society, preconditions for take-off, take-off, drive to maturity, and age of high mass consumption (Rostow 1960, quoted in Mao 2024, 13). Sixty percent of the capital commitments for ADB were from Asia-Pacific countries deemed to be at the model’s mature stages: Japan, Australia, and New Zealand (Black 1965, 4). This meant that, despite purporting to have primarily Asian leadership (6), the bank’s endeavors were likely to be steered by experts advancing American aspirations for democratic capitalism, which were not necessarily in the best interest of Asian nations. As such, the foundation of the ADB can be interpreted as a less politically conspicuous avenue for continued U.S. engagement in Asia-Pacific countries where it still held strategic interests but remained in lower phases of development, including but not limited to the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, South Vietnam, and South Korea (Mao 2024, 28). Similar to U.S. endeavors in post-war Japan, ADB’s

role was and continues to be instrumental in shaping the social and economic futures of decolonizing Asian countries in accordance with American economic principles.

Overall, the distinct differences in American policy towards development in the Philippines and Japan, as well as the later establishment of the Asian Development Bank, attest to the overwhelming influence of the United States in dictating broader economic roles within the region, and, consequently, the fate of each nation that embraces or rejects the ideology of economic integration. As such, the Pacific regional community cultivated by U.S. foreign policy is not an egalitarian network of mutually beneficial relationships between countries, but rather a carefully orchestrated network of economies subservient to American interests.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of American foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region during the Cold War era reveals a concerted effort by the United States to assert lasting influence in the region by shaping the economic infrastructure of countries into an interdependent global community. Through initiatives such as containment and integration, the U.S. sought to counter the spread of communism through a regional economic order restricted to nations economically aligned with American values of free market capitalism. This approach, characterized by violent military strategies that “forced countries open,” aimed to shape the social and economic landscapes of nations across the Pacific, often at the expense of their sovereignty and autonomy.

Moreover, the legacy of American nation-building efforts in the Asia-Pacific region was thoroughly marked by uneven power dynamics and nonreciprocal relationships. While some countries, like Japan, thrived under American support and became models of democratic capitalism, others, such as the Philippines, found themselves ensnared in economic

dependence and strategic manipulation. This historical record raises pressing questions: How should foreign aid and development endeavors such as the ADB be regarded, given underlying hegemonic self-interest of its proponents? How do we reconcile the narratives of cooperation with the coercive realities that underpinned U.S. economic strategy? As contemporary aspirations for further globalization and multilateral institutions such as the World Bank continue to gain influence, it is worth examining the historical foundations on which ideals of “shared prosperity” have proliferated globally. The United States’ institutional engineering in the Pacific has left lasting implications for the socioeconomic development and geopolitical landscape of its nations today. Overall, these enduring structures compel us to question whether the pursuit of integration, at both the regional and global level, has been and can truly be equitable, or whether it simply reproduces and conceals the hierarchies it claims to overcome.

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# UKRAINE

## AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

BY JEFFREY C. LEWIS

### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to analyze two political scientists, Michael Mandelbaum and John Mearsheimer, who write on the relationship between Russia, NATO, and Ukraine at two different points in recent history. Mandelbaum writes a few years after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1995, and Mearsheimer writes after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. Both pieces represent a distinctly realist ontology in international relations. Linking realist and liberal ontologies with conflicting political visions in the United States, I ultimately reject Mearsheimer's 2014 prescriptions on how the US and NATO should conduct itself with Ukraine and Russia, which I argue align closely with the foreign policy perspectives of the Trump administration. While rejecting some of Mandelbaum's realist writing, I adopt some of his 1995 prescriptions to recommend a US foreign policy that embraces liberal ontology, with Ukraine joining NATO in order to create a just, lasting peace. This essay was written before Trump took office on January 20th, 2025.

As the advent of former president Donald Trump's second and final term in office approaches, the future of the conflict in Ukraine is far from certain. Even as Ukraine has finally been allowed to use long-range missiles within Russian territory, the entrenched country must face serious questions about the direction of the war and its ability to face an encroaching Russian army without the aid of the United States; once Trump retakes the Oval Office, it seems increasingly likely that he will lean on Ukraine to concede its stolen land in favor of peace. United States foreign policy

under Donald Trump most closely follows the guidance of Political Scientist John J. Mearsheimer, a contemporary realist who argues that in order to prevent conflict with Russia, Ukraine must remain a neutral buffer state between Russia and the West. This necessity, Mearsheimer notes in 2014, must result from a certain ideological course correction where drop its idealistic liberal notions which have pushed Russia, following realist doctrines, to the brink of war in Ukraine.

In 2022, Mearsheimer's description of the situation may have been proven right: Russia's

invasion of Ukraine under Vladimir Putin was preceded by strengthening relations between Ukraine and the West, with at least some possibility that Ukraine could one day join NATO. The purpose of this paper is not to comment on the validity of Mearsheimer's descriptive claims that the West's liberal foreign policy pushed Russia and Ukraine into conflict, but rather to analyze whether his prescriptions are still valid in 2024. Mearsheimer's 2014 prescriptions are now dead wrong; Putin's actions within Ukraine necessitate that Ukraine cannot be a neutral buffer state between Russia and the West. So long as Ukrainians have statehood, Putin's war will have forged them into a fiercely independent, anti-Russian nation that has been driven even further into the arms of the West. If Putin accepts this fact, realist doctrines following Mearsheimer's own logic will dictate that Putin destroys Ukraine's sovereignty entirely. Therefore, the United States must continue to support Ukraine and eventually incorporate it into NATO because if Ukraine falls, Russia will be emboldened, and armed conflict will surely follow between Russia and the West. The peace promised by the foreign policy of the Trump administration under realist doctrine will fail to deliver and will instead lay the groundwork for more destruction in Ukraine; therefore, the Trump administration's foreign policy must incorporate elements of liberalism in order to create a lasting, just peace between Russia and Ukraine.

Western support for NATO, the North Atlantic Trade Alliance, is defined by a liberal ontology in international relations. The two main foreign-policy perspectives in the United States regarding the Russo-Ukraine conflict reflect the theoretical divides between international relations theories of liberalism and realism. Liberalism, championed by the outgoing Biden presidency, remains steadfastly supportive of NATO, the collective defense alliance that has spread ever-eastward since its conception after World War II. Created in

1949 in Washington DC, NATO was designed to uphold international peace in a world of bipolarity between the United States and the might of the Soviet Union, which later created the Warsaw pact in 1955 consisting of the Soviet Union, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. The Warsaw Pact eventually fell apart around the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, with Albania having withdrawn 23 years earlier in 1968 (NATO 2001). NATO, however, continued to grow, and after the



Photo by Dariia Strizay on Unsplash

fall of the Soviet Union the treaty expanded; this, according to Mearsheimer, combined with Georgia and Ukraine's desire to join NATO, has influenced Russia's foreign policy aggression. Even though Ukraine is still not in NATO, the Biden administration sees the defense of Ukraine as essential to the liberal order that NATO protects: democracy and self-determination.

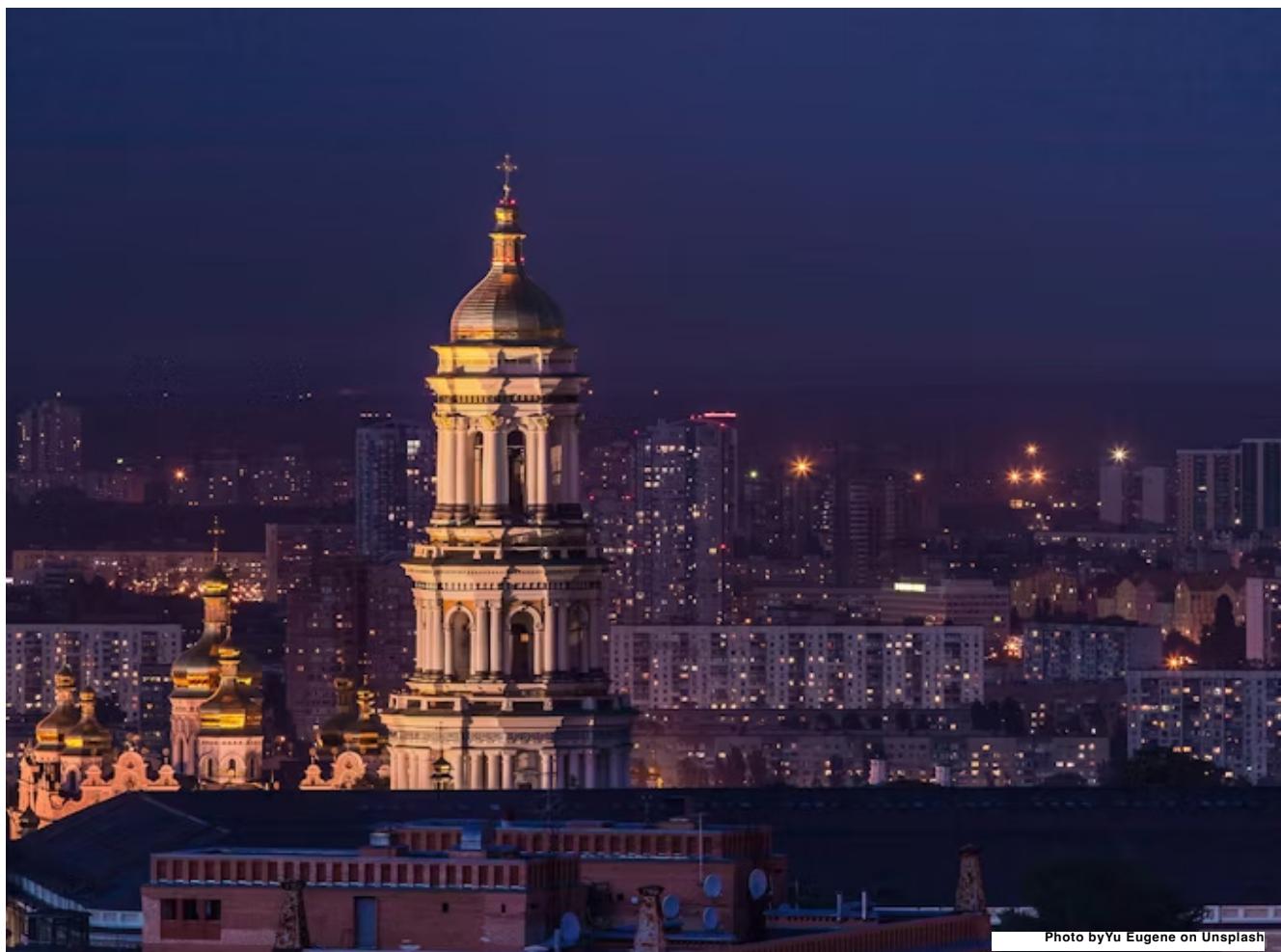
The Trump administration has promised the

opposite approach by adopting realist doctrines. Elected domestically on a platform of isolationism, President Trump will seek to end the war in Ukraine not by continuing the United States' unwavering support for Ukraine's defense, but by threatening to withdraw support to put pressure on Ukraine to sign a peace deal on Russia's terms, likely forcing the nation to concede all of its stolen land. This foreign policy reversal from the Biden administration most closely resembles a realist foreign policy because it tacitly concedes that Russia's realist foreign policy aggression is valid. It puts the onus on Ukraine to make peace while also signaling that it is not in the United States' foreign policy ambitions to protect Ukraine's sovereignty. By withdrawing aid from Ukraine or threatening to do so, the United States will question the viability of a liberal world order protected by shared values, democracy, and NATO.

In withdrawing the United States from aiding Ukraine, President Trump will be enacting

the realist foreign policy advocated by Mearsheimer, writing after Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. Mearsheimer argues that, "The goal should be a sovereign Ukraine that falls in neither the Russian nor the Western camp." He adds, "The United States and its allies should publicly rule out NATO's expansion into both Ukraine and Georgia" (Mearsheimer 2014, 10-11). By leaving Ukraine as a neutral buffer state between Russia and the West, Mearsheimer believes that the West can appease Russia's valid, realist foreign policy concerns and prevent future conflicts.

Michael Mandelbaum, another political scientist and analyst of international relations, in many ways agrees with Mearsheimer's understanding of Russia's tenuous relationship with NATO and the West; both believe that a NATO which includes Ukraine will anger Russia and break down international peace. Mandelbaum argues, "Ukraine[. . .] is central. So long as it remains independent it is a buffer between Russia and the rest of Europe.



More importantly, an independent Ukraine is the best guarantee that Russia will remain a peaceful nation" (Mandelbaum 1995, 10-11). Mandelbaum goes on to argue that "NATO expansion will be good or bad depending on its effect on the peaceful coexistence of Ukraine" (Mandelbaum 1995, 11). Both Mandelbaum and Mearsheimer agree that in their respective time periods, conflict could be prevented by keeping Ukraine as a neutral buffer state — controlled by neither the West nor by Russia. Mearsheimer in particular points to the Orange revolution of 2004— as a moment where NATO seemed open to allowing Ukraine to join in the future, and the Euromaidan uprising of 2014, which he argues pushed Russia toward pursuing an aggressive realpolitik foreign policy. He argues that only a reversal of this trend, an abandonment of NATO and the liberalist worldview that it protects in favor of a realist foreign policy, will allow the West to understand Russia's realist view of Ukraine under Western influence and take steps to prevent that Western influence from causing future conflicts.

While both Mearsheimer and Mandelbaum agree on some points, Mandelbaum's arguments hold much more validity in the present day. In his 1995 essay, Mandelbaum goes on to argue that, "If Moscow absorbed Ukraine or attempted to do so, Russia would again become a multinational empire harboring a large, resentful subject nation, with poor prospects for the construction of a stable democratic system" (Mandelbaum 1995, 11). Russia's slow, brutal invasion of Ukraine has indeed forged a new national Ukrainian identity of resistance. The defiance of an oppressed and invaded people is an underestimated, powerful ontology in International Relations, and is an element that is completely ignored by Russia's realist foreign policy. For the war in Ukraine, this is made even stronger by the abuses of Russia in its efforts to colonise the Ukrainian people; these actions include the

murder of Ukrainian civilians, the suppression of Ukrainian language and culture in captured regions, and the kidnapping of Ukrainian children to be placed in Russian reeducation camps (US Embassy Tbilisi 2023).

The amount of resources Russia has been forced to put into the war and Putin's image as a strongman necessitate strong returns in Ukraine; in order to maintain his power and legitimacy, Putin must see his war to the end. Ukraine was never going to be easy pickings for Russia; in 2014, Mearsheimer believed that Russia would be unlikely to take the step of war in Ukraine, describing how, "Putin surely understands that trying to subdue Ukraine would be like swallowing a porcupine" (Mearsheimer 2014, 9). If Putin did in fact understand this, then it must follow that his decision to invade was made with even more dedication to fully defeating Ukraine and its people. The combination of a defiant Ukrainian nation that has been driven into the arms of the West and a desperate strongman in Vladimir Putin will necessitate that Putin dominate the Ukrainian people insofar as they are either utterly destroyed, or are so damaged as to be unable to pursue further relations with the West. While Trump, in the interest of securing peace on realist terms, might approach Putin as a partner to make a ceasefire or lasting peace in Ukraine, any peace offered by Putin will undermine Ukrainian sovereignty or otherwise severely weaken the country; therefore, a peace forged by the Trump administration on Putin's terms will inevitably fail.

Whether or not NATO was the cause of Russia's war in Ukraine, Russia's decision to invade has itself made it necessary to bolster NATO's role as a collective security alliance in the region, and also made it necessary that Ukraine join NATO for protection. Mandelbaum argues that, "If Russia is bound to resume its traditionally imperialist foreign policy; if, when it does so, the requirements of

American security will demand the eastward expansion of NATO; and if taking this inevitable step is better now when Russia is weak than later when it has grown strong, then it follows that alliance membership should be promptly extended" (Mandelbaum 1995, 11). Regardless of the circumstances leading up to its invasion, Russia's attack on Ukraine and its aggression toward its other neighbors has necessitated that NATO finally act. Mandelbaum lays out certain criteria under which NATO membership should be extended to Russia's neighbors, which includes political or territorial violation of its neighbors, violating major European arms control treaties, or the advent of a "xenophobic, hyper nationalist, or neo fascist government in Moscow" (Mandelbaum 1995, 13). Mandelbaum concludes in his examination of the Russian state that, "While in theory such a regime might conduct a peaceful foreign policy, in practice none of Russia's neighbors will wish to wait to see

whether it does. They will want to join NATO, and in these circumstances they should be admitted" (Mandelbaum 1995, 13). Since Mandelbaum's piece in 1995, Russia has elected a hyper nationalist leader in Vladimir Putin, whose aggressive, warmongering foreign policy has proved that NATO expansion is necessary to protect Russia's neighbors.

The current, foundationally realist Trump plan to end the war in Ukraine will fail, but there is a glimmer of hope available to Ukraine if the Trump administration adopts liberal foreign policy doctrines. Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy has stated that an acceptable "victory plan" would guarantee NATO membership to Ukraine (Boot 2024). Both fully withdrawing support from Ukraine and forcing Ukraine to accept a peace deal on Russia's terms will be disastrous. Regardless of what caused Russia's aggression, Mearsheimer's plan of appeasement will fail to solve the



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current conflict. Ending the war while extending the safety blanket of NATO over Ukraine will be the most effective method to create a just and lasting peace. The war must be stopped before Ukraine is extended an invitation; otherwise NATO risks an otherwise preventable war with Russia by acting too early. Instead, the invitation must be offered after peace has been reached, perhaps as part of a peace compromise. Russia has never before invaded a NATO country, and article 5 makes this precedent likely to continue.

Additionally, while Russia's aggression and bitterness toward the West and NATO will likely grow, it will be a power that failed in its mission to keep Ukraine from the arms of the West. Ukraine will be emboldened and protected, and Russia will be forced to either go home or go to war with the entire Western world. While the nation may be able to advance against Ukraine, its military is not ready for any engagement with NATO forces (Wasielewski 2023). The competition between realist and liberalist visions in United States politics can determine the direction of the Russo-Ukraine conflict. In order to create a lasting peace, the incoming Trump administration must adapt its realist, isolationist foreign policy focus to incorporate elements of liberalism that empowers NATO and the survival of the Ukrainian people.

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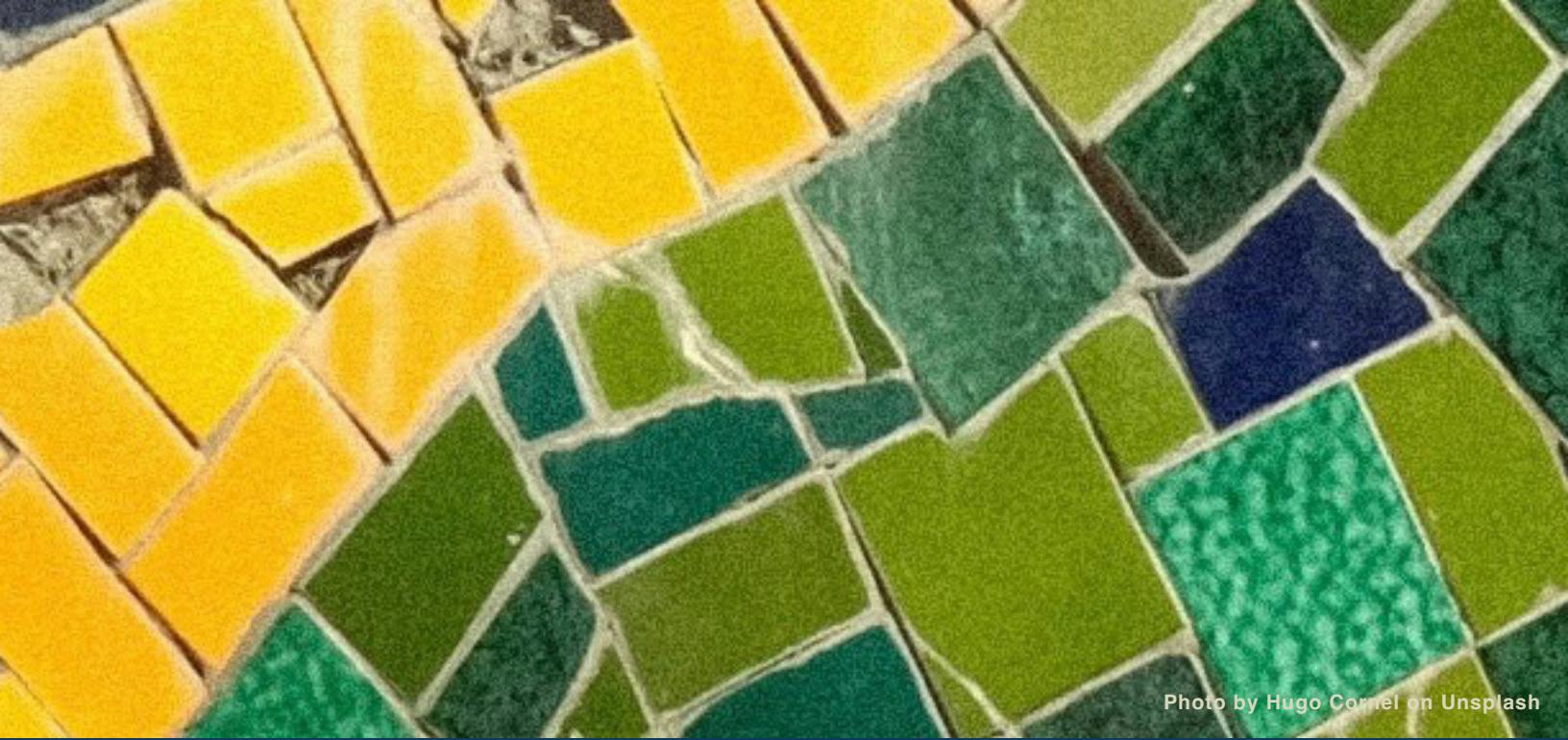


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# FAVELA™: EXPLORANDO O PAPEL DAS FAVELAS NA IMAGEM OLÍMPICA DO RIO DE JANEIRO EM 2016

## UMA ANÁLISE DOS PROJETOS OLÍMPICOS E DO CRESCIMENTO DO TURISMO NAS FAVELAS

BY KAYDEN LEMEE

### ABSTRACT

This essay examines the impact of urban entrepreneurialism and the 2016 Olympic Games on Rio de Janeiro's favela residents, analyzing the shift from traditional urban managerialism to an entrepreneurial model that leverages mega-events and urban regeneration to attract investment, often sidelining local communities. It highlights the displacement resulting from projects like Porto Maravilha and the fate of Vila Autódromo, emphasizing the strategies of spectacularization and cultural tourism that craft appealing images of urban areas while marginalizing and commodifying local cultures. Additionally, it critiques the rise of favela tourism, which offers sanitized narratives of authenticity while overlooking deeper socio-economic challenges. The essay questions the role of favelas in Rio's revamped brand image and underscores the contradictions in urban entrepreneurialism, advocating for the prioritization of the welfare and voices of marginalized communities in the face of global pressures and urban transformation.

No contexto do capitalismo em estágio avançado, as cidades têm se transformado cada vez mais em entidades caracterizadas pelo empreendedorismo urbano, um conceito articulado pelo geógrafo David Harvey. Essa mudança representa um afastamento do tradicional gerencialismo urbano em direção a estruturas empresariais focadas na atração de investimentos e na promoção do crescimento econômico, geralmente por meio de parcerias público-privadas e esforços de

revitalização urbana. Esse modelo, embora melhore a posição competitiva de uma cidade, pode levar à gentrificação, ao deslocamento de grupos marginalizados e a crises fiscais se os investimentos falharem.

As cidades agora se posicionam ativamente como atores competitivos na economia globalizada, adotando estratégias que incluem parcerias público-privadas, desenvolvimento incentivado e planejamento estratégico para “maximizar a atratividade do local como um

chamariz para o desenvolvimento econômico.” Essa dinâmica alterou fundamentalmente o papel das áreas urbanas, posicionando-as como agentes fundamentais na formação da vida cotidiana dos cidadãos e de suas funções no contexto mais amplo das relações internacionais.

Uma forma dessas cidades, principalmente no Sul Global, tentarem competir na economia global é sediar megaeventos, como a Copa do Mundo da FIFA e os Jogos Olímpicos. Essas ocasiões de grande visibilidade oferecem às cidades a oportunidade de ganhar atenção no cenário global, mostrando seu potencial cultural e econômico para um público internacional.

Fazendo isso, as cidades criam uma plataforma para aprimoramento e regeneração, esforçando-se para projetar uma imagem ou marca polida que destaque seus atributos e ofertas exclusivas. Essa busca transformadora é geralmente realizada por meio de duas estratégias principais: espetacularização e turismo cultural. A espetacularização envolve a transformação deliberada de espaços urbanos em ambientes visualmente impressionantes, projetados para cativar turistas e investidores. Esse processo não visa apenas gerar entusiasmo imediato por meio de grandes projetos arquitetônicos e eventos de grande escala, mas também desempenha um papel fundamental na formação da identidade percebida de uma cidade. Por exemplo, as cidades geralmente empregam instalações vibrantes de arte pública, edifícios icônicos e festivais envolventes para aumentar seu apelo visual e projetar uma imagem empolgante para os possíveis visitantes. Um exemplo disso é o Museu do Amanhã, que abriu suas portas em 2015. Através da sua arquitetura e declaração de missão, o museu aborda a modernidade recém-descoberta do Rio de Janeiro, não só para os residentes da cidade, mas também no palco internacional. Como diz a missão, “Vivemos numa nova era, em que a atividade humana se tornou uma força com impacto global. Somos capazes

de intervir a escalas inimagináveis - manipulando moléculas, alterando ecossistemas, criando novas formas de vida e mudando o clima. Habitamos um planeta em constante transformação, resultado direto das nossas ações. Que futuro estamos a criar com as decisões de hoje? O Museu do Amanhã oferece uma viagem para explorar os próximos 50 anos, guiada por questões fundamentais que a humanidade sempre colocou a si própria”. Estes movimentos de espetacularização pretendem marcar o espaço com um novo



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símbolo da atuação da cidade, política atual, que conterá em si um momento do poder político atual. O Museu do Amanhã não é apenas um instrumento urbano para a cultura da sociedade local, mas seria também um novo marco para a contemporização da identidade cultural internacional da cidade do Rio de Janeiro.

Por outro lado, o turismo cultural, ou “culturalismo do mercado”, refere-se ao uso

estratégico de bens culturais como um mecanismo de revitalização urbana e desenvolvimento econômico. Essa abordagem se concentra em alavancar a cultura e o patrimônio locais para atrair turistas, gerando benefícios econômicos e promovendo uma identidade urbana única por meio da celebração da arte, da história e das tradições. O turismo cultural proporciona “autenticidade” à experiência urbana, permitindo que os visitantes sintam que estão obtendo a “verdadeira” experiência cultural.

Quando combinados, a espetacularização e o turismo cultural contribuem significativamente para a imagem de marca de uma cidade. A marca de uma cidade é geralmente forjada por meio de suas ofertas culturais exclusivas e ambientes visualmente estimulantes, criando um fascínio pelo destino. A espetacularização amplia essa estratégia de marca, tornando as cidades memoráveis e atraentes para os turistas que estão buscando cada vez mais experiências dinâmicas e imersivas. É fundamental cultivar essa imagem de

marca, pois ela molda a percepção primária da cidade para os visitantes estrangeiros. No contexto do empreendedorismo urbano, essa imagem forte torna-se essencial para impulsionar o crescimento econômico e atrair investimentos. Como Jacques Berenstein escreve, “De fato, nas políticas e nos projetos urbanos contemporâneos, principalmente dentro da lógica do planejamento estratégico, existe uma clara intenção de se mostrar, reforçar ou até mesmo forjar uma imagem singular da cidade. Essa imagem seria fruto de uma cultura própria, da identidade de uma cidade. A promoção e venda dessa imagem de cidade corresponde à venda da própria cidade como uma mercadoria. A cidade mercadoria funciona como uma empresa.” No entanto, a priorização do apelo estético e do investimento externo muitas vezes leva à marginalização dos residentes, pois suas necessidades e vozes são frequentemente ofuscadas pela busca de ganhos econômicos. A gentrificação é uma preocupação significativa, pois o aumento do valor das



propriedades e do custo de vida pode deslocar comunidades antigas em favor de visitantes transitórios e recém-chegados ricos. Este ensaio analisa a experiência do Rio de Janeiro, enfocando especificamente os Jogos Olímpicos de 2016 como um megaevento notável e suas implicações para os moradores das favelas. Isso criou uma situação paradoxal para essas comunidades: por um lado, muitos projetos olímpicos exigiam a remoção das favelas; por outro lado, a cidade pretendia celebrar a presença delas durante a cerimônia de abertura e por meio da promoção do turismo nas favelas.

Em última análise, essa exploração busca desvendar as relações intrincadas e muitas vezes contraditórias entre o empreendedorismo urbano, a imagem da marca e as experiências vividas pelos moradores das favelas. Ela avalia criticamente como a ênfase na criação de um ambiente de negócios favorável, especialmente por meio de megaeventos, ofuscou o bem-estar das comunidades marginalizadas e de baixa renda, colocando-as em risco de perder sua conexão com os próprios bairros que habitam.

### **Jogos Olímpicos de 2016: A Cerimônia de Abertura**

Os Jogos Olímpicos do Rio de Janeiro de 2016 deram à cidade uma oportunidade significativa de se posicionar no cenário global, mostrando sua vibração cultural e seu potencial econômico por meio de um grande espetáculo. Como um megaevento marcante, os Jogos Olímpicos permitiram que o Rio projetasse uma imagem de modernidade e progresso, incorporando as aspirações do empreendedorismo urbano, que enfatiza a atração de investimentos e o destaque de ofertas urbanas exclusivas. Esse evento foi amplamente celebrado como uma conquista monumental tanto para o Rio de Janeiro quanto para o Brasil inteiro. Como declarou o Presidente Lula,

*“Today I have felt prouder of being a Brazilian than on any other day. Today is the day that Brazil gained its international citizenship. Today is the day that we have overcome the last vestiges of prejudice against us. I think this is the day to celebrate because Brazil has left behind the level of second-class countries and entered the ranks of first class countries. Today we earned respect. The world has finally recognized that this is Brazil’s time.”*

A cerimônia de abertura dos Jogos Olímpicos foimeticulosamente elaborada para pintar um retrato pitoresco da cidade, servindo não apenas como uma demonstração de proeza atlética, mas também como uma celebração do patrimônio cultural diversificado do Brasil. Por meio de imagens, música e atuações impressionantes, o espetáculo pintou uma imagem idealizada do Rio de Janeiro, retratando paisagens de tirar o fôlego, batidas de samba e o espírito alegre do seu povo. A cerimônia também incluiu, de forma notável, uma cena de uma favela.

No entanto, essa representação foi na maioria superficial, deixando de reconhecer os desafios socioeconômicos subjacentes que caracterizam a vida de muitos moradores, principalmente os das favelas. Em vez de confrontar a complexa relação entre o Estado e as comunidades das favelas, a cerimônia enfatizou uma narrativa de modernização e progresso que se alinha ao empreendedorismo urbano. As apresentações extravagantes e as exibições chamativas ressaltaram os esforços do Rio para forjar uma identidade global alinhada com as aspirações da liderança brasileira.

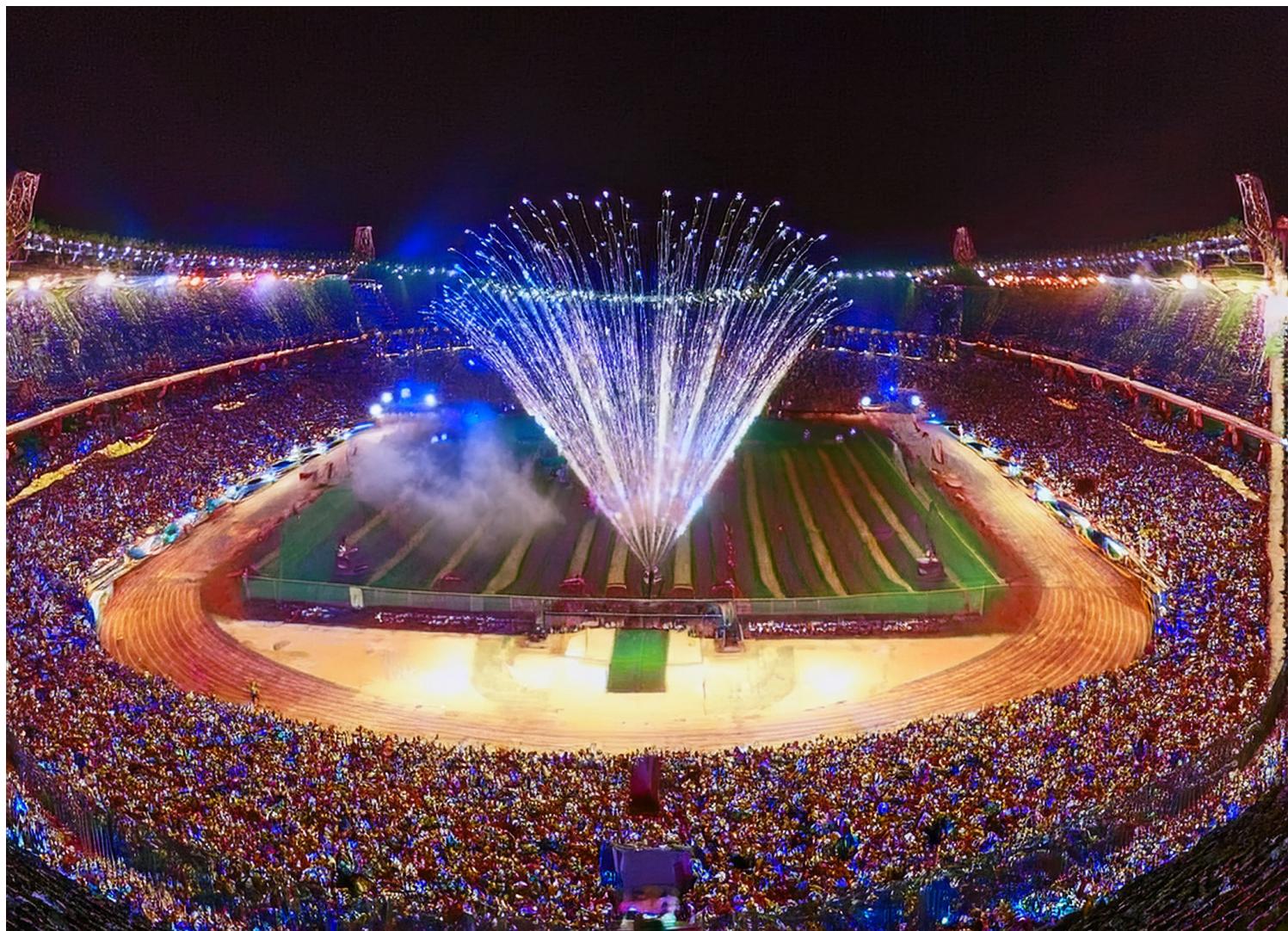
### **Porto Maravilha: Renovação urbana ou deslocamento?**

O Projeto de Regeneração Urbana do Porto Maravilha, um esforço maciço de renovação

da área portuária do Rio de Janeiro, foi lançado como preparação para os Jogos Olímpicos, abrangendo cinco milhões de metros quadrados destinados a transformar a orla industrial em declínio em um vibrante centro cultural e residencial. As narrativas oficiais retrataram o projeto como uma força revitalizadora, com frases otimistas como “dar nova vida ao cenário cultural da cidade” e “um renascimento inspirado nas Olimpíadas”, sugerindo uma reviravolta dramática em relação ao condição “muit[a] negligenciad[a]” da área. No entanto, essa retórica muitas vezes ofuscou a riqueza cultural e os laços sociais existentes entre os residentes, dando a entender que eles contribuíram para a decadência anterior da área. Embora o projeto tenha prometido melhorias na infraestrutura e nas comodidades culturais, ele levou ao deslocamento de mais de 400 famílias da Providência, separando comunidades e corroendo redes sociais de longa

data.

Os moradores frequentemente relatam experiências de assédio e intimidação por parte das autoridades policiais, o que gera um clima de medo em vez de confiança e cooperação. A negligência e a subsequente intrusão na Providência - embora apresentadas como necessárias para a modernização urbana - ressaltam as disparidades que persistem nos esforços de renovação da cidade. Por exemplo, Jorge Santos, um paisagista, foi forçado a deixar sua casa na Vila Recreio II em 2011 devido à construção da linha de ônibus expresso Transoeste. Ao voltar para casa um dia, descobriu que sua casa havia sido demolida, juntamente com todos os seus pertences, e recebeu uma indenização de menos de US\$ 2.700. Com pouca escolha, ele se mudou para outra favela a cerca de um quilômetro de distância, mas acabou se encontrando em uma área dominada por milícias - gangues



paramilitares que extorquem os moradores para ter acesso a serviços básicos. O prefeito do Rio, Eduardo Paes, afirmou que aqueles que foram forçados a se mudar receberam indenizações, auxílio-aluguel ou novos apartamentos em projetos de moradias populares. No entanto, segundo o pesquisador Lucas Faulhaber, da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, muitas das 20.000 famílias desalojadas acabaram se mudando para até 30 milhas de distância das comunidades onde haviam construído suas vidas anteriormente.

As iniciativas de transformação que acompanham o projeto Porto Maravilha se alinham ao fenômeno mais amplo da especulação, pois o porto está sendo transformado em um espaço moderno para atrair investimentos externos e turismo. Conforme articulado por ativistas locais, a narrativa em torno do Porto Maravilha geralmente inclui termos como “maquiagem”, criticando as mudanças superficiais destinadas a aplacar o sentimento público e, ao mesmo tempo, ocultando questões sistêmicas mais amplas.

### Vila Autódromo: O preço do desenvolvimento Olímpico

Da mesma forma, a Vila Autódromo, a favela mais antiga do Brasil, localizada a menos de 300 metros do Parque Olímpico, foi marcada para ser despejada para dar lugar a uma reforma urbana. Essa comunidade, com cerca de 700 famílias, enfrentou intensa pressão para sair, muitas vezes sob o pretexto de que suas casas estavam localizadas em áreas inseguras - uma alegação contestada pelos moradores e apoiada por pesquisas. As táticas de intimidação incluíam uma forte presença policial, que um ex-morador descreveu como desnecessária e ameaçadora: “Não havia necessidade de tantos policiais em uma comunidade tão pequena. Era uma forma de intimidação”. Outro acrescentou: “No início desse período, recebemos uma carta da prefeitura dizendo que nossas casas

estavam em uma zona de interesse público. A pressão psicológica começou imediatamente. Derrubaram algumas casas ao nosso redor, e isso abalou nossos alicerces”. O governo municipal ofereceu indenização por meio de programas de realocação, como o Parque Carioca, mas muitos moradores consideraram essas alternativas inadequadas e desalinhadas com suas necessidades. Um morador desiludido relatou a disparidade entre a nova vida prometida e sua realidade: “Eles nos levaram para conhecer os apartamentos - mobiliados com móveis caros, decorados com piscinas e quadras de esportes para as crianças. Parecia uma terra de fantasia, mas estava longe da nossa realidade”. Essa transformação urbana foi considerada benéfica para a imagem e o crescimento econômico da cidade, mas desconsiderou efetivamente o significado cultural e destruiu os laços comunitários que haviam sido construídos ao longo de décadas. Enquanto a modernidade e o progresso eram celebrados, as vozes e histórias de longa data dos moradores da favela foram deixadas de lado, com suas afirmações de que “Isso não é apenas terra; isso é nossa vida, nossa história” ecoando sem serem ouvidas em meio ao clamor pelo desenvolvimento.

Embora o governo tenha promovido as transformações para as Olimpíadas como um centro moderno e vibrante, projetado para atrair turismo e investimento, as motivações econômicas por trás desse espetáculo muitas vezes foram às custas dos moradores locais. A justificativa dos despejos sob o pretexto de interesse público e renovação urbana mascarou a dura realidade do deslocamento, desviando a atenção do significado cultural e dos laços comunitários que há muito caracterizavam bairros como Vila Autódromo e Providência.

### Turismo em favelas: o Outro Lado

Os Jogos Olímpicos de 2016 causaram um aumento no turismo em favelas no Rio de Janeiro, com o governo promovendo

programas para incentivar essa tendência. Surgido no início da década de 1990 e ganhando impulso significativo após a exposição internacional durante a Cúpula da Terra de 1992, o turismo em favelas evoluiu para uma notável oportunidade econômica, mas também reflete as complexidades das comunidades marginalizadas. Esse turismo se divide em dois tipos principais: passeios organizados pela comunidade, em que os moradores se envolvem ativamente e se beneficiam da apresentação de sua cultura, promovendo orgulho e oportunidades econômicas sustentáveis; e passeios mais exploradores que mercantilizam a vida na favela como um espetáculo exótico, muitas vezes apresentando as identidades dos moradores como meras atrações para turistas estrangeiros.

Este artigo foca especificamente o último. Esses últimos passeios exemplificam um consumo voyeurista da cultura, em que o envolvimento genuíno com a comunidade é mínima. De acordo com Dürr, essa forma de turismo transforma a favela em um palco para os turistas observarem “o outro lado do mundo” de uma distância segura.

A linguagem empregada nos materiais promocionais das favela tours romantiza a experiência, posicionando-a como uma forma de os turistas se envolverem com o Rio “real.” Relatórios do governo e organizações de turismo têm elogiado as virtudes culturais das favelas, alegando que a participação no turismo em favelas contribui para a economia local e promove a integração social. Como parte do “pacote Brasil” mais amplo - que tradicionalmente inclui atrações como o Carnaval, praias, futebol e mostras culturais - as favelas se tornaram parte integrante da imagem estereotipada do Brasil oferecida aos visitantes estrangeiros.

A comercialização desses locais culturais está alinhada com a noção de “patrimônio cultural,” já que as áreas urbanas estão cada vez mais enquadradas como ativos culturais valiosos que podem ser aproveitados para gerar receita com o turismo. No entanto,

esse foco na criação de um espetáculo pode obscurecer a riqueza cultural existente e os laços sociais dos residentes, enquadrando suas comunidades como novas descobertas a serem exploradas, em vez de áreas de longa data de história e identidade. A ênfase em atrair turistas para experimentar a chamada autenticidade das favelas pode levar a uma mercantilização desses bairros, reduzindo dinâmicas sociais complexas a meras atrações para pessoas de fora.

Embora o turismo em favelas tenha realmente criado oportunidades econômicas para alguns moradores, a distribuição dos benefícios é altamente desigual. Muitos moradores que desenvolvem negócios em torno do turismo - seja guiando excursões ou oferecendo acomodações - muitas vezes enfrentam desafios formidáveis. Conforme a pesquisa, os empreendedores locais lutam para obter acesso suficiente ao mercado, enfrentam uma concorrência acirrada e não têm a educação ou as habilidades de marketing necessárias para gerenciar com eficácia os empreendimentos turísticos. Além disso, os lucros gerados pelo turismo nem sempre permanecem nessas comunidades; em vez disso, eles podem ser desviados por empresas maiores, geralmente de propriedade estrangeira, que dominam o mercado.

Apesar do potencial do turismo em favelas para proporcionar alguns benefícios econômicos, muitos estudos indicam que os lucros são muitas vezes insuficientes para causar um impacto significativo na redução da pobreza. Os ganhos financeiros normalmente se concentram em um pequeno segmento da população, deixando muitos moradores de favelas em situações precárias. Esse fenômeno ilustra uma crítica mais ampla ao turismo como uma solução simplista para problemas socioeconômicos complexos, em que o fascínio de experiências “exóticas” para os turistas pode ofuscar as lutas reais enfrentadas pelas comunidades locais.

Os esforços para promover o turismo em favelas como uma solução para os desafios

socioeconômicos também confrontam o estigma persistente associado a essas comunidades. A mídia retrata frequentemente as favelas por meio de lentes de violência e pobreza, reforçando estereótipos negativos que persistem na consciência pública. Embora haja tentativas de mudar essa narrativa, apresentando as favelas como centros culturais vibrantes, o estigma muitas vezes persiste, levando muitos moradores a expressar frustração com como suas comunidades são retratadas. Por exemplo, um morador comentou: “A mídia costumava nos destruir; eles nos chamavam de ‘invasores’ e nos pintavam todos com o mesmo pincel”. Agora a cidade está tentando mudar a narrativa, elogiando as favelas como pontos culturais. Esse paradoxo gira em torno da comercialização da cultura, na qual a favela é apresentada por seu potencial de geração de lucro, enquanto os moradores existentes são deixados à margem. As autoridades governamentais e as partes interessadas no turismo destacam frequentemente a narrativa de que o turismo em favelas fortalece as comunidades locais, alegando que tais iniciativas oferecem oportunidades econômicas e desafiam estereótipos. No entanto, a mercantilização dessas comunidades muitas vezes reduz suas ricas histórias e complexidades culturais a meras atrações para consumo. Os turistas visitam o local para vivenciar a “autêntica” cultura brasileira; no entanto, essa experiência é cuidadosamente selecionada, muitas vezes deixando de lado as realidades multifacetadas da vida cotidiana nas favelas. A ironia está no fato de que, enquanto os representantes do governo promovem as contribuições das favelas para a identidade cultural do Rio, suas políticas ao mesmo tempo facilitam o deslocamento dessas mesmas comunidades em nome do desenvolvimento urbano e da modernização.

Além disso, a noção de turismo em favelas como uma forma de “patrimônio cultural” é profundamente hipócrita. O Brasil adotou habilmente a ideia das favelas como tesouros

culturais - reconhecendo seu potencial para gerar lucro e, ao mesmo tempo, marginalizando os próprios indivíduos que incorporam essa cultura. Ao comercializar as favelas como destinos turísticos enriquecidos com “autenticidade,” o governo tenta projetar uma imagem de progresso e integração social em um cenário internacional. Entretanto, essa narrativa não aborda a exploração econômica e a alienação social vivenciadas por muitos moradores. Como o empreendedorismo urbano busca capitalizar a singularidade desses bairros, ele reforça inadvertidamente os estigmas associados à pobreza e à marginalização, apresentando uma versão higienizada da favela que não reflete as dificuldades enfrentadas pelos moradores. Além disso, os aspectos positivos percebidos nesse modelo de turismo não abordam adequadamente os impactos psicológicos e sociais de viver em uma comunidade que é simultaneamente celebrada e mercantilizada. O custo emocional de se sentir reduzido a uma “atração” é significativo, levando à alienação dos residentes de suas próprias identidades culturais.

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alienação dos residentes de suas próprias identidades culturais.

Para concluir este artigo, analisarei a foto viral do Facebook dos moradores da Mangueira com vista de sua casa para a cerimônia de abertura. Usarei essa foto para refletir sobre a questão que apresentei no início deste artigo: existe um lugar para as favelas na nova imagem de marca que o Rio de Janeiro criou para si? E se há, qual o papel das favelas nessa imagem?

Pode-se argumentar que as favelas têm um lugar, mas é sempre um lugar do lado de fora - nunca do lado de dentro. Nessa imagem, os moradores da Mangueira estão fisicamente à margem, olhando para um evento que simboliza prestígio, enquanto esse mesmo evento buscava realocar as comunidades. Eles são espectadores de uma narrativa que não controlam, deixados de lado em uma história de transformação que prioriza o reconhecimento global em vez de atender às suas necessidades.

Essa dicotomia não é nova. A cerimônia de abertura dos Jogos Olímpicos, que apresentou uma versão encenada de uma favela, glorificou suas contribuições culturais, ignorando a negligência sistêmica e a desigualdade que seus moradores enfrentam diariamente. Essa justaposição é evidente quando vista ao lado da foto da Mangueira. A favela encenada, com samba, cores vibrantes e celebração, foi apresentada como parte integrante da



identidade do Rio de Janeiro, mas a realidade para os verdadeiros moradores da favela continuou sendo de invisibilidade, precariedade e exclusão. Os favelados - as pessoas cujas vidas incorporam a realidade retratada no palco - têm apenas um vislumbre fugaz do espetáculo, limitado aos fogos de artifício. Embora suas contribuições culturais sejam celebradas de forma abstrata, eles são deixados na maioria ausentes da narrativa, reduzidos a meros espectadores em uma cerimônia que ignora suas experiências vividas.

Os comentários na postagem viral do Facebook enfatizam esses sentimentos. Um comentarista comentou: "Isso é que é Brasil. Obrigado por compartilhar. Como brasileiro, senti falta da verdadeira face do nosso país na cerimônia de abertura". A "verdadeira face" do país, conforme retratada na foto, não é a versão colorida e higienizada apresentada ao mundo, mas a realidade complexa, matizada e muitas vezes dura da desigualdade e da marginalização.

Outros comentaristas afirmaram: "Mario, muito obrigado por essa imagem. Talvez, apenas talvez, alguém acorde para a realidade aqui." E, "Obrigada por essa foto, sou da Favela do Complexo do Alemão e me sinto representado nela." A foto expõe as desigualdades que megaeventos como os Jogos Olímpicos costumam mascarar, forçando os espectadores a confrontar a incômoda verdade de que a transformação da cidade pouco fez para melhorar as condições dos moradores das favelas. A foto oferece um raro reconhecimento da presença e da realidade dessas pessoas, um momento de visibilidade em uma cidade que muitas vezes procura torná-las invisíveis.

A foto viral, portanto, torna-se uma metáfora das contradições mais amplas da transformação do Rio durante os Jogos Olímpicos. As favelas são, ao mesmo tempo, glorificadas e excluídas, celebradas por suas contribuições culturais, mas negligenciadas quando se trata de abordar questões sistêmicas. Elas são visíveis na marca registrada da cidade,

mas invisíveis em suas políticas.

## Conclusão

A narrativa em torno da transformação urbana do Rio de Janeiro para as Olimpíadas de 2016 levanta questões importantes sobre o papel das favelas na nova imagem de marca da cidade. Enquanto a cidade procura se apresentar como um destino moderno e atraente, enriquecido pela vibração cultural, as experiências dos moradores das favelas apresentam uma realidade contrastante, marcada pelo deslocamento, pela marginalização e pela mercantilização de suas identidades.

A pergunta que fica é: existe um lugar genuíno para as favelas na imagem polida que o Rio de Janeiro pretende transmitir? Em caso afirmativo, essas comunidades não devem ser relegadas a meros espetáculos para consumo turístico, mas celebradas como componentes integrais do tecido cultural da cidade.

No futuro, as estratégias de desenvolvimento urbano devem adotar a inclusão e o envolvimento genuíno com essas comunidades. Reconhecer as vozes dos moradores é fundamental para criar uma narrativa urbana que honre tanto o seu rico patrimônio quanto as suas aspirações para o futuro. O futuro do Rio de Janeiro depende do reconhecimento de sua população diversificada, garantindo que o progresso econômico não venha às custas das próprias comunidades que enriquecem o caráter e a cultura da cidade. Ao fazer isso, o Rio pode cultivar uma marca que não apenas atraia turistas, mas que também ressoe com a dignidade e a resiliência de todos os seus moradores - onde as favelas não são somente objetos de um espetáculo, mas bairros vibrantes e prósperos que contribuem profundamente para a identidade e a vibração da cidade inteira.

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# WHEN PROTECTION BECOMES POWER

## R2P IN LIBYA AND THE POLITICS OF INTERVENTION

BY CATE PARKINSON

### ABSTRACT

The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine was established by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001 as a response to the humanitarian crises which took place in the prior decade, including the atrocities in Rwanda, Srebrenica, and Kosovo. The UN embraced this doctrine in 2005, and the R2P doctrine established an international understanding that embedded within state sovereignty lies the responsibility to protect the people within the state. The R2P framework serves as the moral argument for international bodies to take action and intervene in circumstances of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity. Through the case of the UNSC and NATO intervention in the Libyan Civil War in 2011, this paper explores the complexities surrounding the R2P doctrine and analyzes its role as the basis for both critical aid in times of crisis and international political machinations. The paper concludes that while the R2P doctrine was not designed to facilitate regime change, in certain circumstances this doctrine can be misappropriated to serve as a theoretical basis and moral justification for carrying out politically-motivated regime shifts in foreign countries. This paper ultimately urges individuals and political actors to consider the potential of the R2P for both humanitarian good and political manipulation, and to reconsider the meaning of “responsibility” and what it asks of international humanitarian actors.

Out of the unfathomable tragedies of the 1990s, namely the genocides in Rwanda in 1994 and Srebrenica, Bosnia in 1995, and the war crimes committed in Kosovo between 1998 and 1999, emerged the need to enshrine the “responsibility to protect” (Cater and Malone, 3). The near-complete paralysis of the international community in the cases of Rwanda and Bosnia, and the highly controversial NATO intervention in Kosovo

underscored the need for a modern and globally-sourced consensus on international intervention practices. This was required for cases where a state was committing grave crimes against its own people including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing.

In 2001, the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) issued a report which established a doctrine

Protect (R2P) formally established the expectation that a sovereign nation is responsible for protecting its own people. The R2P framework establishes justifications for international intervention. In order to justify intervention, which includes military action, on the grounds of the “responsibility to protect” the circumstances must fit several criteria. There must be reasonable prospects, proportional means, right intention, right authority and just cause (Evans and Sahnoun, 32). Examples of just causes include actual or apprehended large scale loss of life or large scale ethnic cleansing (Evans and Sahnoun, 33). More significantly, the R2P doctrine enshrined the justifiability of international military intervention, and has since supported a morals-based argument for international bodies to take military action and intervene in circumstances where a nation is threatening its own civilians. Gareth Evans, the Co-Chair of the ICISS, once stated that sovereignty can be used as “a license to kill” (Evans, “Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes: A Hopeless Dream?”). National actors can weaponize their right to sovereignty to turn their borders into a defensive wall and evade accountability for committing crimes against their own people. The R2P doctrine allows international actors, such as the UNSC or NATO, to circumvent the shield of state sovereignty to stop humanitarian crises.

***“...if humanitarian intervention is, indeed, an unacceptable assault on sovereignty, how should we respond to a Rwanda, to a Srebrenica – to gross and systematic violations of human rights that affect every precept of our common humanity? (Annan, ICISS R2P, VI)***

As is reflected in these words from former Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, who worked as one of the primary architects of the doctrine, it is impracticable to universally respect state sovereignty and effectively

intervene in times of crisis. The doctrine was created to present state sovereignty and intervention as mutually inclusive principles. In February of 2011, the Libyan government—with Prime Minister Muammar Muhammad Abu Minyar al-Gaddafi at the helm—used the military to violently suppress the civilian organized “Day of Rage” in Benghazi, and other popular domestic protests as part of the larger Arab Spring movement (Libya - Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect 2023). Gaddafi was a brutal dictator who vowed to take on his enemies, whom he called “cockroaches” and hunt them down “inch by inch, room by room, home by home, alleyway by

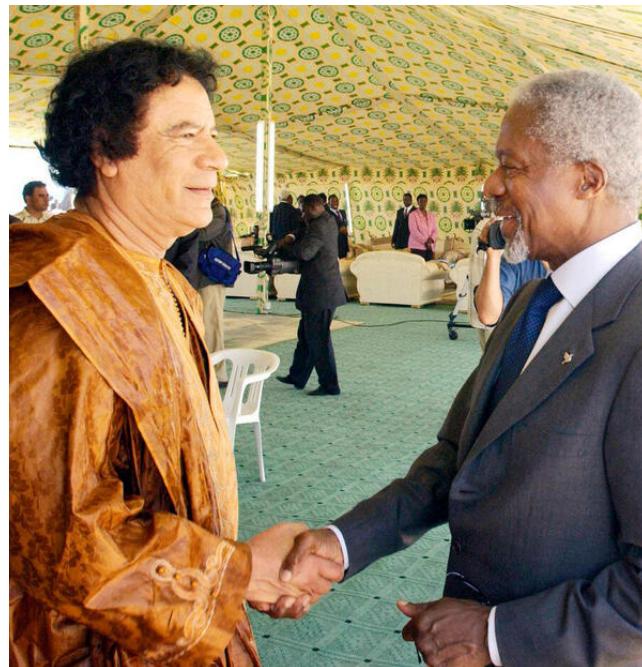


Photo source - United Nations

alleyway, person by person.” (Human Rights Watch 2023, “Death of a Dictator”). He then launched airstrikes on Libyan cities which held known rebel groups. Within days, UNSC members collectively condemned the violence which was inflicted upon civilians and passed Resolution 1970 which imposed an arms embargo and economic sanctions on Libya (UNSC, Res/1970). However, disagreements arose over next steps and the potential for use of force. China, Russia, Germany, India, and Brazil all abstained from voting on Resolution 1973 of the Security Council, which

authorized all necessary protection measures for citizens in Libya who were threatened by the Gaddafi regime (Morris 2013, 1271-72). An excerpt of the Resolution states:

Member States that have notified the Secretary-General [are authorized] to take all necessary measures, notwithstanding paragraph 9 of resolution 1970 (2011), to protect civilians and civilian populated areas under threat of attack in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, including Benghazi, while excluding a foreign occupation force of any form on any part of Libyan territory (UN Security Council 2011, 3).

The R2P doctrine is the foundation upon which more direct international intervention, such as Resolution 1973, is based. R2P places the charge on international actors to spring into action when civilians are not protected by their nation's government. Between February 2011 and March 2012, the UN Security Council passed seven resolutions regarding the crisis in Libya which were built upon the moral framework of R2P, justifying their intervening actions. These resolutions

successfully instituted a no-fly zone, referred the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC) and addressed the issue of nonproliferation of weapons after Gaddafi's regime collapsed. These measures were carried out and enforced by NATO forces within Operation Unified Protector (NATO 2024).

In September 2011, the UNSC established the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), which still operates today (UNSC, RES/2009). The Mission monitors human rights, upholds the Libyan Ceasefire Agreement, and works to stabilize the economic and political climate in Libya (UNSMIL Mandate, 2024).

Despite the tangible positive impacts of this instance of international intervention, it is vital to note the duality of the doctrine. As is reflected in the 2001 ICISS report which formalized the doctrine, the R2P was not crafted to provide justification for powerful states to effect regime changes in other nations (Morris 2013, 1270). However, it is important to recognize that in practice the R2P can provide the moral basis for powerful states to negate



the sovereignty of weaker nations, and effect significant and enduring political changes. The international intervention which took place to protect the people of Libya in 2011 is inextricably intertwined with the destabilization and destruction of Muammar Gaddafi's political regime (Bellamy and Williams, 840), the ramifications of which still reverberate through Libya today.

On March 25th, 2011, President Barack Obama gave a speech ensuring that the NATO mission in Libya would not end until Libyan civilians were protected, and Gaddafi had stepped down from leadership. This speech was given at a news conference in London, where British Prime Minister David Cameron stood alongside President Obama in a clear sign of two significant NATO powers standing unified in their stance on Libya and Gaddafi (CFR 2023). Gaddafi was tortured and assassinated by NATO-supported Libyan rebel forces in October 2011, and the regime change which followed that was made possible by the political doorway to intervention that was provided by the R2P doctrine.

The founding ambitions and attitudes of the R2P doctrine do not reflect the wish to create a useful mask for political machinations, but to construct a common language and framework for humanitarian intervention. In the case of NATO's mission in Libya in 2011, it served as a doorway both for humanitarian action and consequential political maneuvering.

Political turmoil and humanitarian crises in Libya did not end with Gaddafi's downfall. After his assassination, the domestic rebel groups, which worked together to depose Gaddafi, fractured and struggled for political control. Terrorist organizations including Islamic State and Al-Qaeda were able to take advantage of the ensuing political vacuum and the culture of repression and chaos, and have built modest holds in Libya since Gaddafi's demise.

Despite the reconstructive efforts of the UNSMIL, the political volatility which followed

the collapse of Gaddafi's regime has remained, and stability in Libya has not been achieved in the fourteen years since the Civil War. In March of 2025, the UNSMIL issued a statement of concern regarding the marked increase in arbitrary arrests of legal professionals by law enforcement. Once detained, prisoners are intimidated into giving false confessions (HRW 2025, "UNSMIL Alarmed by Wave of Arbitrary Arrests Across Libya"). The UNSMIL also expressed concerns over the culture of fear and the weak state of the rule of law, both of which were constructed during Gaddafi's era and have remained in Libya ever since. This is all taking place in the context of growing political partisanship and division, economic insecurity, a recent devaluation of the Libyan dinar and the ongoing global decline in oil prices, which is Libya's primary exported resource. The NATO effort was able to use the R2P doctrine to act in a time of crisis, but this feeling of duty and responsibility seems to have been short-lived, and did not extend to long-term responsibility for the welfare of civilians or stability in the state. While UN-sanctioned NATO forces through Operation Unified Protector successfully ended the significant violence Muammar Gaddafi inflicted on his people, this intervention did not protect civilians from political instability and continued risk.

It is essential to recognize the multifaceted nature of doctrines which are foundational to international intervention practices, and to understand that the responsibility to protect, in both the idealistic sense and in terms of the doctrine's ethos, extends beyond immediate rescue and includes political restabilization. International intervention should result in a net good, rather than a shift from one unpredictable militaristic power to another, which unfortunately was the case for Operation Unified Protector. Due to the shortcomings of this intervention in Libya, the R2P doctrine lost popular support, and inspired hesitation in UN actors moving forward. Months later,

UNSC resolutions to interrupt the violence of the Syrian Civil War were vetoed by China and Russia (CFR 2023). In the resolutions permitting UN-sanctioned intervention in Libya, China and Russia merely abstained, but in this instance they evoked their veto power. This veto was fuelled by resistance to further intervention in national conflicts after the misappropriation of the R2P doctrine for regime change in NATO's intervention in the Libyan Civil War.

While instances of extreme violence and aggression continue to take place around the world, the international community is once again struggling to create an appropriate, globally-inclusive and adaptable policy regarding humanitarian intervention. While the R2P doctrine was open to misappropriation, and did provide political cover to foreign states for regime change, it also served as a critical method of preserving and protecting persons in times of crisis. There are significant

challenges inherent to formulating a policy for international intervention, but this should not prevent the international community from creating a new and improved iteration of the R2P doctrine to serve as a global consensus on how to protect vulnerable persons in times of crisis.



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# VENEZUELAN BLOOD GOLD

## EXAMINING ILLICIT GOLD MINING IN THE ARCO MINERO

BY GUSTAVO ROMERO

### ABSTRACT

The Arco Minero del Orinoco in southern Venezuela has become a major hub for illicit gold mining, driving corruption, violence, and environmental degradation. This paper examines the evolution of Venezuela's illicit gold market, highlighting how the coexistence and collaboration between state and non-state actors have shaped the market. With global gold prices soaring, illicit mining has offered the Maduro regime a lifeline, allowing it to skirt international sanctions and sustain itself despite severe economic crisis in the country. This paper also explores the devastating human and environmental costs of illegal mining, including massacres, extortion, and deforestation. Drawing on the work of scholars specializing in natural resource smuggling, it argues that enhanced customs data and greater supply chain transparency can help curb illicit gold flows. Finally, it suggests the development of a regulatory framework modeled after the Kimberley Process for "blood diamonds," aiming to mitigate the international trade of Venezuela's "blood gold."

In recent years, the Arco Minero del Orinoco ("Orinoco Mining Arc"), a resource-rich region in southern Venezuela, has become a hub for illicit gold mining. This paper offers a detailed overview of the Venezuelan illicit gold market, the main players who drive it, and the factors, domestic and international, which have shaped its evolution since 2016. It begins by providing background on the history and evolution of the market, focusing on the roles of state and non-state actors who coexist and mutually benefit from the illicit extraction of gold. It then explores the dynamics

of the international gold market, situating the case study of the Arco Minero in a context of rising global demand for gold. For the Maduro regime, gold exports have become a financial lifeline amid external sanctions and internal economic collapse, rendering the regime deeply invested in sustaining this illicit trade. Following this, the paper identifies the devastating environmental and human effects of illegal gold mining in southern Venezuela, including environmental degradation, massacres of locals, extortion, and widespread violence. Drawing on scholarship in the field of

natural resource smuggling, the final section calls for enhanced customs data and supply chain transparency and proposes the development of a framework inspired by the Kimberley Process which could help mitigate the international trade of Venezuela’s “blood gold.”

## Background

The origins of the Arco Minero date back to 2011, when then-President Hugo Chávez nationalized the gold industry and proposed opening a vast area of Venezuela’s southern territory to mining activity. In 2016, amid a deepening economic crisis, Chávez’s successor, Nicolás Maduro, put his mentor’s plan into action (Rendon et al. 2020). Beginning in 2014, a combination of crashing oil prices, government mismanagement, and other factors plunged the Venezuelan economy—in which petroleum-based exports accounted for about 95 percent of exports by value—into the deepest economic crisis in the country’s history (Meacham 2014). In response, by executive decree, Maduro designated 12.2 percent of Venezuela’s land area—a region roughly the size of Portugal—as the “Orinoco Mining Arc Strategic Development Zone.” This mineral-rich area lies south of the Orinoco River, Venezuela’s most important waterway, and spans across the states of Amazonas, Bolívar, and Delta Amacuro. The region contains large deposits of bauxite, coltan, iron, manganese, diamonds, and most notably, gold (Rendon et al. 2020). According to former Minister of Ecological Mining Development Roberto Mirabal, the Arco Minero has a potential mineral value exceeding \$2 trillion USD (Ayala 2016). However, Maduro’s proposal failed to attract sufficient investment to establish large-scale operations. Instead, the promise of mineral wealth during a period of economic meltdown sparked a gold rush in southern Venezuela, drawing migration from across the country and attracting organized criminal groups eager to capitalize on a golden opportunity.

The Arco Minero is home to a variety of armed groups including sindicatos (gangs originally affiliated with labor unions), colectivos (paramilitary organizations), pranes (prison gangs), and Colombian guerilla groups including the National Liberation Army (ELN), and dissidents of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Together, these groups exert control over the region’s estimated 300,000 miners and dominate the illegal mining sector (ICG 2019). Colombian guerilla groups have used the rural southern territory of Venezuela as a refuge for decades, but their presence intensified after FARC factions disillusioned with the 2016 Colombian peace agreement decided to flee and regroup in Venezuela (InSight Crime 2022). Historically, sindicatos exercised the greatest control over the region’s mines, but in recent years, the ELN and FARC have expanded into the market, intensifying competition and often causing violent conflict. In addition to controlling mines, these armed groups extort local communities, business owners, and sindicato-run mines by taxing transportation corridors and demanding payment in gold for their protection (Rendon et al. 2020). As a result, the ELN receives an estimated 60 percent of its revenue from illicit mining and extortion in southern Venezuela, while dissident factions of the FARC generate around 50 percent of their earnings through the same means (InSight Crime 2019).

Despite the strong regional influence of non-state armed groups, the government plays a central role in this market by permitting and facilitating illicit mining activity in exchange for bribes. Furthermore, illicit gold mining has been used by the Maduro regime as a tool to reward political allies, loyalists, and high-ranking officials within the military (Rendon et al. 2020). Two weeks before the creation of the Arco Minero Strategic Development Zone, Maduro founded the Compañía Anónima Militar para las Industrias Mineras, Petrolíferas y de Gas (CAMIMPEG), a new state-owned company tasked with overseeing petroleum, mineral,

and gas extraction. Importantly, it was to be managed entirely by the Venezuelan armed forces (Decreto No 2.231 2016). Deployment to the Arco Minero became a profitable opportunity for soldiers and generals, who could extract bribes from the armed groups and take a cut at every stage of the mining process. Moreover, as the primary supplier of fuel in the region, the military also profits from sales to fuel-intensive mining operations, and often facilitates the clandestine smuggling of gold across borders (Rendon et al. 2020). The other state-owned mining company, Compañía General de Minería de Venezuela (Minerven), does relatively little mining itself, instead sourcing gold from small-scale artisanal mines controlled by the armed groups and shipping it to the Banco Central de Venezuela (BCV) for official use (Blumenthal et al. 2022). Ownership of gold mines that are state-operated is often given to prominent Chavistas and political allies of Maduro as a reward for their support.

In sum, the illicit mining economy of the Arco Minero is characterized by a highly profitable and mutually beneficial interplay between armed non-state actors and the regime's security forces and state-owned companies. Across the region, armed criminal groups exercise control over small-scale mines. In exchange for protection, material support, and discretion, state security forces charge these groups by taking a cut at every stage of the mining and transportation process. The state-owned mining companies, Minerven and CAMIMPEG, generally source 'official' gold (bound for the BCV) from these same illegal mines, thus legitimizing the illegal mining and collaborating with criminal groups for shared profit.

### The Illicit Gold Market

Illegally mined gold from the Arco Minero is exported to international markets in two main ways: either by the BCV in a semi-official



manner, or illegally by criminal groups and state actors in the form of contraband (Rendon et al. 2020). The BCV, which sources most of its gold from illicit mines via Minerven, exports it primarily to Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, whose governments are friendly with Maduro (Blumenthal et al. 2022). However, these official channels account for a relatively small share of the gold trade—the majority of gold is smuggled into neighboring Colombia, Brazil, Guyana, and the Dutch Caribbean by criminal and state actors, fraudulently “legalized”, and then introduced to global supply chains. The NGO Transparencia Venezuela estimates that between 70 and 90 percent of all gold mined in Venezuela is smuggled out of the country (Transparencia Venezuela 2019).

To examine how illegally mined gold from Venezuela enters the international market, it is first important to understand the nature of gold as a uniquely desirable asset in illicit finance. As highlighted in an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report on Venezuelan gold flows, “[gold] is highly valuable, portable, and capable of holding its value even during significant shocks in markets around the world. As an element, it is very difficult to trace through chemical analysis. It can be reshaped in myriad ways, or literally blended into anonymity. Perhaps most importantly, gold is not intrinsically illicit, so it can be laundered easily into legitimate supply chains, contributing to the greying of local, national, and regional economies, and even the global financial system” (2021). These characteristics make it relatively easy for organized criminal networks and the Venezuelan state to smuggle illegal gold out of the country, obscure its origin, and sell it abroad. Additionally, the ease with which gold is “anonymized” makes it extremely difficult to trace supply chains or assess the true scale and direction of Venezuela’s gold exports.

After smuggling gold into Colombia, Brazil, and

Guyana, criminal groups typically “launder” the gold before introducing it to the global market (Rendon et al. 2020). This can be done easily by melting the gold into bars or reshaping it into jewelry. Another popular route runs through the Dutch Caribbean, primarily Aruba and Curaçao, where the islands’ free trade zones and lax oversight allow Venezuelan exporters to mask the origins of their gold and send it to Europe, the U.S., and other markets with ease (Ebus 2019). As long as the gold is sent directly to the islands’ free trade zones and remains technically “in transit” (as opposed to declaring it as an import, which would require they pay taxes and declare the gold’s origin), it can be picked up by a plane or ship with minimal oversight, and the only thing shown on the final customs paperwork will be that the gold came from Curaçao or Aruba (Ebus 2019).

Gold’s value as a reserve asset makes it especially valuable for Maduro’s regime, which is seeking to circumvent international sanctions on the petroleum sector and bolster the BCV’s reserves. Gold’s ability to retain its value makes it an attractive alternative to holding assets in Venezuelan bolivars, which have experienced a series of sharp inflationary cycles in the last decade, peaking at an annual rate of over 130,000 percent in 2018 and falling to a still-elevated 190 percent in 2023 (Roy & Cheatham 2024). Though it is difficult to quantify gold production in Venezuela given the existence of both licit and illicit markets, the OECD estimates that as of July 2021, Venezuela produced around 75 tons of gold per year altogether, equivalent to roughly \$4.4 billion USD in value (2021).

Internationally, the value of gold is higher than ever. Since the 2008 financial crisis, central banks around the world have increased their purchasing of gold to manage financial uncertainty, driving prices to current record highs of over \$2,600 per ounce (Tran 2024). This trend has accelerated significantly since Russia’s

invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the subsequent imposition of sanctions on Moscow. In 2022 and 2023, “central banks purchased more than one thousand tons of gold per year, more than doubling the annual volume of the previous ten years,” with many central banks—particularly from emerging economies—opting for gold as a hedge against inflation or geopolitical risks including the threat of U.S. sanctions (Tran 2024). Given this spike in global demand for gold in 2022-3, it is reasonable to assume that Venezuela’s gold revenues have grown significantly since the OECD’s 2021 estimate of \$4.4 billion.

The gold market has served as a lifeline for Maduro’s regime, which has been the target of aggressive international sanctions for years. Pressure from these sanctions coupled with a decline in petroleum production have left the regime with few sources of income. Gold—both licit and illicit—has become the government’s most important revenue stream (Blumenthal et al. 2022). Even after the imposition of U.S. sanctions on Minerven and “official” Venezuelan gold in 2019, revenues from illegally traded gold kept the regime afloat and according to experts, were instrumental to its resilience (Blumenthal et al. 2022; US Dept. of the Treasury 2019). This reveals the extent

to which Maduro’s regime has become reliant on the illicit gold trade, and the challenges the international community faces in applying pressure to the regime through sanctions.

### The Impacts of Illegal Mining

The expansion of illegal mining in Venezuela’s Arco Minero has had serious negative effects on the environment, health, and wellbeing of local populations, particularly indigenous communities. When Maduro established the strategic development zone by executive decree, he did so without conducting any of the environmental or social impact assessments typically required for this kind of project (ICG 2019). Furthermore, although the region was “opened” to mining, almost all operations occur off-the-record, in flagrant noncompliance with existing laws and regulation, rife with human rights abuses, and with profits that fund criminal organizations and guerilla groups.

The Arco Minero encompasses portions of the biodiverse Venezuelan Amazon, which contains 36 national parks and nature reserves. According to satellite imagery, illegal mining has expanded beyond the Arco Minero’s official boundaries into protected areas including



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Canaima National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site (Rendon et al. 2020). From 2016 to 2020, approximately 2,821 km<sup>2</sup> of forest—of which 50% was “protected”—was destroyed to make way for roads, mines, and camps (Filipetti 2019; Rendon et al. 2020). Beyond concerns raised by the destruction of legally protected areas, this deforestation also has immediate and serious environmental consequences. Artisanal small-scale gold mining is one of the most destructive mechanisms of forest degradation, as it leaves behind the lowest residual forest carbon of any land use, and it disrupts vital ecosystem functions through mercury contamination, defaunation, and the removal of fine sediments (Caballero Espejo et al. 2018). Unlike other drivers of land use change, artisanal mining can render landscapes virtually irrecoverable. As tropical forests harbor irreplaceable biodiversity, even small amounts of degradation can have devastating ecological consequences; even more so in primary forests, such as those being destroyed in this “ecocide” of the Venezuelan Amazon (Gibson et al. 2011; Transparencia Venezuela 2019).

The use of mercury in gold extraction has caused the contamination of waterways in the region, resulting in a public health crisis for local communities. As detailed in an International Crisis Group (ICG) report, “In Venezuela, 92 percent of the indigenous women surveyed in the Caura river basin had mercury levels above the 2-milligrams-per-kilo limit established by the World Health Organization (WHO), and 37 percent of women among Yé’kuana and Sanema peoples faced childbirth complications related to mercury exposure” (ICG 2019). Moreover, deforestation and unsanitary conditions at mining sites have caused spikes of yellow fever, dengue, diphtheria, and other diseases (ICG 2019). Stagnant pools of water left by mining activity have similarly contributed to a massive spike in malaria cases in the region. Despite Venezuela having been the first country in Latin

America to fully eradicate malaria in 1961, the disease has returned in force, and Venezuela now has the fourth highest rate of malaria in the world (Filipetti 2019).

Communities residing within or near the Arco Minero have long struggled with poverty and limited access to services. Most miners in the illicit gold sector are impoverished, and an estimated 45 percent are underage (Saraiba & Trapani 2018). The southern territory of Venezuela has always had underdeveloped infrastructure and limited access to resources compared to the wealthier, population-dense regions in the north of the country, and these inequities were only aggravated as Venezuela’s economic crisis unfolded in the mid-2010s. Basic necessities including food, fuel, and medicine became scarce across the country, and even more so in the rural, underserved south. This relative absence of the state combined with an economy in crisis and ample opportunity, if not necessity, to engage in illicit mining to survive has allowed organized crime networks to establish a firm grip on the region. Some, including the FARC and ELN, have taken on a state-like role, building infrastructure and disseminating propaganda through local education systems to grow local support and bolster recruitment (ICG 2019).

The presence of armed groups has likewise contributed to a marked increase in violence across the region. Between 2016 and 2019, there were 107 reported deaths from 12 massacres in Bolívar state alone, though the actual amount is likely significantly higher (ICG 2019). These armed criminal groups use violence—from mutilation to outright killings—as a tool to establish and maintain control, punish local populations who fail to meet gold mining quotas or pay imposed ‘taxes’, and to engage in territorial conflicts. State officials and military personnel stationed in the region participate in these same practices (ICG 2019). This pervasive violence disproportionately affects vulnerable populations:

often young and indigenous. Men and boys are often forced into doing dangerous labor in the mines, while women and girls face high risks of sexual exploitation, with reports showing that the average age of sex trafficking victims is around 13-14 years old (Rendon et al. 2020).

Although framed as a development initiative, the Arco Minero has operated as a tool of extractive authoritarianism and kleptocracy, deepening poverty, fueling violence, and inflicting long-term damage on the Venezuelan Amazon. This creates clear public health and security risks for the region through the gold trade's empowerment of violent non-state actors and the spread of mercury pollution and disease via waterways and migration.

### Frameworks for Addressing the Illicit Gold Trade

Efforts to address the illicit mining of gold in Venezuela's Arco Minero face significant challenges, particularly due to deep-seated government corruption and the state's active role as a participant in the illicit market (Yansura et al. 2021). There are myriad ways in which the Venezuelan state, were it an ethical actor with any interest in protecting citizens and upholding the rule of law rather than seeking out profits, could work to address illicit mining. For example, it could start by increasing its presence in southern Venezuela and prioritizing the provision of important state services, reinvesting in these communities, and offering locals an honest livelihood and legal way out of the illicit mining sector that has come to dominate the region. However, this is not something the current regime is incentivized to do. Given the Venezuelan government's complicity in legitimizing criminal organizations' extraction of gold, domestic policy interventions like the state-building example above are essentially out of the question. This is especially true given the extent to which gold now sustains the Maduro regime in the

face of international sanctions and economic downturn. Therefore, the following recommendations focus primarily on the role of the international community in tackling this illicit market.

Firstly, the existence of licit and illicit markets for the same good can complicate enforcement. Bisschop and Wingerde's (2021) analysis of transnational organized environmental crime explores how blurred the lines can get between corporations, states, and organized crime groups as actors in the natural resource economy. Legal entities often engage directly with components of the illicit market, whether knowingly or unknowingly, thus facilitating the expansion of the illicit market. This underscores the need for enhanced monitoring and international regulatory measures to identify and interrupt these illicit-to-licit market links.

Research on regulatory enforcement in the timber market by Apeti and N'doua (2023) demonstrates that targeted enforcement of regulation in the legal timber market can help to reduce demand for illicitly-harvested timber, and by extension, decrease deforestation and environmental damage. A similar logic applies to gold: most exporters ultimately want their product to reach legal markets, where consumer demand is strongest. Policymakers could capitalize on this dynamic by tightening oversight of licit supply chains and enforcing penalties for violations, thereby reducing the demand for illegally sourced gold. This principle—originally applied to timber—has also been identified as a viable strategy for the gold sector in case studies from Nigeria (Olujobi & Irumekhai 2024) and Brazil (Siquiera-Gay & Sánchez 2021). It is therefore reasonable to expect that similar interventions could prove effective in Venezuela.

To be effective, any intensification of enforcement of regulations against illicit gold entering licit supply chains should be accompanied by parallel investments and development

projects in the gold-producing communities. There are significant structural factors that force many locals into illicit gold mining, including the limited job opportunities, criminal control, and widespread rural poverty present in the country's south. Crackdowns in the gold market would not target these factors, and ultimately, such interventions would fall short of addressing the root causes of the issue. Unfortunately, there is little the international community could do in this instance, as the Maduro regime has largely closed off Venezuela to foreign aid, labeling it "imperialist" and "insulting" (O'Grady 2019).

The most critical barrier to addressing illegal gold mining is the lack of comprehensive, specific customs data and information about supply chains from beginning to end. Effective policy responses require detailed data to ensure interventions are targeted and well-researched, and to monitor the success of strategies put in place. Adding to this information challenge are free trade zones like those in Curaçao, which serve as critical transit points for illicit goods and allow gold to enter licit markets with minimal scrutiny. These zones facilitate the laundering of gold by allowing it to bypass regular monitoring and regulations (Ebus 2019). Greater research is needed into the role of free trade zones in the illicit gold trade, and into those specific moments when illegal gold 'blends' its way into licit markets through smelting, repackaging, or customs paperwork manipulation. International sharing of data on these phenomena is critical to ensure supply chain transparency and cooperation (Blumenthal et al. 2022). Furthermore, ground-level data from NGOs is crucial in monitoring the environmental and human impacts of mining in regions where government transparency is limited or nonexistent, as in the case of Venezuela. Regular, independent reports from civil society organizations help to fill information gaps and ensure that the full scope of the illicit market and its effects on communities are understood.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), launched in 2003 to curtail the trade of conflict diamonds, provides a model for crafting policies to regulate Venezuela's "blood gold." The KPCS is an international certification scheme that seeks to ensure diamonds are sourced and sold through legitimate and traceable supply chains. Today, it oversees around 99 percent of the global diamond trade and has driven a reduction of the presence of conflict diamonds in the supply chain from an estimated 15 percent in the 1990s to less than 1 percent today (Bieri 2016). Its successes notwithstanding, Howard (2016) notes that the KPCS has also faced criticism due to its narrow definition of conflict diamonds, lack of transparency, and inconsistent monitoring and enforcement requirements for member countries. Future research could examine how a model inspired by the KPCS might be adapted to the illicit gold market, seeking to reduce trade in "blood gold" from regions where gold mining has caused widespread violence, exploitation, and human rights violations, as in Venezuela. This research could use market data and reflect on the successes and failures of the KPCS in order to craft a bespoke framework for combating illegal mining (Howard 2016).

Given that most of the KPCS member states (resource-rich diamond exporters) are generally also involved in the gold market, and view the KPCS' progress in a positive light, a gold-focused KPCS project is politically feasible. Any such framework should seek to replicate the KPCS' tripartite structure of industry, state, and civil society—and ensure that civil society in particular is recentered and given sufficient voice in key discussions. Though not a panacea, such a framework could contribute to a meaningful reduction in the trade of "blood gold" internationally and serve as a first step towards addressing the ongoing crisis in Venezuela's Arco Minero del Orinoco.

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