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Dear Readers,

Global politics has always been marked by turbulence. Yet, in recent months, we have witnessed an alarming intensification of global challenges, ranging from traditional interstate war and humanitarian crises to the erosion of democracy and the reconfiguration of global power structures. In such volatile times, it is more essential than ever to engage with international relations through a lens that is grounded in rigorous scholarship and critically questions standing assumptions. Therefore, it is with great pride that I introduce the inaugural issue of the ***Leiden Graduate Journal of International Relations***, ISSA's own student-led publication dedicated to showcasing exceptional academic work produced by students in the MA in International Relations. Our goal is to provide a platform that reflects the intellectual breadth and methodological diversity of the programme, while amplifying student voices in the global discourse. This first issue captures the vibrancy and depth of our academic community, featuring a wide range of topics that cover all specialisations of the MAIR.

This issue is the result of many hours of dedicated work. I extend my sincere gratitude to all the contributors for submitting their finest work and to the reviewers for their insightful feedback. This journal is a testament to our shared commitment to academic excellence and critical inquiry. A special thank you is due to our editor, Katrina Cassar, who significantly contributed to bringing this project to life.

We hope you find the ideas within these pages as thought-provoking as we did.

Anton Meier
Vice President & Academic Chair
International Studies Student Association
Summer 2025

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this journal are solely those of the authors, and do not represent those of the International Studies Student Association, the MA International Relations, Leiden University or any other institution.

Table of Contents

Desire as Driver of Migration: Exploring the Tensions Between Individual Agency and Structural Constraints of Migration in the Film “As Far as I Can Walk”
— *Lena Božić* ……...1

Circumventing Algorithmic Censorship: Discursive Strategies of Pro-Palestinian Content Creators in the Face of Surveillance and Power
— *Nefret El-Masry* ……16

How do Narratives Portrayed in Ottolenghi and Tamimi’s 2012 Cookbook ‘Jerusalem’ Conceal Realities of Israeli-Palestinian Power Dynamics?
— *Jenna Whitehouse* ……33

From Instability to Cooperation: Hobbes’ Leviathan and the Formation of the European Coal and Steel Community
— *Ambar Colonel Albornoz* ...……...49

The EU-Tunisia Migration Deal: Securitisation as a Weakness
— *Toon van Parys* ……...64

To Adapt Or Die: Military Innovation And Adoption-Capacity – What Organisational Factors Facilitate The Adoption Of New Weapon Systems?
— *Anton Meier* ……85

Addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Cameroon: A Realist Policy Analysis of Cameroon’s National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security
— *Nymke van Poortvliet* ...……107

Securitisation Gone Wrong: Why Yoon Suk Yeol’s Martial Law Declaration Failed
— *Yuri Wagner* ...……126

Latin America within the Third World
— *Júlio Escolastico Siniscalchi* ……..144

Victim Mentality: The “Historical Burden” of China's Rise
— *Yuhan Liu* ...……158

Palestine Lost: The Global Influence of the Creation of Israel
— *Chandler Lütteken* ...……174

Working Less? Implications for Labour in a Degrowth Economy
— *Dimitar Borumov* ……..190

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Lena Božić
Culture and Politics

Desire as Driver of Migration: Exploring the Tensions Between Individual Agency and Structural Constraints of Migration in the Film "As Far as I Can Walk"

Abstract

This essay examines the tension between individual agency and structural constraints in the context of migration through an analysis of *As Far as I Can Walk*, a film by Stefan Arsenijević. By reimagining the medieval Serbian epic *Banović Strahinja* through the experiences of Ghanaian migrants in Serbia, the film foregrounds migration as a complex interplay between personal desire and systemic barriers. Using discourse analysis and assemblage theory, this paper explores how migration is shaped by geopolitical forces, border regimes, and economic precarity while remaining a deeply personal and transformative process. The macro-level analysis addresses the structural constraints of the Balkan Route, the politics of migrant categorisation, and the dehumanising discourses that discipline migrant lives. The micro-level analysis interrogates the role of desire as a driver of migration, emphasizing how individual aspirations, relational dynamics, and self-identifications evolve throughout the migration process. Ultimately, this essay argues that the film challenges conventional representations of migrants and migration politics by shifting the discourse from migration as an impersonal process to one driven by personal narratives. This essay bridges migration studies with film analysis, offering a nuanced reading of migration as both an assemblage of structural forces and an affective, agent-driven phenomenon. It advances discussions on migrant subjectivities, challenges dominant Eurocentric narratives of displacement, and provides an interdisciplinary framework for analysing migration through cultural texts.

Keywords: Migration, Agency, Structure, Discourse, Assemblage

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Introduction

The concept of migration has in recent years been predominantly associated with waves of migrants and refugees attempting to reach salvation in the countries of the European Union. Faceless, nameless, and utterly dehumanised, these people, their lives and struggles have become nothing more than a statistic and at best a newspaper headline. Their journeys are shaped by geopolitical forces, economic precarity, borders and border patrols, and countless other things they have little to no influence on. These structures appear to dominate and discipline migrant lives, yet, at its core, migration remains a deeply human endeavour, primarily driven by desire, love, and search for a better life. In *As Far as I Can Walk* Stefan Arsenijevic reimagines a Serbian medieval epic poem, *Banovic Strahinja,* to tell the story of Samita and Ababuo, Ghanaian migrants navigating both structural forces and their individual desires in the search for a better life in Europe. Here, migration becomes not just the physical crossing of borders, but a deeply transformative process for everyone involved, as the characters assert their desires and ability to make choices within the constraints of the systems and structures that dictate their lives.

Research Question and Roadmap

The research question this essay will tackle is "How does the film *As Far as I Can Walk* navigate the tension between individual agency and structural constraints in the context of migration?" It will be argued that the film places individual agency at the core of migration, and human desire and passion, whether for a different life or another person, as the driving force of the entire process.

Firstly, the film will be briefly introduced and summarised. The essay will then outline the methodological and theoretical frameworks that will be used to answer the research question, namely discourse analysis and assemblage theory. Following this, the impact of structural constraints will be examined, connecting to the broader context of the film's setting. Next, the essay will turn to the question of individual agency, examining the role of desire as a driver of migration. Finally, the essay will conclude with a summary of the arguments and a reflection on limitations.

Film background and context

As Far as I Can Walk is an adaptation and reimagining of a medieval Serbian epic poem *Strahinja Banovic,* by writer and director Stefan Arsenijevic. The film premiered at the 55th Karlovy Vary Film Festival in 2021, where it won the main prize, a special jury mention, the Europa Cinemas Label Award, and Best Actor for the male lead Ibrahim Koma (Tizard, 2021; Europa Cinemas n.d.). Arsenijevic was also awarded Best Director at the KineNova Film Festival in the same year (Lazarevska, 2021). The film was co-produced by Serbia, Bulgaria, France, Luxembourg, and Lithuania, and co-funded by the European Union's Creative Europe – MEDIA program (Abbatescianni, 2020).

Film Summary

The film follows Samita and Ababuo, two Ghanaians who leave their home for Europe. After being deported from Germany, they settled in the Krnjaca asylum centre near Belgrade, where they lived for over a year. Determined to build a future in Serbia, Samita learns the language, adopts the name Strahinja, and earns a permanent position on a local football team. Meanwhile, Ababuo spends her days in Krnjaca putting on sock puppet shows for children and longing for something more. Their lives take a turn when they meet Ali and Dervish, two Syrian refugees heading to the United Kingdom. As refugees, they have better chances of staying in the European Union than Samita and Ababu, who are economic migrants. One night, Ababuo secretly leaves for Hungary with the Syrians, leaving Samita at a crossroads: stay in Serbia and risk never seeing her again, or follow them and forfeit his asylum status.

Deciding to follow Ababuo, Samita takes on the challenges of the Balkan Route. He pays smugglers to take him to and across the border, evades the police, and sleeps in makeshift camps. He finally catches up with her in a Hungarian refugee camp. Spotting her during an interview with a journalist, he rushes to confront her. In a raw and honest exchange, Ababuo admits her pride in Samita for what he has achieved but explains that Serbia has nothing to offer her, and that she has to at least try to live the life she wants. In an act of desperation, Samita storms into the border police office demanding deportation for himself and Ababuo, as they are asylum seekers in Serbia and have no right to be in Hungary. However, when he sees Ababuo violently resisting

the border police, he intervenes, demanding her release. The couple shares a long and meaningful look before Samita turns to the police, saying: “I don’t know this woman, my wife looks completely different” (Asrenijevic, 2021, 1:21:21). He is deported to Serbia, stripped of his asylum rights, and forced to start the process anew. In the final scene, a government employee asks why he left the country, knowing the consequences, to which Samita replies “I had to” (Arsenijevic, 2021, 1:24:38).

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The method this essay will employ to answer the research question is discourse analysis. Discourse, as defined by Foucault, “is a particular knowledge about the world that shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it” (Rose, 2022, p. 215). Importantly, discourse does not just describe the world but also produces subjects within it by disciplining them into certain ways of thinking and acting (Rose, 2022). Discourse analysis is concerned with “social production and effects of discourses” or how text or image construct accounts of the social world (Rose, 2022, p. 221).

The film *As Far as I Can Walk* is the main object of analysis of this essay. As suggested by Dunn and Neuman (2019), a double reading will be conducted. In the first, initial reading, the “discursive terrain” is identified and mapped, and in the second, dialogical reading, alternative possibilities and implicit meanings of the text are explored. This is in line with Rose’s (2022) suggestion that familiarity with the source allows the researcher to identify key themes, the connections between which can then be untangled. It is also necessary to consider the broader context of discourse in order to address its production of meanings and actors. Specific things to look out for when conducting discourse analysis are presupposition, predication, and subject positioning. Presupposition refers to statements that are accepted as a ‘given fact’ and not called into question by in-group members. An examination of these makes visible the role of discourses in producing knowledge and creates space for alternative understandings. Predication examines the verbs, adverbs, and adjectives that are attached to nouns, exposing how certain qualities are linked to particular subjects (Dunn and Neumann, 2019). Subject positioning refers to the relative discursive relationship between subjects that defines them. The process of subject positioning can be illuminated by interpreting

the ways in which the text links subjects and objects to one another. “A text,” emphasise Dunn and Neumann, “never constructs only one thing” (Dunn & Neumann, 2019, p. 113). Multiple things are constructed through the discursive construction of implicit or explicit parallels and contrasts between them.

This essay will utilise discourse analysis to examine how the film positions different elements of migration in accordance with assemblage theory. Through the lens of assemblage theory, migration can be understood as an intricate network of different actors, institutions and materialities. Assemblage theory considers material, bodily, and affective processes, as well as the relations of power between them, in the formation of socio-spatial movements (Wiertz, 2020). Viewing migration as an assemblage means recognising the agency of not just the migrants themselves in the migration process, but all other elements of the route, such as (in)formal camps, smuggling networks, borders and border police, social and political attitudes towards migrants, etc. Importantly, assemblages do not have a fixed organisation or structure but are rather networks of connections in a constant process of becoming (Tamboukou, 2020).

Adopting this theoretical lens allows for a deeper analysis of subject positioning within the film, as the understanding of a subject with agency includes more than just human actors. In this way we can examine the migration assemblage on a macro level, looking at the impacts of structures, institutions, and systems as larger-scale aspects of society in the process of migration, and on a micro level, examining context, meaning-making and interactions between individuals in specific contexts (Gougherty and Puentes, 2024). This will allow for an examination of the tensions between structural constraints and individual agency in the migration process.

Crucial for discussing individual agency will be the concept of desire. However, instead of conceptualising desire in Freudian and Lacanian terms as “something characterised by ‘lack’ and striving for impossible ideals,” this essay will adopt a framework for desire developed by Francis Collins (2017) specifically for the aim of migration studies. Colins follows the principles of assemblage theory in arguing that desire emanates from particular assemblages of bodies, things, and ideas and, as such, is capable of creating conditions for particular subject formations. As such, his

formulation is invaluable for the present analysis of migratory movement as instigated by both conscious and subconscious, internal and external influences.

Macro-level Analysis

The Balkan Route

The backdrop of the film is the Syrian refugee crisis along the Balkan Route. Serbia was one of the key transit countries on the route, with as many as 580,000 people crossing into it in 2015 (Bobic and Santic, 2019). During this time, the capital, Belgrade, outside of which our protagonists reside, served as a major transportation hub. In September of 2015, Hungary erected a 4-meter-tall security fence spanning 175 kilometres along its border with Serbia (Feher, 2015). In November of the same year, it was announced that only those from Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan who were awarded the 'refugee' status would be allowed to continue beyond Greece (Bobis and Santic, 2019). Moreover, the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement resulted in the closure of most key border crossings for irregular migrants and severely limited mobility in the region, leading to the official closing of the Balkan Route. Despite this, the Route has remained active, with Serbia becoming "a sort of buffer state" between southern transit countries and EU countries that continue to block arrivals of irregular migrants (Minca et al., 2018, p.37). This context is deeply influential to the plot of the film, and Samita encounters many elements of the new Balkan Route on his quest to find Ababuo.

Since the official closing of the Route, an informal settlement in Belgrade, Afghan Park, has become recognised as the best place to get in contact with smugglers. Afghan Park has long been linked to Krnjaca, an asylum centre which hosts families and unaccompanied minors (Minca et al., 2018). This link is revealed in the film as we follow Samita's daily activities. When he is not at football training, he volunteers at a Red Cross donation facility near Afghan Park. Moreover, early in the film, he is approached by a father asking for his help in leaving Serbia. Samita takes them to his 'friend', a Serbian taxi driver Aca, who manages a smuggling network of other taxi drivers looking to earn some extra income. Because he brought customers to Aca, he also got a part of the money, illuminating his place in the chain of the informal economy of migration.

Figure 1

Samita brings the family to Aca



(Arsenijevic, 2021)

Figure 2

Samita receives payment from Aca



(Arsenijevic, 2021)

After leaving to find Ababuo, Samita ends up using Aca's network himself. During the drive, he overhears the drivers discussing leaving the migrants several kilometres away from the Hungarian border. Enraged, Samita starts questioning his driver if the

same thing happened to all the people he delivered to Aca, but the car gets stopped by the police before the driver can respond. Despite Samita's belief that he was being a good Samaritan, this sequence reveals a tragic truth that many of those in the smuggling business are not only doing it for their own monetary gain, but also often at the expense of the very people they claim to be helping.

Having evaded the police, Samita comes across an informal camp where he meets Dervish, who got separated from Ali and Ababuo. This episode illustrates another key part of the unofficial Balkan Route, makeshift camps as a result of immobility *en route*. These have emerged alongside border zones and provide places for migrants to rest and gather resources before attempting to cross into the EU (Jordan and Moser, 2020). In the middle of the night, Samita joins a group attempting to cross into Hungary under the guidance of another smuggler. After a long trek through the forest, they crawl through a hole in the fence, but their success is quickly undermined by the arrival of border patrol with dogs, and the group disperses into the night, all running in different directions.

Figure 3

Samita walks through the makeshift camp near the border



(Arsenijevic, 2021)

Figure 4

Migrants cross the border through a hole in the fence



(Arsenijevic, 2021)

Considering the subjectivity of the various elements of the Balkan Route Samita interacts with through the lens of assemblage theory, we can read the subject positioning of an individual migrant to be very low in the hierarchy of the elements constituting the assemblage. On a macro level, the individual migrant is subject to the whims of all the other actors and processes, having little agency in whether or not their migration efforts are successful, as even impeccable plans can be thwarted by an unexpected border patrol or a greedy smuggler.

The Migrant Typology

Another key element in the assemblage of migration are externally imposed categories of different types of migrants and their hierarchical ordering in the eyes of the state apparatus. When Samita and Ababuo meet the Syrians, their conversation reveals the extent to which these distinctions impact the migrants' position in the migration assemblage. Samita and Ababuo explain their situation, having been deported from Germany due to being economic migrants. Their voices are filled with disdain as they

discuss how "[those] from war zones have the priority," due to being afforded refugee status (Arsenijevic, 2021, 00:12:07). In this scene Samita and Ababuo reveal their presuppositions about the different categories of migrants and accept as given the fact that different labels allow for different mobilities and possibilities. Labels such as refugee, expat, economic migrant, political migrant, asylum seeker, etc., place different migrant subjects in different positions within the migration assemblage and reveal the role of the state in this process. While all migrants are equally subject to the elements of the route, the state awards some preferential treatment over others. This bleeds into the migrants' individual subjectivity and personal motivations for migration, illustrated by Samita saying that they will not try again because "[he's] not humiliating [himself] anymore" (Arsenijevic, 2021, 00:12:19). In his article proposing desire theory as a conceptual framework for studying migration, Francis Collins (2017, p. 968) argues that individual desire is shaped by discourses that "prescribe certain actions and proscribe others" evident in how Samita's place in the migrant typology impacts his desire and ambition to migrate.

Moreover, the category of 'migrant' in itself, regardless of the type, carries certain presuppositions which position migrant subjects in society. The dictionary definition of migrant is a neutral description of a person who moved from one country to another (Merrian-Webster, n.d.). However, the broader discourse surrounding migration in Europe has contributed to the term 'migrant' being associated with threats to national security and stability (Zoppi and Puleri, 2021). Additionally, migrants are expected to acculturate to the dominant society, whether through integration, assimilation, or other methods (Kunst and Sam, 2014). Through the character of Ababuo, the film calls attention to how the positioning of migrant subjects in society influences their own presuppositions about themselves, but also those of the audience. The audience, like Samita himself, is stunned by Ababuo's departure, as the pair was on their way to being granted asylum in Serbia. Samita has complete trust in the system, having done what is expected of him as a migrant: applying for asylum, learning the language, and waiting for state approval. Ababuo, on the other hand, is not as receptive to this position or the lack of agency it gives her. This culminates in the interview scene where she passionately declares: "I'm not a fucking migrant", rejecting this identity and the

presuppositions that come with it (Arsenijevic, 2021, 01:07:21). She reasserts her personhood and individuality against both the objectification of migrants as numbers and files and their demonisation as a threat, asserting that “you are just like us” (Arsenijevic, 2021, 01:07:29). This powerful moment challenges the audience to confront the dehumanising narratives surrounding migration and compels a deeper reflection on the shared humanity often obscured by political and bureaucratic labels.

Micro-Level Analysis

Collins (2017, 267) uses assemblage theory to argue that migration is a process where “past, present, and future are folded together in the emergence of migrant lives.” This can be seen in the above-analysed conversation with the Syrians, who at one point ask Ababuo what she does. Samita answers for her, saying she does theatre workshops for the kids in the asylum centre. Ababuo coldly replies that she is an actress, she studied acting and was a professional theatre actress in Ghana. Prior to this, Ali explained that he was a professor of literature who wrote for foreign magazines. During their conversation, Ababuo gets increasingly more excited to talk about her work, feeling seen for her expertise and knowledge. For Ali, his past success as a writer and political activist will continue in the future once he reaches the UK, having been briefly interrupted by his present situation, as his refugee status grants him additional privileges within the migration assemblage. Ababuo, on the other hand, has been completely disconnected from her past, apart from being with Samita, is unhappy with her present and sceptical about their future prospects of getting asylum. During their conversation, Ababuo begins considering the possibility of her future self achieving what her past self desired, to be an actress in the UK, regardless of the difficulties of her present situation.

For Samita, the process looks different, as he has been able to achieve a desired future. After being offered a permanent position in the football club, he shares that he had given up his dreams of becoming a football player over the many years he spent on the road. He declares that Serbia is his new country, the team are his brothers and makes a toast to their future success. This connects to another point raised by Collins (2017, p. 968), that migration is a “transformative process, in which migrants’ place in

the world, their ideas about themselves and possibilities for the future are reworked." Through the process of migration, Samita has transformed into Strahinja – from a scared and uncertain man into a football player with a bright future ahead. On the other hand, Ababuo was transformed from an ambitious and driven actress into a shell of herself who spends her days entertaining children in an asylum camp while her husband chases his dreams. Yet, by leaving with Ali and Dervish, Ababuo once again undergoes the transformative process of migration, her passion and drive reignited. In her final conversation with Samita, she explains her reasons for leaving. Despite being proud of him, she was also jealous that he was able to make a life for himself while she was not. "I need to find myself", she says, "figure myself out on my own" (Arsenijevic, 2021, 01:12:29). In other words, through choosing to migrate again she was reworking her ideas about her past, present, and possible future selves. In choosing to follow her, Samita also underwent that process, risking his potential future as Strahinja so that the present Samita can get answers from the woman who connects him to his past. Shifting the focus from Samita and Ababuo as individuals to their relationship, we can see how the process of migration first transformed it into a resentful marriage and then a heartbreaking separation as they realise their individual perceptions of future possibilities are incompatible.

The subject positioning of the characters, both in relation to one another and to the broader process of migration, is deeply influenced by their personalities, backgrounds, and desires. In this way, the film accentuates the role of individual agency against all other elements of the migration assemblage. Indeed, the smugglers, the police, the politics, all play an important role, but it is the individual who decides if the future possibilities they foresee make it worthwhile to even try. Despite everything, individual agency is at the core of the migration assemblage as it is human desire and passion, whether for a different life or another person, that is the driving force of the entire process.

Conclusion

This essay has set out to answer the research question of "How does the film *As Far as I Can Walk* navigate the tension between individual agency and structural constraints

within the migration assemblage?" In doing so, it has read the film as text through the framework of discourse analysis, drawing out presuppositions and subject positionings. Understanding migration as an assemblage through the lens of assemblage theory allowed for deeper insights into the roles of structural constraints and individual agency in regard to migration. The film posits that in spite of the challenges posed by structural elements, borders, police, smugglers, labels, etc., it is individual agency, motivation, and desire that propels the migration process and in doing so constructs migrant subjectivities. Samita and Ababuo's personal choices and experiences of love, loss, and survival are central to both their personal narratives of migration and the film as a whole.

However, this analysis remains limited by its focus on the film's contemporary setting and characters, without delving into its origins as an adaptation of a medieval epic poem. Although the loose adaptation and significant recontextualisation justify this focus, a comparative study of the film alongside its source material could offer deeper insights into the transformation of themes, narratives, and subjectivities across contexts. Such an exploration is beyond the scope and word limit of this essay, but would undoubtedly deepen our understanding of the film as an adaptation.

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Nefret El-Masry
Culture and Politics

Circumventing Algorithmic Censorship: Discursive Strategies of Pro-Palestinian Content Creators in the Face of Surveillance and Power

Abstract

This paper analyses the discursive strategies pro-Palestinian content creators employ to circumvent algorithmic censorship on social media platforms like Meta, which censors Palestinian narratives. Drawing on a Foucauldian lens, the study uses discourse analysis to understand how power and surveillance are reflected in this censorship. The paper argues that these strategies by pro-Palestinian content creators expose unequal power dynamics but also challenge the invisibility of Palestinian narratives within dominant institutional structures. The main analysis focuses on three key discursive tactics: coding of words to evade algorithmic detection, strategically using facial features to increase visibility and embed symbolism, and actively engaging the audience to counteract reduced content circulation. The paper concludes that while the ultimate effectiveness of these tactics in fully countering algorithmic power remains unclear, they represent crucial attempts by creators to challenge institutional censorship, highlighting the interplay of power, surveillance, and (in)visibility embedded within algorithms. These strategies demonstrate the resilience of marginalised voices in resisting and recreating power to circulate their narratives within the constraints of social media platforms. This study contributes to the understanding of how social media users adapt and resist algorithmic governance in the context of liberation movements.

Keywords: Censorship, Algorithm, Surveillance, Resistance, Palestine

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Introduction

As the famous Palestinian intellectual and Professor Edward Said at Columbia University once said in 1984, Palestinians are denied "permission to narrate" (Zahzah 2021, para.1). As Palestinians and their allies fight for liberation from occupation and call attention to the ongoing genocide by Israel (Amnesty International, 2024), activists are subjected to censorship and repression (Sen, 2024). As activists use these platforms to share their stories, pro-Palestinian content faces significant censorship, specifically from Meta's algorithms, which, according to Nadim Nashif, founder of *7amleh* – the Arab Center for Social Media Advancement, are shaped by a biased understanding of Palestine (Paul, 2023). In response, social media creators have developed various linguistic and visual strategies in an attempt to subvert these algorithms to continue to share their narratives. This essay will analyse these discursive strategies through the Foucauldian lens of discourse analysis using the regime of truth, institutional power, surveillance, and concepts of (in)visibility to understand how power and surveillance are reflected in algorithmic censorship. I argue that these strategies not only expose the unequal power dynamics inherent in algorithmic censorship but also challenge the invisibility and control of Palestinian narratives within Meta. This essay will begin by providing contextual background on the role of social media in social movements and the specific censorship faced by pro-Palestinian content online. It will then outline the discourse analysis methodology, followed by a theoretical analysis of algorithmic censorship within a Foucauldian framework. The main analysis will focus on the three discursive tactics employed by pro-Palestinian content creators to circumvent algorithmic restrictions: 1) coding of words, 2) use of facial features, and 3) actively engaging the audience. Finally, the essay will conclude by reflecting on how these strategies challenge power structures that control the circulation of Palestinian narratives.

Social Media, Social Movements, and Pro-Palestinian Censorship

Pro-Palestinian content has faced censorship from many social media platforms, complicating the extent to which social media can be used as a tool for activism. Social media plays an essential role in social movements, helping facilitate the spread of

information, enhancing human networks, increasing engagement, and inspiring action from new people in both online and in-person spaces (Hwang et al, 2015). However, the tool of social media has also been a place of censorship for Palestinians and those in solidarity attempting to share their stories. For example, in April 2021, Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube forcibly cancelled an online academic event titled 'Whose Narratives? What Free Speech for Palestine?' co-sponsored by the Arab and Muslim Ethnicities and Diasporas Studies program at San Francisco State University, the Council of UC Faculty Associations, and the University of California Humanities Research Institute (Zahzah, 2021). Zoom cancelled the event after claiming one of the panel participants was affiliated with a US-designated terrorist group (Zahzah, 2021). Furthermore, in the spring of 2021, Meta and Twitter were accused of systematically censoring and removing content of those documenting settler and state violence against Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah, occupied East Jerusalem (Zahzah, 2021). In response, Meta claims that removing and hindering content is part of a “global technical issue,” while activists and advocacy groups are doubtful of these claims, given its intentional targeting (Zahzah 2021, para. 27). An external audit commissioned by Meta and conducted by the consulting and research firm Business for Social Responsibility found that Meta restricted Palestinian users’ freedom of expression and disproportionately censored Arabic-language posts over Hebrew-language posts during the year of 2021 (Capelouto, 2023). Finally, a report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) in December 2023 outlined how Meta systemically censored pro-Palestinian content globally since October 7, 2023 (Luscombe, 2023). This report included primarily English content from over sixty countries and cited five types of censorship that targeted pro-Palestinian content, including taking down posts, stories, and comments; disabling accounts; restricting users’ ability to interact with others’ posts; and shadow banning, making content hidden or less visible to others without the user being notified (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Even HRW’s posts themselves were marked as spam (Luscombe, 2023). This highlights the prevalence of social media platforms scrutinising pro-Palestinian content. As social media continues to be a way for activists to share Palestinian narratives, the challenges of algorithmic censorship disrupt the spread of information and the building of social networks essential for social movements to reach and educate new audiences.

Methodology

This essay will use discourse analysis, rooted in Foucauldian theories of power, visibility, and institutions, as the primary method to analyse how pro-Palestinian content creators navigate algorithmic censorship. This study adopts a qualitative discourse analysis approach, focusing on content from five specific content creators. A qualitative approach is particularly suited to analysing the discursive strategies employed by individual content creators, as it allows for an in-depth and nuanced understanding of the tactics they use to resist perceived censorship. The data analysed consists of social media posts from Instagram (owned by Meta), including reels and standard posts. These posts were examined for written and visual cues. The selected posts were published after October 2023, coinciding with increased social media content highlighting Palestinian narratives and the ongoing genocide. Content creators were also selected based on their use of English to ensure accurate analysis without translation tools. Two candidates were identified through secondary sources, from articles discussing their experiences with censorship, which provided additional context for a deeper analysis. To address ethical considerations, only content was chosen from publicly available accounts.

Discourse analysis examines the language, positioning, imagery, visuals, and patterns within content, looking at what is present and what is not. This approach further pays attention to the context in which visuals and language are created and spread (Rose, 2022). Within discourse analysis, the structure of the visual or written content is examined, followed by the tools and circumstances used to produce it. This analysis will also evaluate the institutions that lay behind the display and spread of the visual and written content. Additionally, intertextuality is also considered, recognising that discourse is not independent, but rather interacts and is dependent on the meanings conveyed in other images and texts (Rose, p. 216). Lastly, the concept of discursive formation – how meanings are interconnected within a particular discourse – will inform the analysis (Rose, 2022).

Several limitations were encountered in this study. Platform restrictions prevented access to certain data, such as algorithmic details and performance metrics. While

secondary sources provided insight into users' perceptions of algorithms, this data was not available for all creators. Additionally, the qualitative nature of discourse analysis brings a level of subjectivity in interpreting the data. Grounded in discourse analysis and Foucauldian theory, this methodology provides a framework for examining how pro-Palestinian content creators navigate algorithmic censorship and engage with power through their discursive tactics.

Foucauldian Theoretical Frameworks under Algorithmic Censorship

Regime of Truth

This study draws on Foucault's theories of power to examine how social media platforms regulate and control narratives as a mechanism of power. Foucault asserts that power lies everywhere and is produced and reproduced through discourse, shaping societal norms and practices (Rose, 2022). Central to this is the 'Regime of Truth', which highlights how discourse generates social impact by the assumption that knowledge is truthful, with what is considered true shifting throughout time (Rose, 2022). Foucault understands discourse as not being universally truthful, but rather being a process of persuasion (Rose, 2022). This framework provides a lens to understand how social media platforms and the content produced within their bounds both hold a type of power, relying on the regime of truth to create an outcome.

Institutional Power and Surveillance

Foucault's concepts of institutional power and surveillance are crucial in understanding the structure of social media platforms like Meta and its algorithms. The algorithm is "a collection of protocols and processes utilised to personalise the feeds and timelines of each user" (Matthews, 2024, p. 77). Algorithms structure the online experience by determining who and what is visible on the feed of social media while being customised to each user's personal feed (Cotter, 2019). The exact rules and system with which algorithms are used to determine visibility are not known to the public and are applied without transparency to the user (Conti et al., 2024). Institutionalised power, according to Foucault, is maintained through surveillance – a dynamic where individuals are observed without the ability to observe in return, creating an asymmetrical power

relationship deeply embedded in modern capitalist societies (Rose, 2022). Surveillance is not just a tool for observation, but a mechanism that shapes behaviour. It is the perception of constant visibility that makes individuals adjust their behaviours (Rose, 2022). Within this context, social media platforms like Meta hold institutional power as they are able to have constant surveillance over their platform through their algorithms, without the ability of their users to know exactly what they observe. This, in turn, creates a process where users tailor content to adhere to perceived norms and expectations of the application's algorithm. This makes Meta the institutional apparatus, as it contains organisational structures that govern the platform, while the algorithm functions as an institutional technology that enforces its rules, maintaining authority.

Interplay of Visibility and Invisibility

In the context of social media platforms, this interplay of visibility and invisibility is central to understanding algorithmic censorship. Cobbe argues that algorithmic censorship uses surveillance to provide disciplinary control over discourse that would not be possible to the same extent as with human moderators (Cobbe, 2021), making algorithmic censorship a form of total surveillance (Cobbe, 2021). Under this form of surveillance, algorithmic censorship's visibility is at its maximum capacity. However, invisibility is equally as significant – what is left absent or what is excluded from the view (Rose, 2022). One technique of algorithms employing invisibility is through their visibility reduction methods, such as "shadow banning," making content less visible or hidden from others without notifying the user (Conti et al., 2024). It is intended to reduce harmful content and tackle misinformation, but equally runs the risk of silencing minority voices or voices contrary to powerful interest groups (Conti et al., 2024). Therefore, Taina Bucher, Associate Professor in the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Oslo, argues that social media platforms, through algorithmic censorship, operate not under the 'threat of visibility,' but rather under the 'threat of invisibility' (Bucher, 2012). For Bucher, the issue is not the constant potential for surveillance (visibility), but rather the fear of constantly fading into invisibility – of not being deemed as significant. To gain visibility and to be noticed, users must adhere to the specific logic and power structures inherent in the designs of social media platforms

(Bucher, 2012). This constant 'threat of invisibility' is used to sustain authority and power (Cotter, 2019). Algorithmic censorship uses both visibility and invisibility as a mode to engrain its institutional power: the algorithm has consistent visibility over the activities of the user and uses these as inputs to determine what is worthy of visibility and what should be threatened with invisibility.

Algorithms as Non-Neutral

Algorithms are not neutral tools, but rather institutional technologies that are embedded in broader socio-political systems that reinforce power dynamics by determining what is permitted and what should be suppressed (Cobbe, 2021). The people behind the engineers of algorithms are thus highly influenced by social, cultural, economic, and political norms (Cotter, 2019). As Anisa Matthews notes, algorithms are created with capitalist agendas and often reflect the biases and prejudices of their designers (Matthews, 2024). For instance, social media platforms have collaborated with the United States Department of Defense on surveillance and big data projects, further highlighting their role as centres of power (Zahzah, 2021). Moreover, the executives and employees of Big Tech companies have contributed to socio-economic inequalities, such as land grabs and gentrification in the San Francisco Bay area, displacing working-class and marginalised communities of colour (Zahzah, 2021). This historical and structural context highlights how algorithms were designed and function within a larger political context, reinforcing the inequalities of dominant power structures.

Navigating the Algorithm: Resistance or Adaptation?

Although the exact inputs of social media algorithms are not publicised, it is the perception of these rules, surveillance, and the threat of invisibility that produces specific responses from users to adhere to the 'rules.' However, to counter rules, many creators try to interpret algorithmic architecture in order to 'game' the system: to find its loopholes to achieve a desired outcome (Cotter, 2019). This leads to users using specific hashtags, key phrases, and engagement tools to increase their visibility (Matthews, 2024). However, this adaptation is not always a form of resistance. As Kelly Cotter suggests, users are often "playing the visibility game," working within the

algorithm structure to maximise visibility rather than challenging it outright (Cotter, 2019). At the onset of the Palestinian genocide, Hela Tawil-Souri, Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication, and of Middle East and Islamic Studies at New York University, shifted from interacting with content she genuinely liked to deliberately engaging with posts that she wanted to be more visible to others (Tawil-Souri, 2024). This led to her liking and engaging with images and videos that documented Palestinians dying, suffering, and being dug out from under rubble (Tawil-Souri, 2024). This was her tactic of helping circulate content and help users combat visibility censorship (Tawil-Souri, 2024). As other academics suggest, putting intention behind interactions that challenge capitalist and dominant power dynamics is a way to decolonise the algorithm (Matthews, 2024). As content creators navigate algorithmic censorship, their desire to have agency within a dominant framework is nonetheless present.

Applying Foucault's theoretical framework and examining the interplay of power, surveillance, (in)visibility, algorithmic governance, and user strategies illustrates the complex power dynamics present in social media. This framework provides a critical lens for understanding the discursive strategies employed by creators against perceived censorship in amplifying Palestinian narratives.

Discursive Tactics: Countering Algorithmic Censorship and Creating Power

Tactic #1: Coding of Words

The first discursive tactic is the coding of words, spelling certain words intentionally wrong in order for the algorithm to not understand their intended meaning when determining content circulation. This is a widely known and used tactic by Palestinian activists to 'trick' the algorithm (Shankar et al., 2023). This is such a popular strategy that a blockchain company named Bydotpy was created to recode words in the Arabic and English languages to not be readable by algorithms (Shankar et al., 2023). This strategy can be found in Appendix D, where content creator @thomas.maddens replaces the word genocide with the coded word "gen0cide". Genocide is also coded in Appendix F by @Mikaelaloach to the word "g side." Through coding the word genocide, pro-Palestinian content creators create two separate linguistic and visual effects. First,

as it is one of the few words coded in the sentence or paragraph, it stands out from the rest of the text, creating visual separation and drawing greater attention from the viewer. It functions similarly to a bolded word, strengthening the word's message. Understood through Foucauldian frameworks, as the word has increased visibility to the reader, there is an invisibility towards the algorithm, as the algorithm cannot decode the true meaning of the word. The intertextuality of this word should also be considered: The choice to use genocide as the reference word is intentional. It acts upon other meanings conveyed in other images and texts, referring to the images circulating of violence against Palestinians in Gaza that have been labelled by major human rights organisations as genocide (Amnesty International, 2024). Moreover, the word “genocide” operates within a broader discursive formation, drawing on its historical and cultural usage. The use of the word in media is dependent on whether its victims are allies of the U.S. and Western powers (Herman et al., 2010). By creators intentionally using this word, they are going against these dominant power formations in the media who do not use the word genocide, creating agency in spreading Palestinian narratives. Furthermore, the fact that users react to the perception of the algorithm through coding words, such as genocide, provides an insight into the surveillance apparatus of the algorithm. HRW found that hundreds of cases of comments such as “Stop the Genocide” were removed by Instagram (Human Rights Watch, 2023). A word that is used to talk about atrocities has been deemed as necessary for censorship, making the stories it represents invisible to audiences. This, therefore, erases the genocidal experiences of Palestinians.

Another popular word that is often coded is the word Palestine, which has often been replaced with “Pal” (Appendix F), “P@lestine” (Appendix E), “PLSTN” and “P.alestine” (Appendix F), and “P” (Appendix A). Through the use of symbols and abnormal lettering, the word sticks out visually, increasing its significance to the reader while decreasing its visibility to the algorithm. This also creates a type of symbolism. Palestine is not treated as equal to other nations, so much that it would even require a code to maintain its visibility and existence on the internet. Equally as important is what is absent from the symbolism used to refer to Palestine. What is missing from all these posts is the use of the Palestinian flag emoji, as content creators refrain from using it,

knowing that the Palestinian flag is frequently censored by Meta (Human Rights Watch, 2023). When understood under discursive formation, censorship of pro-Palestinian narratives is nothing unique to social media algorithms but has long existed in online and offline spaces (Sen, 2024). Institutional technologies like algorithms are not separate in power from the institutional apparatuses from which they function. Examining this together is important in understanding algorithmic censorship over pro-Palestinian narratives in social media as part of a larger process of silencing Palestinian liberation. The discursive strategy of spelling words in a different form in an attempt to curve the algorithm highlights how institutional powers understand Palestinian narratives as necessary for surveillance, highlighting an unequal power dynamic on what is deemed as worthy to be visible and what is not. In their response, this tactic challenges and flips concepts of invisibility and visibility.

Tactic #2: Use of Facial Features

The second discursive tactic analysed is the use of facial features in visual imagery. Popular activist accounts spread tools to counter censorship, which suggests users to "show faces" in their posts, citing that posts with faces get 28% more likes than photos without (free.palestine.nl, 2023). This is a popular tactic used by activists; it even has a popular slogan, "face for the algorithm" (Walton, 2024). Climate activist Mikaela Loach says that she shows her face in all her posts relating to Palestine as it helps amplify her content to a wider audience as opposed to sharing images that are linked to Palestinian liberation (Walton, 2024) (Appendix F). The visual effect of posting the user's face brings a level of connection between the user and the content creator, which can also lead to increased user engagement (Bakhshi et al, 2014). Activists try to use this to their advantage, as they combine this with wearing pro-Palestinian symbols. In Loach's video, she is seen wearing watermelon earrings (referencing the Palestinian flag) and a traditional keffiyeh (Appendix F). This creates an effect in which her face and her material possessions cannot be separated – they speak to the same values and struggles. Another example can be shown through Appendix B, where Instagram user @Jenanmatarii posts a picture of her face on the first slide followed by the caption "This is not a pretty picture (because I am tapped the fuck out) but it's still a picture of my face

for 'the algo.'" Matari leverages the necessity of showing her face for the algorithm to her advantage by displaying her key tattoo, which symbolises the right of return, and her Palestinian necklace, which represents historical Palestine. By doing so, she adds layers of meaning beyond the visuality of her face while also avoiding the algorithm's censorship of these symbols. Her caption continues "Because it's bullshit like this that we need to do to fight the censorship that is so tightly strangling Palestinian necks that we are losing our heads – literally." Her caption speaks to the absurdity that activists must show their faces to fight censorship because healthy faces are deemed valuable by the algorithm, while pictures of Palestinians dying are not. This highlights the intertextuality as this discursive strategy cannot be separated from the images that are missing. Content creators express the desire for other visuals to be visible to the public view, but rather result in showing their faces to avoid censorship and continue spreading their messages. This discursive strategy of using facial features is a tactic that activists use to intertwine broader political symbolism, exposing the visibility of the algorithm and its ability to surveil. At the same time, it highlights that the algorithmic system and the power in which it functions determine the worthiness of content that devalues the suffering of Palestinians.

Tactic #3: Actively Engaging Audience

The final discursive tactic used by pro-Palestinian creators is explicitly telling their audiences to engage with their content verbally and through writing. This is a tactic popularly spread in media rooms – digital spaces where media production, curation, and dissemination are discussed – suggesting that the algorithm favours engagement. Users recommend audiences to like, save, and comment on each other's content, add polls, stickers, and questions to stories, and anything that helps make a post more interactive (Arkenbout, 2024; free.palestine.nl, 2023). The Instagram user @yousaama, explicitly calls on his followers to share his posts through their stories, saying that he is "restricted for life" and that his videos do not show up on the explore page or in the reels section of the app (Appendix C). This content creator highlights the way that the algorithm has been censoring his content, making it invisible to non-followers. He even posts screenshots explaining the censorship by Instagram of his pages. The structure of

his post directly confronts censorship as it educates users on the challenges creators face, which persuades users into action. Furthermore, this written content includes action words like “escalate” and “you guys share them to your story,” creating urgency for the viewer (Appendix C). This written message interacts with the video when he points to the camera, creating a sense of personalisation and a feeling of accountability to his audience. Effectively, the action that he asks of his users is to replace the reliance on the algorithm for visibility. As the algorithm is social media’s tool to circulate content based on certain inputs, censored activists instead use human capital and the encouragement of their audiences to repost their content, as an alternative form of circulation and visibility. Another example is by @thomas.maddens, who writes in his caption, “LIKE – SHARE – SAVE – COMMENT – RESIST” (Appendix E). Maddens attempts to increase visibility by directly engaging his audience into action. Maddens places the word “resist” following “like-share-save-comment,” signifying to the audience that engaging in his content is an act of resistance. This could be interpreted as resistance to the occupation or resistance to the algorithm, which arguably influences one another as they both function within dominant institutional power structures. This discursive strategy of explicitly engaging users in attempts to go against the algorithm highlights how pro-Palestinian content creators recreate power and redefine what is deemed worthy of circulation.

Conclusion

Drawing on Foucault’s theories of power and discourse, this analysis highlights how algorithmic censorship functions as an institutional technology employed by Meta, using the dual mechanisms of visibility and the threat of invisibility to shape how creators engage on the platform. This challenges the perception of social media being a neutral tool of activism. Rather than being neutral, social media reproduces power structures within its algorithms, making it an agent of power. This re-understanding should motivate users to engage with the platform intentionally and deliberately. Pro-Palestinian content creators, in their efforts to use social media as an intentional tool to influence social movements and spread their narratives, have used three key discursive strategies to circumvent algorithmic restrictions: coding of words, use of facial

features, and explicitly engaging users into action. These tactics reveal the unequal power dynamics embedded within the institution, where certain types of rhetoric and narratives are targeted, controlling what is allowed to be visible and worthy of circulation, and what is under the threat of invisibility and to be suppressed. However, the extent to which these strategies effectively counter the algorithm remains unclear. What is clear is that by engaging with tactics to manipulate algorithmic functions, pro-Palestinian content creators attempt to challenge institutional censorship and highlight the institutional power, surveillance, and constructs of (in)visibility embedded within the algorithm. Their tactics use literal and visual strategies to recreate power that serves their narratives, emphasising the influence of social media on educating and engaging new audiences in social movements. With this in mind, people should pay attention to not just how content is being produced and circulated on social media, but also what is not visible. Understanding these power structures, people can amplify and engage with oppressed narratives in attempts to counter dominant centres of power. These strategies contribute to a broader struggle of marginalised voices resisting and challenging the extensions of institutional power structures, whether within governments, military forces, universities, or social media platforms.

Appendix

The appendices for this research paper with the data for reproduction can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/18xVSx66DQ95z0w82t30Krk5tMQQL7eCI/view?usp=sharing

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Jenna Whitehouse
Culture and Politics

How do Narratives Portrayed in Ottolenghi and Tamimi's 2012 Cookbook 'Jerusalem' Conceal Realities of Israeli-Palestinian Power Dynamics?

Abstract

Analysis of a cookbook as a site of political activity initially appears a somewhat unintuitive choice, where links to global politics are tenuous at best. This appears even more far-fetched when the cookbook under analysis is a markedly 'non-political' collection of recipes from two friends growing up in the same city. However, through a critical discourse analysis of the cookbook *Jerusalem*, this paper explores the inherently political dimensions of cookbooks, and how, despite attempts, the cookbook serves as a concerningly powerful tool in shaping international perceptions of Israel -Palestine power dynamics. Through exploring the role of popular culture products in global politics, as well as the role of the aesthetic and embodied dimensions of international relations, this paper outlines the mechanisms by which *Jerusalem* functions not only as a cookbook, but also as a site of political representation that shapes perceptions of identity, belonging and power. This analysis highlights the necessity of addressing the complexities surrounding culinary identity within broader discussions of power, culture, and politics, advocating for a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between food and political dynamics.

Keywords: Identity, Culture, Power, Food, Cooking

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Introduction

The international success of the 2012 cookbook, *Jerusalem'*, cannot be understated. 'Jerusalem fever' plagued the western world, introducing new smells and flavours to the middle-class kitchen (New York Times, 2013). Ingredients such as sumac, za'atar and tahini became readily available in supermarkets as the 'Ottolenghi effect' was in full swing. The cookbook, written by Israeli Yotam Ottolenghi and Palestinian Sami Tamimi presents the culinary landscape of one of the world's most politically and historically significant cities - Jerusalem. The book shares over 100 recipes, personal stories and informative sections which paint a picture of Jerusalem as a tapestry of flavours, people and tales. Beyond the aesthetic appeal, it is the co-authorship of an Israeli-Jew and a Palestinian coming together to share tales from their 'parallel lives' growing up in the city which made the book such a success. The cookbook demonstrated the power of a shared love for food in bringing together two unlikely souls from two sides of a city.

Are such narratives of unity, abundance and diversity the reality, however? Today, the hopeful sentiment of *Jerusalem* is appealing to its audience, yet ever more questionable. The authors self-consciously frame their work as apolitical, asserting the reader that the pages that follow are simply stories and recipes from a shared connection to space. In light of power relations between Israelis and Palestinians, whereby food is weaponised and appropriated, such an apolitical stance is problematic. *Jerusalem* is not merely a cookbook, it claims to tell the story of a city, its people and most saliently, its food. It is in this sense that the book's apolitical stance must be questioned. This essay therefore sets out to question the meanings behind what is presented in the book, guided by the question: *How do narratives portrayed in Ottolenghi and Tamimi's 2012 cookbook 'Jerusalem' conceal realities of Israeli-Palestinian power dynamics?.* Through conducting a critical discourse analysis of the cookbook, focusing on the meanings and narratives written between the images, recipes and stories, this paper will problematise the narratives in their role of presenting a false image of Israel-Palestine power dynamics. It argues that by painting a picture of unity, diversity, abundance and peaceful coexistence, the book not only serves to mask the oppression and marginalisation of Palestinian people in Jerusalem but also serves to perpetuate such inequalities through providing an image of a distinct cuisine which

continues to dismiss Palestinian influence. In this sense, the essay problematises the cookbook on two levels - both in its masking of political realities and in its perpetuation of unequal power dynamics through the political realities it constitutes.

The essay begins with an overview of relevant literature. The literature review situates cookbooks within international relations and provides insight into the constitutive role of popular culture products. The literature review then sets out to explore the role of food in global politics, looking at its importance in identity production. Next, a brief background section contextualises the preceding analysis, including relevant information of Israeli-Palestinian food relations which are representative of broader power dynamics. The following methodology section introduces the process of discourse analysis and how it is used to analyse the cookbook. Here, the section gives justification for the use of a discourse analysis and reintroduces the research question. The analysis section is grouped into five subsections: 'Portrayal of Jerusalem'; 'The narrative of Abundance'; 'Questions of Ownership'; 'Food as a Unifying Force'; and 'Co-authorship and Coexistence'. The analysis looks for the hidden meanings within the pages, coupling it with contextual considerations in order to identify how such narratives are mobilised to conceal realities of Israeli-Palestinian power dynamics whilst further perpetuating such dynamics. Finally, a conclusion synthesises this analysis and discusses the implications of the cookbook and such analytical approaches.

Review of Relevant Literature

Choosing to analyse a cookbook, particularly one which markets itself as an apolitical, personal appreciation of the food and dishes shared between two friends, seems to be a somewhat unintuitive choice, whereby links to international relations are tenuous at best. Nonetheless, recent contributions by renowned IR scholars have brought to light the incontestable links between popular culture items – films, dance, music, books – and global politics. Such sources are increasingly challenging disciplinary boundaries in IR, demonstrating the value of considering the role of visuals in socio-political realities (Caso and Hamilton, 2015). Several significant global events have further demonstrated pop culture's significance in global politics, most shockingly, the 2015 attacks in Paris as a response to a satirical publication by Charlie Hebdo. Here, sceptics were forced to

resign that popular culture does not hold relevance in IR. Foucault proposes an important role of popular culture in global socio-political realities: popular culture not only *reflects* world politics, but *constitutes* world politics (Foucault, 1972). By this, Foucault and other scholars see popular culture products as sites whereby realities are constituted and materialised (Weldes and Rowley, 2015). The very mechanisms by which popular culture and world politics interact are varying, with Weldes and Rowley (2015) providing an account of 6 specific ways in which the two interact, amongst these is the aforementioned constitutive role of popular culture in world politics. In all degrees of intersection, popular culture and world politics are seen as interconnected, yet still ultimately separate domains. Grayson, Davies and Philpott (2009) interrogate this notion, arguing that the two domains work in a 'continuum'. By this, they refuse to see popular culture as a superstructure which reflects a political base (Grayson, Davies and Philpott, 2009, 157), but instead as interconnected within one system. Such an understanding allows us to better problematise popular culture and the way it shapes and interacts with international power dynamics, a proposition which is essential for the latter critical discourse analysis of a seemingly apolitical cookbook.

Recognising popular culture's significance in IR stems from a body of literature which holds appreciation for IR's visual elements – or 'visual IR'. The postmodern, 'Aesthetic turn' (Bleiker, 2009) in IR saw a rise in the interrogation of visual sources as sites of understanding world politics. Such work is grounded in the belief that valuable insights emerge when one explores how representative practices constitute and shape political realities (Bleiker, 2009). The approach assumes that there is a gap between a form of representation and what is represented therewith, and it is within this gap whereby politics is located (Bleiker, 2009, 19). Moving beyond the positivist approach, which privileges certain faculties such as reason, the 'aesthetic turn' looks towards alternative sites of analysis, namely images, and their relationship to political realities. Weber (2008) provides an important departure from the linguistic focus of mainstream IR and urges readers to take seriously the role of visual materials. She claims that by ignoring the role of the visual, mainstream IR "risks misunderstanding contemporary subjectivity, spatiality, and temporality" (Weber, 2008, p. 137). Similarly, Neumann and Nexon (2006) and Dyson (2015) point to the constitutive role of visual popular culture

products, namely the Harry Potter and Star Trek novels and films, and their capacity to influence foreign policy. These scholars, despite owing their analysis to different forms of visual materials, all rally for the departure from a purely linguistic study of IR and an appreciation for the insights made possible by visual sources. The inherently visual and aesthetic appeal of cookbooks makes the contributions made by the above scholars ever important.

Cookbooks also provide a unique site of analysis where the effects of embodied/sensorial interactions can be analysed. Callahan (2020) argues, similar to others working within the 'aesthetic turn', that visuals viscerally move readers and therefore need to be analysed in terms of their affect work. He takes this proposal further, exploring multi-sensory, spatiotemporal spaces sites such as gardens and veils - or 'visual artefacts'- and the three-dimensional sites of political participation. When cooking from a cookbook, one is engaging with the discourse and its meanings through not only the text and images, but also the taste, smell and feeling of the dishes. To fully engage with the book, participants do not just read it, but also perform as active participants. This participation deepens one's engagement with the discourse, deepening the potential for the constitutive effect of cookbooks.

Later analysis also relies on an understanding of the political nature of food and culinary practices. How is it that a seemingly apolitical cookbook constructs political realities? When Brillat-Savarin (1825, p.6) said "Tell me what you eat and I shall tell you what you are", he introduced the inextricable link between food and identity. The mundane nature of a single meal often means that the socio-cultural importance of it is overlooked (Head, 2013); however, those studying such sites have been able to uncover the semiotic power and symbolism engaging in culinary traditions. 'Gastronationalism', a term coined by DeSoucey (2010, p.432), holds this idea at its core, looking at how food products, practices and consumption can "demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment". When one engages with a food sort, namely one which is attributed to one's national identity, one is reconstructing or reinforcing their political and national identity (Ferguson, 2020). 'Gastrodiplomacy', coined by Chappel-Sokol (2012) and Rockower (2012), similarly describes the use of food as a means of creating cross-cultural understanding and as a nation-building tactic.

Gastrodiplomacy is relevant here not so much as a top-down, state-run public diplomacy project, but more so as a familiarisation process or 'culinary consciousness raiser' (Baron & Press-Barnathan, 2021). The cookbook and its authors practice gastrodiplomacy by connecting and familiarising readers with the food of Jerusalem, and its people and politics, creating a 'contact zone' (Suntikul, 2017). The question to ask here is the effects of this familiarisation - or normalisation - and how this transpires into political realities.

Also relevant is Billig's (1995) 'Banal Nationalism', whereby quotidian practices allow one to express their national identity which in turn, reinforces it. Those engaging with cookbooks, especially those alike to *Jerusalem* which present food tied to a place and people within this place, are implicitly enforcing certain national identities. Relatedly, Anderson's (1983) 'Imagined communities' argues that shared identities and communities are socially constructed. This concept can also be taken further to argue that 'national foods', like those presented in *Jerusalem* are also socially constructed in the same way national identities are (Mintz, 1996; Nugent, 2010). Also relevant here are 'Foodwashing' and 'culinary colonialism' whereby certain narratives and food practices work within colonial and neocolonial relations and power dynamics. Such implicit means of constituting national identities, and by extension nationhood, were pivotal to colonial and neo-colonial missions, as outlined by Appadurai (1988). 'Culinary Colonialism' sees the exploitation and appropriation of indigenous food and culinary practices within a colonial mission (Grey and Newman, 2018).

Israeli-Palestinian Food Relations

The following section shall introduce a non-exhaustive overview of Israeli-Palestinian relations, focusing on the role of food in such power dynamics. This section is kept brief for the sake of word count, though the centrality of the role of food within the occupation of Palestine cannot be understated.

Food is a weapon integral to the Zionist mission - siege, blockade, and starvation are core to Israel's attacks on the Palestinian people and their culture (Messer and Cohen, 2024). Food as a weapon has a long history. In the early-to-mid-20th century, when a new Israeli identity was being established in Palestine during the creation of a

national state for the Jewish people, the Jewish population began to adopt local culinary traditions, opting for Palestinian recipes and local ingredients in their daily cooking (Kassis, 2020). Cultural theft was imperative to the integrity of Israel's cultural-political boundaries and national identity. In time, these dishes and practices began to be dubbed as 'Israeli food', disregarding the Palestinian origin and influence. One cannot ignore the crucial influence of Palestinian culinary traditions, as well as ingredients and agricultural practices, in 'Israeli food', an influence which has been self-consciously estranged and detached from its Palestinian roots. Relatedly, one cannot understand Israeli culture and national identity without acknowledging the settler-colonial practice of replication and imitation, and later replacement and appropriation of Palestinian food cultures - such appropriation still stands today as a key tool of the erasure of Palestinian cultural identity and the artificial production of a common Israeli identity. Scholars have dubbed this process "Culinary Colonialism" (Valens, 2024) and by some, 'Culinary Zionism' (Baron and Barnathan, 2021).

In Gaza, Israel has imposed a blockade against incoming aid, as well as destroyed infrastructure which feeds the population, leading to widespread starvation. In the West Bank, everyday settler-colonial practices also continue to leverage food as a means of marginalisation, control and occupation against Palestinians. Here, checkpoints and strict control over movements mean that Palestinians' access to markets, agricultural land and employment opportunities are severed. The extent of this project of cultural and culinary appropriation knows no limits and exists as a form of rule over every aspect of Palestinian existence. Every day appropriation of Palestinian food continues to serve as a process of occupation and culinary colonialism whereby Palestinians are being stripped of their cultural identity. The above seeks to situate the centrality of food, both in its nutritional and cultural significance, within the context of Israel's occupation of Palestine, and thus demonstrate the significance of the narratives presented within *Jerusalem*.

Methodology

The following analysis follows a Critical Discourse Analysis with the following question in mind: *How do narratives portrayed in Ottolenghi and Tamimi's 2012 cookbook*

'Jerusalem' conceal realities of Israeli-Palestinian power dynamics? The form of discourse analysis chosen follows Rose's (2023) 'Discourse Analysis I', paying attention to discourse as presented through visual images and texts. Specifically, this form of discourse analysis is concerned with power and knowledge, and discourses social production and effects. Analysis is grouped in meaningful clusters of words and images, exploring various themes and narratives and how they work to construct meaning. Themes were identified through a process of coding. Furthermore, contextual information such as the background of the authors was collected in order to understand the environment in which the book was created.

Critical Discourse Analysis of *Jerusalem*

Co-authorship and Co-existence

First, it is important to consider the contextual considerations which contribute to meanings later presented in the book. The co-authorship of the book between an Israeli-Jew and a Palestinian gives the book a sense of authority and legitimacy, and allows for identity blurring, hiding the cultural theft at play within the book. The narrative of the two authors leading 'parallel lives' obscures their different experiences and further conceals the reality of life for Palestinians in Jerusalem, painting an idealised image of coexistence. Upon a deeper analysis of the book, such power disparities between the authors become apparent. It is Ottolenghi's voice which infuses the book, with the book now being synonymous with his brand. Meanwhile, Tamimi's voice takes a background stance, with his name even sitting below Ottolenghi's on the title page. Such analysis may seem pedantic, but it is important to question such choices.

One must also consider that the book was written in English, with no translation in Arabic or Hebrew. A soft power technique whereby narratives in the book were intended to be consumed by western audiences. This further points to the role of the book in contributing political realities, making the above critical analysis all the more important.

Portrayal of Jerusalem

Throughout the book, text, images, and recipes build a specific narrative of the city of Jerusalem, its food, and its people. This narrative presents Jerusalem as a unified, inclusive and vibrant city whereby people from all communities live in peaceful coexistence, sharing food and culinary traditions. However, through interrogating this representation of Jerusalem, an analysis uncovers how narratives warp realities.

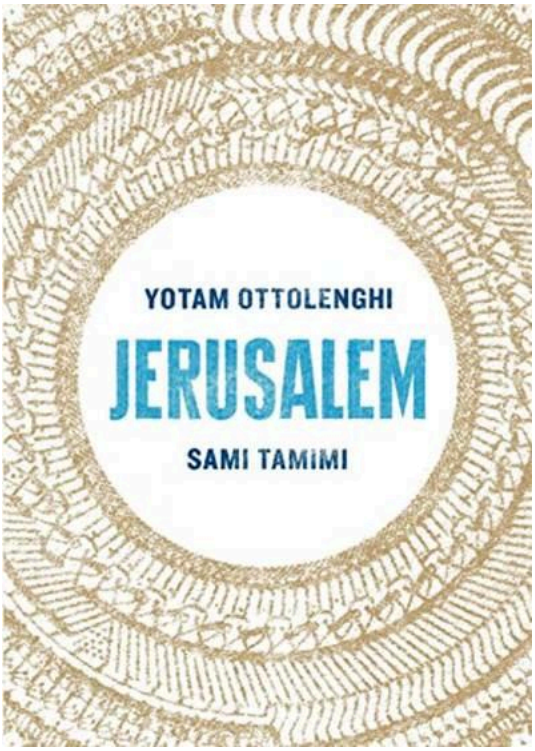
Analysis begins with the title, the single word, the name of which the book tells the story of. The title '*Jerusalem'* is presented on the cover of the 2012 Ebury Press cover (see Figure 1), surrounded by a mosaic of intricate patterns. Such patterns display no obvious religious affiliation, representing the book's apolitical stance whilst maintaining a sense of diversity and vibrancy. The pattern forms a circle surrounding the title, representing a sense of unity and inclusivity. Such designs contribute to a narrative of Jerusalem as a diverse yet inclusive, vibrant, natural and unified place. Furthermore, the positionality of the names of the authors, Ottolenghi and Tamimi, an Israeli and a Palestinian, on either side of the title deepens this notion of coexistence. The authors describe the city as an "intricate, convoluted mosaic of people" and an "immense tapestry of cuisines" (Ottolenghi and Tamimi, 2012, p. 10). Such artistic language creates a romantic image of a city whereby people coexist to create something more beautiful. Furthermore, describing it as a "soup of a city" (p. 16) leverages the discourse of food to create an image of the city as a place rooted in shared culinary traditions.

However, one must ask what this narrative and representation conceals? In its conscious attempt to paint Jerusalem as a vibrant and inclusive city, the book ignores the deeply unequal power dynamics which exist within the city, presenting an idealised version of reality (Baron, 2016). It ignores the fact that for Palestinians living in Israel-controlled Jerusalem, the reality consists of home demolition, segregation, displacement and controlled movement. The tapestry and 'melting pot' narrative romantically glosses over the fact that there is a cap on the Palestinian population living in the city. The single word title, whilst powerful, allows for a decontextualisation and dehistoricisation of the reality of the city, giving a sense that this is *the* story and *the* food of the city. Legitimacy is achieved through providing a historical section, whereby Palestinian history and ties to the land are subordinate to the history of other

communities in the city. Such marginalisation of Palestinian history serves to marginalise the Palestinian existence in the city. This narrative of Jerusalem is literally consumed by the reader, reinforcing and constituting misinterpretations of the reality of the city, which marginalises Palestinian life whilst reinforcing an image of a vibrant and flavorful Israeli culture rooted in history and authority (Farah, 2019).

Figure 1

2012 Ebury Press Cover of Jerusalem



The Narrative of Abundance

Images and anecdotes claiming that “Jerusalemites tend to eat seasonally and cook with what grows in the area.” (p. 18), build a narrative of abundance. One extract speaks of “mountains of food”, telling the readers about a ‘local motto’: “Eat more” (p. 12). Images show piles of Za’atar, street vendors selling an abundance of fresh produce, and groups smiling around a table full of colourful dishes. In doing so, the authors are able to portray an image of the city in which food is central, accessible and celebrated. Whilst perhaps true for the authors of the book, such images of abundance

do not reflect the reality for Palestinians and other groups living in the city today. It is approximated that 72% of Palestinian families in Jerusalem live below the poverty line, compared to 26% of Jewish families (ACRI, 2019). Furthermore, movements between East and West Jerusalem are heavily restricted, which limits access to food, agricultural lands, and markets for those in the East. The authors are marketing Jerusalem and its food to the audience, reinforcing one's perception and understanding of 'Israeli food' as a colourful, flavourful and abundant cuisine, whilst marginalising the Palestinian experience. The image of the pile of Za'atar is problematic in particular. This image, by which a whole section of the book follows, showcasing the various uses of the herb mix, gives no mention to the long tradition of agricultural practices developed by Palestinian people. For Palestinians Za'atar is part of their identity - it ties them to their land and the act of picking the herb is seen to be an indicator of Palestinian identity. The book also fails to address the Israeli land laws which now outlaw Palestinians from growing and picking the herb, stripping them of a practice integral to their culture while simultaneously appropriating it as a stable Israeli ingredient (Shutek, 2014). Through glossing over this, the book serves the reader an idealised and romanticised version of reality, which paints the Israeli capital and its food as a place of abundance and flavour whilst further marginalising the Palestinian experience and cultural heritage which contributed to such culinary landscapes.

The Question of Ownership

Questions of ownership are selectively addressed throughout the book. Various strategies are adopted which sidestep the question of ownership, one of which being the adoption of language which suggests an inherent shared primitive connection to the foods of the city, ignoring the variety of groups and influences which contribute to the culinary landscape instead presenting a unified, singular cuisine. Language such as "The flavours and smells from this city are our mother tongue", "our culinary DNA", and "the city that made us the food creatures we are today" (p. 9) all paint a certain narrative of a shared primal connection to the food which is shared by both authors, and by extension, all those living in Jerusalem. It presents an image by which politics comes second to hedonism, and arguments over ownership are futile due to a shared

connection to the food of the city by all. This narrative is compounded by the explicit rejection of the ownership conversation whereby the book quotes: “Food is a basic, hedonistic pleasure, a sensual instinct we all share and revel in, It is a shame to spoil it” (p. 16). Here, the book explicitly refuses to engage with the various influences made by the web of communities in the city, and instead suggests that the food of Jerusalem is inherent to the place and has always existed as it does today. By doing so, the book further constructs an image of a distinct Israeli cuisine which marginalises Palestinian influence as well as silencing any contestations.

Food as a Unifying Force

Despite its utmost, somewhat self-conscious attempt to provide an apolitical, personal account of the culinary tapestry of Jerusalem, the book builds a narrative which encourages the reader to consider the unifying force of food. This narrative echoes that of gastrodiplomacy. This narrative is explicit, with the book claiming “Hummus will eventually bring Jerusalemites together if nothing else will” (p. 13), and that “Food is the only unifying force”. This hopeful narrative is persuasive, yet problematic in what it conceals and produces. Firstly, the narrative ignores the history in which food has been used as a weapon of Israel’s settler-colonial relationship to Palestinians. It ignores how Palestinians have been stripped of their culinary cultural identity, forgetting Israel’s history of appropriation. Food in this case, is not the solution; it's part of the problem. Second, this narrative generates a process of ‘foodwashing’, whereby the focus on food discourse allows for dismissal of the violence and power dynamics, washing over the injustices at play (Baron and Barthanan, 2021). Such foodwashing merely provides a facade of a progressive narrative, but in turn acts to dismiss and normalise the occupation. Furthermore, as a popular culture commodity, one must problematise the commodification of the dynamics through such narratives. Relatedly, such narratives give readers a sense that they are engaging with the politics by engaging with the book. Such engagement, however, does not take meaningful form and leads to the entrenchment and normalisation of narratives presented in the book. Therefore, by addressing the narrative of food acting as a unifying force, the book serves to not only

hide the deeply complex politics of food in Jerusalem, but also lead to a false sense of political engagement on behalf of the reader.

Conclusion and Discussion

Baron and Bathanon (2021) understand cookbooks to be sites whereby politics and international power dynamics play out in our kitchens. Critical analysis of such popular culture commodities is therefore essential in order to understand how the meanings between the pages not only reflect, but construct political realities. By problematising the apolitical facade of the cookbook, this analysis comes to the following conclusions:

Through exploring the rich culinary landscape of the city, supplemented by personal anecdotes and historical references, *Jerusalem* paints a picture of a city, its food and its people which is defined by peaceful coexistence, abundance, diversity, and unity. It is this very narrative which made the book such a success. However these narratives conceal and mask the realities of Israeli-Palestinian power dynamics through painting an idealised vision of the city, silencing the inequalities and occupation faced by Palestinian people living in Jerusalem today. The images, recipes, stories and design choices as well as the co-authorship all contribute to this facade. In doing so, the book also perpetuates such inequalities through marketing a romanticised version of a distinct Israeli cuisine which continues to dismiss Palestinian existence and strengthens an Israeli cultural identity.

The implications of such discourses are dangerous. If one understands cookbooks to hold power in the construction of political realities, then challenging the narratives presented in *Jerusalem* is pertinent. Such analysis highlights the importance of a critical approach to 'apolitical' narratives and a questioning of the meanings hidden between what we read. By way of departure, this essay urges readers to engage with cookbooks and foods, familiarising themselves with different flavours and culinary traditions, but to do so with a critical and inquisitive eye, asking the difficult questions of ownership, authenticity and origins of such food. By refusing the apolitical nature of food, one can better understand the structures and systems which shape global foodways and societies, and how such foodways reflect and constitute broader socio-political realities.

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From Instability to Cooperation: Hobbes' Leviathan and the Formation of the European Coal and Steel Community

Abstract

The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1952 marked a pivotal turning point in European history as the first supranational community, laying the foundations for deeper integration. This paper examines the ECSC through the lens of Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, arguing that the aftermath of World War II mirrored the Hobbesian state of nature, characterised by severe chaos and persistent insecurity. The ECSC functioned as a centralised supranational political mechanisms in response to the crisis, akin to the Leviathan, as a sovereign authority to prevent conflict. By applying Hobbes' social contract theory, this study highlights how the founder Member States conceptualised supranationalism as a means to overcome the crisis and achieve peace, security and stability.

Keywords: Supranationalism, Leviathan, Sovereignty, ECSC

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Introduction

In 1952, the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) by the 'Six' (France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) marked a crucial milestone in European history, establishing the first supranational community (Van Zon et al., 2024). Emerging in the aftermath of World War II (WWII) in a context of political and social discontent, the ECSC was designed to prevent future conflicts in Europe by pooling control over coal and steel, resources critical not only for military power but also for economic recovery (Van Zon et al., 2024). The creation of the ECSC reflected common values such as economic integration, the promotion of prosperity, and a shared destiny (Van Zon et al., 2024). Moreover, it revealed broader ambitions for peace and stability in a divided and fragile Europe, underscoring the reconciliation between France and Germany (Van Zon et al., 2024).

ECSC's institutional framework, and particularly the High Authority as its supranational body, represented a departure from traditional intergovernmental cooperation by requiring Member States to cede aspects of their sovereignty to this superior authority, creating a system of shared governance over essential industries (Van Zon et al., 2024). This innovative approach to governance, based on the principle of supranationalism, invites a deeper theoretical exploration through the lens of Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy work, the *Leviathan*. Hobbes theorised that in a 'state of nature', marked by chaos and perpetual conflict, individuals would willingly surrender certain freedoms to a sovereign authority in exchange for peace and security (Hobbes, 1651). Similarly, as discussed in this paper, the ECSC can be seen as a 'European Leviathan,' formed to address the state of nature that characterised post-WWII Europe. Hobbes' theory offers a compelling analytical framework for understanding the ECSC akin to the Leviathan. The ECSC emerged in response to war-induced chaos and instability, reflecting Hobbes' fears of disorder and the need for a centralised authority to prevent conflict. In this sense, supranationalism can be interpreted as a contractual submission of sovereignty by States, echoing individuals ceding power and freedoms to the Leviathan.

The broader academic debate on the formation of the ECSC explains the reasons behind the integration process and how it developed. For instance, through

theories as neofunctionalism led by Haas and Lindberg (Haas, 1958; Lindberg, 1963), intergovernmentalism represented by scholars like Moravcsik and Hoffmann (Moravcsik, 1998; Hoffmann, 1966), and realism held by authors such as Gillingham (Gillingham, 1991). These theories offer valuable insights about economic integration, States interests, and geopolitical strategies; however, do not analyse the phenomenon from the political philosophy perspective in order to explain the rationale behind the initial granting of a supranational authority. Hobbes' analysis of human behaviour reveals patterns of conflict and cooperation that, over time, lead to the institutionalisation of governance. In this sense, political structures do not emerge arbitrarily but as a response to the persistent vulnerabilities of social organisation. The sovereign authority, in this sense, becomes the institutionalised mechanism that transforms individual self-preservation into collective security. On this basis, the Hobbesian approach provides a valuable framework for analysing the formation of the ECSC by tracing it back to the foundations of governance. It allows for an understanding of how fundamental human needs − particularly security and stability − were mirrored in the post-WWII context, driving the creation of new political structures. Thus, supranational governance emerged as a direct response to the most fundamental threat to society: the state of war.

In the framework defined above, this essay analyses how the formation of the ECSC, as a supranational organisation, can be explained through Hobbes' political philosophy. For this purpose, the first chapter develops the historical context against which Europe integrated after 1945, focusing on social, economic and political factors that affected European nation-states. The second chapter explains the basis for the formation of the ECSC, focusing on its foundations and objectives, in accordance with the post-war context. Finally, the third chapter delves into Hobbes' political philosophy, outlining key concepts essential for the development of this paper, including the state of nature, social contract, and Leviathan. Then, the same chapter explores how the devastation of WWII and the onset of the Cold War created conditions analogous to Hobbes' state of nature. Additionally, it analyses the consolidation of the ECSC in light of Hobbes' theory of sovereignty, emphasising the parallels between its supranational logic and the philosophical foundations of the nation-state.

Historical context: Post-WWII Europe

The devastation produced by WWII left Europe's political and social order in a state of profound disarray. The repercussions of the war not only led to an evident scenario of economic crisis and destruction of infrastructure but also deeply affected the legitimacy of nation-states, understood as the capacity of the political system to solve citizens' concerns and to generate desirable outcomes, requiring collective solutions (Scharpf, 1999). Desolating social consequences characterised the European scene; essential resources such as food, housing, and healthcare were in short supply and transport infrastructure was damaged (Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l'Europe, 2016; Andry, 2022). Widespread social discontent throughout Europe was intensified by the harsh winter of 1946-1947 due to the severe coal shortage, leading to mass demonstrations and strikes (Andry, 2022; Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l'Europe, 2016). The prospect of European social harmony seemed even more unlikely to be achieved in the war-torn countries, exacerbated by a considerable demographic imbalance that occurred as millions of young men perished in battle, leading to a rapid ageing of the population. At the same time, changes in national borders produced high displacement rates, leaving millions homeless (Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l'Europe, 2016). From an economic point of view, the scene was marked by high inflation, currency devaluation, lack of supply, and severe unemployment rates, producing a dramatic decline in living standards (Centre virtuel de la connaissance sur l'Europe, 2016). In response to these social and economic challenges, European governments recognised the urgent need for comprehensive reconstruction efforts, leading to the emergence of extensive welfare systems across the continent. By expanding their roles in providing social security, healthcare, and education, these governments demonstrated their commitment to improving social well-being and addressing the inequalities aggravated by the war (Boccia & Nachkebia, 2024).

The severe situation in Europe after WWII also drew international attention. In 1947, the U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson emphasised Europe's economic dislocation and its struggle for reconstruction due to the absence of a comprehensive peace settlement. As he noted, "Political instability in some degree retards revival in

nearly every country of Europe" (Acheson, 1947, p. 991). The European Recovery Plan, also known as the 'Marshall Plan', introduced in 1948 in the period leading up to the Cold War, constituted a turning point, offering substantial financial aid from the U.S. to rebuild European economies, restore infrastructure, and alleviate social distress (Hinnershitz, 2022).

Despite the recovery efforts, the war revealed the inability of several European states to defend their territories and protect their populations from external attacks, undermining social trust in their authorities and weakening the effectiveness of governing powers (Milward, 2000). The erosion of trust, exacerbated by the widespread violence of wartime, presented additional challenges to the legitimacy of nation-states as governments sought to rebuild not only their economies but also the confidence of their citizens (Grosjean, 2014). Emerging from the collapse of pre-war governance structures, European nation-states found themselves in a fragile position, necessitating a transformative process centred on establishing a new political consensus capable of addressing post-war challenges and meeting citizens' needs more comprehensively (Milward, 2000). In this regard, the nation-state reaffirmation as the primary structure of political, economic and social life appeared as a crucial challenge in terms of re-establishing order in Europe, in response to the extensive social discontent and financial hardships that lingered after the war. These conditions underscored the urgency of economic reconstruction and the need for measures to address popular discontent by tackling structural challenges to governance systems.

The formation of the ECSC: A new model for cooperation

In the aftermath of WWII, characterised by economic crisis and social discontent, the ECSC, established by the Treaty of Paris in 1951, marked a pivotal step toward European integration, intended to reduce the risk of conflict between nations historically divided by war and rivalry. On May 9, 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman outlined a visionary proposal to pool French and German coal and steel production under a common supranational authority (Andry, 2022; Van Zon et al., 2024). This 'Schuman Plan', heavily influenced by Jean Monnet's federalist ideals, aimed to prevent future conflicts by addressing the root causes of rivalry over essential resources in the

region, promoting economic integration and prosperity, and inducing a shared destiny (Andry, 2022; Van Zon et al., 2024). Monnet's design provided the first nod to what would later take the form of a supranational institution through what he initially called a supra-ministerial structure independent of any minister, ensuring efficiency and neutrality (Brunet, 2018). Later, Monnet carried the supra-ministerial ethos of his Plan into the ECSC, laying the groundwork for the supranational institutions that would eventually define European integration. In this sense, the ECSC brought together six countries – France, West Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg – united by the need to reconcile past animosities and foster socio-economic stability, leading to the creation of the first supranational community (Van Zon et al., 2024).

The High Authority, consisting of nine members acting independently of national governments, initially chaired by Jean Monnet, was the supranational body of the ECSC and, thus, the cornerstone of the community's governance (Brunet, 2018; Van Zon et al., 2024). Tasked with ensuring the functioning of a common market for coal and steel, the High Authority operated under the principle of collegiality, ensuring decisions were taken collectively and without national bias, enabling collaborative decision-making for mutual benefit (Van Zon et al., 2024). The Member States' willingness to relinquish certain aspects of sovereignty to a supranational authority reflected a pragmatic recognition of interdependence and the necessity of cooperation. As Schuman envisioned, the ECSC laid the "first concrete foundation of a European federation indispensable to the preservation of peace" (Schuman, 1950, p. 1). In doing so, it redefined the relationship between nation-states and collective governance, forging the foundation stone for a new political consensus that now continues to shape Europe. As Schuman declared, "Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity" (Schuman, 1950, p. 1). Moreover, Marshall emphasised the idea of an agreement among European countries and a shared destiny as a crucial element for economic recovery in his speech on the European Recovery Plan, delivered years earlier (Marshall, 1947).

The after-WWII period underscored the fragility of national economies and the social instability arising from economic dislocation. Therefore, the ECSC's

establishment reflected broader post-war ambitions to stabilise Europe through economic integration, as a means to improve wealth, prosperity and living conditions for citizens (Andry, 2022). Post-war Western European governments recognised that lasting peace required a socio-economic foundation. Consequently, the ECSC aimed to harmonise industrial production and ensure fair competition among European nation-states as a way to rebuild their economies (Andry, 2022). The ECSC had a functional approach based on strategic oversight. By centralising control over coal and steel, industries critical to armed power, the ECSC mitigated the potential for unilateral military rearmament (Andry, 2022). This was particularly relevant in the context of the Cold War, as the ECSC integrated West Germany into the Western bloc while fostering its economic recovery (Van Zon et al., 2024). Furthermore, following Schuman's aspiration regarding the elimination of the opposition between France and Germany (Schuman, 2011), the installation of a High Authority of coal and steel was seen as a way of making war between the two countries impossible (Van Zon et al., 2024).

In this context, what happened with the legitimacy of Western European nation-states post-WWII? As mentioned above, the war left a landscape characterised by an economic, social and political crisis that seriously affected the legitimacy of nation-states through a severe lack of trust among their citizens and a plight of latent conflict between Western European countries in the run-up to the Cold War. In this situation of sheer disarray, nation-states became an obstacle to reaching a more advanced form of governance and societal organisation, represented by the supernationalist ideals (Milward, 2000). For instance, social inequality between war-torn countries represented a significant challenge and potential obstacle to European integration (Andry, 2022). Therefore, the post-war scenario required a broader political consensus to maintain legitimacy and meet the growing demands of European citizens.

The ECSC emerged not only as an intellectual counterpoint to nationalism but as a political alternative to government from the national powers (Milward, 2000). This redefinition of sovereignty was instrumental in stabilising the post-war consensus. Indeed, without the integration process, the Western European nation-states would have been unable to maintain the confidence and support of their citizens, nor would they have been able to offer their populations the same level of security and prosperity

(Milward, 2000). In the end, the formation of the ECSC as the first supranational structure was the vanguard of a more advanced form of political organisation due to the growing inability of the nation-states to fulfil their sovereign functions satisfactorily within their borders (Milward, 2000). Hence, the High Authority performed in accordance with the functional needs of the states by managing lower-level matters and emerged as the leading power in supranational functional governance (Milward, 2000). In a nutshell, the legitimacy of nation-states could have been maintained if they had been able to address the demands of their citizens in the post-WWII period by establishing a lasting social consensus on governance. However, as states failed to consolidate their legitimacy in the post-war period, increasing social discontent in a context marked by the economic crisis, the reconstruction of Western European states had to rely on a broader political consensus and demonstrate greater responsiveness to the needs of their populations in order to gain legitimacy.

As can be seen, the ECSC served as a crucial support and an essential component of the nation-state post-WWII development, opening the way to new forms of integration in the upcoming years. Its success demonstrated that shared governance could bring both economic growth and social peace, allowing the appeasement of certain factors that had been fomenting a latent state of war (Van Zon et al., 2024). The integration process, therefore, was both a means of overcoming the historical divisions of Europe and a strategy for reinforcing the form of sovereign power in a new geopolitical and economic context.

The ECSC as the European Leviathan: Hobbesian Analysis

Hobbes' concept of the 'state of nature,' articulated in the *Leviathan*, describes a hypothetical condition where there is no central authority to govern individuals, resulting in a perpetual conflict and insecurity state (Hobbes, 1651). Subsequently, the right of nature is represented by the freedom of each person and their power of self-preservation, based on equality among human beings, despite the natural differences and vulnerabilities (Hobbes, 1651). Hobbes argues that individuals without recognised authority or governing power are in a state of war, driven by a situation of inevitable competition, which is not limited to actual combat, but includes the constant

threat or willingness to engage in conflict (Hobbes, 1651). In this state, Hobbes argues, human life is characterised by perpetual insecurity and conflict, represented by a “war of every man against every man” (Hobbes, 1651, p. 96), emphasising the chaos and vulnerability inherent in the state of nature. In this sense, the absence of trust among individuals fosters a condition of fear and suspicion, where people act to protect themselves, often through aggression. As can be interpreted from Hobbes' theory, this vision of unregulated chaos highlights the necessity of a sovereign power to impose order and ensure collective security.

Hobbes theorises that this state of nature is determined by some intrinsic features of humankind regarding competition for honour and dignity, the distinction between the private and public or common good, and the belief of superiority, considering themselves wiser and more capable of governing public opinion than others (Hobbes, 1651). All these characteristics emanate from the use of reason, which differentiates human beings from other creatures, whose agreement to pursue commonwealth is naturally determined (Hobbes, 1651). In contrast, Hobbes argues that human beings, as rational individuals, seek to escape from the miserable state of war, and to do so, they recognise the necessity of a social contract, represented by an artificial or non-naturally determined agreement (Hobbes, 1651). This covenant implies that individuals collectively confer some of their power and right to govern themselves to a sovereign authority (Hobbes, 1651). The social contract forms the basis of the commonwealth, so-called by Hobbes as the Leviathan; a political entity created to ensure peace, security, and order among human beings (Hobbes, 1651). For Hobbes, the establishment of the commonwealth is rooted in mutual consent, as individuals agree to obey a sovereign power in exchange for protection and stability. Furthermore, by surrendering their personal power and submitting to the authority of a sovereign, individuals establish a form of social cohesion designed to ensure not only their survival but also peace and prosperity within the commonwealth. This is the core of Hobbes’ argument which represents the transition from nature to civil society, through the establishment of a central power that halts the state of war that is nature. Hence, the legitimacy of the sovereign arises from the rational choice of individuals to prioritise collective security and social order.

As can be seen, Thomas Hobbes articulated a political philosophy that explains the initial stage of the founding of states and sovereign powers as a mechanism for moving out of the state of war, ensuring collective security and welfare. That said, the question now arises whether this theory of political philosophy can explain the process of the establishment of supranational organisations at a more advanced phase of the consolidation of sovereign powers, in line with the historical progress of humankind. In particular, after defining the context in which Europe integrated post-1945 and the grounds for the creation of the ECSC, this essay seeks to determine how the formation of the ECSC can be analysed through Hobbes' political philosophy.

Europe in the aftermath of WWII bore a striking resemblance to Hobbes' state of nature in the form of the state of war. In the post-1945 context, where war severely destabilised political and social orders, leaving nation-states fragmented and vulnerable, the analogy with the *Leviathan* gains force, explaining the formation of ECSC as a supranational organisation. Without effective governance, economic crisis and devastating social conditions in the war-torn countries of Western Europe, the legitimacy of nation-states and their role as protectors of their citizens was severely weakened. As explained in the first chapter, the chaos and vulnerability of individuals in nation-states was sown in a social landscape marked by hunger, unemployment, homelessness and lack of health care. Western European countries were embedded in a system of severely weakened sovereign power. Despite being centuries later, the Hobbesian state of war characterised by fear and suspicion could be glimpsed in post-WWII Europe through widespread social discontent and a severe lack of trust in the governing powers. In addition, the extensive crises and lack of trust not only affected the internal affairs of nation-states but also extended to international relations, undermining the stability of the European continent in the post-war period. Thus, the absence of trust was not only at the vertical level (from individual to national sovereign power) but also at the horizontal level (between European countries). From the post-WWII context outlined above, and with the Cold War gaining momentum, it can be interpreted that the European geopolitical framework was under severe tension among nation-states, each one concerned with managing on their own the consequences of the war within their territories and populations. At the same time, Western European

countries were striving to preserve their influence on the global stage, aiming to demonstrate their resilience and relative superiority over other nation-states. In this respect, the opposition between France and Germany in the vestiges of the war stands out.

Notwithstanding that government structures already existed in the post-1945 European scenario, in contrast to the Hobbesian state of nature, the analogy arises from the state of war represented by instability, violence and distrust. Noticeably, European nation-states in the post-war context were in an analogous Hobbesian state of war, pictured by a constant threat or willingness to engage in conflict. Under Hobbes' theory, whereas individuals find themselves in a permanent conflict and insecurity situations led by self-preservation instinct, Western European nation-states were exposed to an underlying geopolitical tension threatened by war after WWII. This state of war was determined by the absence of trust between Western European nation-states, reinforced by the weakening of the legitimacy of sovereign powers due to social unrest at the internal level, which led to a latent risk of armed conflict and insecurity at the regional level. Therefore, the political philosophical reasoning behind the Hobbesian state of war fits into the post-WWII scene, understanding Western European countries in this later stage of governance as the individuals in the primary formation of sovereignty structures.

In this context, Hobbes' assertion that individuals in the state of nature would rationally seek to escape it by forming a social contract finds a parallel in Europe's post-war response. In this war-torn landscape, Western European governments recognised the need for regional cooperation and consequent interdependence, since the devastation of war revealed the limitations of isolated national efforts to achieve stability. Echoing Hobbes' argument that only a centralised authority can effectively suppress conflict; analogously, a supranational authority could overpower the latent state of war between nation-states. This understanding set the path for collaborative measures and integration efforts aimed at overcoming the divisions and hostility that had previously fuelled conflicts across Europe. While Hobbes envisioned this authority as a central sovereign, post-war Europe sought to balance the existing weakened

sovereignty of nation-states with supranational cooperation through the creation of the ECSC, setting the stage for initiatives that would redefine governance on the continent.

The establishment of the ECSC is a striking redefinition of Hobbes' social contract, this time represented through the nation-states, in this advanced phase of consolidation of sovereign powers. History has left no doubt that the European integration process was crucial in achieving the transition from a state of war to a stabilised civil society, due to the willingness of Western European governments to cede some aspects of their sovereignty to a supranational authority. Otherwise, the central power of nation-states would have been unable to achieve the commonwealth as a state of peace and prosperity for their populations. In this regard, the High Authority as the supranational institution of the ECSC symbolised a political consensus that embodied the legitimacy conferred by the mutual consent of the Six founding nation-states. According to Hobbes' theory, the ECSC through the High Authority analogically represented the 'European Leviathan', as it performed to recover the economy of its Member States and to provide higher responsiveness to the needs of their citizens in order to increase legitimacy and pursue the commonwealth as the ultimate end.

Conclusion

The historical context of post-WWII Europe revealed a continent in disarray, grappling with widespread social discontent, economic devastation, and a profound loss of trust in nation-state governance. The vestiges of the war undermined the legitimacy of sovereign powers, exposing their inability to address citizens' basic needs and prevent conflict. The creation of the ECSC appeared as a regional response to these challenges, driven by the need for a transformative political framework that prioritised reconciliation and collective recovery. By pooling critical resources, specifically coal and steel under a supranational authority, the ECSC offered a pragmatic solution to rebuild economies, stabilise societies, and prevent future wars, particularly between historical rivals like France and Germany. This strategic alignment of economic cooperation and peacebuilding set the stage for a new model of governance, blending national sovereignty with supranational principles.

Hobbes' political philosophy provides a compelling framework for analysing the formation of the ECSC in the aftermath of WWII. Europe's post-war landscape, marked by devastation, insecurity, and mutual distrust, echoed Hobbes' state of nature, a condition characterised by latent risk of war and the absence of trust. The ECSC, conceived as a supranational body, functioned as a European Leviathan, designed to overcome the state of war between Western European nation-states, underscoring the reconciliation between France and Germany, by establishing a centralised authority capable of fostering economic cooperation, political stability, and peace. By pooling sovereignty and creating a High Authority, the ECSC allowed Western European nation-states to move beyond national rivalries and work towards a shared destiny.

The ECSC emerged as analogous to Hobbes' social contract but with a new approach through the principle of supranationalism in a more advanced stage of governance, according to the progress of humankind. This act of mutual consent among the Six Member States not only addressed immediate post-war challenges but also laid the foundation for deeper integration and long-term stability in the region. The ECSC's establishment demonstrates the adaptability of Hobbes' principles to new forms of governance, where the Leviathan's role transcends the philosophical foundations of the nation-state. By addressing the fragmented sovereignty of post-war Europe through a supranational authority, the ECSC redefined the concept of the social contract in a collective and cooperative context at the regional level. This innovation not only mitigated the immediate risks of renewed conflict but also signalled a shift towards interdependence as a solution to structural challenges. In doing so, the ECSC exemplified how cooperation among nations could transform a state of latent conflict into a platform for stability and shared prosperity, setting the path for the broader European integration process.

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Global Conflict in the Modern Era

The EU-Tunisia Migration Deal: Securitisation as a Weakness

Abstract

For years, the EU and its Member States have struggled to manage migration effectively, leading to increased securitisation and policy externalisation. One such measure is the migration deal with Tunisia. This paper examines the deal through the lens of securitisation theory, which often overlooks the role of external actors. However, as Léonard and Kaunert demonstrated in Turkey's case, third countries can wield considerable influence. Using discourse analysis, this study explores statements, speeches, and interviews by Tunisian President Saied and relevant ministers. The findings reveal that Tunisia has recognised the EU's vulnerabilities on migration, particularly its growing securitisation of transit routes. While explicit threats are limited, Tunisia's discourse exhibits a pattern of leveraging migration as a bargaining tool. Consequently, Tunisia played a decisive role in shaping the EU-Tunisia migration deal, significantly impacting the securitisation process. Despite this, the EU continues to pursue similar agreements with other regional partners, ignoring the risks of manipulation. Before expanding this model across the Mediterranean and beyond, the EU – and President von der Leyen in particular – should carefully reconsider its approach.

Keywords: Securitisation, Migration, Bargaining, Vulnerability, Externalisation

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Introduction

Tunis, July 14, 2023. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, Marc Rutte, Dutch Prime Minister, and Giorgia Meloni, Italian Prime Minister – referred to as 'Team Europe' – have has just signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with Tunisian President, Kais Saied (European Commission, 2023). By virtue of this agreement, the EU earmarks over €700 million in support of Tunisia's economy. While this is not explicitly stated, it is no secret that the EU expects Tunisia's cooperation in halting migration towards Europe in return (Liboreiro & Genovese, 2023). Hence, €105 million is meant as support for border management and controls, an almost tripling of the amounts received over the past two years (Deutsche Welle, 2023). This deal, however, was heavily criticised, primarily by EU Parliamentarians. After all, Tunisia has a – to put it lightly – problematic human rights track record, a.o. with regards to the treatment of migrants (O'Carroll & Smith, 2024). Moreover, ever since July 2021, when he *de facto* assumed all executive powers, President Saied has led the country in an increasingly authoritarian fashion (Amara & Mcdowall, 2021). How then, is it possible that this figure was awarded such substantial financial aid?

This paper answers this question through the lens of the securitisation theory. More precisely, it views the securitisation process from the perspective of the outsider, in this case Tunisia. Therefore, this paper's research question is the following: what role did Tunisia play in the EU's securitisation process of migration, both before and after the EU-Tunisia migration deal? Answering this question is pertinent. Firstly, as elaborated on below, securitisation theory has largely overlooked the potential influence of external states. Only recently, some scholars have recognised this neglect. This paper aims to supplement these new insights by adopting a similar approach, and as a result, rectify this neglect. Therefore, this paper contributes, both theoretically and empirically, to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of securitisation processes. Secondly, this question is equally relevant for contemporary politics, especially for the EU. Since von der Leyen proclaimed the EU-Tunisia deal as a 'blueprint for the future' (Reuters, 2023), it is unsurprising that the EU made similar agreements with Lebanon and Egypt thereafter (Petillo, 2024). Most likely, the EU will make similar deals with Jordan and Morocco (Dubois & Foy, 2024). Therefore, it is of vital importance to

comprehend the mechanisms underlying these developments. By looking closely at the case of Tunisia, this paper contributes to this need.

In pursuance of these aims, this paper employs discourse analysis. This method is used to analyse statements, speeches and interviews of the most relevant Tunisian officials when it comes to migration and foreign policy. This paper argues that Tunisia recognised that the EU's growing securitisation of migrants signalled a weakness on part of the EU. Consequently, Tunisia increasingly leveraged its position as a central nod in the migration flows towards Europe. This exploitation occurred especially in advance of the EU-Tunisia migration deal and other similar agreements, which enabled Tunisia to significantly steer these outcomes of the securitisation processes.

Besides this introduction, this paper consists of four part. First, a brief literature review is presented. This includes the securitisation theory itself as well as the relevant supplemental works on migration and external actors. Thereafter, the second part, defines this paper's research design, which entails the spatial and time limitations of the case, the used methodology and the analysed data. The main and third part of this paper is the presentation and analysis of the results. Then, these results are discussed and concluded in the last part.

Literature Review

In *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, Wæver, Buzan and de Wilde put forward what became to be known as the 'securitisation theory'. While these authors – often referred to as the 'Copenhagen School' – build upon the work of other scholars, their views formed a major shift from traditional security studies. More particularly, they disagreed with the traditional perspective of security as an objective phenomenon. Instead, they argue that what constitutes a security matter is 'socially constructed' (Léonard & Kaunert, 2019) and time and context-specific (Balzacq et al., 2016). In their view, a certain issue only enters the realm of security if and when the "issue is presented as posing an existential threat to a designed referent object" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 21). The central aim of this whole process is for the securitising actor – most often the state – to take measures "beyond the established rules of the game", otherwise referred to as 'extraordinary measures' (Buzan et al., 1998, 23).

Considering Europe's increasingly securitised approach towards migrants, many authors have applied the securitisation framework to EU migration policies (Balzacq et al., 2016). From the beginning of the 21st century, academics have considered migration to be a securitised issue by the EU and in most of Europe (*e.g.* Huysmans, 2000; Ceyhan & Tsoukala, 2002; Bigo, 2002; Balzacq, 2008) and is still considered as such by the majority of the contemporary literature (*e.g.* Gattinara & Morales, 2017; Leonard & Kaunert, 2019, 2022). Some of the most recent outcomes of this securitisation are the above-mentioned migration deals. Arguably, in the light of its non-compliance with the legal requirement of consultation with the European Council and Parliament (Natter, 2023), these deals can be characterised as extraordinary. Besides, these deals also signify the growing 'externalisation' of EU migration policy, *i.e.* the extension of EU migration controls from EU territory to the surrounding states (Stock et. al., 2019). Hence, this raises the following question: can – and if so how – the securitisation theory, which analyses the internal dynamics of security policy, explain the external dimension of these policies?

This question is at the heart of *De-centring the Securitisation of Asylum and Migration in the European Union* (2021). In this piece, Léonard and Kaunert emphasise the increasing leverage of Turkey over the EU on migration as a consequence of the Syrian civil war. More precisely, they argue that – after the signing of the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement on migration – Turkey exploited the presence of Syrian refugees on its territory in order to blackmail the EU, primarily through the formulation of threats. Afterwards, other scholars have drawn similar conclusions regarding the 'Ceuta Border' and the 'Eastern Borders Route', where respectively Morocco (Ferrer-Gallardo, & Gabrielli, 2022) and Belarus (Graban, 2024) have instrumentalised migratory flows for their political advantage. Indeed, as underlined by Ferrer-Gallardo and Gabrielli, these insights are not novelties. In fact, many authors have emphasised the growing agency of 'third countries' (*i.e.* non-EU countries) in shaping EU migration policies (*e.g.* Paoletti, 2011; Wunderlich, 2012; Okyay & Zaragoza-Cristiani, 2016; Tsourapas, 2019). However, the uniqueness of Léonard and Kaunert's arguments was the connection made between the securitisation theory and the agency of third countries. They point to the fact that scholars debating the EU securitisation of migration have "omitted to

consider an important factor, namely the potential role of external actors, that is, non-EU actors" (Léonard & Kaunert, 2021, 732). Léonard and Kaunert acknowledge this neglect and, by shifting the perspective towards third countries, observe that the growing securitisation of migration by the EU has increased the leverage of those countries hosting migrants. By securitising an issue, securitising actors "lay bare their fears" and hence "point themselves at a source of vulnerability and relative weakness" (Léonard & Kaunert, 2021, 735).

Perhaps not deliberately, the Copenhagen School left room for this dynamic via the notion of "functional actors". These units are vaguely defined as "actors who affect the dynamics of a sector" and "significantly influences decisions in the field of security" (Buzan et al, 1998, 36). Nonetheless, Léonard and Kaunert discard this theoretical pathway because "the literature on functional actors does not shed any significant light on the potential role of outsiders" (Léonard & Kaunert, 2021, 734). However, some authors – both *a priori* and *a posteriori* – have contended that an external state can be considered 'functional actors' (see Baysal, 2020; Dieudonné, 2024). Moreover, previous neglect of the role of functional actors should not imply that one cannot further explore the theoretical potential of this notion. Floyd notices that "functional actors may act not only to veto securitisation but also to endorse it" (Floyd, 2021, 87). Thus, the potential impact of these functional actors cannot be underestimated, as evidenced by the abovementioned growing leverage of non-EU countries. Therefore, it would be contributing to develop this notion – and the role of external states at large – more in depth, both theoretically and empirically.

Research Design

Case selection

This research paper covers a four-year timeline, namely from 2021 until the present. The main reason for this limitation is simple: the statements and speeches of President Saied – which forms the lion's share of the analysed data – are only accessible from 2021 onwards. This, however, does not bar the aim of this paper. After all, this period still allows to shed light on the role that Tunisia played leading up to the migration deal, and afterwards. Spatially, this research focuses on Tunisia and its relations with the EU.

As this paper aims to supplement the findings of Léonard and Kaunert, selecting the EU-Tunisia migration deal as a case study is evident. While there are numerous differences, the rationale behind this deal is generally similar to the EU-Turkey deal, namely decreasing migration towards Europe in return for financial benefits. This allows to test and compare the results of this paper's case – Tunisia – against Turkey.

Methodology and data

This research paper employs discourse analysis in its research, for which the reasons are twofold. Firstly, like the securitisation theory, this method recognises that "language is a medium orientated towards action and function" (Halperin & Heath, 2020, 366), and how 'text' – whether spoken or textual – produces meaning (Balzacq, 2011). More precisely, discourse analysis argues that, to grasp the meaning of text, the relevant context must be considered. Here, context primarily refers to the relevant political circumstances surrounding the EU-Tunisia relations. Therefore, this emphasis on text and discourse processes makes discourse analysis the dominant method among academics involved in securitisation studies (Balzacq et al, 2016). Secondly, Léonard and Kaunert (2021) refer to the formulation of 'threats' by virtue of which external actors exploit vulnerabilities. These threats are essentially discursive. This makes discourse analysis the most suitable method for this paper.

This approach, however, does have two major limits. Firstly, it should be noted that political vulnerabilities can be exploited via various means besides threatening discourse. However, this paper takes into account the role of language at large and is therefore not confined to mere threat formulations. Moreover, the relevant political context will be taken into account in order to derive more meaning to the language. A second limitation of discourse analysis is its inability to explain why a certain securitisation process has succeeded or not. Process tracing, for example, is far better suited to answer these questions (Balzacq et al., 2016). However, this method is time-consuming, and hence less suitable for smaller research. Moreover, and perhaps most essentially, this paper only seeks to answer *how* Tunisia has interacted with the EU's securitisation of migration. Discourse analysis is perfectly suited to answer these questions.

This research will focus on 'official foreign policy discourse', more precisely on official discourse addressing migration from Tunisia. Therefore, the units of analysis are those political leaders with the most authority over migration policies in Tunisia (Hansen, 2006), being President Kais Saied and, where relevant, his Ministers. The statements, speeches and interviews of both individuals constitute the bulwark of the data for this research. In this regard, I consulted the official websites of the Presidential Office and other governmental institutions. However, until 2023, the texts concerned stem predominantly from the Presidential Office's website. This is merely out of practical limitations: the websites of the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister provide limited access to statements and speeches made prior to 2024. Therefore, in an attempt to complete these gaps, I consulted online news coverage, although these sources were also used to establish the relevant political context.

Results

As articulated by the proponents of discourse analysis, as well as the Copenhagen School, one cannot interpret the meaning of text without considering its context. The same applies for the political context surrounding the EU-Tunisia migration deal. Therefore, an overview of the political context surrounding the EU-Tunisia migration deal is given, before we delve deeper into the relevant statements, speeches, etc. These texts will be subdivided over three periods. The first period stretches from 2021 until 2022. The second onsets from 2023 onwards until July 2o23, when the migration deal was signed. The last and third period dates from the signing of the migration deal until the present.

Context

Especially since the onset of this decade, EU-Tunisia relations have been shaped by migration. Before, migration was a largely depoliticised topic in Tunisia (Natter, 2023). Today, Tunisia has become a central 'transit hub' for individuals migrating towards Europe, primarily from Sub-Saharan origin. In 2020, Tunisia surpassed Libya as the largest origin country for migrants arriving in Italy, a development that kept increasing in the years afterwards (Liga, 2024; Meddeb & Louati, 2024). In 2023, for example, a total

number of 97.306 migrants arrived in Italy from Tunisia by sea. The Tunisian government, however, continuously failed – either unable or unwilling – to develop effective policies to manage these increasing flows (ECRE, 2024). Meanwhile, the EU was increasingly pressured by its Member States, primarily Italy, and an increasing share of the EU population to tackle migration more efficiently. Hence, the EU pursued an agreement with Tunisia, which resulted in the EU-Tunisia migration deal (Balmer & Amante, 2023).

2021-2022

During the years 2021 and 2022, migration was clearly no priority for Tunisia's political leadership. Internally, Saied held monthly meetings with his Minister for Foreign Affairs and Migration. Yet, despite the growing presence of migrants residing in or transiting through Tunisia, this issue was never discussed. This neglect stands in sharp contrast with Saied's meetings with EU and Italian representatives. Here, the topic of migration featured more frequently. Moreover, Tunisia articulated their standpoints quite coherently. In a meeting with EU ambassadors in February 2021, Tunisia's President Saied stressed the need for an approach "differently from previous approaches" (Presidential Office(a), 2021). Additionally, Saied repetitively urged to look "beyond the security solution" and instead "address the root causes of this phenomenon, such as poverty and unemployment" (Presidential Office(b), 2021; Presidential Office(c), 2021; Presidential Office(d), 2022). The diplomatic and constructive framing of his viewpoints indicates that migration was no top priority for Tunisia. This is further evidenced by the Presidential Office's statement on Saied's meeting with von der Leyen at the Tunis-EU Summit in June 2021, which barely mentions the topic of migration (Presidential Office(e), 2021). Still, it is worth noting that there exists a discrepancy between the priority of migration on the internal and external level, as this evidences that Saied recognised the vulnerability of the EU. This changed completely after the President's coup in July. Hereafter, except for one meeting with EU Commissioner on Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi (Presidential Office(d), 2022), EU officials were more concerned about the status of the rule of law and democracy in Tunisia, instead of migration (Presidential

Office(f), 2021; Presidential Office(g), 2021; Presidential Office(h), 2022; Presidential Office(i), 2022). These concerns, however, shifted in 2023.

2023 – Migration Deal

On February 21, 2023, Tunisia's President Saied held an infamous address to the National Security Council. As the official statement reads, Saied had urged the Council to implement “urgent measures that must be taken to address the phenomenon of the influx of large numbers of irregular migrants from sub-Saharan Africa to Tunisia” (Presidential Office(j), 2023). What followed was a xenophobic conspiracy theory, in which he referred to an “undeclared goal to consider Tunisia only an African country” and “the resulting violence, crimes and unacceptable practices” of Sub-Saharan immigration (Presidential Office(j), 2023). These racist comments were received with sharp criticism by the international community, especially because of the consequential attacks on Sub-Saharan migrants present in Tunisia. While commentators explain these comments on Saied's aim to combat his domestic political insecurity (Cordall, 2023; Reuters, 2023), it also set the tone for the aftercoming engagement with the EU. While Saied and his Ministers refrained from reiterating such racist comments, they did formulate more assertive discourses.

Since 2023, Saied recurrently linked migration to criminality. In June 2023, for example, Saied pointed von der Leyen to the “existence of criminal networks trafficking in human beings in the southern and northern Mediterranean” (Presidential Office(k), 2023). Similar references were made in meetings with the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, and Giorgia Meloni (Presidential Office(l), 2023; Presidential Office(m), 2023). Additionally, the Tunisian President increasingly emphasised that his country is becoming a “place of residence”, instead of a mere transit country (Presidential Office(k), 2023; Presidential Office(m), 2023), for example in his engagements with 'Team Europe’ in June 2023 (Presidential Office(n), 2023). Moreover, Saied stressed that Tunisia cannot, and will not, be a ‘guardian' for EU borders (Presidential Office(l), 2023; Presidential Office(o), 2023; Presidential Office(p), 2023). Interestingly, this inability was often coupled with the ongoing economic struggles of Tunisia and Saied’s problematic relationship with the International Monetary Fund

('IMF'). In a speech on April 6, 2023, Saied openly rejected a $1.9 billion IMF loan by describing the coupled conditions as 'dictats' (Reuters, 2023). Two months later, Saied suggested Meloni to turn "the issue of cancelling the debts that burden the Tunisian state [...] into development projects" (Presidential Office(m), 2023). Saied increasingly tried to present Tunisia as a country unable and unwilling to tackle the issue of migration by its own. Therefore, he frequently implored his European counterparts to "hold a high-level conference among all the countries concerned" in order to find a collective solution (Presidential Office(q), 2023). Similarly, in a meeting with the Italian Minister of Interior, Saied frequently highlighted that "irregular migration […] is constantly worsening", requiring a collective solution "as soon as possible" (Presidential Office(r), 2023).

By linking the migration issue to its economic woes, Saied made clear that economic aid could provide Tunisia with the necessary tools to decrease migratory flows to Europe. Notably, this discourse resembles a blueprint for the actual migration deal made between the EU and Tunisia. Furthermore, Saied seemingly aimed to strengthen his position by pointing towards the urgency of the matter and highlighting the idea of Tunisia as a 'place of residence', thus in need of more aid.

Migration deal - present

While the migration deal was announced as a new milestone in EU-Tunisia relations, these relations gradually deteriorated after its signing. In an odd sequence of events during October, 2023, Tunisia reimbursed €60 million previously transferred by the EU since, as articulated by Saied, Tunisia "does not accept anything resembling charity" (Liboreiro, 2023). This amount was allocated to Tunisia under the EU's 'Covid-19 recovery programme' and did hence not form part of the payments included under the migration deal (Sorgi, 2023). Tunisian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Migration, Nabil Ammar, accused the EU of deceiving Tunisia by conceiving the €60 million as part of the migration deal. Moreover, Minister Ammar stated that, for Tunisia, "sovereignty is not a weapon" and that "the world does not stop at one partner or another" (Business News, 2023). This emphasis on the sovereignty of Tunisia was reiterated by the Minister when he denounced a rejected visit of EU Parliamentarians as an "inspection mission"

and stated that “we are not the EU's police”. At the 2023 General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly, the Minister expressed Tunisia’s concern over foreign influence in its territory by rejecting “any implicit settlement project of irregular migrants” in Tunisia (United Nations, 2024). Additionally, in an interview with El País, he made clear that the “best solution is to create wealth” and “integrate the southern shore of the Mediterranean”, which can only be interpreted as an implicit request for financial aid (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2023). Less implicitly, Tunisia’s Prime Minister, Ahmed Hachani, stated that, at the time, “the aid provided is very low” and stressed “the need to help Tunisia deal with the migration issue”. Nonetheless, the Prime Minister meanwhile asserted that Tunisia “does not assume responsibility” for the migration issue (Prime Minister’s Office, 2024).

Another interesting episode exemplifying Tunisia’s tough balancing act between the need for economic aid and upholding its sovereignty occurred in April 2024. During this month, Tunisia’s official discourse on migration intensified dramatically, both in quantity – the topic of migration was never mentioned in the first three months of 2024 – and quality. In a meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Migration, President Saied repeated the known narrative: the issue of migration is “worsening every day”, Tunisia “refuses to be neither transformative nor stable”, and the IMF tries “to impose a fait accompli that Tunisians will never accept” (Presidential Office(s), 2024). Saied reiterated this message to the National Security Council, adding that – especially in the case of migration – “Tunisia belongs to the Tunisians, it is not on sale nor for rent, nor in favour of any policy imposed from abroad” (InfoMigrants, 2024). This shift must be interpreted in the light of the agreements Tunisia signed with Italy shortly thereafter. These agreements consist of over €200 million in financial aid provided to Tunisia by Italy (Mbarek, 2024). Therefore, Saied’s discourse must be regarded as a way of leveraging his position and evidence, again, that Saied deliberately instrumentalised the migration issue in its foreign policies.

Discussion

In general, the results above support the arguments made by Léonard and Kaunert (2021). In their paper on the EU-Turkey migration deal, they proclaim that – first – the

EU's securitisation of migration signalled a strategic weakness, which was recognised by exploited. Second, they contend that Turkey intentionally exploited this vulnerability, in particular through the formulation of threats.

It has been clearly established that, like Turkey, Tunisia acknowledged the EU's securitisation of migrants transiting its territory as a liability. This is evidenced by the discrepancy between the disinterest of migration on the domestic level and the priority of the migration issue on the international level, especially in its relations with the EU and Italy. Indeed, it can be argued that this difference is fairly logical considering the international dimension of migration. Yet, one should consider the element of timing as well. In the months leading up to the EU-Tunisia migration deal, Saied frequently emphasised that migration flows were increasing 'every day' and stressed the need for a quick, collective solution. As illustrated, the same pattern occurred in April 2024, when Tunisia signed a mini-version of the EU migration deal with Italy.

Tunisia's exploitation of this weakness, however, is less obvious. In fact, only one clear threat can be identified, more precisely when Minister Ammar signalled to the EU that "the world does not stop at one partner or another" (Business News, 2023). Nonetheless, both Saied and his Ministers often positioned Tunisia as economically unable to halt migration, but willing to conclude a collective agreement. Even though these statements are far from threatening, they do indicate the constant effort off Tunisia to leverage its position as a central nod in the migratory flows towards Europe. Therefore, it can be concluded that Tunisia aimed to exploit the EU's vulnerability, albeit in a less aggressive manner than Turkey. Moreover, contrary to Léonard and Kaunert (2021), this research paper also investigated the role of external actors *before* the migration deal. As a consequence, this research was able to observe another interesting phenomenon: the ability of external actors to influence the content of the 'extraordinary measure'. After all, the EU-Tunisia deal very much resembles the public statements made by Saied and his Ministers: financial aid while preserving Tunisia's independence, or, in other words, an alternative to the IMF.

Scholars should integrate these empirical results into the securitisation theory. This can be done through a renaissance of the notion of "functional actors". Whether it is Tunisia, Turkey, Belarus or Morocco, it has been sufficiently evidenced that external

states can have significant influence on the securitisation processes of others and therefore fall with the scope of this term. Once this integration between empirics and theory has been established, securitisation theory will encompass a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying dynamics of security policy.

Conclusion

For quite some time, the EU and its Member States have struggled to effectively tackle the issue of migration. These concerns have led to an increasing securitisation of this topic, as well as an externalisation of its policies. One of such policy instruments is the migration deal with Tunisia. This research paper has analysed this deal through the perspective of the securitisation theory. This theoretical framework has largely neglected the potential impact of external actors. In contrast, as Léonard and Kaunert (2021) evidenced in the case of Turkey, this paper has shown these third countries can have significant leverage.

Through the use of discourse analysis, this paper has analysed the statements, speeches, and interviews of Tunisian President Saied and, where relevant, his Ministers. The results demonstrated that Tunisia has recognised and exploited the weakness of the EU on the file of migration, which was signalled through the EU's increasing securitisation of migrants transiting through Tunisia. While clear threats remain limited, the analysed discourse illustrated a pattern of Tunisia leveraging its position vis-à-vis the EU via the instrumentalisation of migration. As a result, Tunisia was able to significantly influence the content of the migration deal, and hence the outcome of the securitisation process.

Still, the EU is pursuing similar deals with other countries in the region, in spite of the potential manipulation by its partners. Therefore, the EU and von der Leyen in particular, should think twice before she extends her 'blueprint for the future' to the entire Mediterranean and beyond.

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Anton Meier
Global Conflict in the Modern Era

To Adapt Or Die: Military Innovation And Adoption-Capacity – What Organisational Factors Facilitate The Adoption Of New Weapon Systems?

Abstract

The Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine combines traditional and innovative tactics and technologies in a previously unseen manner. In this conflict, we observe high-tech first-person view (FPV) drones, Main Battle Tanks (MBT), and trenches all present on the same battlefield. While crucial for both the survivability of forces and the success of missions, military innovation remains an understudied field. Furthermore, when it is studied, the focus tends to be on prestigious high-technology weapon systems. However, the adoption of new weapon systems is what truly matters, not just their development. Therefore, this research addresses the question of what organisational factors facilitate the adoption of new weapon systems. To that end, comparative case studies will examine the adoption of tanks during World War II and the contemporary adoption of drones in the armed forces. It is concluded that organisational capital is more important than technological capabilities in facilitating the adoption of new technologies. Organisational capital is defined by critical task focus, experimentation resources, and organisational age. A newly identified important factor is the time since a military's last major engagement. Thus, incorporating 'time since the last war' as a variable in the Adoption-Capacity Theory could further enhance its explanatory power.

Keywords: Military Innovation, Adoption-Capacity, Drones

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Introduction

Carl von Clausewitz famously stated: “In war, more than anywhere else, things do not turn out as we expect” (Clausewitz, 2011). The ability to adapt to changing circumstances is one of the most crucial in war. Therefore, studying how military organisations adapt and implement military innovations is imperative. Nevertheless, this is an often-overlooked field of study and even overlooked by Clausewitz himself (Barry, 2012). The Russian War of Aggression against Ukraine brought conventional inter-state warfare back to Europe. This war combines traditional and innovative tactics and technologies in a previously unseen way. A balance of power led to digging into World War One-styled trenches. Among others, these trenches led to the need for Main Battle Tanks (MBT), which have been relatively redundant in the past decades and are characterised by Counter Insurgency Operations (COIN). Suddenly, cheap Ukrainian first-person view (FPV) drones were dropping makeshift explosives into immensely costly Russian MBTs. This development went so far that at some point, the death of the concept of tanks was seriously discussed, and reputable military leaders felt the need to justify its persistent relevance (Buzzard et al., 2023; Johnson, 2022).

Throughout the war, the Ukrainian armed forces have been lauded by Western observers for their innovative use of their limited means of implementation of new technologies and tactics (Lopatin, 2024; Verkhniatskyi, 2024). However, Western militaries seem to struggle with their lessons-learned processes and the integration of significantly smaller FPV drones into their armed forces (Lopatin, 2024; Phillips-Levine & Mills, 2024). Even major Western military powers with large defence budgets and technological know-how, such as France, the United Kingdom, and the USA, only deploy larger, often plane-like, drones but no smaller systems on lower echelons.

Consequently, this paper seeks to answer the research question: **What organisational factors facilitate the adoption of new weapon systems?** To that end, first recent literature on military innovation will be reviewed, and Adoption-Capacity Theory will be discussed. Based on that, a theoretical framework for the analysis will be constructed. Subsequently, a case study on the organisational factors that facilitated the adoption of tanks will be conducted. The results will be discussed regarding their relevance to FPV drone warfare in the 21st century.

Literature Review

What is Military Innovation?

Before answering the question of what factors facilitate the adoption of new weapon systems, it is necessary to establish what military innovation is in the first place. As a scholarly concept, military innovation has evolved significantly over the past century. Initially explored through grand historical narratives, operational histories, and bureaucratic-political case studies, the field was transformed in the 1980s by Barry Posen's *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. Posen introduced a social scientific approach to studying military innovation, focusing on interwar developments in Britain, France, and Germany. This methodology catalysed the emergence of military innovation studies as a distinct academic discipline, marked by diverse schools of thought, case-based debates, and interdisciplinary relevance.

The issue of how to define military innovation has been debated, with scholars proposing various definitions over the past two decades (Cheung, 2021; Grissom, 2006; Horowitz & Pindyck, 2023). Nevertheless, there is an implicit consensus on what constitutes military innovation. Grissom (2006) proposes three key components. First, innovations must change how military formations function in the field. Second, innovations must have a significant scope and impact. Third, innovations must increase military effectiveness to be considered as such. Consequently, military innovation is "a change in operational praxis that produces a significant increase in military effectiveness' as measured by battlefield results" (Grissom, 2006, p. 907). Similarly, Horowitz and Pindyck (2023) define military innovations as "changes in the conduct of warfare designed to increase the ability of a military community to generate power" (p. 99). It is crucial to note that both definitions allow military innovation to refer to tactics and technologies.

Horowitz and Pindyck (2023) also argue that "how militaries use raw materials is crucial in determining the difference between technical invention and military innovation" (p. 93). With that, they underline the importance of implementation. A good example which will be further elaborated on in the case studies section is the invention of the tank by the British in WWI, which they failed to implement effectively. Military innovation is both an outcome and a process with three subsequent stages: 1) Invention, 2)

Incubation, and 3) Implementation (Horowitz & Pindyck, 2023). The invention stage involves creating new technologies, adapting existing ones to address specific military challenges, or developing new tactics. For example, the British Army's creation of the tank in 1916 marked a significant technological breakthrough, introducing a new tool for battlefield operations. The incubation stage focuses on refining and gaining acceptance for the invention within the military. This phase often involves experimentation and advocacy, either through bottom-up efforts or top-down directives. For instance, carrier warfare was incubated during the 1920s and 1930s, with efforts such as Captain Reeves' bottom-up experimentation in the U.S. Navy shaping its role as a mobile airfield. Finally, the implementation stage requires top-down innovation adoption across a military organisation. This stage ensures that the innovation moves beyond isolated use to become an integral part of military operations. A clear example is how the U.S. Navy fully adopted and operationalised carrier warfare, transforming it into a core element of naval strategy. Together, these stages illustrate how military innovations progress from ideas to widespread operational capabilities.

Adoption-Capacity Theory

After establishing how military innovation is defined, we can now move on to the topic of how it works. To that end, Adoption-Capacity Theory (ACT) is a valuable theoretical framework. ACT was first put forward by Horowitz in his work on the effect of the spread of military innovations on global politics and consequently constitutes a theory of the spread of military power (2010). ACT proposes that two central categories are needed for the adoption of an innovation. These are **resource mobilisation challenges** (require **financial capital**) and **organisational challenges** (require **organisational capital**). How states are able to adopt military innovations depends on the capacity of states to absorb these demands. Resource mobilisation challenges mainly refer to the hurdles in producing and financing innovations, e.g. having the opportunity and means to procure high-quality steel or semiconductor chips. Gilli and Gilli (2016) propose that material obstacles to the proliferation of (technological) military innovation matter more than academics have estimated so far. These material obstacles manifest in 1) the technological challenges of developing advanced weapon systems (**platform**

challenges) and 2) the infrastructural support that they require (**adoption challenges**). Horowitz (2010) defines organisational capital as: “the non-technological aspect of force generation, demonstrated through doctrine, education, and training” (p. 34). He proposes to characterise **organisational capital** by the **critical task focus** of an organisation, **experimentation** resources, and **organisational age**. Furthermore, he operationalises these variables by analysing internal documents to assess the military's focus on critical tasks, using budget data to evaluate commitment to experimentation, and considering the time elapsed since the most recent regime change or significant military defeat to determine organisational age. Horowitz states that: “Militaries with high levels of experimentation, young organisational ages, and critical tasks less defined by operational methods have higher levels of organisational capital, making it easier for them to be culturally open and adopt innovations” (p. 60). Central to ACT is that there is a difference between the interest in responding to an innovation and the actual substance of the response. Similarly, it is argued that it takes a long time to figure out how to organise and utilise innovations to produce military power differently. ACT proposes that “inexpensive but organizationally challenging innovations are more difficult to adopt than those that are expensive but not organizationally demanding” (Gilli & Gilli, 2014, p. 520).

Gilli and Gilli (2014) agree with Horowitz that organisational factors can affect the adoption of some weapon systems but criticise ACT on several points. They argue that organisational size is a better measure of organisational capital and that when this proxy is used, organisational capital is no longer statistically significant. Furthermore, some organisations do not adopt some innovations, while others do because they lack the incentive to do so. At the same time, they highlight the crucial importance of accumulated experience and existing organisational structures in employing disruptive military innovations. Arguably, they come to a very similar conclusion as Horowitz: Organisational capital matters. Furthermore, ACT also concludes that when both the platform and the adoption challenges are low, a military innovation will spread more quickly and widely. In their 2016 paper, Gilli and Gilli conducted a study on the adoption of loitering attack munitions (LAMs), intelligence surveillance, and reconnaissance drones (ISR). They conclude that wealthy countries also struggle with both the platform

challenge of producing combat-effective drones and the adoption challenge of the command, control, communication, and computer infrastructure to operate them. Here, we argue that while this might be true, the large ISP drones Gilli and Gilli write about do not truly change how war is fought; they largely only functionally replace aeroplanes. This could be a reason why some states do not put their full weight behind this innovation, as they still can achieve similar outcomes with their existing means. On the other hand, the adoption of small FPV drones provides squad-level units with new means of organic air support and firepower.

Factors Influencing Organisational Capital

Three main factors influence military innovation and the adoption of new weapon systems. **Technical challenges** include resource mobilisation an financial challenges as well as platform challenges and adoption challenges. Gilli and Gilli (2014) define platform and adoption challenges as the know-how for developing innovation and the infrastructure to use it. Important factors are defence spending and experimentation resources, but they also include the availability of resources. **Organisational challenges** refer to the issues that need to be tackled to integrate innovation into doctrine, education, training, and the actual force structure. Organisational capital is necessary to overcome these challenges. Important factors are critical task focus, organisation age, and organisation size. Furthermore, the individual actions of visionary leaders have proven to be a key driver of innovation (Peatfield, 2022). As Murray (2009) highlighted: “Successful innovation has depended on the organisational culture, the imagination and vision of senior leaders, and the seriousness with which military organisations have taken the intellectual preparation of future leaders through an honest and intelligent study of the past” (p. 13). A third factor for the adoption of military innovation is necessity and urgency. Gilli and Gilli (2016) propose tactical necessity as a main driver for innovation. They test this argument for the implementation of suicide attacks as a tool for terrorist organisations. It is found that if a group has the need to strike a superior conventional military force, they will adopt suicide terrorism. Nevertheless, it should be criticised that ‘necessity’ is quite difficult to establish for

operators, policymakers, and academics alike. It must be noted that all three dimensions are closely interwoven and overlapping.

Case Studies

Case Study: Tank Warfare in the Second World War

We must not be misled to our own detriment to assume that the untried machine can displace the proven and tried horse.

– Maj. Gen. John K. Herr, last U.S. Army Chief of Cavalry, 1938

Context

To understand what organisational factors facilitated the adoption of the tank, it is useful to examine the different approaches of European armed forces regarding the introduction of tanks. The development and adoption of tanks as a critical military asset in the 20th century epitomises the evolution of modern warfare. In WWI, new means of firepower enabled by the Industrial Revolution met old means of manoeuvre warfare, which was still fuelled by the muscles of horses and men. This is one of the factors which led to the unimaginable horrible war of attrition fought in trenches we imagine when discussing WWI. Tanks first emerged during WWI as a response to the stalemate of trench warfare, with the first models being introduced by the British and French. The first tanks made their combat debut at the Battle of the Somme as part of the British force, where they failed to be decisive due to a lack of numbers and mechanical unreliability. These early tanks were plagued by technical limitations and often deployed without a coherent strategy. In WWI, Germany was lagging behind in tank development and only developed one type (‘A7V Sturmpanzerwagen’), of which only 20 units were produced and used in war (The Australian War Memorial, 2021). Nevertheless, during the interwar period, Germany transformed into a pioneer in mechanised warfare. By the outbreak of WWII, Germany's adoption and integration of tanks into combined arms warfare and the high-speed manoeuvre which characterised the ‘Blitzkrieg’ proved instrumental for its successes. While the British and French had been pioneers in tank warfare in the First World War, they ignored many of the lessons learned in the interwar period and were unable to field an efficient armoured force until the end of WWII (W.

Murray, 2009). When they did, the British especially relied heavily on US American-made Sherman tanks. In only 20 years between the Battle of the Somme (1918) and the German Reich's invasion of Poland (1939), both technology and organisational frameworks behind the tank shifted significantly. This case study discusses the organisational and technical challenges of the adoption of tanks in Great Britain and Nazi Germany in WWII.

Organisational Challenges

Previously, we identified critical task focus, organisational age, and size as key measures to assess organisational capital. Comparing the armed forces of the United Kingdom and Nazi Germany during WWII highlights significant differences in these dimensions. The British Army, having a long history dating back to 1660, is considerably older than Nazi Germany's Wehrmacht, which was established in 1935. Although Germany's military heritage spans centuries, the Wehrmacht was a relatively new organisation during WWII. Hitler created it intending to form a modern armed force offensively capable of fulfilling his fascist ideology. This difference in organisational age most likely influenced their approaches to adaptability and innovation. Not necessarily because British Commanders were conservative per se, but because the British lessons-learned process from WWI was not as efficient as the German one. While both armed forces had the opportunity to learn from the same war, they acted on these changes differently. In terms of size, the British Army was much smaller at the outset of the war, with 224,000 personnel in 1939. It expanded significantly during the conflict, reaching a peak of approximately 2.9 million personnel by 1945. In contrast, the Wehrmacht began with 104,000 personnel (the cap imposed by the Treaty of Versailles) and rapidly grew to 4.2 million in 1939, ultimately swelling to 7.83 million by 1945.

Regarding critical task focus, Nazi Germany demonstrated a very high emphasis on mechanised warfare and tanks, which became a cornerstone of its Blitzkrieg strategy and was funded by massive defence spending. At the beginning of the war in 1939, Germany owned 3,502 tanks, which would grow to a wartime total of 46,274. By comparison, the United Kingdom possessed only 143 tanks in 1939, which increased to 27,528 during the war. The British focus on armoured warfare was half-hearted, with

their military strategy prioritising naval power and air superiority for homeland defence. These differences in organisational characteristics shaped the military strategies and operational effectiveness of both nations during the conflict. Nazi Germany's high critical task focus and rapid expansion gave it an early advantage but created vulnerabilities in sustaining prolonged warfare. Meanwhile, the United Kingdom's slower mobilisation and more diversified focus allowed it to leverage alliances and resources for a sustained campaign against the Axis powers.

Table 1

Comparison of Organisational Factors United Kingdom and German Reich in WWII

Armed Forces	**United Kingdom**	**German Reich**
Critical Task Focus	Medium	Very High
Organisation Age (in 1939)	279 years (British Army, 1660)	4 years (Wehrmacht, 1935–1945) (previously: Reichswehr, 1921–1935)
Organisation Size	224,000 (pre-1939) 892,697 (1939) 2,900,000 (1945)	104,000 (pre-1939) 4,220,000 (1939) 7,830,000 (1945)
Total Tank Count	143 (1939) 27,528 (Wartime total)	3,502 (1939) 46,274 (Wartime total)

(Author's Illustration based on: French, 2010; R.-D. Müller & Ancker, 2016; Zaloga, 2015)

Tank doctrine was a persistent issue throughout WWI and the interwar period until the end of WWII. The British developed the first tank in February 1915 out of the tactical necessity of breaking the stalemate of trench warfare. Their main task was the

support of infantry units in overcoming barbed wire, trenches, and machine gunfire. Therefore, the first tank doctrine, developed by Colonel Ernest Swinton, stated that tanks should be deployed as “an auxiliary to the infantry […] and in operation be under the same command” (Swinton, 1972, p. 214). Yet, some, such as British tank advocate J.F.C. Fuller, argued for a more offensive and independent role. Against the common consensus, he argued that infantry should be supplementary to tanks. Furthermore, he was one of the first to call for combined arms tactics, that is, to deploy tanks closely supported by aircraft and infantry. While initially successful in, for example, the Battle of Amiens, these ideas got lost in the British lesson-learned process (Murray, 2009). In WWII, the British tank forces would again operate in ineffective Piecemeal attacks for a significant period of time. Only in late 1939, it was decided that the fast cruiser tanks would be assigned to armoured divisions or independent armoured brigades for mobile operations, and the heavy infantry tanks would be grouped into tank brigades for infantry support (Imperial War Museums, 2024).

Technical Challenges

In WWI, the British Mark I was deployed only a year after its development. That meant that the tanks were not tested well, and that the infantry was not able to train with the new machines thoroughly. Consequently, nearly ⅔ either broke down or got destroyed. Therefore, it has been argued that the limited operational capabilities of the first tanks rather than the overly conservative general staff led to the cautious employment of tanks during WW1 (Farrell & Terriff, 2002).

In 1937, Britain began a period of major rearmament (Imperial War Museums, 2024). However, there were major challenges. The lack of clear doctrine made it unclear what type of tanks should be designed and produced. Ultimately, three main types of tanks would be designed. Therefore, financial capital and production capacities had to be split, slowing output. Additionally, the rearmament resources focused on the Royal Air Force and Navy as they were considered crucial for ‘home defence’. Another issue was the disconnect between producers and end users. Over time, various Departments in the War Office were established and abolished again. In 1940, the 'Tank Board' was set up, which slowly synchronised tank procurement policy between the War Office, the

Ministry of Supply and the manufacturers (Imperial War Museums, 2024). Consequently, the Royal Armoured Corps had just 143 tanks available in late 1939 and little infrastructure to facilitate maintenance and training. This compares to 3,502 tanks produced by Nazi Germany before 1939.

Case Study: Drones in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Context

The full Invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 is a significant marker for various reasons. For once, it brought full-out war back to the European mind for the first time since WWII. While there have been other wars with European participation, it significantly changed the European consciousness and discourse. Secondly, it is remarkable in its intensity and attrition. Thirdly, while it is not the first war in which drones had a prominent role (e.g. Afghanistan), and also not the first war in which both sides used drones (e.g. Armenia and Azerbaijan), the scale in which drones have been used is unprecedented (Franke, 2023). It is estimated that more than 60% of Russian tanks have been destroyed using FPV drones, thereby playing a critical role in the defence of Ukraine (Detsch, 2024). Before diving deeper into the case study, the terminology must be clarified. This paper will refer to all unmanned vehicles as drones. This includes unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), unmanned ground vehicles (UGV), and unmanned surface vehicles (USV). However, this discussion focuses on UAVs, as they are the most used in Ukraine.

The USA has a long history with their large fixed-wing Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and hunter drones such as the now infamous MQ-1 Predator, RQ-4 Global Hawk, and MQ-9 Reaper. Already 20 years ago, in 2004, the various drones used by the US forces amassed over 100,000 total flight hours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (U.S. Department of Defense, 2005). However, it is important to differentiate between drone types. While connected issues, there is a significant difference between the various types. Key factors are fixed-wing or with rotors and if it is single-use or retrievable. Furthermore, there can be a differentiation between the range and purpose.

Organisational Challenges

Previously, we established critical task focus, organisational age and size as measures to determine organisational capital. Both the Ukrainian military and German military are relatively young organisations. They have longer histories but have been in their current form only established around 30 years ago. Compared to that, the US military is quite old with close to 250 years. Before the full Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian armed forces amounted in 2021 to approximately 196,000 service members (IISS, 2022), which is again comparable to Germany. The United States' armed forces are much larger, with 1,328,000 active personnel in 2024. Due to the war, Ukraine's armed forces grew to approximately 1,260,000. This would lead to the assumption that Ukraine and Germany are more flexible in their organisation than the USA or at least have the potential thereof.

Ukraine is certainly demonstrating a very high critical task focus on drones. According to Ukrainian sources, the Ministry of Defence delivered over 1.2 million drones to the Defence Forces in 2024 alone (MoD Ukraine, 2024). In addition, there are various civil society organisations which purchase drones directly for Ukrainian units. The Ukrainian military established in 2024 with the 'Unmanned Systems Forces' the first drone warfare specialised branch of the armed forces worldwide. It currently is home to one regiment (ca. 3000 personnel). Furthermore, Ukraine is supported by various partners in the procurement of drones. In 2024, a 'Drone Coalition' was established by Latvia in collaboration with the United Kingdom and other NATO allies (MoD Latvia, n.d.). This coalition pledged over pledged €45mio. to deliver 1 million FPV drones to Ukraine in 2025 (MoD UK, 2024). Furthermore, the Ukrainian government is pushing the production of drones heavily. President Zelenskiy announced in October 2024 that Ukraine is now able to produce four million drones annually (Harmash, 2024). These numbers compare to around 11.000 drones in the US armed forces according to the US MoD and 618 in the German military (.loyal, 2024; U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.). It is unclear how many drone pilots have been trained in Ukraine as many training centres are civilian-run; however, already in 2023 alone, individual drone piloting schools have put out multiple ten thousand graduates (Skove, 2023). One instructor stated: "Ideally, every soldier could use a drone like they could a rifle" (Skove, 2023).

Table 2

Comparison of Organisational Factors Ukraine, USA, and Germany in 2024

Armed Forces	**Ukraine**	**USA**	**Germany**
Critical Task Focus	Very high	Medium	Low
Organisation Age (in 2024)	33 years (1991) 107 years (1917)	249 years (1775)	34 years (1990) 69 years (1955)
Organisation Size	1,260,000 (2024) (ca. 196,000 pre-2022)	1,328,000 (2024)	180,215 (2024)
Total UAV Count	+1.2 mio UAV (2024)	ca. 11,000 UAV (2024)	618 UAV (2024)

(Author's Illustration based on: .loyal, 2024; MoD UK, 2024; MoD Ukraine, 2024; U.S. Department of Defense, n.d.)

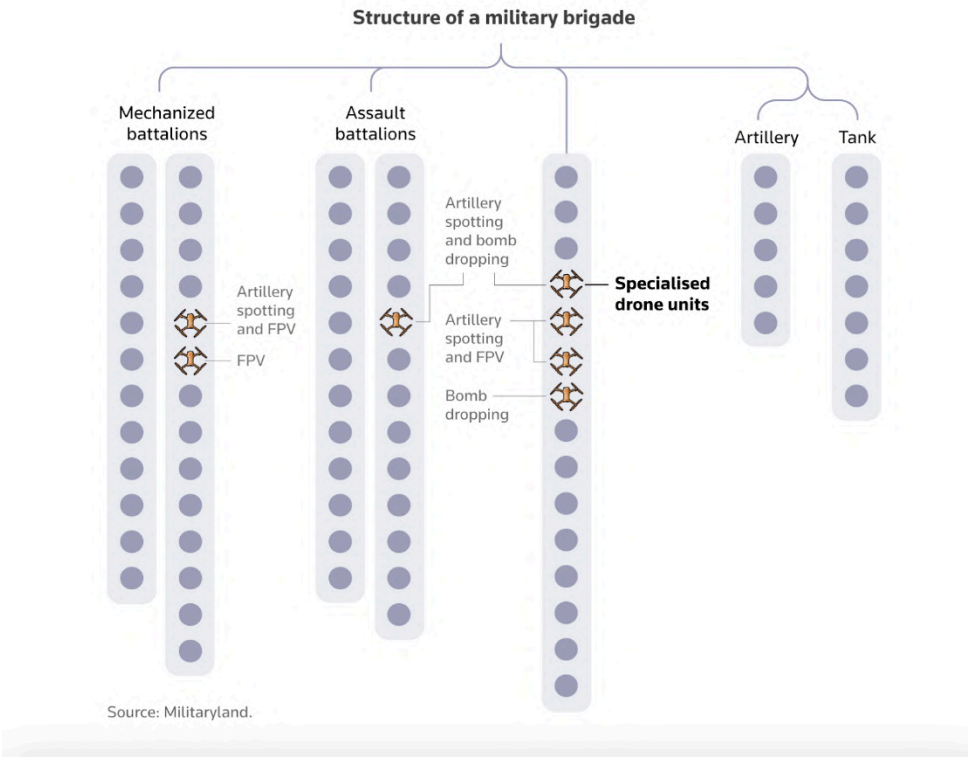
This essay argues that the larger drones which the USA employs require relatively little organisational adoption. They certainly require new procurement, education, and doctrine, yet overall, relatively little organisational restructuring. Rather, systems such as the Predator and the Reaper have been used as a substitute of, or supplement to, traditional air power. Therefore, they required some new structures, especially to deal productively with the new data IRS drones provided but have been employed relatively separated from the fighting forces. Consequently, it can be argued that these drones did not fundamentally challenge the way the USA fought wars, with its focus on Air superiority and Air support.

This is a fundamentally different situation from the FPV drones and LAMs that are used in significant numbers in Ukraine. While the USA introduced hand-held drones such as

the RQ-20 Puma already over 20 years ago, they neither had a significant impact nor were used in the significant numbers they are in contemporary times. The manufacturer considers the Raven the “most widely deployed unmanned aircraft system in the world” with close to 20,000 produced airframes since the early 2000s. Yet, these are marginal numbers to the 1.5 million FPV drones employed by Ukraine in 2024 alone. Arguably, the deployment of small drones grew out of tactical necessity and started out inconsistent at the beginning of the war (Mariano Zafra et al., 2024). However, this effort has now become professionally organised, with drones now deeply integrated into Ukraine's armed force’s structure. Most units have modest reconnaissance drones, and nearly every battle brigade has a dedicated attack drone company (Mariano Zafra et al., 2024).

Figure 1

Structure of a Ukrainian Military Brigade



(Mariano Zafra et al., 2024)

Necessity and Urgency

Certainly, one key argument is that other Western states do not feel the same existential threat that Ukraine faces. This might seem obvious, but it is a fundamental difference concerning the urgency which needs to be kept in mind in this analysis. More challenging to assess is necessity. Precisely, there is the question of whether drones are only useful in the context of the Ukrainian armed forces and whether other Western forces are missing out, or not.

The US military forces have been using drones but not on the lower organisational levels (Phillips-Levine & Mills, 2024). The lessons learned from Ukraine are changing this. Many in think tanks and the military establishment push to supply troops with the IRS capabilities and organic firepower small drones offer (Phillips-Levine et al., 2020). In 2023 the US DoD kicked off the 'Replicator initiative' with the aim to: "deliver all-domain attritable autonomous systems (ADA2) to warfighters at a scale of multiple thousands, across multiple warfighting domains" by late 2025 (Defense Innovation Unit, n.d.). The Pentagon finances the project with $1bio. over the two years. The contracts will include drones such as the Switchblade LAM as well as "enablers" such as command and control infrastructure. In the second year, there will be a focus on countering drones. Representatives of the German armed forces on the other hand, do not plan to procure FPV drones (in larger quantities), because they do not consider them as necessary (B. Müller, 2024). They argue that small single-use drones present just a momentary development, which will be over soon due to further advancement in counter-drone technology. There are plans to purchase LAMs, but not before 2026 (B. Müller, 2024).

One of the reasons both Ukraine and Russia deploy drones in large quantities is to compensate for personnel shortages and as force multipliers. The various types of drones make traditional artillery fire more efficient by enabling more precise targeting. Especially, for Ukraine with limited numbers of shells and personnel this is crucial. It is an interesting commonality that both, tanks and drones, have been developed to overcome the stalemate of trench warfare. While tanks, in theory, could break through trenches, they are not efficient because neither side has air superiority. Drones currently fill that gap. It can be argued that Western militaries such as Germany or the USA

possess other means to fulfil the tasks small drones currently do in Ukraine. The doctrine assumes that air superiority can be established, which is crucial for reconnaissance and joint operations. Yet, it is highly uncertain if that is a realistic scenario in a near-peer or peer war.

Technical Challenges

Gilli and Gilli's (2016) analysis focuses on platform and adoption challenges and comes to the conclusion that Western countries also face severe challenges in the adoption of Drones. Yet Ukraine was quickly able to deploy foreign-made drones, field the necessary infrastructure, and develop their own drones. For illustration, on February 24, 2022, the 'Ukrspecsystems' business started developing the Shark UAV in the face of the full-scale Russian invasion, and less than six months later, flight tests started (Defense Express, 2022). Ukraine is certainly profiting from an educated society and robust economy as well as the support from its NATO allies in the development of drones. Studies show that Ukraine's drone industry is "characterized by robust growth, strategic innovation, and investment opportunities" (Bilousova et al., 2024). Furthermore, the war is characterised by many cheap, off-the-shelf civilian drones. This mitigates the technological challenges. An additional factor facilitating the Ukrainian use of drones is that from 2014 onwards, the Ukrainian armed forces started their military modernisation, which included command and control as well as the modernisation of equipment. Furthermore, they prioritised artillery and the procurement of drones, which proved crucial (Sanders, 2023).

Conclusion

A comparison of the adoption of tanks by the British and Germans in WWII and the adoption of drones by Ukraine highlights striking parallels and contrasts in how military organisations approach new technologies. The Ukrainian adoption of drones mirrors the German approach to tanks in the early 20th century in several ways. Ukraine's battle-hardened military, informed by lessons learned from fighting Russian-backed separatists since 2014, emphasised decentralised decision-making, mission-driven operations, and the integration of drones into combined arms warfare. Similarly,

Germany's success with tanks was driven by the lessons the armed forces learned and applied during WWI. Furthermore, both armed forces focused on the education of officers. Both examples demonstrate that organisational capital is the most important factor in enabling the adoption of new systems by providing leadership vision, flexible command structures, and an actual willingness to adapt.

A crucial organisational factor identified is the time since a military's last major engagement. Battle-experienced militaries, such as Ukraine's, are more likely to recognise the urgency of integrating innovations, as they already operate under existential pressure. This is evident in Ukraine's modernisation efforts starting in 2014, which included strengthening the NCO corps and command structures and creating a foundation for the widespread use of drones. Similarly, Germany's interwar military reforms were driven by lessons from WWI, prioritising mechanisation and mobility. Therefore, incorporating 'time since the last war' as a variable in the Adoption-Capacity Theory could further enhance its explanatory power. Battle-hardened organisations, as shown by contemporary Ukraine and Nazi Germany, are more sensitive to necessity and urgency, leading to faster adoption of innovations. The case studies underline that military innovation is not only about the availability of resources or technology but also the organisational capacity to adapt and integrate these innovations effectively into doctrine and operations.

The difference lies in how organisational agility enables adaptation. As Murray (2023) argues: "It won't be those nations with the best technology that wins the next major conflict, it will be those with the most agile bureaucracy, regardless of whether they spend 2 per cent or 20 percent of their GDP on defence"; It is the agility of bureaucracies, not technological superiority that determines military innovation and consequent battlefield success. Ukraine's innovation in drone warfare stems not from superior resources but from necessity-driven adaptation, decentralised operational control, and a robust lessons-learned process. This should be a relief for Western militaries of which all are struggling with their budget. While financial investments still are necessary, much progress can be made, and battlefield effectiveness can be created by adapting bureaucracies.

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Nymke van Poortvliet
Global Conflict in the Modern Era

Addressing Sexual and Gender Based Violence in Cameroon: A Realist Policy Analysis of Cameroon's National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security

Abstract

This paper evaluates the failure of Cameroon's National Action Plan (NAP) in reducing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) by applying Leeuw's (2003) realist policy evaluation framework. The analysis reveals critical flaws in the NAP's program logic, with none of the five identified mechanisms fully valid and only two partially valid. Key challenges include inadequate and unreliable funding, poor coordination among implementing bodies, lack of clarity in proposed outputs, and failure to address all relevant stakeholders and criteria contributing to SGBV. To overcome these shortcomings, the study proposes six targeted recommendations for stakeholders. Without these structural changes, the NAP will remain ineffective in protecting women and girls against SGBV during peace, conflict, and post-conflict periods. This research contributes to the broader discourse on policy effectiveness by demonstrating why initiatives like Cameroon's NAP often fall short of their intended goals. It underscores the necessity of critically assessing policy mechanisms and adapting them to the specific sociopolitical context. By identifying key gaps and providing actionable recommendations, this paper serves as a foundation for improving Cameroon's approach to SGBV and strengthening the effectiveness of NAPs globally.

Keywords: SGBV, Policy, Evaluation, Mechanisms, Effectiveness

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Introduction

Cameroon is a country in Central Africa (see Figure 1) that is currently experiencing two ongoing conflicts. Firstly, Cameroon's Far North Region has suffered from attacks, lootings, killings and abductions by Boko Haram and the Islamic State Province West Africa since 2014 (Heungoup, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2023). In 2023, 246 attacks were reported, causing the deaths of 169 civilians. Secondly, since October 2017, violence has been rampant in Cameroon's Anglophone regions between separatist forces and the military (Orock, 2021; Okereke, 2018). The Anglophone conflict has caused a major humanitarian crisis. By 2022, there were more than 750,000 people internally displaced, 6,000 deaths, and 2.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (International Crisis Group, 2022). All aspects of these crises are relevant to focus on as these are vastly under-researched conflicts (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2019). Although not the entire population is directly affected by these conflicts, the resulting migration flows are substantial and have far-reaching impacts.

Figure 1

Map of Cameroon



(Grandi, 2018)

This paper investigates the effect of these conflicts on women's safety in Cameroon. In 2000, Cameroon signed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

Resolution 1325 to enhance women's roles in peacebuilding and security, preventing and responding to gender-based violence, and promoting gender equity across sectors (George & Shepherd, 2016). However, this remains a broad agenda rather than a formal program. In 2017, Cameroon adopted a concrete National Action Plan (NAP) to adhere to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda of the United Nations (UN) (Republic of Cameroon, 2017). NAPs reflect member states' concrete commitment to this resolution (Faraz, 2017). Cameroon's NAP has four main goals: 1) protecting women and girls against sexual violence and gender-based violence during periods of armed conflict, 2) increasing female participation in conflict prevention and management, 3) better integrating the gender dimension in emergency aid and reconstruction, and 4) strengthening institutional mechanisms and data collection on the gender dimension. This paper focuses on the first of these elements: sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Although Cameroon's NAP aspired to protect women and girls against SGBV, it has increased in Cameroon since the creation of its NAP. In 2019, the UN recorded 1,065 cases of SGBV in the Anglophone regions, about a third of which were incidents of rape or sexual assault (Craig, 2021). In 2020 this increased to 4,300 cases, almost half of incidents involving rape or sexual assaults, and 30 percent of victims being children. Although the data on SGBV is likely incomplete and affected by surrounding stigma and the data collection methods, the findings are still significant (International Crisis Group, 2022). As Moussi (2020a) argues, SGBV in Cameroon continues to become more common and acceptable and takes on more brutal forms.

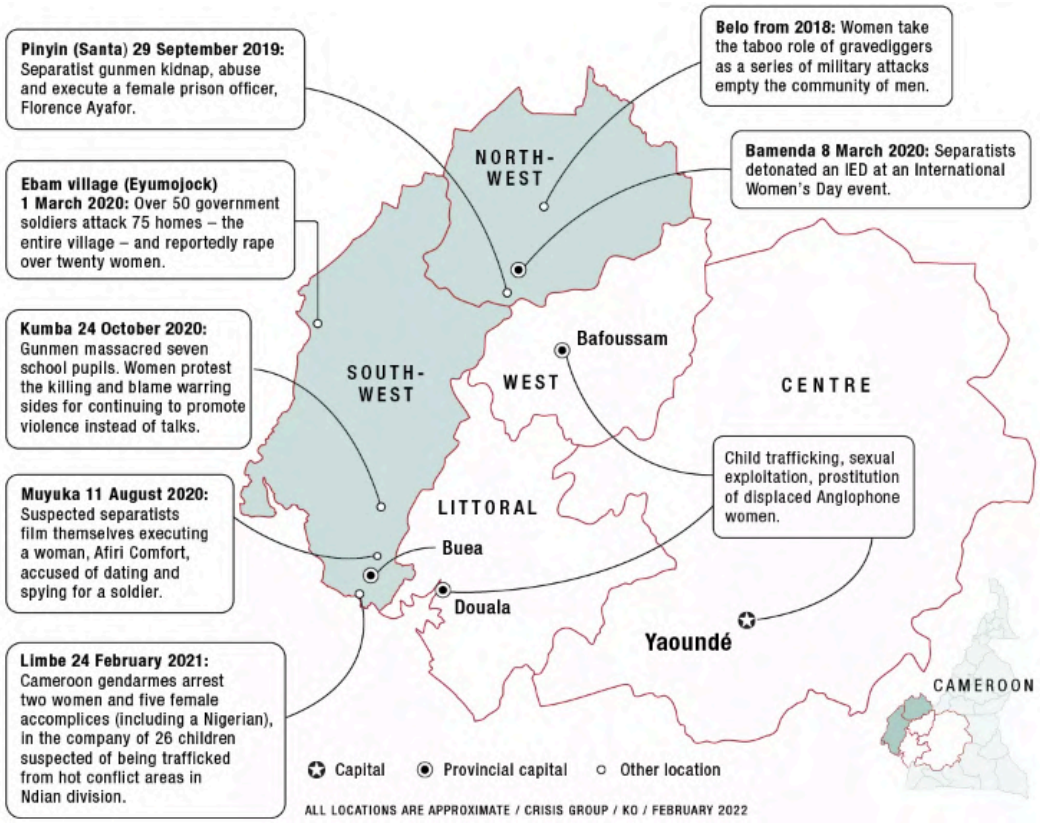
This leads to this paper's research question: "Why has Cameroon's NAP failed to reduce sexual and gender-based violence in Cameroon?" To answer this question, this paper applies Leeuw's (2003) realist policy evaluation framework and a qualitative research design. Through reconstructing the program logic of Cameroon's NAP, this analysis found that most mechanisms are invalid or only partially valid. This analysis leads to six recommendations for policymakers.

Literature Review

No previous academic literature answers why Cameroon's NAP failed to reduce SGBV. Firstly, most research focuses on the SGBV itself, instead of the surrounding policies. For example, the International Crisis Group (2022) researches how women have shaped the Anglophone conflict, suffered from it, and how an inclusive peace process can be built. This analysis is based on over 110 interviews with government officials, separatists, civil society representatives, researchers and more. Examples of personal stories are depicted in Figure 2. Moussi (2020b) also focuses on personal stories of women as victims and activists. Brun (2019) focuses on statistical evidence of gender inequality in Cameroon. Additionally, the Civil Society Platform (2020) activates the wider international community to aid Cameroon in addressing SGBV through policy advice, monitoring, and funding.

Figure 2

Selected Events Map of Violence Against Women and Children in Anglophone Conflict



(International Crisis Group, 2022)

Although some of these articles mention Cameroon's NAP and commitment to the WPS agenda, this is not thoroughly studied. For example, although Moussi (2020b) mentions the NAP, there is no evaluation of the plan or whether the promised changes have taken place since then. The Civil Society Platform (2020) also mentions the NAP and other policy commitments, such as the 1999 National Gender Policy of Cameroon, but again remains very superficial in their analysis. In the existing literature, evaluations done on Cameroon's NAP are only done so in passing.

Some of the existing literature, especially policy papers, also gives recommendations on reducing SGBV in Cameroon. The Civil Society Platform (2020) formulates recommendations for the international community and nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). International Crisis Group (2022) forms recommendations for the government, separatist groups, the international community, and NGOs. However, these both address broader socio-economic equality concerns and are not put into the context of existing policies.

Lastly, scholars mainly focus on broader criticisms of the WPS agenda. Smith (2020) advocates for focusing on climate change in WPS NAPs as it can increase risks of violent conflict, risks to human security, and challenge conflict recovery and peacebuilding. However, in Cameroon, these concerns are not applicable as the conflict had no clear relation to climate change. Sam (2009) and Laura (2011) also posits that the UNSCR 1325's language and framing reinforce restrictive gendered frameworks. George and Shepherd (2016) criticise the WPS principles for becoming diluted and 'elastic' through mainstreaming. They argue that the principles are altered to harmonise with other institutional or political priorities and that NAPs reflect the broader institutional environment, political priorities, and sources of institutional support. Overall, the existing literature leaves a gap for this paper to evaluate Cameroon's NAP and its role in slowing SGBV.

Research design

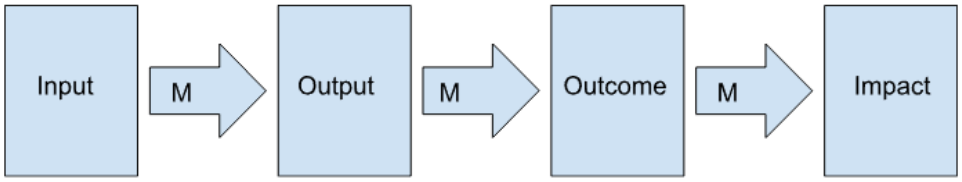
Theoretical Framework

To analyse Cameroon's NAP, this paper applies Leeuw's (2003) realist policy evaluation framework. This framework consists of two main steps: 1) reconstructing and 2) analysing the policy's program logic. Pawson and Tilley (2004) give a clear overview of what it entails to reconstruct program logic. First, one must identify the policy's input, output, outcome, and impact. Input refers to the resources committed to the policy program, output is the measurable action of the program, outcome is the directly influenced desired result, and impact is the larger, long-term and indirect change the policy wishes to achieve. A simple example is the banning of smoking on school grounds. The input is buying signs and banning smoking, the output is putting up signs and monitoring students' adherence, the outcome is that fewer students smoke, and the impact is that overall health will improve.

The second aspect of reconstructing program logic is identifying the mechanisms between these steps. Mechanisms (M) are the underlying assumptions that input will lead to output, output to outcome, and outcome to impact (see Figure 3). These causal mechanisms are always context-dependent and should thus also be analysed in the actual context in which the policy would be placed.

Figure 3

Program Logic



(Author's Illustration)

The second step of realist policy analysis is to analyse this program logic. Is it valid to assume that these mechanisms work in the assumed context? Are the central concepts clear, and are there any contradictions? Are there any unintended

consequences of the program logic? From this analysis, the researcher concludes whether the mechanisms are valid, partially valid, or invalid. This leads to recommendations, both for this policy and related policies.

Additionally, it is of significance to reflect on the researcher's positionality towards the policy evaluation. Weimar and Vinning (2017) argue that policy analysts are always connected to politics in some way and describe three analytical roles that policy analysts can fulfil: 1) objective technician, 2) client's advocate, and 3) issue advocate (see Figure 5). As the researcher of this paper holds no relation to clients and focuses on this topic due to personal interest, there is a high chance of issue advocacy. However, the researcher will aim to be an objective technician, focusing on giving objective advice and letting the analysis speak for itself.

Case Study

The chosen research design for this research project is an intrinsic case study. A case study refers to the "qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 245). This research design is highly suitable as it suits a qualitative research method, in-depth research questions and policy analysis.

Several types of case studies exist within this approach: single instrumental, collective and intrinsic case study (Creswell et al., 2007). This project conducts an intrinsic case study. Instrumental and collective case studies analyse a generalisable issue illustrated in one or multiple cases. Contrarily, an intrinsic case study focuses on the case itself, for example, a specific programme. Such a case is selected on its own merits, not because it represents a broader issue. An intrinsic case study resembles a narrative review but is set in the case's contextual surroundings, allowing for a more detailed description and analysis. Thus, this paper does not aim to form broader conclusions on the WPS agenda or other NAPs, only that of SGBV in Cameroon.

Data Collection & Analysis

To analyse this case, data was collected from both the primary source, Cameroon's NAP, and a literature review of academic journals, NGOs and think tanks discussing Cameroon's NAP and commitment to WPS. Sources from 2017 onwards were analysed, since that is when the NAP was drafted. The collected data was then analysed through a content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) define content analysis as the subjective interpretation of text data. Collected data is analysed through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. This allows for a systematic interpretive analysis, befitting of this study.

Limitations

This research design has three main limitations: data collection, contextual change, and exclusion of violence against men. First of all, data collection limits this research paper as only a limited amount of literature was available on Cameroon's NAP and SGBV. The researcher was also unable to contact the authors of Cameroon's NAP. Because of this, parts of the analysis rely on the researcher's own analysis and logic.

Secondly, this research paper is unable to analyse the entire context. As Pawson and Tilly (2004) state, the system contexts of policies continually change, and one can not analyse all of those factors. Even within a policy, not all mechanisms, contexts and outcomes will be evaluated to the same extent. These limitations should thus be taken into account. Other frameworks and methodological approaches might lead to different conclusions on Cameroon's NAP and SGBV.

Lastly, it is important to note that not only women and girls are affected by SGBV in Cameroon. In 2019, 11% of such reported cases were boys and men, labelled as 'forced homosexuality' (OCHA, 2019). However, as Cameroon's NAP only focuses on women, this is also the focus of this paper.

Reconstruction of Program Logic

This section reconstructs the program logic of Cameroon's NAP on the topic of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (Republic of Cameroon, 2017). The program logic

is reconstructed backwards: first impact, then outcome, output and input. See Figure 3 to revise the order of these elements. Figure 6 illustrates the reconstruction of Cameroon's NAP's program logic.

Impact

As mentioned in the introduction, there are four main goals that Cameroon's NAP aims to achieve, however, this paper focuses on the issue of SGBV. The impact, referring to the general and long-term societal change, that this policy aims to make is "The protection of the rights of women and girls, including against sexual and gender-based violence in periods of peace, conflict and post-conflict" (Republic of Cameroon, 2017, p. 58). The policy aims to change not only the amount of SGBV but also the attitudes towards it. This entails stopping secrecy and stigma surrounding SGBV and eradicating tolerance for the issue.

Outcome

There are four outcomes, directly influenced results, that this policy aims to achieve, and which will lead to the desired impact. The first outcome is adopting multilateral policies to prevent SGBV during and after conflicts, with strong community and media engagement. Secondly, communities, especially women but also girls, men and boys, should become more aware of their rights and actively oppose sexual and gender-based violence. Third, survivors of SGBV should gain access to physical, psychological, legal, and economic support. Lastly, perpetrators of SGBV should be punished according to international and national rules, and the victims should be redressed for the damage suffered.

Output

Each of the four outcomes has a set of outputs, measurable actions, that should lead to the desired effect. These outputs are too lengthy to include in this research paper, but can be found in Appendix A. Each outcome had between nine and twenty-one actionable outputs.

Input

The input for addressing sexual and gender-based violence in Cameroon's NAP consists of two elements: budget and coordination organs. The first input is a budget of 1,330,000,000 West African CFA francs, equivalent to approximately 2 million euros. This budget is distributed amongst four outcomes and their respective policies (outputs). Outcome 1 requires a budget of 234,000,000 francs, outcome 2 is 188,000,000 francs, outcome 3 is 657,000,000 francs, and outcome 4 is 251,000,000 francs.

The second input is that three organs are created to implement the NAP: 1) the piloting and orientation committee, 2) the national technical coordination of 1325, and 3) the regional, divisional, and sub-divisional units. All these organs have different responsibilities in implementing, coordinating and monitoring the NAP. The regional, divisional, and sub-divisional units monitor implementation at the local level and transmit this to the national coordination unit, which falls under the Ministry of Women's Empowerment. The piloting and orientation committee defines the general guidelines under the Secretary General.

Mechanisms

This section now reflects on the context-dependent mechanisms in this program logic. In total, the author noticed eight mechanisms. However, as stated in the limitations section, the analysis is limited as the policymakers themselves could not elaborate on their logic in the making of this policy. Figure 6 depicts the reconstruction of Cameroon's NAP on reducing SGBV. This also includes the assumed mechanisms in each phase.

To elaborate, the first mechanism is that this policy assumes that the required budget will be made available. Secondly, the NAP assumes that the three coordination organs will effectively work together to implement, coordinate and monitor the NAP. Third, this policy assumes that the listed outputs will lead to each of the respective desired outcomes. Fourth, it is assumed that all outputs are properly implemented. Otherwise, it will not lead to the desired outcomes. Lastly, mechanism 5 assumes that the four outcomes lead to the protection of women and girls against SGBV.

Figure 6

Reconstruction of Cameroon's NAP Program Logic on Sexual and Gender Based Violence

If Input	**Then Output**	**Because Mechanisms**
1) 1,330,000,000 franc budget (around 2 million euros). 2) Three coordination organs.	See Appendix A.	M1) The Budget will be made available. M2) The three organs effectively work together
If Output	**Then Outcome**	**Because Mechanisms**
See Appendix A.	1) Multilateral policies with strong community and media engagement. 2) Communities become aware of their rights and advocate. 3) Survivors access physical, psychological, legal, and economic support. 4) Perpetrators are punished, and victims are redressed.	M3) The outputs lead to the desired outcome. M4) The outputs are properly implemented.
If Outcome	**Then Impact**	**Because Mechanisms**
1) Multilateral policies with strong community and media engagement. 2) Communities become aware of their rights and advocate. 3) Survivors access physical, psychological, legal, and economic support. 4) Perpetrators are punished, and victims are redressed.	Protect women and girls against SGBV in periods of peace, conflict and post-conflict.	M5) These four outcomes will lead to the desired impact.

(Author's Illustration)

Analysis of Program Logic

This section now analyses to what extent these eight mechanisms are valid, partially valid, or invalid. Firstly, mechanism 1, which assumes that the necessary budget of 1,330,000,000 francs will be made available, is invalid. Although the policy gives a concrete outline of the budget required for each specific output, it remains vague where this money will come from. The NAP states that:

> "The implementation of this plan is free and calls on all structures interested in the topic 'women, peace, and security'. As concerns the budget, each administration is responsible for activities involving its mandate. [...] International organizations, private administrations and civil society organisations involved may, apart from their own budget, negotiate funding and technical support from financial and technical parties." (Republic of Cameroon, 2017, p. 69)

Thus, the programme primarily relies on existing international organisations, private administrations and civil society organisations interested in the topic of WPS. The policy assumes that these organisations will fund the proposed outputs. However, few resources have actually been made available for the fight against sexual violence (Civil Society Platform, 2020). Hamilton et al. (2020) also highlight that Cameroon is overly dependent on these external partners. Already in 2011, a workshop was held to 'identify available and potential sources of funding' for the implementation of the NAP, but no clear amount could be designated to specific partners. Thus, in this context, mechanism 1 is invalid.

Mechanism 2 is also invalid. This mechanism assumes that the three coordination organs work effectively together. However, in actuality, there is a constant struggle between the organs, as well as external partners involved, to implement and create support for their own work (Civil Society Platform, 2020). In general, consistency between the administrations is lacking.

Mechanism 3 assumes that the NAP outputs will lead to the four desired outcomes. This mechanism is partially valid. In general, the logic of the outputs is valid, and no counterevidence was found. However, some outputs are worded vaguely. For example, outcome 1 of output 4 aims to "Popularize international and national conventions on human rights, mainly CEDAW, CDE, CADBEE, the Geneva Convention,

the Maputo Protocol, the rights of refugees, etc." (Appendix A). In the budget, one can see that this should consist of 10 campaigns, each costing 5,000,000 francs. However, no further explanation is given of what this entails.

Secondly, per desired outcome, additional outputs should be added for the separatist forces. International Crisis Group (2022) argues that not only the government, but also donor countries, multilateral organisations and NGOs should take action. Complete change won't happen if the separatist forces aren't also addressed. International Crisis Group advocates for separatists to immediately suspend attacks on humanitarian workers and to establish a coordinated mechanism to exclude militiamen responsible for SGBV from their ranks. Thus, in general, mechanism 3 is partially valid.

Mechanism 4, which assumes that the outputs are properly implemented, is invalid. In general, the Cameroonian government struggles to implement policies for gender equality. For example, the implementation of Cameroon's 1999 National Gender Policy has also lacked (Civil Society Platform, 2020). Civil Society Platform argues that this is because of a lack of political and societal will. As a result, few resources are made available against SGBV.

In the case of Cameroon's NAP, although the outputs for outcome 3 aim to improve care for victims, Cameroon's government continues to oppose humanitarian help. International Crisis Group (2022) argues that Cameroon rejects external help camps because setting up camps would contradict the official narrative that life in the Anglophone regions is returning to normal. Additionally, there is also no clear framework for monitoring implementation. The three coordination organs only consist of a vague framework of communication and jurisdiction (Civil Society Platform, 2020). Actual monitoring of implementation still lacks. Overall, the assumption that outputs are properly implemented is invalid.

Lastly, mechanism 5 is partially valid. Mechanism 5 assumes that the four outcomes will lead to the desired impact: protect women and girls against SGBV during peace, conflict and post-conflict periods. The causal logic of these outcomes is mostly valid. No counter-evidence was found. Although one could argue that improving care for victims (outcome 3) will not protect women and girls against SGBV, this still greatly

improves general women's rights in Cameroon and protects them against harm they still face after the fact (International Crisis Group, 2022).

However, the four outcomes are not the only influences on SGBV. Additional outcomes should be added that focus on displacement and arms control. Displacement, the travelling of long distances, and dependency on male acquaintances lead to high rates of SGBV amongst women and girls (Brun, 2019). Additionally, arms proliferation plays a large role in SGBV against women (Civil Society Platform, 2020). However, the NAP offers no actions for disarmament and arms control, such as mechanisms for assessing the impact of arms proliferation on sexual and gender-based violence. As the outcomes are incomplete, mechanism 5 is partially valid.

Discussion

This analysis has concluded that no mechanisms in Cameroon's NAP for the reduction of SGBV are entirely valid. Three out of five mechanisms are invalid, and two out of five are partially valid. The analysis of these mechanisms leads to six main recommendations for the involved actors.

Firstly, the necessary budget must be made available for the implementation of Cameroon's NAP. NGOs, civil society, and the international community play an important role in this due to the Cameroonian government's limited finances. Secondly, outputs should be concretised if they have not already. Aims and content of outputs should be included. Thirdly, separatist forces should also be addressed to suspend attacks on humanitarian workers and exclude militiamen responsible for SGBV from their ranks. The Cameroonian government and external partners can and should support their efforts in this. Fourth, the Cameroonian government should accept humanitarian organisations setting up shelters and camps for displaced people and victims of SGBV. Fifth, external partners should help in setting up clear monitoring and evaluation measures. Lastly, outcomes should be added in Cameroon's NAP to address displacement and arms proliferation

Conclusion

This paper set out to evaluate why Cameroon's NAP failed to reduce the country's level of SGBV. Applying Leeuw's (2003) realist policy evaluation framework, the analysis revealed significant flaws in the program logic of Cameroon's NAP. Of the five mechanisms identified, none were fully valid, and only two were partially valid. Key challenges include insufficient and unreliable funding, poor coordination among the NAP's implementing organs, lack of clarity and feasibility in the outlined outputs, and not addressing all stakeholders and criteria leading to SGBV. This paper created six recommendations to address these issues. Without these changes, the NAP will continue to fall short of its ambitious goal of protecting women and girls against SGBV in periods of peace, conflict, and post-conflict.

This research paper contributes to the broader understanding of why policies like Cameroon's NAP often fail to achieve their intended impact. It highlights the importance of critically evaluating policy mechanisms and adapting them to the specific contexts in which they are implemented. By identifying gaps and proposing actionable recommendations, this paper provides a foundation for future efforts to improve Cameroon's response to SGBV and, more broadly, for enhancing the effectiveness of NAPs worldwide. Future research is encouraged to investigate these topics further. Besides applying different research designs, researchers are encouraged to further deepen this realist policy evaluation by interviewing relevant policymakers.

Appendix

The appendices for this research paper with the data for reproduction can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WdEW7nfeSAvoB87_4Fflz-CqonS4ewsU/view?usp=sharing

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Yuri Wagner
Global Conflict in the Modern Era

Securitisation Gone Wrong: Why Yoon Suk Yeol's Martial Law Declaration Failed

Abstract

On December 3, 2024, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law, citing the need to eliminate "anti-state" forces threatening the country's free constitutional democratic order. However, this securitisation attempt failed almost immediately, leading to mass protests, the swift reversal of martial law, and eventually Yoon's impeachment. While securitisation theory has extensively analysed successful cases, failed securitisations remain underexplored. This study examines why Yoon's apparent attempt to securitise the National Assembly, and especially his political opposition (the Democratic Party), as an existential threat to South Korea's free constitutional democratic order ultimately failed by applying the Copenhagen School of Thought's securitisation framework. Accordingly, a mixed-methods approach, including a single-text discourse analysis of Yoon's speech and a close reading examination of public and political reactions, reveals three key factors: (1) Yoon's failure to convincingly articulate how martial law would protect South Korea's free democratic order, (2) his lack of political capacity to enforce the securitisation, and (3) the audience's overwhelming rejection of his narrative, instead perceiving martial law itself as the greater threat. This study contributes to securitisation theory by demonstrating the crucial role of audience legitimacy and political capacity in determining whether a securitisation attempt succeeds or fails.

Keywords: Securitisation, Martial Law, Democracy, Opposition, Legitimacy

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Introduction

On the evening of the 3rd of December 2024, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol addressed the nation in a televised speech in which he proclaimed martial law. The proclamation of martial law entails the substitution of military rule and law over regular civilian rule and law with implications for "warrants, freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association, or the powers of the Executive and the Judiciary" (Korean Legislation Research Institute [KLRI], n.d.), giving the president much more executive power to protect the country in times of crisis. Moments after the speech, heavily armed soldiers were deployed to the National Assembly, which represented the focal point of Yoon's speech. For most South Koreans this came as a shock, leading them to protest Yoon's measures. Only six hours later, martial law was already lifted with Yoon facing an impeachment for his actions in the days that followed. Yoon thus seemingly tried to construct a threat that was not apparent for most South Koreans, but required extraordinary countermeasures, which is referred to as "securitisation" in security studies (Buzan et al., 1998, pp. 23-24).

This raises the question of what President Yoon attempted to securitise – but more importantly, why did South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's December 2024 securitisation attempt fail?

Using the latter question as the main research question, this study tries to identify processes and mechanisms by which securitisations (in general) fail. This is relevant since most studies focus on successful securitisation cases, although failed securitisation cases could add relevant insights and knowledge to the general field of securitisation from an unconventional angle as the following literature review will showcase (Ruzicka, 2019). Studying the South Korean case therefore adds brand-new data to a relatively young field from an under-analysed angle.

This is achieved by applying the framework for successful securitisation developed by Buzan et al. (1998) to the South Korean case, which should conversely help identify the conditions that were not met for a successful securitisation. Correspondingly, a mixed-methods approach between a single-text discourse analysis

of Yoon's December 3rd speech and close reading analyses of primary and secondary data will be used to conduct the analysis.

Accordingly, the following study argues that Yoon's securitisation attempt failed due to him not having elaborated on the logic of his modus operandi in his speech-act, not having sufficient capacity as a speech-actor and consequently not being able to convince the audience that an existential threat exists nor that his extraordinary measures are appropriate.

Literature Review

To answer the question on *why* securitisation attempts fail, one must first examine what is meant by "securitisation." Gaining insights on *how* successful securitisation attempts develop should conversely help when trying to figure out *why* securitisation attempts fail. In a broad sense, the term "securitisation" describes a "threat construction in a way that is not situation bound" (Balzacq 2015, p. 103). In security studies, Buzan et al. (1998) provide the most prominent framework to analyse the process by which an issue is framed as an existential security threat that requires extraordinary measures, constituting what is often considered as the "Copenhagen School of Thought" (CST) of securitisation theory (Williams, 2003, p. 511).

This literature review seeks to outline the CST more thoroughly by examining its theoretical foundations and its application to various cases. Albeit interesting, scholars have also debated the ethics and impacts of securitisation (Williams, 2003; Floyd, 2011; Gates, 2024); these practical arguments are not expected to be relevant when using securitisation theory as a distinct analytical tool as anticipated in this study (Taureck, 2006). Eventually, this literature review should form a conceptual framework needed for an analysis of a failed securitisation case and showcase the relevance of conducting such an analysis.

Theoretical Foundations

The CST, most prominently represented by the book *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* by Buzan et al. (1998), emphasises the power of language to construct security threats (Wæver, 1995), by arguing that the "process of securitisation is what in

language theory is called a speech-act" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 26). The CST therefore differs from security studies' traditional focus on military issues alone and theoretically allows for uncountable things (ranging from people to phenomena, institutions and more) to get securitised (Williams, 2003, p. 513). Nonetheless, the CST mentions five sectors with particular referent objects that can get securitised, namely: the military, political, societal, environmental and economic sectors (Buzan et al., 1998). Accordingly, the CST showcases the political nature inherent in casting a referent object as a security threat by arguing that securitisation represents a process in which an (originally non-politicised) issue gets politicised by being included in the public policy discourse, before eventually getting securitised through extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998). Securitisation therefore follows a three-stage social process, as "security is not treated as an objective condition" (Williams, 2003, p. 513).

While the CST allows for analyses on a broad range of things, successful securitisation requires a set of (pre)conditions. *First*, a speech-act (not exclusively communicated or performed in oral format) must take place in which something is framed as an existential threat requiring an urgent response through extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998). *Second*, securitisation requires an actor conducting the speech-act of framing something as a threat. That actor needs to possess the authority and capacity to securitise something (Buzan et al., 1998). *Third*, these extraordinary measures shall protect a referent object under threat, which could entail many things such as a state, society, or group of individuals (Buzan et al., 1998). *Finally*, the audience needs to be convinced by the actor engaged in the speech-act that such an existential threat exists for it to accept and legitimise the extraordinary measures (Buzan et al., 1998). An analysis of a failed securitisation attempt therefore needs to consider all four of these conditions to pinpoint which (pre)requirement(s) was/were insufficiently met.

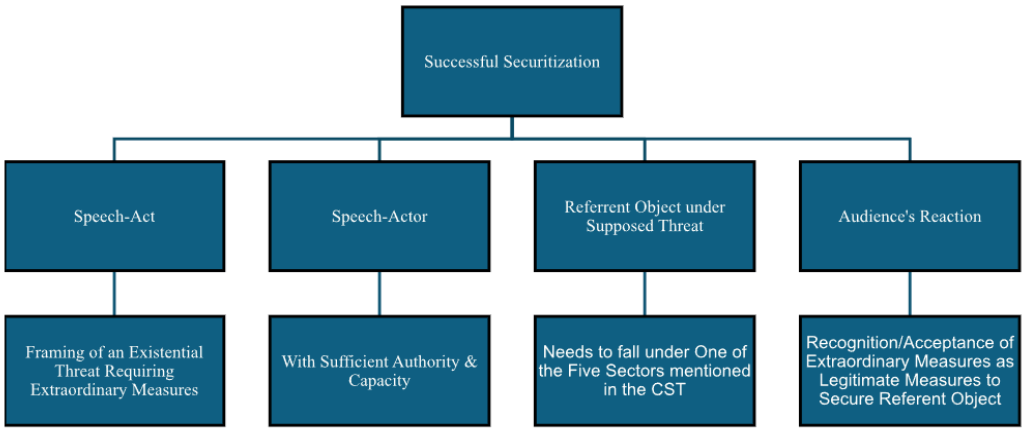
Application of Securitisation Theory

Securitisation theory and the CST's wide recognition is reflected by the variety of analyses and cases that it has been used in. The variety of cases showcases the broad

range of issues that can be framed as a security threat, such as protest movements like the “Fees Must Fall” protests in South African universities (Sempijja & Letlhogile, 2021), epidemics and pandemics like HIV/AIDS or Covid-19 (Elbe 2006; Chang, Yen and Liu 2023), and groups of people like the 2015 refugee flows crossing Slovenia (Vezovnik, 2018), among many other examples. However, most of these cases represent instances in which securitisation has been mostly successful, suggesting that failed securitization cases are under-analysed.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of Securitisation Theory



(Author’s Illustration)

Less analysed are instances in which securitisation was not successful. Krishnan (2024), for example, has analysed the Singaporean government’s failed attempt to securitise declining birth rates through a eugenics program. Importantly, his analysis also showcases the important role the audience plays in securitisation, as the Singaporeans ultimately contested the threat construction of their government (Krishnan, 2024). The CST itself even mentions that “successful securitisation is not decided by the securitiser but by the audience of the security speech act” (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 31). Accordingly, the audience seems to have the power to contest the threat construction, deem proposed measures disproportionate, or lack trust in the securitising actor, as multiple other analyses on failed securitisation attempts concluded (Côté,

2016; Edjus & Božović, 2017; Hintjens, 2019). One can thus maintain that oftentimes securitisation seems to fail due to the audience's unacceptance of the speech-actor's securitisation attempt, making the audience an active participant in securitisation that has the last say in (de)legitimising a securitisation. One must therefore lay special attention to the audience's reaction in a failed securitisation analysis.

In sum, the CST represented by Buzan et al. (1998), which regards securitisation as a speech-act, provides the most recognised framework to analyse the securitisation of issues. Accordingly, the four elements laid out in the CST, as visible in Table 1, will be of importance to examine in an analysis of a failed securitisation attempt by examining which (pre)requirement(s) of a successful securitisation was/were insufficiently met. Additionally, the literature hints that the audience may play a special role in failed securitisation attempts. However, as most of the existing analyses include cases of successful securitisation, the literature suggests that a further examination of cases with unsuccessful securitisation attempts could add important knowledge on the topic of securitisation (Ruzicka, 2019).

Research Design

Case Study Selection

To analyse *why* securitisation attempts fail, this study examines the case of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's proclamation of martial law in December 2024. While there may have been earlier instances where Yoon framed domestic threats as existential crises, this case represents the most extreme securitisation attempt of his presidency. The December 2024 case involved a truly extraordinary measure as it marks the first proclamation of martial law since 1980, a time when South Korea was effectively under a military dictatorship (Arranz et al., 2024). Furthermore, Yoon's extraordinary proclamation of martial law – justified as a measure to protect South Korea's democracy while targeting his political opposition – blatantly failed. The case of Yoon's failed martial law proclamation might therefore offer valuable insights into the conditions under which securitisations fail, contributing relevant and fruitful results to the CST from the under-analysed perspective of failed securitisation attempts.

Data

To analyse *why* securitisation attempts fail, this study examines the case of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's proclamation of martial law in December 2024. While there may have been earlier instances where Yoon framed domestic threats as existential crises, this case represents the most extreme securitisation attempt of his presidency. The December 2024 case involved a truly extraordinary measure as it marks the first proclamation of martial law since 1980, a time when South Korea was effectively under a military dictatorship (Arranz et al., 2024). Furthermore, Yoon's extraordinary proclamation of martial law – justified as a measure to protect South Korea's democracy while targeting his political opposition – blatantly failed. The case of Yoon's failed martial law proclamation might therefore offer valuable insights into the conditions under which securitisations fail, contributing relevant and fruitful results to the CST from the under-analysed perspective of failed securitisation attempts.

Method

To analyse *why* securitisation attempts fail, this study examines the case of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's proclamation of martial law in December 2024. While there may have been earlier instances where Yoon framed domestic threats as existential crises, this case represents the most extreme securitisation attempt of his presidency. The December 2024 case involved a truly extraordinary measure as it marks the first proclamation of martial law since 1980, a time when South Korea was effectively under a military dictatorship (Arranz et al., 2024). Furthermore, Yoon's extraordinary proclamation of martial law – justified as a measure to protect South Korea's democracy while targeting his political opposition – blatantly failed. The case of Yoon's failed martial law proclamation might therefore offer valuable insights into the conditions under which securitisations fail, contributing relevant and fruitful results to the CST from the under-analysed perspective of failed securitisation attempts.

Figure 2

Analytical Framework for the Case of South Korea

	Speech Act	Referent Object Under Supposed Threat	Speech-Actor	Audience's Reaction
Feature	Framing of an Existential Threat to Referent Object & Requiring Extraordinary Measures	Needs to fall under One of the Five Sectors mentioned in the CST	Sufficient Authority & Capacity to use Extraordinary Measures	Recognition/Acceptance of Extraordinary Measures as Legitimate Measures to Secure Referent Object
How to Analyze	Qualitative Discourse Analysis of President Yoon Suk Yeol's Dec. 3rd Speech		(Descriptive) Close Reading of President Yoon Suk Yeol's Executive Power	(Descriptive) Close Reading of Events and Reaction(s) to President Yoon Suk Yeol's Dec. 3rd Speech
Type of Data	President Yoon Suk Yeol's Dec. 3rd Speech (Primary Data)		Constitution of South Korea & Other Sources (Primary & Secondary Data)	Media articles, approval ratings (Primary & Secondary Data)

(Author's Illustration)

Limitations of Approach

Analysing *why* securitisation attempts fail through the case of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's failed securitisation attempt might represent a case that is too recent to get a full picture of the events, since the events occurred only two weeks before the time of writing this study. However, it can be argued that the (failed) securitisation attempt is (mostly) over since Yoon was already successfully impeached, with the constitutional court currently assessing whether he is permanently removed or not.

Additionally, a more wide-spread quantitative, rather than qualitative, discourse analysis of media articles could potentially bring more representative results on the public and media discourse after Yoon's December 3rd speech. This is true for most qualitative analyses, which provide detailed insights into a case, but might not be representative enough to make general claims about patterns intrinsic in other (similar) cases. However, not only the time of writing but also the scope of the study hinders such an approach.

Analysis

Speech-Act and Referent Object Under Supposed Threat

On the evening of the 3rd of December 2024, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol addressed the South Korean nation in a televised speech. In this speech, he proclaimed martial law to "immediately eradicate the unscrupulous pro-Pyongyang anti-state forces that pillage the freedom and happiness of our people and to protect free constitutional order" (Chea, 2024), using the historic exasperation with North Korea to invoke the impression that treason has been committed.

Next to the "free constitutional order", Yoon also explicitly mentions "liberal democracy" as another national institution that is in acute danger (Chea, 2024). Accordingly, Yoon mentions on three occasions in his speech that he seeks to protect the "free Republic of South Korea" (Chea, 2024), implicitly stating that the whole country needs (his) protection and conversely implying that the whole country is under existential threat. This is supported by Yoon mentioning that a "rebellion" and an "overthrow" are about to happen (Chea, 2024). Yoon thus framed South Korea's free

constitutional democratic order as the referent object under supposed threat, which clearly fits under the "political sector" of the CST (Buzan et al., 1998).

Yoon clearly identifies the culprits that are supposedly endangering South Korea's free constitutional democratic order as sitting in the National Assembly, calling it a "den of criminals" and a "monster trying to destroy [the foundation of liberal democracy]" (Chea, 2024). At the beginning of his speech, he mentions the assembly as a whole to be responsible for paralysing the government and the "key functions of the state" (Chea, 2024). Later in his speech, his target becomes more direct by mentioning the *Democratic Party* (DP) as a danger for South Korea's free constitutional democratic order, as he calls them a "legislative dictatorship" on two occasions (Chea, 2024). Yoon thus frames the DP as active culprits existentially endangering South Korea's free constitutional democratic order.

However, apart from Yoon stating that he "will eliminate anti state forces and normalise the country as soon as possible", he did not specify how exactly martial law would securitise South Korea's free constitutional democratic order at all. Nonetheless, through Yoon's strong language against the DP, one can suggest that the proclamation of martial law aimed at the sidestepping or removing of the political opposition, most notably in the National Assembly. Despite not clarifying how the proclamation of martial law would play out in practice, Yoon somewhat acknowledged the extraordinary nature of its proclamation by stating that "martial law will cause some inconveniences for good citizens" although they would "focus on minimising such inconveniences" (Chea, 2024). Thus, Yoon did not provide any explanation or clarification as to how martial law represents the right step to securitise South Korea's free constitutional democratic order. Rather, he spent most of his speech solely justifying the proclamation of martial law as an extraordinary but necessary measure.

Additionally, Yoon tried to justify the proclamation of martial law by emphasising the urgent nature of the supposed threat that lies in the National Assembly. He did so by first mentioning how the National Assembly had so far prevented effective governance by blocking government initiatives and attempting to impeach government officials (Chea, 2024). This conveys the message that the National Assembly, under the "DP's

legislative dictatorship" must be put to a stop as soon as possible before the country falls "into ruin" (Chea, 2024). Yoon's emphasis on the urgency of the threat is potentially most blatant when he stated that "at this moment, Korea faces a fate that is never strange even if it collapses immediately" (Chea, 2024). Here, Yoon points at a dire situation that could become worse at any moment, implicitly stating that South Korea "faces a fate" to make a choice whether it wants to act upon this supposedly dire situation or not, resembling a "make or break" situation. Yoon thus tried to convey that South Korea finds itself under urgent threat, which calls for extraordinary measures to be implemented right away.

In sum, in Yoon's December 3rd speech he framed South Korea's free constitutional democratic order as the referent object under supposed threat by the National Assembly and, more specifically, the DP. He conveys that the free constitutional democratic order of South Korea is under urgent and existential threat which calls for extraordinary measures in the form of martial law. However, Yoon failed to explain in more detail how the proclamation of martial law would play out in practice and how it would eventually protect South Korea's free constitutional democratic order.

Speech-Actor

Although other actors, such as Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun and other high-ranking officials, are alleged to have plotted the proclamation of martial law (Jae-Hee, 2024), it was President Yoon who proclaimed martial law in his televised address to the nation on the evening of the 3rd of December and framed these urgent extraordinary measures as necessary to securitise South Korean democracy from anti-state forces. Accordingly, he directly acted as the main speech-actor in this case.

The proclamation of martial law in South Korea, which according to the constitution may be proclaimed "in time of war, armed conflict or similar national emergency," has implications for "warrants, freedom of speech, the press, assembly and association, or the powers of the Executive and the Judiciary" (KLRI, n.d.). Considering that martial law has not been proclaimed since 1980 (Arranz et al., 2024), the recent proclamation of martial law by President Yoon represents a truly extraordinary measure.

Under Article 77 of the South Korean Constitution, the South Korean president is the only one able to proclaim martial law (KLRI, n.d.). Therefore, in terms of authority, President Yoon possessed the necessary legal power to proclaim martial law.

However, when "a majority of the total members of the National Assembly" decides to lift martial law, the president has to comply (KLRI, n.d.). Considering that the majority of the South Korean National Assembly's seats are taken by opposition parties (Yoon, 2024), it can be argued that Yoon's political capacity to conduct a successful securitisation rested on shaky grounds. Nevertheless, Yoon proceeded to declare martial law regardless, while the deployment of soldiers who actively tried to seal off the National Assembly indicates that he wanted to prevent assembly members from voting in favour of lifting the martial law (France 24, 2024a). This suggests that Yoon tried to compensate for his lack of political capacity as a securitising actor.

Regarding the level of credibility Yoon received from the public before his proclamation of martial law, Yoon was perceived to be moderately capable. Yoon was able to win the 2022 presidential election in a tight race against the DP candidate Lee Jae-myung. After this tight race, Yoon's approval ratings unsurprisingly decreased but continued to hover around the 35% mark throughout most of his presidency (Arranz et al., 2024). In the March 2024 legislative elections, which also serve as a midterm approval test for the president, his *People Power Party* (PPP) was even able to win an additional five seats (Majasaari, 2024), indicating that his presidency was not perceived to be disastrous despite being attributed to scandals and the cost-of-living crisis (Chang & Robles, 2024). Yoon's approval ratings up until December 2024 were not far off from his predecessors' approval rating paths (Arranz et al., 2024). Thus, while Yoon did not enjoy great approval ratings, he was not perceived to be more incapable than many of his predecessors by most South Korean citizens.

One can thus maintain that President Yoon acted as the sole speech-actor in his securitisation attempt. While he did possess the legal authority to commit such an act, his capacity was severely limited in terms of political influence through the National Assembly and, to a lesser but no less significant degree, unpopularity among citizens. Additionally, it can be argued that Yoon might have attempted to make up for his lack of

political capacity by trying to prevent the overturning of martial law by assembly members.

Audience's Reaction

The aforementioned approval ratings from the public shifted drastically after Yoon's securitisation attempt on the evening of December 3rd. With ratings plummeting down to about 11% (Min-Young, 2024), it becomes clear that Yoon's securitisation attempt has failed as his popularity has reached an all-time low. Furthermore, only moments after Yoon's televised speech, thousands of people gathered to protest his proclamation of martial law (France 24, 2024a). Demonstrators also gathered around the National Assembly and actively tried to obstruct the entry of the soldiers that got deployed under martial law (France 24, 2024a). Additionally, protests arose calling for his impeachment, with relatively smaller protests calling against his impeachment (France 24, 2024b). Thus, most South Korean citizens did not seem to approve Yoon's securitisation attempt.

The deployed soldiers who tried to get into the National Assembly did not only meet resistance from citizens, but also from assembly members who stormed to the National Assembly building moments after Yoon's speech. Only six hours after Yoon declared martial law, he lifted it again, showcasing that his attempt to securitize South Korea's free constitutional democratic order from the framed threat of the National Assembly, and more specifically the DP, ultimately failed. The audience, also consisting of political actors, thus did not accept the extraordinary measure of proclamation of martial law as adequate.

However, the aftermath of Yoon's failed securitisation attempt did not stop with the lifting of martial law. The civic and political audience continued to express their resentment towards Yoon even after his failed securitisation attempt. In addition to protests that called for the removal of Yoon, the DP set a presidential impeachment vote in motion on December 7th (Park, Lee & Kim, 2024). Despite not being able to gain the required two-thirds majority of votes in that first instance, the second impeachment attempt was successful on the 14th of December as 204 out of 300 assembly members voted in favour of impeaching President Yoon, with some voters even belonging to

Yoon's own party (France 24, 2024b). As a result, Yoon is currently suspended from office while the constitutional court assesses whether he shall be permanently removed or not (France 24, 2024b). The immediate aftermath (whose full extent will become more visible as time passes) therefore suggests that the majority of the audience was not convinced that South Korea's free constitutional democratic order was under urgent threat, whereas his very own proclamation of martial law was regarded as a severe threat to the referent object under supposed threat.

In sum, the South Korean civilian and political audience did not approve Yoon's securitisation attempt. Clearly, the audience did not recognise the extraordinary measure to proclaim martial law as an adequate measure. Although not mentioned explicitly, the audience did not seem to be convinced that the free constitutional democratic order of South Korea was under existential threat. On the contrary, the immediate aftermath of Yoon's securitisation attempt, including mass protests and Yoon's impeachment, indicates that the audience regarded his proclamation of martial law as an existential threat to South Korea's free constitutional democratic order itself. Consequently, he became the threat to what South Korea's free constitutional democratic order had to get securitised from, unwillingly shifting his securitisation attempt against himself.

Conclusion

To conclude, the events that occurred around the 3rd of December 2024 in South Korea represent one of the most recent attempts to securitise a framed threat in the political realm. As President Yoon Suk Yeol addressed the nation in a televised speech, he acted as the speech-actor committing a speech-act in which he framed South Korea's free constitutional democratic order as the referent object under supposed existential threat from the National Assembly and, more specifically, the DP. Correspondingly, he argued that the proclamation of martial law is urgently necessary to securitise South Korea's free constitutional democratic order. Ultimately, his securitisation attempt failed, which this study attempted to discern *why*.

This study argues that Yoon's securitisation attempt failed due to an interplay of reasons. *First*, he failed to explain in more detail *how* the proclamation of martial law would play out in practice and *how* it would eventually protect South Korea's free constitutional democratic order. *Second*, although he had the legal authority to proclaim martial law, his capacity was severely limited in terms of political and popular influence. *Third*, Yoon failed to regard the audience as active participants in his securitisation attempt, as the audience did not recognise the proclamation of martial law as an adequate measure, nor did they seem to be convinced that the free constitutional democratic order of South Korea was under existential threat.

Accordingly, this study concludes that Yoon's securitisation attempt failed due to him not having elaborated on the logic of his *modus operandi* in his speech-act, not having sufficient capacity as a speech-actor and consequently not being able to convince the audience that an existential threat exists nor that his extraordinary measures are appropriate.

Ultimately, this study succeeded in bringing new knowledge to the field of securitisation theory by examining a very recent case of a failed securitisation, which represents an under-analysed but important type of case in the field. The results of this study seem to confirm the hypothesis that the audience does play an important role in (de)legitimising securitisation attempts. However, the South Korea case shows that other factors play a role too sometimes. Although the South Korean case might not be representative for every other failed securitisation case, it did provide insights into *why* securitisations fail. Nonetheless, as the aftermath of this very recent event might still unfold, this study invites us to keep an eye on South Korea for potential future analyses.

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Júlio Escolastico Siniscalchi
Global Order in Historical Perspective

Latin America within the Third World

Abstract

In the latter half of the 20th century, the spirit of Bandung spread like wildfire through the decolonised states of Africa and Asia, fostering Third World solidarity and leading to the Non-Aligned Movement. However, it did not cross the Atlantic to connect with Latin America (LATAM). This article analyses how Latin America's distinct decolonisation trajectory, having achieved independence over a century earlier, shaped its relationship with the Third World. It also identifies how, despite the chronological divergence, LATAM continued to face many of the same obstacles as the other decolonised nations, which could have created opportunities for stronger connections that ultimately remained underdeveloped. The article further identifies how the United States, as a hegemonic power in the Americas and willing to intervene in other states' affairs, both through coercion and direct military intervention, prevented a shift toward the more left-leaning, often Soviet-aligned, movement. To understand these variables, two case studies are presented: Colombia, which remained aligned with Washington's interests throughout the 20th century, and Cuba, which, after the Revolution and escaping American influence, closely aligned itself with the wider Third World.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Solidarity, Nonalignment, Hegemony, Intervention

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Introduction

The decades following the end of the Second World War witnessed the decolonisation movement and the emergence of dozens of new independent states, with Africa and Asia joining their Latin American (LATAM) counterparts in forming the Third World. In the context of the Cold War, the Third World referred to those countries lying outside the traditional American and Soviet alliances, forging their own paths. However, as much as the term might imply some level of cohesiveness among the group, that was not entirely so. While the new states from Africa and Asia (as well as Yugoslavia) spearheaded the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and promoted Afro-Asian solidarity, LATAM often remained on the sidelines. This essay seeks to analyse the reasons behind this internal division and assess whether LATAM's limited engagement with the Third World and NAM was self-imposed or externally driven.

While Asia and Africa shared the 19th–20th century colonial experience and therefore had a unifying history, the same could be argued not to be true for LATAM, where most states had acquired their independence in the early 19th century (Haiti 1804, Colombia 1810, Brazil 1822). This meant they had over a century to consolidate their positions, develop a national identity, and reform their relations with Europe and the United States. By the 20th century, the colonial trauma that united Africa and Asia was largely absent in LATAM, enabling close relations with former colonial powers. This distinct trajectory could potentially explain the lack of participation of LATAM within the Third World and NAM.

The second hypothesis assumes that, even while independent, the region remained under significant influence from the United States. Under the Monroe Doctrine and Big Stick ideology, Washington treated the region as its "backyard," using its power to maintain alignment with the First World and the American-led order. The U.S. often resorted to violence to depose leaders who might have upset this balance and sought stronger relations with the Third World, such as Chile's Salvador Allende and Brazil's João Goulart (Chomsky, 2003). Therefore, strong U.S. influence might have been another central factor distancing LATAM from the Third World and NAM.

To analyse these hypotheses, this essay will focus on two case studies: Colombia and Cuba. Colombia represents the standard case in South America, as a Spanish colony that acquired independence early in the 19th century and remained firmly under U.S. influence during the Cold War, only showing more willingness to work with Third World partners in the 1980s and 90s. In contrast, Cuba presents a case more akin to the Afro-Asian examples. It gained independence from Spain only in 1902 and remained effectively a U.S. protectorate until 1934, with U.S. influence persisting until the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The Cuban timeline thus resembles that of many Third World nations more than the typical LATAM trajectory. The Cuban Revolution also marked a rupture with U.S. influence and secured Soviet protection, allowing Cuba to reorient itself toward both the Second and Third Worlds, as demonstrated by Havana hosting the sixth NAM summit in 1979. These two examples provide contrasting cases within the continent, offering insights into the broader reasons for LATAM's general lack of participation within the Third World.

The Third World and the Non-Aligned Movement

In his seminal work *The Darker Nations*, Vijay Prashad presents the Third World as "not a place. It was a project." He argues that after enduring long struggles to free themselves from colonialism, the peoples of Africa, Asia, and LATAM dreamed of a new world (Prashad, 2007). The question, however, is how much this dream resonated in the already distinct LATAM. Indeed, the organisations and groupings emerging in the first decades following decolonisation largely excluded the other side of the Atlantic. From the Afro-Asian solidarity spirit in Bandung to the political calculations of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), LATAM was often left on the periphery.

From the hopes of the Third World, many institutions emerged to turn these dreams into action (Prashad, 2007). One of the main concerns of the Third World was development. Compared to the industrialised First and Second Worlds, it lagged behind, and its leaders recognised that the Cold War order perpetuated global inequalities (Escobar, 1995). Addressing this required both working within existing international structures and creating new institutions to advocate for their interests. Though

individually weak, Third World nations were collectively numerous and often capable of advancing their proposals in the United Nations General Assembly (Smith, 2008).

One of the most significant contributions of the Third World was the formation of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1964. Inspired by the Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) and led by the Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch, UNCTAD sought to raise living standards and promote economic growth in developing nations (Smith, 2008). While this initiative showed unity among the Third World and recognised shared challenges between LATAM, Africa, and Asia, its organisational structure revealed persistent divisions. UNCTAD's board was divided into four distinct groupings: the First World (including the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand), the Second World (the Soviet Union and its allies), African and Asian nations (with the notable inclusion of Yugoslavia, demonstrating the Cold War logic), and LATAM in a group of its own (UN. General Assembly (19th sess. : 1964-1965), 1965). This separation underscores how LATAM was often treated as distinct from the broader Third World, both historically and geopolitically.

While UNCTAD became the most wide-reaching of these efforts, many other regional economic organisations emerged to address development. Some, like the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), successfully mobilised economic cartels to influence political issues, inspiring Third World solidarity. However, over time, OPEC's political impact waned as it became more focused on economic goals. While organisations such as the Afro-Asian Organization for Economic Cooperation managed to bridge Africa and Asia (Prashad, 2007), the same could not be said for LATAM, with few organisations able to transcend the Atlantic divide.

Ultimately, the developmental aspirations of the Third World faced significant challenges. Political instability, deepening economic dependency, and the imposition of Western development models through financial institutions like the World Bank and IMF eroded the movement's momentum. By the 1980s, much of the Third World's initial impetus had been lost (Prashad, 2007).

While development was central to the Third World's agenda, Cold War geopolitics was another driving concern. Forced to choose between the two major blocs, the Third World forged its own path, demanding political equality (Prashad, 2007). Led by figures like Gamal Abdel Nasser, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sukarno, and Yugoslavia's Josip Broz Tito, the Non-Aligned Movement emerged as a political platform for unity against colonialism and imperialism. NAM sought to overcome cultural, racial, and religious differences to claim agency for the Third World (Prashad, 2007).

The movement also recognised that decolonisation required different approaches. While some countries, like India and Ghana, achieved independence peacefully, others, such as Algeria and Cuba, were liberated through armed struggle. NAM's calls for "new Vietnams" in Africa and LATAM revealed its ideological alignment with revolutionary movements, often bringing it closer to Soviet interests and antagonising the United States (Prashad, 2007). Unsurprisingly, Washington exerted significant influence to reduce NAM's appeal and disrupt its efforts—particularly by discouraging LATAM participation.

Diverging paths?

The peripheral position of LATAM within the Third World is therefore evident, leading to the question of what pushed the region apart. At first glance, it might be argued that LATAM's distinct colonial experience set it on a path that altered its interactions with the First and Second Worlds (Escobar, 1995). How could nations that had been independent for over a century and consolidated their state structures feel a connection to newly decolonised nations still fighting for autonomy and independence? A deeper analysis, however, reveals that while the region had long experienced political independence from its colonial powers, many of the same social and economic issues persisted. Although generally less poor than its Asian and African counterparts, LATAM's stark development disparities with the United States and Europe highlighted the urgent need for structural change (Smith, 2008).

The Napoleonic Wars created chaos in Iberia, allowing Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the Americas to assert near-total autonomy at the turn of the 19th century.

Between 1810 and 1825, all of South America gained independence from Iberian control, as did most of Central America, with the exceptions being the Dominican Republic (1865) and Cuba (1898). However, the end of political ties to Madrid and Lisbon did not dismantle colonial structures. In most cases, creoles—people of Iberian descent born in the Americas—replaced Spanish-born peninsulares, maintaining systems of exploitation that subjugated Indigenous, Black, and mestizo populations (Bethell, 1987). In Brazil's case, the monarchy remained in power until the end of the 19th century, with the same dynasty ruling both before and after independence. Economically, LATAM remained tied to global powers as exporters of raw materials, dependent first on Europe and increasingly on the United States (Escobar, 1995). Real decolonisation was an unfinished process, linking LATAM to the broader Third World despite its earlier independence.

In the post-World War II era and the wake of decolonisation, it is therefore possible to argue that the Third World ideals of freedom and equality resonated in LATAM. The economic disparities, both compared to the Global North and within Latin American societies, created significant pressures for change (Prashad, 2007). These disparities echoed the challenges faced by Africa and Asia, and Latin American economists like Raúl Prebisch articulated shared solutions through dependency theory. This theory, which emphasised the structural inequalities of global capitalism, influenced the Third World's push for initiatives like UNCTAD and the New International Economic Order (Prashad, 2007).

Another area of shared struggles was in women's movements. Both LATAM and the rest of the Third World grappled with integrating women into civil society, especially through the right to vote, while maintaining patriarchal definitions of family and marriage (Prashad, 2007). Guerrilla movements in Cuba, Venezuela, and Vietnam included female soldiers, and women's feminist organisations gained traction across the Global South. The spirit of Bandung led to the organisation of the Afro-Asian Women's Conference in Cairo in 1961 (Prashad, 2007), but as was often the case, LATAM remained on the outside.

The strongest push for cooperation between LATAM and the Third World came from Cuba. As will be analysed, Cuba proved the exception in its ability to engage with and even lead Third World initiatives. The Tricontinental Conference in Havana in 1966 led to the creation of the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), an effort to bring LATAM into the Bandung spirit (Artaraz, 2009). However, attempts to merge OSPAAAL with the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization ultimately failed, reflecting persistent divisions within the Third World. The overtly socialist and anti-American tone of the conference, including its calls for 'new Vietnams' (Prashad, 2007), further alienated many Latin American states, which feared antagonising the United States (Smith, 2008).

Therefore, history reveals that while the early decolonisation cannot be enough cause to explain the Third World division, once considered the still similar issues being faced and the common solutions needed to address those problems, it is still clear that the separation persisted throughout the Cold War. We therefore move to another possible explanation: has the United States influence over LATAM pushed the continent away from the remaining Third World?

Dependent Independence

Inverting the previous argument, perhaps LATAM could have stayed separate from the Third World not because it had been independent for too long, but rather because it was not independent enough. LATAM is seen by the United States as its backyard, its legitimate sphere of influence, and any attempt to subvert its power, especially during the Cold War and the 'Communist threat,' has been swiftly dealt with. Through economic, military, and diplomatic means, Washington managed to keep most countries in line with its foreign policy — and take down opposing governments (Long, 2022). Attempts to swerve towards the Third World, mostly coming from governments with socialist sympathies, have often been met with far-right military coups sponsored by the United States, such as in Allende's Chile (Chomsky, 2003). Cuba being the only country to manage to permanently leave the US sphere and also achieve a central position within the Third World would point towards the validity of this perspective.

This is not to say Washington could not hold positive relations with Third World countries. Through the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, formed in 1954, for instance, the US entered a mutual defense pact with Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines, all important countries within the Third World and present at Bandung (Prashad, 2007). What they had in common, however, is that all of them had strongly anti-communist stances, and were greatly influenced by US policy. The same could not be said of Third World countries with socialist or leftist sympathies. It was with US support that Indonesia's Suharto, fiercely anti-communist, took down one of the major leaders of the Third World and NAM, Sukarno (Chomsky, 2003). What the US could not tolerate, therefore, is a Third World solidarity and neutralism that could move them away from American interests, and it would use all of its tools to keep LATAM distant. (Prashad, 2007)

If Cuba managed to escape the talons of the eagle in 1959, most of those who tried did not. Just in the first third of the 20th century, the US military had intervened four times in the Dominican Republic, once in Guatemala, twice in Haiti, seven times in Honduras, twice in Nicaragua, and six times in Panama (Prashad, 2007). The Cold War would see many further supported coups in the region, keeping authoritarian right-wing military regimes in power. Sometimes, the intervention would be in the name of governments fighting against insurgencies and guerrillas, such as in Colombia (Chomsky, 2003), while in others, like Allende's Chile, Washington was going directly against democratically elected leaders (Prashad, 2007).

Ultimately, as long as a regime cooperated with Washington in resisting communist influence in LATAM and ensured American access to natural resources, the United States would be happy to accommodate and normalise relations with right-wing dictatorships (Smith, 2008) — regimes which would often avoid interactions with the broader Third World. When Cuba managed to break through in 1959 and, further, establish close relations with the USSR, American fears that revolutionary ideals could spread to the rest of the continent intensified, leading to renewed impetus in maintaining control and increased support for authoritarian regimes (Chomsky, 2003).

But military power is not the only way to exert its influence. As analysed by Escobar (1995), the development discourse was just as much a tool of control over the Third World. While presented in terms of humanitarian concerns, in effect it allowed the First and Second Worlds to guarantee their hold on Third World resources under the guise of helping in their developmental path (Gleijeses, 2002). Even more concerning, then, that in many ways the underdevelopment had been produced by the colonial and capitalist countries pumping wealth out of the less developed nations (Prashad, 2007). Many treaties and institutions, therefore, were weaponised for control, such as the World Bank and the IMF, forcing countries to adopt their measures, and especially neoliberalism, in exchange for vital financial support (Escobar, 1995).

For as long as the Cold War raged and the fear of communism spreading persisted, Washington was to hold a tight grasp over LATAM, resorting to whatever means necessary to keep national governments in line and prevent the ascension of any revolutionary movement. Interaction with the Third World and their ideals could be seen as contrary to US interests and thus quashed.

Colombia

Independent since 1819 (Bethell, 1987), Colombia represents a standard case within LATAM. Once a Spanish colony, Bogotá kept close relations with the US and avoided any direct military interventions by keeping a strong anti-communist discourse through most of the Cold War. Rather, the Colombian government managed to count on US support in its operations against potential insurgencies and revolutions in the country, some of those who would have moved the country closer to the Soviet Union and the Third World.

Colombia has for decades dealt with issues of narcotraffic, such as the Medellin Cartel, and revolutionary guerrillas, often sponsored by Cuba (Palacios, 2007), such as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC). Under the guise of the War on Drugs, Washington managed to supply the Colombian Army with enormous amounts of military aid — along with Türkiye, the country received the highest amount of aid from the US in the 1990s (Chomsky, 2003). This aid helped the United States secure its

interests in Colombia, including access to natural resources, while further entrenching Bogotá's dependence on Washington. The fact that this support made Colombia the country with the worst human rights records in the hemisphere through the 1990s, with rampaging paramilitary groups, was of no interest (Chomsky, 2003).

Economically, Colombia has also been tied to the USA, limiting its autonomy. Depending on the raw material exports to North America and requiring the import of intermediary goods for its industrial structure, and further in need of foreign investment and loans, the Colombian economy is not, by design, self-sufficient, leading Fernández (1979) to call the country a neo-colony of US imperialism.

In turn, Colombia mostly kept away from Third World initiatives during the Cold War. It only joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1983 and was to hold the 11th summit of the NAM only after the fall of the Soviet Union, in 1995. Most of the organizations it was part of, such as CEPAL and the InterAmerican Development Bank, were focused on the Latin American context and had strong connections to the United States (Palacios, 2007). It's evident from the case of Colombia, therefore, that throughout the Cold War, the American influence in LATAM successfully kept it from integrating into the third world, from where disruptive ideals to the US interests could come.

Cuba

If Colombia is the traditional example, Cuba is the exception. In historical terms, it remained a Spanish colony until 1898 (Bethell, 1987) and was thereafter an American protectorate, with Washington reserving itself the right to intervene in the island affairs. The dictatorship under Fulgencio Batista, starting in the 1930s, kept Havana close to Washington and the interests of American plantation owners (Gleijeses, 2002). But the 1959 Cuban Revolution meant true independence for the island, making its timeline much more similar to the decolonial struggles raging in Africa and Asia than to its LATAM counterparts. Further, by escaping America's grasp, Cuba had the opportunity to intensify its contacts with the Second and Third Worlds, and Castro went on to assume a leadership role within the Non-Aligned Movement (Prashad, 2007).

When it comes to Cuba, the first question is whether it should still be considered part of the third world or, if seen as a satellite of the USSR, the Second World. After the revolution, and facing embargoes and the threat of intervention by Washington, Fidel Castro turned to the USSR for support (Artaraz, 2009). It's noticeable that this was not at first due to ideological reasons. The leader would only identify with Marxism-Leninism years after the revolution and only turned to Moscow as the single other possible alternative for protection from the USA (Gleijeses, 2002). In developmental aspects, it remained much closer related to the developing countries in the Third World than the industrialised Second World. Its political vassalage to Moscow is also often overstated. Castro led the island in its own path, often ignoring or going against the USSR's instructions (Long, 2022). It trained and supported guerrillas in LATAM, a region Moscow attempted to keep away from to not further antagonise Washington. In Africa, Cuba supported Ben Bella's Algeria on its own accord and against Soviet orders, supported the MPLA in Angola in its fight against South African troops (Gleijeses, 2002). Therefore, even with its close relations with the USSR, for the purpose of this analysis, Cuba is better understood as an autonomous Third World country (Artaraz, 2009).

That is not to say, however, that the US did not see the island as a center for the exportation of Soviet ideals to LATAM and therefore made all its could to take Castro down, including several assassination attempts and the failed invasion at the Bay of Pigs (Smith, 2008). Even if Cuba didn't fall, it did become isolated within LATAM and therefore had to turn to the broader Third World, rather than its geographical and cultural neighbors. Cuba became a story of success in overcoming imperialism, mobilising sympathy from Africa and Asia, and leading it to assume a central position within the Third World and especially the Non-Aligned Movement. The friendship between Castro and Ben Bella and Havana's support for Africa's independence movements, especially in the Portuguese colonies, further consolidated its positions (Gleijeses, 2002). It went on to host the 1966 Tricontinental Conference in Havana, seeking to bring LATAM into the Afro-Asian solidarity spirit of Bandung, and the 6th conference of the NAM in 1979 (Prashad, 2007). It also led developmental and

solidarity projects across the Third World, such as sending doctors to new independent countries emptied of medical professionals and receiving African students in Havana for scholarships (Gleijeses, 2002). Its actions much more resembled a third-worldism, seeking liberation first through the impoverished and agrarian periphery than the Soviet proletariat revolution (Artaraz, 2009).

From Cuba's case, it becomes evident that LATAM did have the potential for wider participation within the Third World, though mostly unrealised. In analysing what sets Havana apart from its neighbors, it's clear that the United States influence must have had a part in holding the continent back. Once away from Washington, Cuba went on to become a leading voice in the Third World.

Conclusion

The Cold War world was often divided into three parts. The American-led First World was composed by the industrialised capitalist nations in North America, Western Europe and the Asia Pacific. The Second World was dominated by the communist industrialized estates in Eastern Europe, led by the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. The Third World was everything else. Whether capitalist or communist, it was the underdeveloped world, today identified as the Global South. While there was much in common within the grouping, namely the developmental issues, it was much less unified than the other two. Africa and Asia managed to find common cause in Bandung and further consolidated their solidarity through the Non-Aligned Movement, but LATAM mostly stayed on the outside.

With over a century of independence prior to the decolonisations of the post-WW2, it could be argued that their situations were simply too different to find a parallel in the Afro-Asian experience. As has been shown, however, this is not the case. Most of the issues being faced demonstrate that the Third World had many shared problems to be solved and common solutions to be found. Yet, institutions like the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organization did not get the political momentum to incorporate LATAM. Rather than distancing itself, the continent could have used its experience as older states to assume central positions within the Third World, but

ultimately that did not happen until after the end of the Cold War, when countries like Brazil started gaining prominence in global organisations such as the BRICS.

If internal historical factors cannot solely explain the division, the external US influence might provide a missing key. Fearful that the Third World had a strongly anti-American and even pro-Soviet perspective, Washington attempted, and succeeded, in keeping LATAM distant from the block, manipulating its economic and military power into influence over the foreign policy of the continent. If Colombia proves the strength of US control, Cuba goes on to show that, away from American control, Latin America could find common cause with the Third World.

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Yuhan Liu
Global Order in Historical Perspective

Victim Mentality: The “Historical Burden” of China's Rise

Abstract

This paper explores the unique characteristics of China's rise in the international system through the lens of “victim mentality,” challenging the conventional binary of “conformist” and “resentful” national ascents. While many scholars have compared China’s trajectory to pre-World War I Germany or Japan, this paper argues that China’s identity is shaped not by overt aggression but by a deeply internalised historical memory of national humiliation. Drawing on theories of historical memory (Halbwachs), constructivism, and cognitive psychology (Jervis), this study demonstrates how narratives of victimhood have been institutionalised to construct national identity, mobilise domestic cohesion, and inform international behaviour. Through qualitative analysis of key cases—including the Sino-US trade dispute and Sino-Japanese historical tensions—this paper shows how China’s victim mentality generates both defensive diplomatic postures and rigid policy responses. The paper concludes that while this mentality may serve as a source of national unity and moral legitimacy, it also risks entrenching strategic mistrust and constraining China’s diplomatic flexibility. Ultimately, this research contributes to the understanding of identity politics in global order by introducing “victim mentality” as an alternative framework for analysing rising powers and highlights the importance of memory politics in shaping international interactions in the post-colonial world.

Keywords: Victimhood, Identity, Memory, Nationalism, Constructivism

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Introduction

In the modern international system shaped by the Treaty of Westphalia, states frequently find themselves in intense and competitive dynamics. Professor Ren Jiantao from Tsinghua University has argued that in an international order dominated by nation-states, the rise of a nation and its exercise of international leadership can generally be categorised into two types: one is a Conformist Rise, which relies on steadily increasing national power and adherence to international rules to exert global leadership, as exemplified by the United Kingdom and the United States; the other is a Resentful Rise, which depends on rapidly strengthening military capabilities to forcibly alter the international order and aspire to global dominance, rooted in deep-seated resentment toward the former leading nations that established the existing order, with Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan serving as key examples (Ren, 2022). Ren contends that nations falling outside these two categories tend to have minimal impact on the global historical trajectory or existing international order. Thus, his framework focuses exclusively on nations whose rise accompanies significant changes to international systems.

However, China's rise, which has been predicted to potentially challenge and even overturn the international order, does not seem to fit into either of these categories, exposing limitations in this typology. Although many scholars liken China to pre-World War I Germany due to its rapid rise and its challenge to the existing hegemon, thereby implying a "resentful rise," this paper argues that China's rise is uniquely characterised by a "victim mentality" – a form of identity politics that strengthens national unity through narratives of historical humiliation and victimhood while converting these into justifications for its international behaviour.

Unlike previous works linking victim mentality to conflict and war, this paper proposes that victim mentality serves as an analytical framework for understanding the logic of national rise. This model of rise differs significantly from the resentful rise. While the latter tends to fiercely confront the existing international order, the "victim mentality" of the former manifests itself more defensively, emphasising the preservation of its own legitimacy through historical memory, while demonstrating its prudent participation in the

international order. This mentality makes China sensitive to external criticism or pressure and makes it easy to perceive certain external actions as a threat to China's rise.

Therefore, this paper raises the question: how does China's victim mentality arise and shape its domestic governance as well as its international behavior during the rise? Based on historical memory theory, constructivism and cognitive psychology, the article adopts qualitative analysis, combining cases such as the Sino-US trade dispute, the memory of war in East Asia. By examining China's victim mentality, this paper aims to deepen the understanding of the logic behind China's rise, explore the complexities of state behavior in globalisation, and offer new perspectives on how historical memory and identity politics influence national actions.

The paper is structured into four sections. First, it examines the types of national rise and the theoretical underpinnings of victim mentality. Second, it explores how victim mentality strengthens national unity domestically while exacerbating nationalism. Third, it discusses the potential negative effects of victim mentality in the international arena, such as a loss of diplomatic flexibility. Lastly, the paper argues that transforming this "historical burden" into a constructive force within the international community remains an ongoing test of national wisdom.

Types of National Rise and Theoretical Framework

Comparison of Three Types of National Rise

Conformist rise, represented by the United Kingdom and the United States, refers to a long-term process of gradual political and economic development, relying on small adjustments to the national order to steadily reach the top in global competition and exert international leadership (Ren, 2022). Some scholars argue that the success and sustainability of conformist rise lie in a nation's self-restraint. For instance, the foundational characteristic of the UK and US rise is their focus on improving domestic affairs rather than mobilising development momentum by blaming other nations for perceived injustices. This focus allowed them to better resolve internal conflicts and lay a solid foundation for rational engagement in international affairs. For example, the UK

maintained its global dominance by employing an offshore balancing strategy to achieve equilibrium and prudence, avoiding simultaneous confrontations with multiple great powers and utilising selective appeasement to divide its opponents (Snyder, 2007, p. 164). The US, with its strong tradition of isolationism, adopted the Monroe Doctrine to reject European expansion in the Americas while opening a window for its own regional dominance (Bemis, 1987, pp. 186-208).

In contrast, resentful rise, as exemplified by Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union, is marked by a strong sense of retribution and confrontation. These nations often employed aggressive forms of nationalism to stir public sentiment, pursued rapid political and economic growth through extraordinary measures, and displayed a certain degree of contempt for existing international norms. Germany, as a “belated nation-state,” experienced prolonged medieval fragmentation, which fostered cultural nationalism (Barrett & Gerhard, 1990). Following the Napoleonic Wars, unifying the German territories became a priority in the 19th century, but neglecting democratic political development caused its nationalism to become rigid under the pressures of modernisation, placing Germany in a state where “the nation's self-expectations were deeply misaligned with its international recognition” (Ren, 2022, p. 25). After Bismarck's departure, Germany’s continental policy became unsustainable. Russia, as a late-modernising and peripheral European power, maintained an expansionist “Third Rome” messianic spirit (Riasanovsky et al., 2007). However, its policies shifted eastward after the setback of the Crimean War. Japan, which historically developed its civilisation by emulating Chinese culture and later modernised by adapting Western civilisation, has long operated in a subordinate, learning-oriented position. This dynamic embedded a sense of shame in Japanese culture, ultimately facilitating Japan’s rapid transformation from a victim of aggression to an aggressor (Benedict, 2007).

In contrast to resentful rise, the rise characterised by victim mentality emphasises historical memory and justice, showing more defensive than confrontational traits. However, its negative impacts are more subtle and long-lasting. A nation's resentment may be resolved through direct conflict, either by successfully exacting revenge on its target or by being thoroughly defeated. Alternatively, a victim mentality shaped by

historical trauma poses the risk of having deeper psychological and institutional impacts on a nation, subtly undermining internal stability and the environment for international cooperation over time.

Theoretical Basis of "Victim Mentality"

Victim mentality emphasises the memory of harm, a strong tendency for self-justification, and a persistent perception of insecurity. At the national level, it profoundly influences identity, cognition, policy, and behavioral logic. In 2003, an article in *Foreign Affairs* titled *China's New Diplomacy* introduced the term "victim mentality," mentioning Chinese scholars reflecting on whether they should continue to view international affairs through a victim's lens (Medeiros & Fravel 2003, pp. 22-35). In foreign policymaking, victim mentality refers to an actor positioning itself as a historical or contemporary victim. This perception often prevents decision-makers from conducting comprehensive, objective, and rational analyses of problems, making them highly sensitive to potential external harm or security threats. In interpreting information, they tend to overlook goodwill signals from others while exaggerating hostility and perceived threats. Furthermore, in assessing situations, they often elevate the legitimacy and justification of their own actions (Qian, 2004).

Maurice Halbwachs' theory of historical memory highlights that memory is both a process and a result shared by members of a specific social group, with social memory being inherently selective (Halbwachs, 2002). Historical memory is not a comprehensive reproduction of past events but rather a cultural emphasis on particular events. For instance, the Opium Wars, "century of humiliation," and foreign invasions constitute integral parts of China's national identity. These memories, reinforced through official narratives, written history, commemorative activities, media, and education, have become an internalised force shaping national identity and driving long-term state behavior.

From a state-building perspective, historical memory constructs national behavior and identity. "Historical memory is a collective construct of the past, grounded in the present" (Wu & Gu, 2018, p.70). Narratives such as "never being humiliated again"

frequently appear in China's diplomatic stances, reflecting an identity politics that fosters defensive postures in international affairs while exhibiting heightened sensitivity to external criticism.

Robert Jervis' cognitive psychology provides further insights into trauma memory and threat perception. He identifies “cognitive consistency” and “historical burden” as key mechanisms leading to misperceptions. Traumatic memories exaggerate the perceived threats of external actions, shape national biases, and may lead a state to overreact defensively or, in an effort to “prove itself” on the international stage, ultimately resort to extreme measures (Jervis, 2003).

The Domestic Dimensions of “Victim Mentality”

Orville Schell described China as a “prisoner of its past” due to its victim mentality (1999, p. 16). The nation’s collective memory of humiliation has left a lasting psychological imprint, making it difficult for the Chinese people to move on. Unlike the “resentful nations” that are often in an agitated state of striving for revenge, China's victim mentality, constrained by its perception of era and international order, has instead fostered a desire for self-validation, redirecting emotions inward to serve as a driving force in its national rise. China seeks to rely on the will of state power to rapidly accumulate strength, thereby achieving economic development, geopolitical advancements, and an elevated international status. This desire for “surpassing others” has revealed a tendency toward short-sightedness and impatience for quick results. Additionally, the mindset that ties “development achievements” to the possibility of escaping historical shame reveals an unhealthy pursuit of performance-oriented goals. This “victim mentality” struggles to find an outlet for emotional release, remaining subtle yet persistent, fluctuating in intensity depending on the international environment.

This paper divides the construction of China’s national identity through the lens of victim narratives into three phases: the period of humiliation from China’s Modern Era to 1949, the Maoist era of national identity reconstruction from 1949 to 1978, and the resurgence of victim mentality from 1978’s reform and opening-up to the present.

Historical Memory: From the Century of Humiliation to the Founding of the PRC

China's victim mentality originates in the “century of humiliation” during its modern era. Beginning with the Opium Wars in the 19th century, the nation endured territorial concessions, indemnities, unequal treaties, followed by Japan’s full-scale invasion until the end of World War II, China’s national memory as a “victim” gradually accumulated, fostering an enduring resentment toward its aggressors. Furthermore, the dramatic collapse of “Heavenly Kingdom” worldview and the stark fall in China’s historical standing triggered profound national feelings of inferiority and anger. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs suggests that frustration of the need for esteem can lead to feelings of inferiority and helplessness, which in turn prompt compensatory behavior (Tang Kailin, 2004, p. 584). China’s “great power mentality” emphasises its unique historical role. The disparity between its past status and present reality, compounded by the psychological impact of its history of invasion, creates a strong sense of historical trauma (Qian, 2004). Moreover, China’s cultural emphasis on self-respect elevates the perception of invasion beyond material losses, turning it into a profound challenge to cultural identity and shaping a deep-rooted memory of historical humiliation.

National Myths and the Intensification of Nationalism: The Revolutionary Construction Period (1949–1978)

After the founding of the PRC, the Communist Party sought to combine its identity with that of a “liberator” by emphasising anti-colonial and anti-aggression struggles. It highlighted narratives of victims to consolidate its legitimacy and facilitate the implementation of class revolution and various industrial initiatives. It is worth noting the difference between China’s “victim mentality” and the “resentful rise” of other nations: China does not have a specific target or enemy. Resentful nations typically identify specific “enemy targets,” such as historical aggressors or direct competitors. In China’s case, the memory of humiliation has generalised into a broader “victim mentality,” leading to increased caution and even hostility toward multiple actors in international relations. This was also influenced by the early post-war détente and the PRC’s pursuit of international recognition.

Moreover, communist ideology focused on “class struggle,” targeting class enemies rather than specific nations. Following the outbreak of the Korean War and the deployment of the US Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait, the US re-emerged as a threat labelled “American imperialism,” but this was framed through the lens of ideological conflict between communism and capitalism (Mitter, 2000). Unfortunately, unlike the post-war reconciliation between France and Germany, the Korean War deprived the three East Asian nations of the opportunity to reflect on and address their historical memories. This laid the groundwork for ongoing historical disputes and the failure to build shared narratives. Meanwhile, China’s military success against the US during the Korean War provided a “satisfying conclusion” to its victim narrative— after enduring the suffering of national humiliation and loss of sovereignty, the newly established China defeated its former imperial oppressors, further strengthening a sense of heroic nationalism. These self-glorifying myths often included exaggerated or fabricated claims of national virtues and capabilities, creating a “cult of national martyrdom,” which grants a nation moral superiority (Bartov, 1998; Linn & Gur-Ze’v, 1996). Such national myths, particularly under collectivist ideologies, tied individuals' value to the state, creating an obligation to “pursue the ideals of all past memories and aspirations, connecting one's destiny with that of predecessors, contemporaries, and future generations” (Bell, 2002, p. 124). By sharing past injustices, these narratives reinforced the distinction between “self” and “other,” solidifying national identity (Podeh, 2000).

Reform and Opening-Up: The Dilemmas of Rise and Potential Risks

The victim mentality has motivated China to utilise and reinforce nationalism during its rise, though this reliance on a singular historical narrative poses significant risks. “There can be no identity without memory, and no nation without identity” (Smith, 1986, p. 383). Unlike the European concept of state sovereignty developed under the Westphalian system, China historically lacked a similar consciousness. Communist China initially prioritised class struggle over state identity. However, Deng Xiaoping’s reform and opening-up policies marked a shift toward modernisation, reintroducing and reshaping national consciousness. This shift allowed China to view both itself and the international

community through a clearer, more cohesive “state” perspective, focusing on national identity and pride. As a result, the memory of China’s historical trauma became intertwined with economic achievements, further reflecting its aspiration for economic rise and equal standing in international affairs. This has led to a contradictory stance in its international behaviour—seeking cooperation while emphasising the need to resist any form of aggression. Encouraged by economic success in the 2000s, some Chinese scholars proposed abandoning the long-held “victim mentality” in favour of a “great-power mentality.” However, economic progress has yet to heal the memory of historical trauma, as evidenced by the increasingly radical nationalism in recent years (Medeiros & Fravel, 2003).

Nationalism and populism expressed through sensitivity to external threats and strong reactions to historical injustices. The government has institutionalised historical trauma through education and propaganda, further reinforcing the narrative of a “victim mentality.” This narrative centres on “never forget national humiliation” but also incorporates elements of “great-power confidence” and “the great rejuvenation.” Cultural products like films and literature repeatedly evoke trauma narratives, such as the frequent themes of the War of Resistance against Japan in movies and television. These memories are continually reinforced through imagery, symbols, and drama, perpetuating them across generations (Podeh, 2000). There is no doubt that the nationalism fuelled by the “victim mentality” has, to some extent, strengthened national cohesion and mobilisation. However, it also carries risks. Over-reliance on a singular historical narrative may limit the flexibility of China's foreign policy and constrain the space for rational discourse. For instance, in relations with Japan and Western countries, China’s narratives often link contemporary conflicts to historical aggression, exacerbating confrontational postures. Domestically, in regions like Xinjiang and Tibet, the strong caution toward separatist movements can also be linked to the persistence of the victim mentality.

If China overly relies on historical narratives and humiliating memories as a source of legitimacy for its political party, artificially exaggerates external pressures, and does not try to eliminate the blind hatred, exclusiveness, and fragile high self-esteem

induced by the “victim mentality,” it is likely to lose sight of future development, hinder innovative and forward-looking policymaking, with negative constructs leading to self-fulfilling prophecies.

The International Dimensions of Victim Mentality

International Environment and External Pressures

China’s victim mentality has evolved in various forms across different historical periods, shaped by the nature and intensity of external pressures. In the case of the Sino-Japanese historical issue, for example, China’s intention to ease the historical issue with Japan at the beginning of the founding of PRC, however, has left a hidden danger of the revival of the “victim mentality”. Nowadays, with the deterioration of China’s diplomacy, this hidden danger is increasingly highlighted and has once again become a topic that needs to be taken seriously.

The deterioration of China’s international environment and the containment and blockade by the West beginning in the 1950s made it strategically important to improve national relations with Japan. Beijing adopted semi-official “people's diplomacy” with Japan and crafted a historical narrative that distinguished between “a small group of Japanese militarists” and ordinary Japanese citizens, who were portrayed as victims of militarism. Moreover, Beijing handled bilateral historical legacies with remarkable generosity. For instance, during the 1956 war crimes trials, out of approximately 1,000 Japanese war criminals detained in China, only 45 were sentenced to imprisonment, while the rest were pardoned and swiftly repatriated (Jin, 1999). Additionally, Beijing never used war reparations as a precondition or bargaining chip in its diplomatic relations with Japan. In the 1960s, the Chinese Communist Party formally decided to abandon claims for reparations (Zhang, 1998). China's lenient treatment of Japanese war criminals was a result of top-down, leader-driven diplomatic decisions. Consequently, the preservation of public war victim memories was not prioritised. For example, the collective memory of the Nanjing Massacre remained underrepresented. To some extent, Chinese society’s memory of the War of Resistance against Japan was

subordinated to the broader political needs of the state, existing in a dormant state during this specific historical period.

With the end of the Cold War, Western-led globalisation exerted external pressures on China. In response, China interpreted Western containment and suppression strategies as manifestations of “neo-imperialism” or “Cold War mentality.” This interpretation often revived memories of historical humiliation. For example, during the U.S.-China trade disputes, official Chinese narratives framed the conflicts as an extension of “Western containment,” portraying economic tensions as an effort by the West to suppress China’s rise. Through historical memory, China constructed a “victimhood legitimacy” to justify its defensive posture in the international system (Ma, 2008). Thus, the victim mentality narrative framed the trade disputes as a continuation of “oppression.” This narrative not only influenced domestic public opinion but also provided moral leverage for China to gain support within the international system (Merton, 1957).

Manifestations and Impacts of International Behaviour

China's victim mentality contributes to its ambivalent attitude toward the existing international order. This mistrust of the international system influences China's policy choices and shapes its interactions with the outside world. Nevertheless, China's international behaviour remains relatively conservative. Unlike resentful rising powers that challenge the existing international order to achieve political goals, China abides by international rules to secure benefits, striving to enhance its influence by participating in shaping those rules. It continues to support platforms like the United Nations, the World Health Organization, and the WTO.

Traumatic events shape the cognitive patterns, behavioural models, and interaction modes with the external world (He, 2007). They also reveal the selective nature of historical memory, which shifts in response to changes in the international dynamics. For example, Chinese public sentiment today shows little “victim mentality” toward Russia, despite Russia historically being the country that seized the most territory from China through unequal treaties such as the *Treaty of Nerchinsk, the Treaty*

of Aigun, and the Treaty of Beijing. Russia acquired over 1.5 million square kilometres of Chinese land and, in 1945, pressured the Chinese Nationalist government to recognise Mongolia's independence to serve as a buffer zone for Soviet security needs.

In contrast, during the 20th century, particularly the 1970s, China lacked both official interests and public pressure to inflame historical disputes with Japan. However, since the turn of the century, tensions between China and Japan have resurfaced due to issues such as Japan's revisions to textbooks concerning the Nanjing Massacre, visits to the Yasukuni Shrine (Kisaharu, 2012), the comfort women issue, and territorial disputes over the Diaoyu Islands (Tian, 1997). China is not unique in this regard; Japan also exhibits "selective trauma memory." The Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings play dual roles in Japan's war memory. On the one hand, Japan portrays itself as the sole victim of nuclear weapons, while on the other, this narrative shields Japan from confronting its war guilt. As Fujiwara Kiichi noted, "The Japanese people did not forget the war because too much time has passed; they closed their eyes early because they did not want to see certain things" (Fujiwara, 2002). This duality of "victim and perpetrator" in historical consciousness has become a significant barrier to improving Japan's relations with its neighbouring countries (Yeo, 2009, p. 181).

Potential Risks

First, the "victim mentality" may result in rigid diplomacy, heightened confrontations with other countries, and the generalisation of enemies across multiple international issues. Over-reliance on historical narratives could also limit China's flexibility on the global stage and hinder the implementation of innovative policies. This rigidity might further strengthen international distrust toward China, exacerbating its security dilemmas.

Second, China's "victim mentality" intensifies mistrust of the external environment, leading to highly sensitive and over-reactive policies. These reactions deepen external wariness of China, improved regional concerns about its potential expansion, and reinforce the global perception of the "China threat theory." This, in turn, worsens China's international image and creates a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1957).

Finally, confrontational behaviour driven by the "victim mentality" could weaken China's potential for cooperation with other countries, making it more difficult for the international community to reach consensus on complex issues. Tensions in U.S.-China relations are evident across multiple domains, including trade, technology, intellectual property, military, and geopolitics. If these tensions escalate into multifaceted confrontation without effective mechanisms for communication and interpretation, they risk leading to persistent strategic misjudgements, posing long-term threats to both sides and the broader international community.

Conclusion

In contemporary China, the slogan of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," grounded in a victim mentality, contains inherent tensions. Rejuvenation should ideally be a process of self-exploration rather than a confrontational approach built in opposition to "the other," especially the West. Without grounding this process in the core of its culture, history, and society, China risks following an "external mirroring" path of rejuvenation, which may expose the fragility of its propagandistic narratives and the limitations of political culture.

Tocqueville distinguished between two types of patriotism: one is intuitive and selfless, resembling a religious instinct that saves a nation from crisis but often allows it to decay in peace. The other is rational patriotism, which develops through the exercise of rights but diminishes when mixed with personal interests (Tocqueville, 1988). China's rise, infused with a "victim mentality," is both a legacy of historical memory and a political tool to mobilise society. However, over-reliance on this mentality risks dragging the nation into a spiral of blindness and hatred. The purpose of historical memory is not only to evoke collective emotional resonance but also to encourage rational thought and reflection. Thus, the transformation of historical education and public memory by the state, alongside the rational guidance of nationalism, is essential. Transitioning from emotional reactions to reflective historical learning requires understanding the complexity of trauma memory and avoiding excessive emotionalism. Only by doing so can a solid foundation for national development be built, turning historical trauma into a

source of positive internal motivation. Ultimately, achieving balance between the "historical burden" and "future development" will be key to China's sustainable progress.

On the international stage, the process of reconstructing a nation's collective memory is shaped through interactions with the collective memories of other nations (Zheng, 2016). This process should particularly encourage diverse historical perspectives and reduce reliance on a singular victim narrative. Political reconciliation cannot substitute for historical reconciliation. The legacy of war memories should not be confined to the suffering of a single nation but should transcend national boundaries, becoming a shared historical heritage for all of humanity.

Munger once said, "I don't like any feelings of being victimised. I think that is a counterproductive way to think as a human being. I am not a victim; I am a survivor." Getting rid of the victim mentality, facing or recalling history is not about remembering hatred, but about holding on to peace today and in the future, and that is what it means to be a "survivor".

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Chandler Lütteken
Global Order in Historical Perspective

Palestine Lost: The Global Influence of the Creation of Israel

Abstract

The State of Israel was established in 1948 through international efforts to find a national home for the Jewish people. The establishment of Israel in the Middle East was a unique occurrence, deeply impacting the region's stability due to heavy foreign intervention and the arguable lack of integration efforts. This paper aims to answer the following question: In what ways did the creation of the Israeli nation-state in 1948 cause a shift in the post-war global order? The essay will observe the British and Zionist history leading up to 1948, delving into the policies that led to Israel's establishment and analysing the underlying risks for conflict. Additionally, it is argued that Israel's establishment had an influence on the global order, inter alia through adding a layer of political tension in the West-East division originating in the Cold War. Finally, the paper will conclude by reflecting on the analysis' implications and the effects the creation of Israel caused in the following decades.

Keywords: Israel, Palestine, Zionism, Conflict, Intervention

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Introduction

The State of Israel was established in 1948 through international efforts to find a national home for the Jewish people. The allocation of territory in the Middle East to create this state was a unique event, severely impacting the region's stability. Due to factors such as foreign intervention and ideological conflicts, Israel faced significant hostility – for example, given the fact that it was the sole country borne out of an agreement of the United Nations that was pledged on the establishment of a Jewish *and* a Palestinian state. Moreover, the significant differences between Israel and the neighbouring countries, and the arguable lack of integration efforts, further complicated the prospects of peace in the region.

This paper aims to answer the following question: In what ways did the creation of the Israeli nation-state in 1948 cause a shift in the post-war global order? To answer this query, firstly, the existing literature will be examined to provide insight into nationalism, state formation and the role of the nation-state in the global order. The following section will delve into the origins of Israel's creation, followed by a critical analysis of the consequences the establishment of the Israeli nation-state had in the Middle East region and, subsequently, in the global order. The paper argues that Israel's formation critically shifted the stability of the Middle East and the relational paradigms both among Arab states and between Arab states and Western nations involved in the region, such as the Allies of WW2. Finally, the paper will conclude by reflecting on the analysis' implications and the effects the creation of Israel caused in the following decades.

Literature review

There is an inherent bias in the choice of the word 'creation' to describe the origin of the Israeli nation-state. The term echoes Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, in which he argued that the nation is a man-made construct: an "imagined political community, which is both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson, 1983, p. 6). Similarly, Gellner affirmed that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it *invents* nations where they do not exist" (Gellner, 1983, p. 41). Katz applied these theories to the creation of Israel, arguing that Israeli state-building relied on strategically

placed refugee camps as a “modern biopolitical instrument” at the base of Israel’s spatial development (Katz, 2016). Berger observed the risks of such geopolitical developments. He stressed that especially with foreign backing, approaches to state formation “ignore the wider historical context or assume … the ‘right’ set of state-building strategies” without considering the specificity of local, regional or global realities (Berger, 2006, p. 21).

Studies on nations and nationalism stress the fundamental importance of history in validating such kinds of state formation. This occurs, for example, through retracing the origins of the national language or legitimising the nation through an–invented–connection to an ancient glorious ruling power in the region (Anderson, 1983). However, Hobsbawm’s theory stands out in the academic debate as he affirms that the nation’s historical continuity is an invented concept (Hobsbawm, 1983). He points out the instrumentalist nature of the invention of the nation: history can at times be erased, or rewritten, to promote a certain narrative of the nation. Concerning this theory, Halbwachs’ term “collective memory” describes the process of creating commonly understood meanings in a society, which can impact how people observe or remember their history (Halbwachs, 1950). Collective memory reconstructs the past, and simultaneously “deform[s] it” (Hobsbawm, 1983, p.289). Additionally, Billig argued that national identity, rooted in history, thus results from “different factions … [struggling] for the power” to impose their narrative of the nation (Billig, 1995, p. 71).

In a contrasting perspective on the role of the nation-state, Huntington’s “clash of civilisations” brought in a different argument (Huntington, 1993). In his view, the global order would experience a shift that put the nation-state in a secondary position, as conflicts ensued between Western and non-Western civilisations (Huntington, 1993). Opello and Rosow challenged this belief, as the nation-state “as a form of politico-military rule” is taken for granted” (Opello & Rosow, 2004, p. 2). They argue that we live in the era of modernity, namely a historically developed configuration of the political space as the “sovereign territorial state” (Opello & Rosow, 2004, p. 2).

Modernist scholars conceptualised the ‘nation’ by underlining its man-made constructive nature. Eric Hobsbawm focused on what strategies political and cultural

elites employ to make people believe that they belong to the same nation's community. For Hobsbawm, the national identity is constructed by highlighting the population's common past and destiny (Hobsbawm, 1983). The political and cultural elites create "invented traditions" by fabricating national and historical symbolism, pushing the masses to internalise this sense of continuity in their values (Hobsbawm, 1983). Only through such inventions can the existing order remain in place, controlling the potential processes of social transformation that could affect the elites' power (Hobsbawm, 1983). Similarly, Hall believed that the national discursive practice impacts narratives of national culture. He affirmed that national identities are "not things we are born with, but are formed and transformed within and in relation to *representation*" (Hall, 1995, p. 612). National culture is, therefore, a discourse that constructs the meaning of nation and people's behaviours and values: a national culture "seeks to unify" people into one cultural identity, so that they belong to the same "great national family" (Hall, 1995, p. 612).

Hall develops his argument further by drawing attention to the concept of the 'Other' in establishing the 'Self' (Hall, 1996). National identity is not only dependent on the imagined national community, it is also heavily reliant on the opposition to the 'Others', i.e. the opposite or the negation of the national people (Hall, 1996). Furthermore, Hall's 'Other' is subdivided into external and internal Other. We see this distinction in theories by Said and Morrison. The former studies the Orient, broadly referring to what lay outside the West or Europe as one of the most common 'Others' in opposition to the West. The Orient's image is constructed in contrast to the West, hence defining what the West is, through determining what the Orient itself is not (Said, 1978). Conversely, Morrison observes blackness–the internal Other in the United States – as the Other used to identify what White America is (Morrison, 1992).

The case analysed in this paper is thus representative of these theories as, for example, we easily identify a mutual conception of Other between Israel and Palestine, or the neighbouring Arab nations as a whole. The following analysis will observe these tensions, focusing on Israel through researching its history and the role of nationalism and a Jewish, and subsequently, Israeli, national identity.

Case analysis

The Creation of Israel

The website of the Israel Permanent Mission to the UN provides a timeline delineating Israeli history. The Land of Israel is defined as the "birthplace of the Jewish people", of which a "significant part" of the nation's history was recorded in the Bible (Mission of Israel to the UN, 2010). Moreover, the establishment of Israel in 1948 is seen as a *renewal* of Jewish independence and statehood, two thousand years after the exile of the people of the Land of Israel. This narration heavily underlines the historical ties to the territory. It establishes the common past of the Israeli people, underlining that "the Jewish people never severed nor forgot its bond" with the Land (Mission of Israel to the UN, 2010). However, it disregards the developments of the nation-state that would make the modern Israeli State of 1948 a one-of-a-kind entity, with little ties to the sociopolitical historical entity of the Land of Israel. However, as argued by Gellner, the legitimacy of Israel relies on its connections to ancient history, which are fundamental to fostering a form of nationalism that can *create* the national identity itself "where it [did] not exist" (Gellner, 1983, p. 41). Additionally, while the Bible provides ample recollections of Israelite history, historians argue that the purpose of the Christian sacred scriptures is not that of a historical source.[1]

The events narrated in the Bible have been pointed out as historically inaccurate or lacking proof to confirm they even occurred because historical accuracy was never the aim. Therefore, it would be unwise to tie biblical history to modern Israel without considering these issues, even though it has been used as a source to strengthen Israel's territorial claims (Wright & Filson, 1956).

An analysis by Chris McGreal for 'The Guardian' points out that the origins of Israeli history are highly debated, as some will mention biblical history, while others will think of the 19th-century Jewish migration to the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Zionism or the Balfour Declaration (McGreal, 2023). The next subsection of the analysis will delve into the history Zionist movement and challenge the argument that puts the Holocaust

[1] i.e. history specifically related to the Jewish ethnoreligious group.

as the primary cause for the establishment of Israel in 1948. In the following subsection, in chronological order, this paper will observe the role of the United Kingdom and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and its impact on the regional relations between the UK, Israel and the neighbouring Arab nations (Balfour, 1917).

The Zionist Project

In studies on the creation of Israel, scholars have long argued on the impact of the Holocaust on the establishment of the Jewish State (Novak, 2015). The global order was irremediably devastated by the Second World War, and the displacement of people due to the Holocaust created migration waves in post-war Europe, a considerable amount being Jewish survivors of the Holocaust (Novak, 2015). However, Friesel argues that the connection with the Holocaust is erroneous, as the project of Israel was central to Zionist thought long before the conflict or the drastic rise in antisemitism in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s (Friesel, 2008). Conversely, the study affirms that the Holocaust's effect endangered Israel's creation, as "Zionism was essentially a product of European Jewry" and thus terribly suffered from the slaughter of the *Shoah* (Friesel, 2008, p.462).

The ideation of a Jewish "national home" had become popular from the early days of the Zionist movement (Novak, 2015). In the first Zionist congresses in 1897 and 1898, Austrian journalist Theodor Herzl appeared as the primary leader of those openly calling to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. Herzl had published a work titled *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) in 1896, and had previously noted:

"We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by … denying it employment in our own country. … Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly" (Herzl, 1960, pp. 88-89).

In response, concerns had been raised among the Palestinians, as cited in Rashid Khalidi's *The Hundred Years War on Palestine*. Yusuf al-Khalidi, the author's ancestor, wrote to the "founder of modern Zionism" (Khalidi, 2020, p. 17). Al-Khalidi expressed his admiration for Herzl and his understanding of the Zionist cause, but worried for the

Palestinian people and the problems the Zionist project would bring. Regardless of the benefits of Zionism, the "brutal force of circumstances had to be taken into account" as "Palestine[,] … more gravely, is inhabited by others" (Khalidi, 2020, p. 17). The Zionist project would bring disputes among Christians, Jews and Muslims. "Nothing could be more just and equitable," than for "the unhappy Jewish nation" to find a refuge. Still, al-Khalidi pleaded that "in the name of God, … Palestine be left alone" (Khalidi, 2020, p. 17).

Great Britain's Mandate in Palestine

The Zionist project became a concern for the international community as tensions rose in the Middle East (Friesel, 2008). Initially, the "Palestine problem" was addressed through single delegated 'administrator' nations, such as Great Britain. Firstly, the United Kingdom clarified its position in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. In the document, directed to the British Isles' Zionist Federation, the United Kingdom declared their support towards establishing a "home" in Palestine for the Jewish people (United Nations, n.d.). The excerpt of the Balfour Declaration of 1917 reads as follows:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country" (Balfour, 1917).

The United Kingdom did not truly consider the wishes of the Palestinian people at the time but maintained an ambiguous position by mediating with both sides. The relations between the UK and the Arab nations had recently suffered under the disclosing of the Sykes-Picot agreement by the Soviet Government after the 1917 revolution. This agreement, secretly made by Great Britain and France, formally agreed on the division of the Arab peninsula under their sphere of influence (Fromkin, 1989). Therefore, Arab nations needed assurances in regard to the future of their territories. In essence, Palestine was included in the pledge by the UK Government to Husain

recognising and supporting Arab independence (British Government, 1939). The Palestinian Arabs could "reasonably assume" that the British Government did not possess the right to "dispose" of the wishes of the Palestinian people, but conversely, had vowed to support them (Toynbee cited in John & Hadawi, 1970). Regardless, the commitments to the Arab nations were infringed by the UK's assurances to the Zionist leaders, which prevailed despite the task of the "British Mandate" in Palestine (United Nations, n.d.). Vested with such powers by the League of Nations in 1922, the Mandate was intended as a transitory phase, but it did not achieve the final aim of Palestine attaining the status of an independent nation (United Nations, n.d.). The Mandate's clauses included i.a. that:

"The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such … conditions [that] will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home … and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion" (League of Nations, 1922).

Most importantly, article 5 of the mandate stated that the United Kingdom "shall be responsible for seeing that no Palestine territory shall be ceded or leased to, or […] placed under the control of, […] any foreign Power" (League of Nations, 1922). Yet, the British Government's position in the Mandate took little interest in the Palestinians' rights, as seen since the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

Throughout the Mandate, the Zionist Organisation worked towards the goal of the 'national home'. The indigenous people of Palestine viewed the project as a violation of their rights as *de facto* inhabitants of the region for the previous two thousand years (Friesel, 2008). Moreover, the British Government's attitude represented a breaking of trust in the deal ensuring independence of Arab leaders in return for support to the Allied Powers during the war. The result of the Brits' ambiguity towards the two stakeholders led to increasing aversion towards the Mandate by Palestinians, while the Jewish side became increasingly hostile and prone to violence towards the end of the Second World War.

Israel's balance in the Middle East

There has been a clear shift in the balance of the Middle East with the establishment of the Israeli state, seeing the unique process that formally established a nation-state through diplomacy rather than centuries of historical development. Some scholars have disagreed with the influence of the Israeli state creation, arguing that the Middle East is a region characterised by conflicting religious and political currents that create regional tensions. Shamir argues that the predominant Muslim-Arab culture has not created any homogeneity (Shamir, 1982). Moreover, he challenges the belief that solving the Arab-Israel conflict would lead to regional stability (Shamir, 1982). Tensions in the region have existed long before the state of Israel itself, thus reducing Middle Eastern relations to the hostility between Arab nations and Israel would mean neglecting millennia of regional history and developments. However, it is undeniable that the establishment of Israel as a decision imposed by foreign authorities was bound to further impact the area's instability.

Rejwan argues that stability in Arab-Israeli relations requires a shift in the very idea of the Jewish national home (Rejwan, 1998; United Nations, n.d.). In focusing on the nationality of the state itself, all other nationalities within Israel's boundaries are not equal according to the state doctrine. The Israeli state doctrine thus relies on the idea of 'Jewishness', meaning that the state would "cease to be *national*" if it allowed for equality among Jewish and Arab populations living in its territory (Rejwan, 1998, p. 127). Rejwan notes that "two mutually hostile and ethnically oriented political entities" living in the same geographical region can feed into each other's myths towards the other entity (Rejwan, 1998, p. 127). Indeed, Harms notes that the very concept of the Israeli state had become a myth for immigrating Jews, as the *aliyah* (migration to Israel, AN) was increasingly motivated by Zionist ideology (Harms, 2010). The Zionist slogan "A land without a people for people without a land" initially fostered the idea that Palestine was an empty state awaiting the Jewish people. To the surprise of many Jewish immigrants pouring into Palestine, the territory was, on the contrary, inhabited by 400,000 Muslims, 43,000 Christians and 15,000 Jews (McCarthy, 1990). The issue of the acquisition of land thus generated tensions in a region increasing in population

density, conflicting with the ideology these migration waves carried. Additionally, Palestinian Arabs progressively realised that Israel was not seeking an idea of harmonious living with the native inhabitants, but rather a process of expropriation to be executed “discreetly and circumspectly” with foreign support (Herzl, 1960; Morris, 2001; Harms, 2010).

Israel’s establishment in the Global Order

The rise in tensions due to the British Mandate’s failure to address both sides’ concerns led to Great Britain submitting the question now known as the “Palestine problem” to the United Nations. The UK declared that the almost twenty-five years of work as Mandatory in the region had met irreconcilable issues of “conflicting obligations” (Pappé, 2007). By this point, tensions in Palestine had escalated into violence. The proposition of a twofold partition of Palestine into two independent territories was suggested for the first time, but the United Nations failed to bring peace to the region (Pappé, 2007). The Jewish State envisioned in the UN plan declared independence as Israel, while the Palestinian Arab State “never appeared on the world’s map”, as Palestinians “struggled for their lost right” (United Nations, n.d.). Penslar argued that the yearning for a Jewish homeland became, in the wider global context, comparable to anticolonial and national liberation movements (Penslar, 2016). The liberation was not from the British, nor from the Arabs, but rather from the very concept of a “diasporic existence” (Penslar, 2016, p. 172). The Israeli “War of Independence” in 1948, a formal name for the start of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, generated a “fighting force” that brought “catastrophe” upon the Palestinians. Additionally, Zionist liberation came at the expense of the Ottomans, who lost their Arab territories, and the British Mandatory, weakened as the British Empire approached its decline (Penslar, 2016).

The creation of Israel thus significantly shaped the post-war global order. A one-of-a-kind state entity, Israel initially remained fixed on a non-identification standpoint in the world binary forming between East and West. To ensure a Jewish State’s survival in the Middle East, Israel needed a position of non-identification for several reasons. Not only did it feel responsible towards Jews living in any of the two

blocs, it also relied on immigration from both (Katz, 2016). Furthermore, Israel was in dire need of military support to survive the hostile tensions in the Middle East. The creation of Israel occurred at the beginning of the Cold War, but it enjoyed a unique status of receiving support from both sides. The Soviet Union principally supplied weapons, while the United States offered economic aid (Bialer, 1990).

Shlaim affirms that non-identification was a "pragmatic policy" serving the Israeli national interest rather than an "ideological conception of neutrality in world politics" (Shlaim, 1990). However, while Israel did not engage in global politics, it fostered bilateral relations with the Great Powers from both sides, the Soviet Union and the United States, to ensure its survival (Shlaim, 1990). In the middle of a region that was hostile towards Israel's existence, the Jewish 'national home' relied not only on "the non-recognition of a Palestinian national identity" but also on an alliance with Great Powers "external to the Middle East" (Shlaim, 1990, p. 657). The first Israeli government declared its position to be open to relations with all, proclaiming "friendship with all freedom-loving states, and in particular with the United States and the Soviet Union" (Shlaim, 1990, pp. 39-40).

The non-identification stance was slowly abandoned throughout the following decade, mainly due to changes in the relations with the Soviet Union and the United States as the Cold War progressed (Rafael, 1991). The Soviet Union voted in favour of the internationalisation of Jerusalem at the United Nations, opting for a generally more critical attitude towards Israel. Moreover, the United States expressed increasing mistrust towards non-aligned States in the Cold War (Shlaim, 1990). The non-alignment stance officially ended with the start of the Korean War, as Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Gurion presented the vote in favour of the United Nations' condemnation of the North Korean aggression. Ultimately, Ben-Gurion needed US-backing, not only politically, e.g. to press for reparations from Germany, but also at a societal level. Only a small minority of American Jews were Zionists, and thus needed a different kind of Israeli policy to feel a connection to the new nation (Shlaim, 1990).

Conclusion

The establishment of Israel impacted the global order through several factors. It added a new layer of geopolitical tension to the Middle East, an area already known for struggles for resources and territory among nations (Rejwan, 1998). The Zionist project for a Jewish national home became concrete through the involvement of several actors, as the United Nations vested the United Kingdom with the powers to administer Palestine, which in turn was formerly under Ottoman control. The British favoured the Zionists and failed to uphold their pledge to the Palestinians, who felt threatened by the increasing Jewish migration waves and by the West's apparent negligence in ensuring Palestine's rights. With the abandonment of the British Mandate, Israel found a new growing alliance with the United States, who to this day are the biggest foreign supporters through economic aid (Masters & Merrow, 2024). Consequently, it created a new front in the global divide between East and West, as Israel ultimately set to become a strong US ally and the Soviet Union strengthened its collaboration with the Middle East (Shlaim, 1990). These factors, over the following decades, contributed to further tensions in the Middle East that became crucial political debates on the global stage, as Israel contested territorial limits imposed by international bodies and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict worsened, further increasing foreign involvement in the region.

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Global Political Economy

Working Less? Implications for Labour in a Degrowth Economy

Abstract

World capitalism is in a paradoxical relationship with the environment. On the one hand, capitalism depends on the environment in a way that it finds there resources that are necessary to ensure production to sustain the system. On the other hand, the exploitation of these resources, and other uses of the environment by capitalism, tend to destroy it. In the heart of this paradox lies the growth paradigm – capitalism's constant need for growth to sustain itself. Labour plays a major part in this growthism. While orthodox political economy defends capitalism and its growth addiction, critical political economy addresses issues like environmental degradation because of capitalist growthism more radically. Degrowth is a major school of thought that covers such issues. As a theoretical and practical idea, degrowth requires a shift in mindset and a reconceptualisation of key terms and practices necessary for the world economic system. Labour and work, as essential parts of world capitalism, would continue to exist within alternative economic systems that deal with environmental issues posed by capitalism. In order to address such issues properly, however, a reconceptualisation of these terms is necessary. This essay discusses what degrowth has to offer for work and labour, as essential parts of any socio-economic system. From a theoretical and practical perspective, I argue, a reconceptualization of the two would benefit addressing environmental issues. I argue that degrowth offers both quantitative and qualitative approaches to reconceptualise work and labour that are useful to understand when one addresses environmental issues more critically.

Keywords: Capitalism, Environment, Degrowth, Labour, Growth

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To Grow or Not to Grow – An Introduction

The performance of an economy and its successes, or failures, have been dominantly measured by the size of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – the total monetary amount of goods and services produced within it. GDP has been the longstanding indicator for economic success, or boom, when it is growing at a steady rate, and economic recession, when GDP's growth is lower than expected. The world economy is tied to the idea of economic growth measured by increase in GDP. Success of the economy, in turn, is represented by growth of GDP, and thus labels the economy to be growing as well. This is pure economic theory, unquestioned and taken for granted when political economy issues are discussed from an orthodox theoretical perspective.

The current capitalist system we live in relies on a constant economic growth that is necessary for the system's sustainment. The drive for economic expansion, in a way that the economy strives to grow in order to reduce unemployment by creating more job opportunities, has resulted in reaching planetary boundaries and further exacerbated environmental destruction (Harvey, 2014, pp. 246-248). This strive for constant economic growth measured by GDP is what I here call growthism. The negative relationship between growthism and the environment came apparent in the early 1970s with the Club of Rome's book *The Limits of Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972). Since the publication of the book, the relationship between economic growthism, its limitations and its negative impact on the environment have gained more popularity, especially with the advent of degrowth in more modern terms (Georgescu-Roegen, 1975; Schumacher, 2011). Nowadays, even more critical scholars engage in conversations in which degrowth plays a key role (Hickel, 2020; Kallis, 2011; Latouche, 2009; Sekulova et al., 2013).

While it has been difficult to agree on a single definition that encompasses what degrowth entails, and there have been many debates about its meaning, drawing on the abovementioned scholarly work I define degrowth as a political-economic ideal that aims to purposefully downscale the world economy and move beyond growthism in order to tackle environmental and social issues. By reducing the in- and output of the economy, proponents of degrowth argue, economic activity should be slowed down, and

even actively descaled, this way tackling environmental and social issues to achieve a sustainable future for the world economy. Among the practical proposals of how to achieve degrowth, one of the most important ones discusses work and labour, and what would happen to them while downscaling the economy (Alcott, 2013; Kallis, 2013; Saave and Muraca, 2021). In this essay I discuss what degrowth has to offer for work and labour, and argue that in cases of a socio-ecological change of the economy a reconceptualisation of work and labour is needed, should sustainable degrowth be pursued.

I begin by conceptualising the growth paradigm under the current capitalist system in order to provide an understanding of the logic of degrowth on a broader scale, as well as in terms of work and labour. Then, I (re)-conceptualise work and labour and turn to the proposals by degrowth scholarly work when addressing work and labour issues. Following that, I argue that in order for degrowth to succeed in addressing pressing environmental and social issues, a (re)-conceptualisation of work and labour are needed so that they be addressed in ways that it serves their purposes, as well as the ones of society. I conclude by summarising the key points of this paper and highlighting the need for further research on the matter.

The Growth Paradigm, the Environment and the Promises of Degrowth

Growth and the capitalist economic system can be said to have become somewhat synonymous in terms of normative expectations. When one talks about the economy and its development, they assume it needs to grow in order to provide. In this section, I discuss growthism in the capitalist economy, its relationship with the environment, as well as how the idea of degrowth ties with that.

Before delving into the environmental impacts growthism has, I suggest that growthism be understood as a growth paradigm instead. Drawing on Kuhn's model of science and thinking about paradigms and paradigmatic shifts in cases of scientific revolutions (1962), by understanding growthism as a paradigm one acknowledges the dominance economic growth has over the current economic system. Therefore, within the growth paradigm, there exist certain laws and logic that work in favour of growth and

make sense within a set of theories. For example, the capitalist logic of accumulation for the sake of production, present in Marx's critique of political economy, understands the capitalist logic of production as one in which capital is accumulated, invested and reproduced for the sake of increasing it (Marx, 2013 [1876]). In simpler terms, it follows the formula M – C – M', where M is the input capital that is invested to produce commodities C, which are sold and produce more capital M' (Marx, 2013 [1876], pp. 591-593). Instead of using capital to produce commodities, therefore, capital is essentially used to reproduce itself in larger amounts to serve the needs of capitalists, put in simpler Marxian terms.

Other more contemporary critical political economy scholars also highlight the reproduction of capital for the sake of profit (Fraser, 2022, pp. 5-6; Fukuyama 2022; Milanovic, 2019, pp. 2-3). In other words, the capitalist system as we know it, has become one that functions not for the society it should serve, but rather to satisfy its own means and reproduce itself. In its reproduction, however, the capitalist system exploits not only people, but also nature. It is in this relationship between growthism and nature that the former destroys the environment. Capitalism, hence the growth paradigm, views the environment as a constant free supplier of resources (Harvey, 2014, p. 250). It is, however, less obvious that the former also relies on the latter and is in fact dependent on it. This is evident in capitalism's needs – of natural resources, human capital which needs the environment to reproduce itself, and places for waste-dumping, to name but a few (Fraser 2022; Harvey 2014). Then, capitalism's relation to the environment tends to be somewhat twofold – exploitative, but also destructive, where the exploitation tends to cause the destruction.

Capitalism, and its addiction to growth, in their destructive relationship with the environment, have spurred debates about how to address environmental issues caused by economic growth. While there exist many propositions and opinions on the matter, two rather inclusive schools of thought within political economy inform this debate – critical political economy and neoclassical political economy (see spectrum on Figure 1 below). Within orthodox economic thinking – neoclassical economics, there are two broad ideas supported – on the one hand, green/inclusive growth (Buller, 2022, p. 23;

Chomsky et al., 2020, pp. 39-41; Steinberg, 2010, p. 12), and, on the other, what I call 'hardcore' neoliberalism (Norberg, 2023, pp. 232-233). While both approaches do acknowledge the environmental degradation caused by the growth paradigm, the former addresses environmental issues more actively by proposing a change in the growth mechanism, whereas the latter advocates for even more economic growth and development of the economy without needs for actively tackling environmental issues because of its belief in technological advancement that would help solve a possible crisis.

At the other end of the spectrum below lies critical political economy with what some may call a radical call for a socio-environmental revolution in adopting degrowth (Eastwood and Heron 2024; Hickel 2020). Such an approach radically challenges the growth paradigm, questioning the ability of the capitalist system to solve the crisis it has caused, and suggesting a move beyond the growth paradigm in pursuing the opposite – degrowth. To once again define degrowth, it is an political economy ideal that challenges the growth paradigm, and aims to actively reduce the scale of the economy in order to tackle environmental and social issues. Then, this degrowth way of thinking, as one beyond what we currently have within the growth paradigm, is what makes degrowth a challenging, but also somewhat promising, ideal (Eastwood and Heron, 2024, pp. 7-10).

Figure 1

Political-Economic Approaches to the Growth-Caused Environmental Degradation



(Author's Illustration)

Degrowth offers a set of theoretical and practical ways to move beyond the growth paradigm. The key suggestions revolve around a shift in mindset that aims to change the consumerist society we live in by reducing the input of the economy to reduce its output and thus discourage consumers from consuming unnecessary goods and services (Sekulova et al., 2013, pp. 2-4). An even more practical way of doing this would then be to simply reduce the working hours of society thus reducing labour and its productivity. In order for consumerism to be tackled, degrowth proponents argue, a reduction of the work week could serve as a step towards decreasing the production of goods and services and thus their consumption (Latouche, 2009, pp. 38-40; Sekulova et al., 2013, p. 3). To attempt to degrow the economy, however, and practically address issues such as the reduction of the work week, for instance, would require more than simply practical policies. Instead, and for the reason that degrowth is more than simply descaling the economy, a reconceptualisation of terms such as work and labour is needed in order to address them properly. To move beyond the growth paradigm, one needs to rethink what work and labour should mean in a non-consumerist society. I turn to reconceptualising work and labour as terms in the next section, in order to develop understandings of the two within and outside of the growth paradigm.

What Does It Mean to Work?

Addressing work and labour to tackle the growth-environment nexus requires understanding the terms more in-depth, as they may entail different meanings when used by different schools of thought. While work and labour, and their productive power, have been key in both capitalist and socialist economic systems, a different approach is taken by degrowth thought, where the terms receive different meaning (Kallis, 2013, p. 96; Latouche, 2009, pp. 81-82; Saave and Muraca, 2021, p. 747). In this section I discuss the meaning of work and labour for the growth paradigm, but also what a reconceptualisation of the two should mean in cases of degrowth.

To begin with, work and labour are at times used interchangeably, where both of them represent an activity performed for certain purposes. While work entails a more general meaning, however, labour tends to be associated with wage, thus the term

wage labour (Marx, 1910 [1849]). Drawing from Marx again, workers, or labourers – to use the two interchangeably here, are free to sell their labour power (the commodifiable ability to work) and thus earn a wage (amount of money representing the price of their labour power in terms of time, or number of goods produced) (Marx, 1910 [1849], pp. 21-33). From this definition follows that labour is a key component of capitalist production, because of the dependence of capitalism on labour to produce commodities to be sold and thus make profit. Therefore, the labour performed by one helps reproduce the capitalist system in a way that the labourer plays an essential role in sustaining the production thus enhancing growth.

Not all labour, however, can be labelled wage labour. In more recent discussions on the 'commodification of everything' (Strasser, 2013), debates have spurred about the role non-economic (non-wage) labour plays in the economy. Such an example is reproductive labour – essential for the reproduction of society, but also for the reproduction of the capitalist system in terms of producing labourers (Picchio, 1992). Reproductive labour, for example care-work, falls into the category of commodifiable within capitalism but broadly uncommodified labour that capitalism would not function without. This, in turn, moves labour beyond the definition of wage labour for which when performed an amount of money is earned in order to compensate for the performed work. Therefore, since not all labour is wage labour, it could be said that some non-wage labour is performed without compensation, while also serving the purpose of reproducing capitalism. It is then logical to say that all labour, wage or not, reproduces the capitalist system.

Nevertheless, it is not only in the capitalist system that labour is important. A key feature of socialist economic development has been the mobilisation of labour to build the economy, as well as produce large numbers of goods in order to grow the economy (Latouche, 2009, p. 32). This, in turn, reflects the productivist nature of both capitalist and socialist regimes – to sustain the system, whether by producing more for the sake of profit in the case of capitalist accumulation, or by relying on mobilised labour in order to build a more self-sufficient economy in the case of socialism (Latouche, 2009, pp. 32-35). In both cases, labour represents means through which a 'hypergrowth' is to be

achieved in order to reach the goals outlined above (Latouche, 2009, p. 23). Furthermore, in both ways labour is a necessary component that leads to sustaining the system it serves.

In the examples above, to work, to perform labour, means to play a role in the reproduction of a system – socialist or capitalist. It should be mentioned, however, that one is not entirely working to sustain the system in either example, because of the compensation in terms of money that the labourer is free to spend in a way they desire, or in terms of benefits in cases of formal work. There exists, then, another aspect of work and labour – one detached from its system-sustaining one. What is suggested by degrowth thinkers, in turn, is a reconceptualisation of the meaning of work and labour, as opposed to the one provided above. To work in order to sustain a system that endangers and degrades the environment means to actively take part in the destruction of the planet. It is, therefore, necessary to imagine a different type of work and labour activities that are not connected to sustaining the capitalist system, hence destroying the environment. Changing the way one thinks about labour, be it wage or not, and decoupling it from its capitalism meaning, is what is suggested by degrowth scholars in order to address practically the question of how to achieve degrowth (Kallis, 2011, p. 876; Latouche, 2009, p. 40; Sekulova et al., 2013, p. 3; van den Bergh, 2011, p. 883).

It would only be possible to decouple labour from its capitalist meaning, however, outside of the growth paradigm (Eastwood and Heron, 2024, p. 8; Hickel, 2020, pp. 29-30). It is thus needed to think in a revolutionary way that challenges existing notions of the capitalist economy and, as proponents of degrowth say, be radical (Saave and Muraca, 2011, p. 746). Radical thinking in degrowth terms would mean to reconsider the needs of society and rethink what is worth working for. A similar idea is well captured in Polanyi's work on society and markets, where Polanyi talks about the process of the embedding of society into the market in the mid-20th century – where the society serves the market (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]). Instead of society serving the market, Polanyi would argue, it should be that the market is embedded in society and serves society's purposes and needs (Polanyi 2001, [1944]). Similarly, instead of (wage) labour serving the economy, in this case – capitalism, it should be that labour serves the needs of

society; in more Polanyian terms – society serves itself using the market, or society serves itself using its own labour.

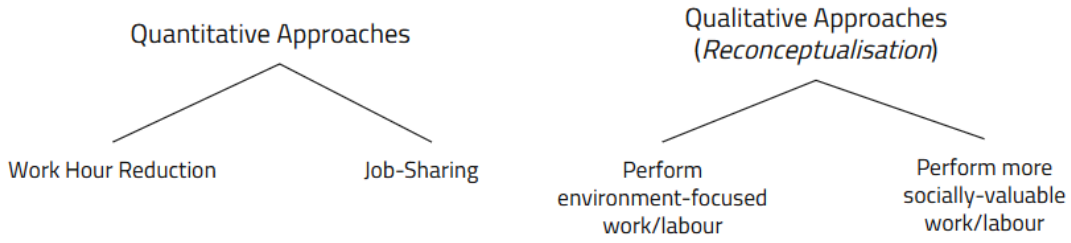
Such a comparison allows for a more in-depth understanding of the purpose of labour within the capitalist system, or the socialist one as outlined above, and points towards the question of what labour should entail in a degrowth economy. In other words, how could we address changes in work and labour in a change of economic systems, and what does degrowth have to offer for labour in case of a reconceptualised practical change?. If work and labour were to contribute to society more than they were to contribute to the sustainment of a system they function within, what new meaning should both entail and how should this be addressed practically? This will be discussed in the following section. I discuss this in the following section.

Degrowth in Theory and Practice – Implications for Labour

Thinking about labour in degrowth necessitates addressing a few theoretical and practical questions. The most prominent proposition for labour in degrowth is reducing work hours in an attempt to descale the economy (Alcott, 2013, pp. 56-57; Kallis, 2013, pp. 95-97; Latouche, 2009, p. 40; Saave and Muraca, 2021, p. 747). It is debatable, however, whether a transition to descaling the economy would benefit from reducing labour activities or it would require even more labour in an attempt to secure a sustainable change. One of the main questions then revolves around wage labour and to what extent would a degrowth economy need such, especially in the beginning of a degrowth transition. Another question focuses on the radical reconceptualisation of the concept of labour and work briefly brushed upon above. In the next section I address these issues and provide a systematised understanding of both quantitative and qualitative approaches towards labour in degrowth, shown in Figure 2 below and explained through.

Figure 2

Approaches to Work and Labour in Degrowth



(Author's Illustration)

Reducing work hours is the most self-explanatory quantitative proposition by degrowth thinkers. In simple terms, by reducing the amount of work performed in terms of hours, this would impact production of goods and services, that would in turn also decrease their supply and thus, in the long run, result in a drop of demand too (Latouche, 2009, p. 40). Following basic economic theory, therefore, a simple reduction of the work week would mean less production, less supply and, to meet the economic equilibrium, demand would also fall. This way, the proposition continues, people would have more time to spend on activities they enjoy more, activities that may be more important for them – such as spending more time with friends and family (Kallis, 2011, p. 876). Such a quantitative reduction of economic input in the name of labour, and eventually economic output, however, would not address the question from a qualitative perspective (van den Bergh, 2011, p. 883). While it may indeed reduce the amount of goods and services produced, this would not necessarily mean that they would be ones produced sustainably, in a way that the environmental aim of degrowth addresses.

To tackle this issue, then, an approach of sustainable degrowth is proposed (Sekulova et al., 2013; Kallis, 2011). Instead of focusing on degrowth from a policy-package perspective, therefore, an understanding of it is required as a new paradigm. To move beyond the growth paradigm would mean to enhance new ways of thinking about what the economy means and who it should benefit. From this point of view, in turn, sustainable degrowth refers to reconceptualising the whole socio-economic system with a view towards addressing environmental and social issues in an attempt to descale the economy (Kallis, 2011, pp. 873-875; Sekulova et al., 2013,

p. 2). In this meaning, sustainable degrowth would represent an umbrella term for a transition economy beyond the growth paradigm, in which not only policies addressing the change of labour would be targeted, but also ways in which issues in the whole socio-economic system be managed. This would imply, therefore, not only a reduction of the work week as a practical way to achieve degrowth from a labour perspective, but also an active way to allow people to engage more in other, more socially valuable activities, such as care work and conceptualised social reproduction, two issues I turn to again towards the end of this section.

It is, however, problematic to think that reducing work hours would easily result in a reduction of consumption and lead to degrowth. In the notion of sustainable degrowth, there exist different opinions about the needs of a transitioning to degrowth economy. Degrowth thinkers acknowledge that more labour would be required in the beginning of the descaling transition in order to ensure sustainable change to 'greener' labour (Latouche, 2009, p. 80). This raises the question of how to deal with this paradox of a kind. How do we reduce working hours in a period which would require more work? Preserving wage labour and making it serve the purposes of society by steering it towards working for a sustainable degrowth transition is a proposition that offers an answer (Kallis, 2013, p. 96; Sorman and Giampietro, 2013, pp. 81-85). While (wage) labour, as noted above, serves the purposes of the system it exists within, from a sustainable degrowth perspective this would mean to serve the purposes of a system that serves the purposes of the environment and therefore society. It is in this that (wage) labour in capitalism/socialism differs, as opposed to sustainable degrowth (Alcott, 2013, pp. 56-58). Providing wages for labourers that would work for an environmental transition of the economy, instead of for the sake of profit, would change the meaning of labour and make it more beneficial to degrowth and society.

With the larger part of society still being part of the formal and paid labour force in the short run, however, in the long run the need for wage labour would decrease and thus a reduction of work hours would be even more possible and effective (Saave and Muraca, 2021, p. 749-750). With less need for wage labour focused on the sustainable degrowth transition, in turn, people could focus on more socially valuable work. Instead

of having to work more for the sake of growth, then, work would shift to working for the society (Latouche, 2009, p. 82). This, in turn, would decommodify the idea of social labour and reconceptualise the need for such in a way that working would mean contributing to society and not to an economic system (Saave and Muraca, 2021, pp. 749-750).

Job-sharing is another proposition by degrowth thinkers. Essentially, the proposal suggests that by making a job for one possible to be done by two or more people, this could naturally slow down the production process, as well as move beyond the growth paradigm (Latouche, 2009, p. 40). In contrast with the growthist idea that the more efficient a job performance is, the better it would be (for the economy), job-sharing provides an opportunity for reconsidering the notion of jobs, their purpose, and eventually – labour as well (Saave and Muraca, 2021, pp. 750-752). Instead of specialising in production and working on improving efficiency, as suggested by the growth paradigm since the time of Fordism in the US, by creating opportunities for more people to work on the same job, a rethinking of the process of production would also take place in a way that it provides questioning for the purpose of jobs and work.

Such a reformist vision of work and labour in degrowth thinking requires not only theoretical and practical suggestions and understandings, but also a shift in mindset of society (Eastwood and Heron, 2024, pp. 7-8; Hickel, 2020, p. 35; Saave and Muraca, 2021, p. 744; Sekulova et al., 2013, p. 2). To return to the idea of social reproduction, it is an integral part of society – not only in terms of preserving the economic system, but also in terms of preserving society as such (Picchio, 1992). In a degrowth economy, social reproduction and activities involved in it would not be less important. Since social reproduction does not only entail activities connected with sustaining one's labour power, other leisure activities also play an important role. The reduction of work hours as a step towards achieving degrowth would then provide people with more time to focus on other activities (van den Bergh, 2011, p. 883). Even if social work and labour for the sake of contributing to society would still exist within a degrowth economy, proponents of the movement argue, more time for leisure activities would be available to

people, thus reducing stress levels among them and increasing happiness (van den Bergh, 2011, pp. 888-889).

With more free time, leisure activities and less stress, together with the reconceptualisation of work and labour within the degrowth movement, a shift in mindset, aimed by degrowth proponents, would also be achieved (Eastwood and Heron, 2024, pp. 7-8; Hickel, 2020, p. 35; Saave and Muraca, 2021, p. 744; Sekulova et al., 2013, p. 2). To contribute to the broader aim of degrowth – working towards actively descaling the economy in a way that addresses both environmental and social issues, with their revisited conceptions on work and labour, people would themselves tackle these issues. It could be asked, however, whether there would be that much need for reproductive labour once there is no system to sustain. It should be noted, however, that reproductive labour should not keep its capitalism definition. To return once again to the idea of reconceptualisation of work and labour, reproductive activities should benefit society for its own sake.

Reflecting on the idea that degrowth as an ideal should happen beyond the growth paradigm, then, proponents of degrowth offer an economic system of social welfare and state regulation to favour the change degrowth entails. Since both capitalism and socialism, as explained above, rely on labour for their reproduction and this way exploit work and labour, a degrowth economy could be favoured by what some call eco-socialism (Hickel, 2020; Latouche, 2009, p. 92). A revisited and reconceptualised economic system within which community work and labour for the sake of society would be favoured in a way that environmental issues are tackled. By focusing on the environment from a socialist perspective, while having in mind a reconceptualised meaning of work and labour, there would be a shift from the growth paradigm to one that places in the centre the needs of society and the environment (Hickel, 2020).

Having in mind the above, it should be highlighted again that degrowth propositions would work beyond the growth paradigm, therefore beyond the capitalist system (Hickel, 2020). Work and labour would shift their meaning, providing more for a sustainable degrowth system that benefits society, and not vice-versa. This is why it is

vital that in order for degrowth to be achieved practically, work and labour be reconceptualised and gain a meaning that goes beyond the ones of the existing growth paradigm.

Conclusion

Thinking about the world economy in order to address issues within it requires more than theoretical understanding. While it is important to be able to grasp concepts that explain the functioning of the capitalist system we live in, it is also vital to manage to think beyond existing paradigms. Such is the case that degrowth proposes when it comes to addressing the growth-environment nexus. Work and labour play a key role in any economic system in a manyfold way – sustain the system, produce goods and services, take part in the social reproduction process, to name but three. Should the growth-environment nexus be addressed from a degrowth way, then, it is important that one think about what (new) role work and labour should play in cases of socio-environmental changes.

Degrowth proposals address work and labour in two key ways – quantitatively and qualitatively. While the former addresses the amount of labour as economic input and tackles the consumerist nature of the capitalist economy, the latter addresses a more philosophical question. Reducing the work time, as proposed by degrowth thinkers, challenges the current productivist nature of the capitalist economy by questioning the need for massive production. In doing that, reducing work hours results in a decrease in supply that, in simple economic terms, later results in a decrease in demand. Apart from simple work hour reduction, another way to address work and labour from a quantitative perspective is job-sharing. Job-sharing also serves as a transition towards a more qualitative approach – a reconceptualisation of work and labour.

Rethinking what work and labour mean is key for degrowth scholars. Being able to escape from the growth paradigm – key pillar in degrowth thinking, requires a reconceptualisation of concepts such as work and labour that function within capitalism. By challenging the existing definitions and meanings of the two terms and shifting them

towards more society- and environment-based task performance in the name of work and labour, degrowth proposals offer a new paradigm. Making it possible for labour to be more beneficial to society than the economic system it works within is essential in degrowth.

It is vital to address environmental issues, regardless of the way one approaches them. While I have shown that there exist many ways in which scholars address such issues, for example green/inclusive growth, or 'hardcore' neoliberalism, degrowth offers a rather revolutionary way of thinking that needs to be addressed. Work and labour are essential parts of any economic system and thinking about in what way they could or should change in a process of environmental change is of utter importance. What I have shown in this essay is a small part of a larger issue that needs to be discussed, conceptualised and researched even more, in order for both academic and non-academic communities to be able to discuss and work towards solving a possible environmental crisis on the horizon.

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