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The Yale Review of International Studies

Volume VI,
Issue I

The Intercollegiate Issue

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Dear Reader:

In this issue of *The Yale Review of International Studies*, we're proud to continue our commitment to providing the best possible platform for outstanding student scholarship on international issues. This is the third year since we have introduced our Intercollegiate Issue, and the pieces within this autumn's edition of *The Issue* were selected from a record number of submissions from universities worldwide. We are humbled again by the student interest in *The Review*, and we sincerely believe that the pieces we have chosen reflect many of the issues our international community faces today.

In this issue, we have included pieces that tackle profound and difficult subjects such as: the fight against gender-based violence in the Congo; the impact of US economic sanctions on Russian public welfare; the achievement of social equality in South Africa through the lens of LGBT rights; feminism and grassroots desertification combat in Rajasthan; Radio Free Europe and the rhetoric of liberation; and the effects of changing US–Iranian relations on US Saudi Relations. Also included in our publication is a comment written by one of our editors on immigrant family detention in the United States.

Our contributors come from Yale, The University of Sydney, Fordham, Duke, American, Colby, and the University of California, Berkeley.

The publication of this issue would not have been possible without them, the help of their faculty and friends, and without the unwavering dedication of our new team of design editors, Ben Fehrman–Lee and Biba Košmerl, MFA students at the Yale School of Art.

Working with peers within our intercollegiate community has been nothing short of a great pleasure, and we at *The Review* are extremely grateful to those who gave us permission to solicit writing at our peer institutions. We hope you enjoy this edition of *The Review*—it's our best yet.

If you are interested in writing for YRIS, please send all submissions to yris@yira.org.

All our best,
The Editors

I.

YRIS COMMENT

IMMIGRANT FAMILY
DETENTION:
A Failed Experiment

Elena Vazquez
Yale University, '18

Immigrant family detention is an ineffective process that further traumatizes children and adults fleeing violence and persecution in their home countries. Not only does family detention further damage the physical and mental health of immigrant families, but it costs the United States a great deal in comparison to alternative programs, impedes detainees' access to counsel, and violates the United States' obligations under international law.

On June 20, 2014, the Obama Administration announced a set of plans to tackle illegal immigration at the southern border. These plans, a reaction to the surge of immigration that summer from Central America, included the detention of immigration families. Reinstating a practice that the US had all but abandoned in 2009, the Obama Administration sharply increased the capacity of detention centers for immigrant women and children. In one year, capacity for immigrant family detention in the US increased from 95 beds to 3,700.¹

Since 2014, the policy of detaining immigrant families has received a great deal of criticism from human rights organizations as well as members of congress. A spokesman for House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi has stated that "Leader Pelosi believes it is long past time to end family detention," adding that "Family detention centers are inappropriate for jailing refugee children and mothers fleeing persecution and violence." In addition Rep. Steny Hoyer (Md.), the Democratic whip, has said in a statement, "The individuals being detained with their children have committed no crime under our laws and are seeking asylum. They ought to be treated with compassion." To the joy of such critics, On July 24, 2015, Judge Dolly M Gee of the Federal District Court for the Central District Court of California found that the family detention facilities do not meet the minimum requirements for housing children and ordered that the children be released from the facilities with the parent that accompanied them without unnecessary delay.

The Obama Administration has pushed back against this decision, asking Judge Gee to reconsider. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has announced that it will begin releasing immigrant families and will decrease the amount of time that families stay in the facilities. While the facilities have started to release current detainees, new ones are taking their place and

continue to be held for extended periods of time. On Thursday, August 13, a group of immigrants' rights lawyers stated in a filing to Judge Gee that detention facilities continue to provide woefully inadequate health treatment and that immigrants continue to stay in the facilities for lengthy periods of time. Despite the government's claim that its facilities are appropriate for housing children and that they are quickly moving families out of the facilities, the filing explains that officials at the detention centers regularly delay the screening and processing of asylum claims, hinder access to counsel, and set bonds too high for families to meet.

By detaining individuals — particularly children — who have recently experienced traumatic situations such as gang or domestic violence, family detention can have the effect of worsening the trauma that these families have already suffered. This trauma can damage the mental and physical health of immigrants, even when they are only detained for a short period of time. Children detained at the Artesia detention center were reported as experiencing weight loss, gastro-intestinal problems, suicidal thoughts, and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.² In fact, multiple suicide attempts have been reported at family detention facilities, the most recent of which occurred early this summer by a teenage mother at the Karnes detention center. In a March 2015 report, Juan Mendez, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment wrote that "Even very short periods of detention can undermine a child's psychological and physical well-being and compromise cognitive development."³

Being in detention also strictly limits individuals' access to counsel. Studies show that about 80% of detained immigrants do not have a lawyer.⁴ Without a lawyer, it is virtually impossible for immigrants to navigate the incredibly convoluted — and unnecessarily so — asylum process. A study carried out by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse found that 98.5% of immigrant women with children who do not have a lawyer are deported.⁵

Family detention centers are located far away from urban areas where most lawyers and advocacy organizations are located. In addition, the operators of the facilities make it particularly difficult for attorneys to represent their clients.

Lawyers at the Artesia detention facility found no place to conduct confidential meetings with clients. Attorneys representing clients at such facilities have also complained of delays in permission to meet with clients and bars on technology necessary for attorneys to provide efficient and effective legal services. An attorney from Human Rights First volunteering at the Dilley detention center described that the regulations to enter and provide representation at the facility changed every day, imposing unnecessary burdens on lawyers and causing stress for immigrant families seeking representation.⁶

The negative effects of immigrant family detention reach beyond the families in question. Immigrant detention costs the United States \$1.99 Billion every year,⁷ and an additional \$345.3 million is spent on the increase in family detention.⁸ In comparison, alternatives to detention — other programs that work to ensure that immigrants appear for their court dates — are estimated to cost between 17 cents and \$17 a day. A 2013 study found that these alternative programs have a 99.6% appearance rate for immigration court hearings.⁹

Immigrant family detention also violates US obligations under international law. Article 31(1) of the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees prohibits states from penalizing refugees and asylum seekers for entering the country illegally. Article 31(2) prevents states from restricting the movement of refugees and asylum seekers unless such restriction is necessary. Because affordable and effective alternatives to detention exist, the US's current policy of detaining immigrants without a criminal record or any other indication that they would be a threat to United States residents is unnecessary. The US's policy of detaining immigrant families in order to deter further illegal immigration also runs counter to US international obligations, as the UNHCR's guidelines on the detention of asylum seekers state that detention with the purpose of deterring others from entering the country to seek asylum is "inconsistent with international norms."

Rather than using the harmful system of immigrant family detention, the US should implement alternatives to detention in order to ensure that immigrant families appear for their court dates. Such alternatives include ankle-monitoring systems, unannounced or announced home visits, employer verification, and

in-person reporting. Immigration and Customs Enforcement should also utilize community support programs, which provide referrals to legal and social service organizations to non-detained immigrants. These support programs help immigrants — who often do not speak English — understand their legal obligations and improve court appearance rates. Organizations such as the American Jail Association, the American Bar Association, the Heritage Foundation, and many others recommend these types of alternatives to detention as cost-savings techniques. These alternatives to detention are widely used in the US criminal justice system, but immigrants who have not committed any crime are not provided the same opportunity.

The Obama Administration should end its policy of detaining immigrant families that have no history of criminal activity and pose no threat to US communities. Immigrant family detention is a misguided policy decision implemented in a moment of crisis and which has proven to have negative effects on asylum seekers, while wasting an exorbitant amount of money. Instead, the US should utilize alternatives to detention, which have proven effective and far less expensive. The United States should empty immigration family detention facilities and treat the families who cross our borders fleeing horrible violence in a manner that is respectful and just.

Endnotes

- 1 *US Detention of Families Seeking Asylum: A One– Year Update.* Washington, DC: Human Rights First, 2015. Print. P. 7
- 2 “Stop Detaining Families.” *immigrantjustice.org*. National Immigrant Justice Center, n.d. Web. 15 Aug. 2015.
<<http://www.immigrantjustice.org/stop-detaining-families>>.
- 3 *US Detention of Families Seeking Asylum: A One– Year Update.* Washington, DC: Human Rights First, 2015. Print. P. 9
- 4 *US Detention of Families Seeking Asylum: A One– Year Update.* Washington, DC: Human Rights First, 2015. Print. P. 14
- 5 *US Detention of Families Seeking Asylum: A One– Year Update.* Washington, DC: Human Rights First, 2015. Print. P. 14
- 6 *US Detention of Families Seeking Asylum: A One– Year Update.* Washington, DC: Human Rights First, 2015. Print. P. 15
- 7 *Alternatives to Immigration Detention: Less Costly and More Humane than Federal Lock–Up.* Washington, DC: ACLU, n.d. *aclu.org*. Web. 15 Aug. 2015.
<https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/aclu_atd_fact_sheet_final_v.2.pdf> P. 1
- 8 *US Detention of Families Seeking Asylum: A One– Year Update.* Washington, DC: Human Rights First, 2015. Print. P. 1
- 9 *Alternatives to Immigration Detention: Less Costly and More Humane than Federal*

II.

ENGAGING NON-STATE
ARMED GROUPS IN THE
'FIGHT' AGAINST SEXUAL AND
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
IN EASTERN CONGO

Mackenzie Kennedy,
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According to the UN Secretary-General's 2014 report, "Conflict Related Sexual Violence," Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is closely related to larger issues of insecurity, security-sector reform, and to the incomplete, and/or flawed disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes in post-conflict settings.¹ In times of conflict, many factors aggravate SGBV, such as the polarization of gender roles, the militarization of society, the proliferation of arms, and the breakdown of law and order. The prevalence of SGBV in conflict has lasting effects on the security of communities affected, where SGBV exists in many post-conflict settings when various sides in a conflict struggle to demobilize and resume their lives alongside one another.² SGBV continues not only to tear the social fabric of society apart but also to directly affect the durability of peace and prospects for sustainable development. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), these issues prevail because significant challenges remain in effectively preventing SGBV. While Congolese military efforts recently succeeded in pressuring commanders in the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) to sign a landmark declaration to spearhead SGBV prevention efforts, Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), who are also largely complicit in SGBV crimes, remain difficult to engage.³ This paper focuses on the approaches of three international organizations in Eastern DRC — the ICRC, Geneva Call, and Search for Common Ground — engaging with NSAGs in SGBV prevention efforts. I analyze SGBV prevention efforts through a theoretical framework contextualizing NSAGs' risk factors associated with committing acts of SGBV originally identified in a UNICEF/United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) DRC 2010–2011 mission report. Given the complex analysis integrated into an understanding of SGBV and NSAGs in the DRC, the first section of the paper highlights some of the practical challenges and prospects for engaging NSAGs in reducing and preventing wartime sexual violence in the DRC.

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in the DRC Prevalence of SGBV

The UN estimates that 200,000 women and girls had been assaulted over the 12 years preceding 2008 in the DRC.⁴ Moreover, in 2014, ahead of the Global Summit on Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) claimed that at least 20,000 women and girls, or 2 women every hour, would become a victim of SGBV in the DRC without immediate action last year alone.⁵ Measuring the prevalence of SGBV in the DRC, however, remains extremely difficult because of insecurity developments, a weak judicial system, a largely underdeveloped healthcare infrastructure, and the sensitive nature of rape itself.⁶ Although there is limited epidemiological data capturing the number of victims of SGBV in the DRC, a study by Johnson et al. (2010) found that 40 percent of all women and 24 percent of all men in a random sample in Eastern DRC were victims of sexual violence, where 74 percent of the cases of sexual violence against women and 65 percent of the cases against men were conflict-related.⁷ These estimates and statistics illuminate the gravity of the issue, but it is necessary to move beyond a statistics-based understanding of SGBV in the DRC in order to understand the underlying factors that drive SGBV. While Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), or 'rape as a weapon of war' is attributed to security issues in the country, SGBV is prevalent in all spheres of society, in times of conflict and post-conflict, where victims and perpetrators include both FARDC and NSAGs soldiers and civilians — irrespective of age and gender.⁸

International Strategy to Combat SGBV

International focus on SGBV in the DRC gained momentum following a 2002 Human Rights Watch report, "The War within the War: Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern Congo," which drew attention to the brutal nature of SGBV in the DRC.⁹ Thus, international attention began to recognize the gravity of sexual violence as part of the insecurity of Eastern DRC. Consequently, SGBV was classified as a 'weapon of war.' However, the international community's concentration on SGBV

as a consequence of mineral resource trafficking has diverted focus from other causes of violence including land conflict, poverty, corruption, local and state predation, and general hostilities between security forces, state officials, and the general population.¹⁰ Furthermore, armed groups operate through means beyond mineral resource extraction such as cattle herding, poaching, the timber trade, and the imposition of unofficial fees and taxes on communities.¹¹ Critically, natural resource exploitation in the DRC is a secondary factor fueling a larger struggle for social and political power occurring in a context of extreme poverty and inequality affecting the lives of civilians and combatants, both in the Congolese armed forces and in NSAGs.¹² By focusing on one cause of violence (SGBV) and one solution to it (banning illegal mineral exploitation), policy has been diverted from needed areas of attention, including land rights, the reform of the state administration, the fight against corruption, and the resolution of grassroots antagonisms.¹³

Alleviation versus Prevention

While the increased attention to SGBV has provided many SGBV survivors with much needed assistance, there remain significant challenges in effectively preventing SGBV. In 2010, the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy found that 72 percent of international funds for sexual violence in the DRC were devoted to treating victims of rape, compared to only 27 percent to preventing sexual abuse.¹⁴ Striking the balance between SGBV assistance-based and prevention programs, however, is difficult when SGBV survivors have severely limited access to existing public services, such as health care and justice, due to poor public service delivery in the country.¹⁵ Thus, the need to alleviate suffering and tend to those affected through assistance programs takes precedence over prevention programs.

Non-State Armed Groups

Intra-state conflicts worldwide are generally “waged for the control of populations, as much as territory.”¹⁶ Although the fighting in Eastern DRC has varied in degrees of intensity since

1996, much of the fighting has occurred between poorly controlled domestic armed groups, as well as foreign armed groups, who have undermined attempts to secure peace in the region since the end of the Rwandan genocide. Given the nature of the conflict, NSAGs and the Congolese forces attack civilians often rather than attacking one another. Since NSAGs may act as local defense militias and the FARDC units are often stationed in settlements for the purpose of civilian protection, combatants and civilians are mixed together. In both instances, combatants’ families are often residing in this military deployment area.¹⁷ While civilians are protected under Rules 93, 134 (women), and 135 (children) of Customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL) against SGBV, the FARDC and NSAGs continuously fail to respect these rules. Although IHL applies to CRSV, it is difficult to address SGBV, which occurs in a post-conflict setting but is conflict-related. SGBV perpetrated by civilians is linked to severely traumatized ex-combatants from NSAGs and the FARDC who took their violent behavior home. At the same time, a conflict-centered understanding of SGBV in the DRC limits SGBV as rooted in the normality of socio-cultural norms and gender dynamics in Congolese society.¹⁸

As the increased humanitarian focus on SGBV assistance in the DRC has allowed for many SGBV survivors to voice their testimonies, it has failed to seek an understanding of SGBV from the perpetrators themselves and how they perceive their own crimes.¹⁹ In analyzing why combatants inflict SGBV on civilians, it is important to note that combatants are victim to different forms of violence, while some are victim to SGBV. For instance, a 2011 study conducted with ex-combatants from 16 different armed groups found that 12 percent of ex-combatants had been sexually assaulted, and in most instances the perpetrator was the commander of the victim.^{20,21} In light of this example, it is difficult to point to individual motivations for acts of SGBV; behavior is more likely attributable to a complex web of social, political, economic, and historical circumstances.²²

During 2013, the Government of the DRC recorded 15,352 incidents of SGBV in eastern DRC (North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, and Ituri Districts).²³ The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO) verified 860 cases of sexual

violence committed by parties to the conflict. NSAGs were responsible for 71 percent of the cases verified by MONUSCO, while national security forces, mainly the FARDC and the national police, were responsible for 29 percent of cases. On March 31, 2015, Special Representative for the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, praised the FARDC military commanders' signing of the declaration as a "milestone" to ending CRSV. The pledge will be taken by every commander serving in the FARDC and requires military leaders to respect IHL and take direct action against sexual violence committed by soldiers under their command, including the prosecution of alleged perpetrators.²⁴ While this declaration offers potential in the fight against SGBV, its success lies in the will of the FARDC. Although the declaration provides a structure for FARDC accountability, it is not applicable to NSAGs because they are not recognized in international agreements. Through different programmatic approaches, however, international organizations in the DRC — the ICRC, Geneva Call, and Search for Common Ground — have engaged NSAGs working to prevent SGBV. The following section will position the different approaches of these organizations and how they may influence the behavior of NSAGs through reducing risk factors associated with committing SGBV as identified in the UNICEF/OCHA DRC 2010–2011 mission report.

Theoretical Framework

Although there is no preliminary framework targeting SGBV prevention work with NSAGs in humanitarian settings, a framework adapted under the WHO Ecological Model²⁵ has been applied to organize a primary prevention model for SGBV work with NSAGs in the UNICEF/OCHA DRC 2010–2011 mission report. This model presents a comprehensive approach to understanding the contributing factors of SGBV at various levels and highlights the connection between these factors and potential prevention interventions.²⁶ Lori Heise's Ecological Model (1988) as found in the *WHO's World Report on Violence and Health*,²⁷ provides a useful framework for understanding the perpetrations of SGBV by NSAGs in suggesting that the causes of violence extend beyond a perpetrator's individual level and are the result of

larger community and societal level factors that allow violence to thrive.²⁸ Reportedly one of the most widely accepted frameworks for understanding risk factors associated with violence,²⁹ it organizes existing research findings into a model to establish what factors emerge as predictive of violence at each level: individual, relationship, community, and society.³⁰

SGBV Primary Prevention Model for NSAGs

While the findings of the multi-phased UNICEF/OCHA initiative include examples of contact and relationship building between NSAGs and humanitarian actors, there are few instances of engagement specifically to prevent SGBV against civilians.³¹ There is a need to better understand the motivations and behavior of NSAGs and to better coordinate with humanitarian actors across sectors to identify best practice strategies engaging with NSAGs.³²

From December 1, 2010 to August 2011, UNICEF and OCHA commenced a multi-phased initiative under the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict Multi-Donor Trust Fund to improve knowledge on how to prevent NSAGs from committing CRSV and to develop resources, which can be used by international and field-based actors to mobilize prevention efforts. The first phase of the study included a mapping assessment of NSAGs in the DRC to collect information about perpetrations of sexual violence and the identification of key "influencers" at the international, national, regional, and local levels who might impact the behavior of NSAGs.³³ Analyzing the findings of Phase I, a proposed framework based on the Ecological Model³⁴ has been applied, providing a foundation for future research and action in the field. The framework, adapted from public health and violence against women prevention work and conflict management concepts, contextualizes some of the risk factors associated with perpetrations of sexual violence by NSAGs and links these risk factors to interventions identified in Phase I. Under the original Ecological Model, risk factors associated with violence are categorized into four levels: individual, relationship, community, and society. Thus, the ecological approach to violence prevention attempts to explain violence as arising out a complex interplay of conditions at these levels.³⁵

Adapting the Ecological Model to consider risk factors relevant to CRSV committed by NSAGs, the first level, individual, encompasses the personal history risk factors of an individual member of an NSAG. The relationship level, then, examines the group dynamics and social interactions between the members of the groups. Third, the community level applies the physical environment in which the NSAG lives and operates and their interactions with local communities. Lastly, the societal level describes the larger dynamics that perpetuate the perceived need for armed resistance/overall structures in the social order. By identifying the risk factors found in Phase I categorized under the Ecological Model, there is belief that NSAGs can be influenced through various means including: military, social, economic, political, and social.³⁶ Under this logic, primary prevention efforts should focus on reducing the risk factors identified in Phase I, considering these risk factors in the design of programs, research, and monitoring and evaluation strategies. Moreover, prevention efforts should consider the interplay between risk factors at different levels.³⁷

Research Methodology

This research references the risk factors identified in the 2010–2011 UNICEF/OCHA study under the Ecological Model framework, as well as “influencers” according to the categorized level of capabilities. These “influencers” operate under different conditions, with different capabilities, and at different levels. For instance, local-based actors generally have knowledge of conflict dynamics, local networks, cultural beliefs, and risks that can serve in engaging NSAGs.³⁸ States and inter-governmental organizations, however, have a stronger capacity to mobilize political influence and can serve an important role in prevention efforts by strengthening and promoting international law and norms. In order to develop successful prevention efforts engaging NSAGs on the issue of SGBV, it is essential to initiate contact, encourage dialogue, and maintain relations with NSAGs.³⁹

This study specifically focused on international organizations currently engaging directly or indirectly with NSAGs in the DRC to reduce and prevent SGBV including the International

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva Call, and Search for Common Ground. Interviews were conducted with four experts representing these organizations to identify the level of engagement with NSAGs in the DRC and programs focused on preventing SGBV, whether directly or indirectly. A series of questions were geared to each organization’s mandate, while general questions were compiled for a comparison of programs from each organization in attempt to position each organization’s influence over the behavior of NSAGs, or in reducing risk factors associated with SGBV as identified in the 2010–2011 UNICEF/OCHA study. The experts interviewed for this study have had significant experience working in the DRC and Great Lakes region as both researchers and practitioners. Understanding that there are conflicting views surrounding SGBV assistance and prevention programs in the DRC from both researcher and practitioners, measures were taken to safeguard interviewees right to confidentiality if preferred. Moreover, the objectives of this study were explained in full detail prior to the interviews in that the research findings would feature organizations working to prevent SGBV, as well as strengthen understanding of the mandates of these organizations.

SGBV Primary Prevention Model for NSAGs

RISK FACTORS

LEVEL

INDIVIDUAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social norms/expectations, ideas and attitudes toward SGBV and women and girls • History of witnessing or experiencing violence, bystander violence • Young age • Interruption of “regular” life (school, employment, agriculture, marriage, etc.) • Forced recruitment into armed group • Seeing oneself as victim • Heavy alcohol or drug consumption • Expectation of impunity
RELATIONSHIP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual violence used as a tool to break the ties of individuals from their families and communities • How males feel they “should” behave as a man (i.e. if sexual violence used as a way to increase bonds and cohesion in the group) or how they “need” to demonstrate their masculinity/identity • Male dominance within the NSAG • Role of female combatants in the NSAG • Conflict and competition within the NSAG rank and file • Presence/absence of religious/traditional authority • Local communities’ perceptions of the NSAG (particularly if the NSAG is politically-motivated) • Lack of or weak command structures and hierarchy • Peer pressure connected to military socialization • Lack of or weak code of conduct • Organizational culture that promotes negative attitudes about women and girls (as well as issues of men having sex with men)

COMMUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High levels of violence in the community • Community norms that justify violence against women (rape as a weapon of war) • Social norms that promote negative attitudes about women and girls (as well as issues of men having sex with men)
SOCIAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of violence, and sexual violence being taboo • Vulnerability of the environment (economic stress and insecurity; lack of available resources; social marginalization) • Natural resource exploitation dimension to the conflict (mining, forestry, agriculture) • Lack of access to media and information about sexual violence and gender (not in formal or formal sanctions within the NSAG for violence against women) • Mutual reliance by local communities/NSAGs for security, food, labor, etc. • Ability to hold dialogue with and maintain a relationship with a NSAG • High levels of general violence in society • Breakdown of society due to violence, leading to the absence of protection for women and girls • General breakdown in law and order increasing all forms of violence • Lack of or weak criminal sanctions for perpetrators • Lack of understanding or application of traditional/customary laws • Lack of active presence of peacekeeping troops (poorly trained/unclear mandate) • Dissatisfaction or failure of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs • Lack of implementation and reinforcement of international laws and standards

Organizations Engaging NSAGs in SGBV Prevention Efforts International Committee of the Red Cross

As a neutral and impartial humanitarian organization, the ICRC works to address both the causes and effects of sexual violence through the provision of health care, assistance, protection, awareness raising, and prevention.⁴⁰ Working with local communities, the ICRC works to raise awareness, identify risk factors, and develop protection strategies against sexual violence.⁴¹ In order to identify those in most need of protection, the ICRC networks extensively, speaking to all sides of a conflict such as FARDC or NSAG combatants, community leaders, local NGOs, and health and humanitarian staff in order to obtain access to civilian populations in need of assistance. It works to address IHL concerns at all levels within an NSAG and its political branch.⁴²

One specific program in the DRC has been the provision of listening houses, which operate mainly for the purpose of providing SGBV victims counseling support. In 2012, the ICRC had directed 40 listening houses run by local communities.⁴³ The houses also seek to raise awareness of the consequences of sexual violence, informing communities about health facilities and the importance of seeking urgent medical care within 72 hours after rape occurs. The ICRC promotes this program through workshops and radiobroadcasting in order to reach as many people as possible, including those most isolated and with limited health care accessibility.⁴⁴ While this program focuses on reaching SGBV victims in order provide services, the approach of this program could potentially have an indirect level of influence on NSAGs, since the program is promoted over the radio, which NSAGs have access to. There are limited data and studies on this topic, but the ICRC could determine if radiobroadcasting messages for listening houses reach NSAGs through program monitoring and evaluation schemes.

Regarding direct engagement with NSAGs, the ICRC works to voice the suffering of SGBV victims with the broader community, including the Congolese armed forces and NSAGs involved. Through hosting seminars and workshops with these groups, the ICRC focuses on conveying the physical and psychological trauma

victims face, including the risk of pregnancy, HIV contraction, and potential rejection of victims by their families. In one program, the ICRC implemented a sexual violence awareness-raising initiative using paintings, where the targets of the program were not specifically NSAGs but communities in general.⁴⁵

Considering prevention efforts, in response to humanitarian needs, the ICRC must balance reactive responses and proactive approaches. A needs assessment reactively informs a thematic approach to focus efforts on the most serious needs.⁴⁶ Prevention efforts relate closely to protection efforts to reduce humanitarian needs in the future. Guilhem Ravier, Head of Unit for the Protection of the Civilian Population in the Central Tracing Agency and Protection Division at the ICRC, adds that engagement with NSAGs is a crucial, yet difficult process, as some NSAGs use terror tactics against civilian populations.⁴⁷ Under such circumstances and in establishing a relationship with this type of actor, the ICRC has to consider “incentives versus disincentives that influence attitudes and behaviors of a NSAG,” as miscalculated efforts could threaten civilians.⁴⁸ While collecting information for humanitarian access and protection, the ICRC has to constantly remain transparent in its actions and justify its impartial mandate in order to maintain access to protected person under IHL. One risk the ICRC faces when studying the military objectives of NSAGs during the dialogue process is that an NSAG may perceive the interest in military objectives as biased.⁴⁹ Despite the challenges engaging with NSAGs, however, the ICRC is generally the first humanitarian organization to have established ongoing dialogue with NSAGs.

Geneva Call

In working with NSAGs, the ICRC must immediately discuss protection issues the negotiation of access to populations in need of assistance. Geneva Call, on the other hand, does not provide assistance to populations in need under IHL, but rather strictly engages in dialogue with NSAGs in hopes that NSAGs will put forth the support and implementation of Geneva Call’s Deed of Commitments promoting IHL compliance. Geneva Call conducts mapping assessments, a type of program design, of NSAGs

to understand the networks and command structures of NSAGs before engaging in dialogue with NSAGs. In contrast, the ICRC works to progressively build structures and policies promoting respect for and compliance with IHL. Since the military, social, and political dynamics NSAGs change over time, it is difficult to study the motives of NSAGs. The ICRC, however, studies the internal group features of NSAGs and the external influences on them. Categories include objective, interest, command and control procedures, control over territory, and relationship with communities. It is also important to consider the organizational capacity of NSAGs and to identify the leaders in the group, as well as those who externally influence the group like community leaders. Another area of consideration is how the state perceives the NSAG.⁵⁰ Under the SGBV Prevention Framework from the UNICEF/OCHA study, the ICRC has influence over the behavior of NSAGs mainly at the relationship, community, and societal level.

Proclaiming itself as a neutral and impartial NGO, Geneva Call's engagement tools with NSAGs include dialogue, advocacy, and training. Recognizing that NSAGs cannot become parties to international treaties and norm-making processes, Geneva Call created a mechanism, known as the Deed of Commitment, which allows signatory NSAGs to undertake accountability procedures as dictated by international standards. Geneva Call developed a *Deed of Commitment for the Prohibition of Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict and towards the Elimination of Gender Discrimination* in 2012, allowing NSAGs to formally express their agreement to abide by humanitarian norms and hold themselves accountable for respecting IHL.⁵¹ In signing this deed, NSAGs agree to the following: prohibit all forms of sexual violence, prevent and sanction sexual violence acts, provide victims with access to assistance, ensure confidentiality and protection of victims of sexual violence, eliminate discriminatory policies and practices against women or men, and ensure greater participation of women in decision-making processes. Signatory NSAGs must agree to take necessary measures to enforce the commitment and to cooperate in Geneva Call's verification of their compliance. The organization, however, supports and monitors the implementation of the signed Deed of Commitment — for instance, through engaging

community-based organizations to build their capacities to engage with NSAGs and assist in monitoring their commitments. In the DRC, civil society is active and has strong links with armed groups. Increasing dialogue with these actors is crucial to understanding the penal codes, policies, and codes of conduct of ANSAS.⁵² Since the launch of the *Deed of Commitment for the Prohibition of Sexual Violence in Situations of Armed Conflict and towards the Elimination of Gender Discrimination*, 12 NSAGs from different countries have signed this commitment, while over 20 NSAGs have been engaged in dialogue with Geneva Call on this commitment.⁵³

Following a mapping assessment of NSAGs in North and South Kivu in 2012, Geneva Call began preparations for engagement with NSAGs focused on the prevention of sexual violence and child protection issues under IHL.⁵⁴ In the DRC, Geneva Call has found it is easy to reach armed groups because the government is not able to protect communities, due to the weak capacity of the FARDC. Most armed groups have no military education and acknowledge the need for international humanitarian law training focusing on the protection of civilians and the prevention of SGBV.⁵⁵ Geneva Call's strategy of engagement with ANSAS in the DRC focuses on general international humanitarian law training. Training and advocacy activities have been targeted for influencing the leadership of NSAGs and local communities.⁵⁶ For instance, in July 2014, elderly community members from Goma, known as the Baraza, community-based and civil society organizations, and selected provincial Members of Parliament were brought together to engage in dialogue and to learn about IHL norms, particularly in regards to sexual violence in armed conflict and the protection of children. As a result of the meeting, which had aimed to identify local capacities to address protection issues, the Congolese parties involved offered support for Geneva Call's engagement with NSAGs to protect civilians. In focusing on the protection of civilians against SGBV, the organization takes an indirect approach first by introducing other IHL norms, such as the prevention of attacks on schools. This approach works towards gaining the confidence of ANSAS, rather than taking a 'naming and shaming' approach, as in writing a human rights report documenting human rights abuses. Since

communities maintain complex family and ethnic relationships with many of the NSAGs active in the DRC, this provides an opportunity for Geneva Call to reach combatants and potentially influence the behavior of NSAGs in sensitization to IHL. Moreover, the combatant–civilian relationship is very complex. While Geneva Call’s prevention efforts in the DRC launched only recently, the organization has the potential to sustain a relationship with NSAGs in the region through the support of civilian communities. Geneva Call is in the process of piloting program activities from its newly established office in Goma.⁵⁷ As of 2015, the organization has engaged with four armed groups and plans to engage an addition of two armed groups per year.^{58,59} Under the SGBV Prevention Framework from the UNICEF/OCHA study, Geneva Call’s most powerful level of influence over the behavior of NSAGs are at the relationship and community level, gearing IHL training towards the groups structures and norms of NSAGs and engaging community–based organizations and civil society groups in holding NSAGs accountable to IHL standards.

Search for Common Ground

Understanding that “conflict and differences are inevitable but violence is not,” Search for Common Ground (SFCG), is an international NGO which partners with all parties of conflict, working at all levels of society, to build peace from the grassroots to the government level.⁶⁰ SFCG has impartiality in relation to engagement with all actors, or all sides of a conflict. Gearing one of its programs towards a specific armed group, for instance, could compromise its impartiality, as the community could perceive this as bias in a local context. Across its programs, SFCG works to increase trust between communities, organizing joint community activities ranging from waste–cleanup to football matches to create added value for these communities. These activities also work to increase accountability between local actors.

SFCG’s programs are developed based on the existing socio–cultural context and local needs. One radio programming initiative focused on SGBV is known as ‘Kesho Ni Siku Mpya’ in Swahili, or ‘tomorrow is a new day.’ The program is a soap opera, or radio drama, which features characters as they subtly deal

with sensitive issues like SGBV. Soldiers and police can then relate to these characters and learn from their actions without having to face ‘finger pointing.’⁶¹

Recognizing the need to reduce and eliminate the occurrence of sexual violence, the conflict mediation organization launched a program with the Congolese army and police in 2006 to enforce protection of civilians in regards to SGBV. Hosting mobile cinema screenings to communicate the need to prevent SGBV, the organizations has reached nearly 1 million Congolese soldiers since.⁶² Through its SGBV program with the FARDC and the police, SFCG raises awareness of SGBV and trains soldiers using tools like participatory theatre to initiate discussion of SGBV with each battalion, highlighting the consequences of SGBV. SFCG trains the head of battalions in hopes that they will facilitate discussion and that this will consequently, have a ‘multiplier effect’ within the FARDC. The organization also works with the battalions to create Civilian Protection Committees that establish a record of human rights violations committed by groups. It is important to distinguish the purpose of these records from say, that of Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International, which use an advocacy–centered ‘naming and shaming’ approach to document human rights abuses. The purpose of SFCG’s human rights records with the FARDC is grounded in community–level accountability, for soldiers to hold one another accountable and for soldiers to take ownership for their actions. SFCG’s human rights records, then, are maintained for the internal benefit of the organization’s beneficiaries and not shared with advocacy–based human rights organizations.

While SFCG works with the Congolese army to prevent SGBV, it promotes its activities through a community–driven approach, understanding that SGBV is an act perpetrated by both Congolese army forces, NSAG combatants, and civilians. “Breaking the silence,” one of SFCG’s mobile cinemas focused on SGBV, works towards reducing the stigma surrounding SGBV. “The Real Man,” a short film series, exposes different attitudes of men in the DRC fit to their local context to promote healthy gender relations. Challenging unhealthy gender relations, another short soap opera series, “The Team,” features female football players.⁶³ SFCG holds mobile cinema showings in communities based on certain

times to try to get a maximum number of community members to attend. The showings are then followed by a community-focused discussion in the village. The organization also brings targeted groups together, like young males, or customary leaders, to facilitate more in-depth discussion. Another one of SFCG's programs facilitates dialogue within the adolescent community about gender relations, which in one aspect, feeds into the preventive efforts against SGBV. In dealing with the role of men in society, SFCG has learned that blaming men in an accusatory manner was hampering their ability to constructively engage in the process of preventing SGBV. The blame and guilt tends to prevent them from realizing that they are also part of the solution. On the other hand, continuing to depict women as victims, even if it is helpful for them to know how to act after a rape or sexual or gender based aggression, is not constructive in terms of equipping them with skills to prevent new aggressions and to positively impact their society in preventing SGBV.⁶⁴ SFCG works at all four levels included in the SGBV Prevention Framework in the UNICEF/OCHA study in challenging underlying gender norms that influence individual behavior and group relations promoting SGBV. Beyond SGBV prevention efforts, Gabrielle Solanet, Regional Project Coordinator for the Great Lakes at Search for Common Ground in Brussels, notes that SFCG promotes good governance within the extractive industry in Katanga, for instance, working to increase dialogue between the private sector, local government, and communities to ensure re-distribution of benefits from the private sector to communities.⁶⁵ While not directly addressing SGBV, these measures may address some of the underlying risk factors attributed to SGBV, for instance, land conflict and forced displacement categorized at the relationship and societal level under the SGBV Prevention Framework.

Conclusion

This paper highlights the SGBV prevention efforts of the ICRC, Geneva Call, and Search for Common Ground engaging with NSAGs in North Kivu, South Kivu, Katanga, and the Ituri District of Eastern Congo. Its findings reveal that these organizations have some degree of influence over the behavior of NSAGs, directly

and/or indirectly. While these organizations fulfill different mandates, each values a community-oriented response to towards reducing and preventing SGBV. The focus of this paper was on a theoretical understanding of the SGBV prevention efforts of these organizations, as opposed to a comparative monitoring and evaluation approach on these efforts. Programs such as Geneva Call's, for instance, are in an infancy or development phase.

Despite the numerous international agreements championed to fight impunity for SGBV crimes, little progress has been made in bringing perpetrators to justice because the judicial system across the country remains weak. At the same time, community level accountability measures arising from the ground-up have yet to fulfill their potential. Indeed, the findings of this study reveal that SGBV prevention efforts largely depend on communities for holding their own members accountable and for measuring NSAGs' compliance with IHL. As a result, communities serve as an important medium for international organizations to leverage in order to engage in dialogue, advocacy, and IHL training with NSAGs in Eastern Congo to reduce and prevent SGBV.

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III.

RADIO FREE EUROPE AND THE
RHETORIC OF LIBERATION

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On February 28, 2014 President Barack Obama publicly addressed the military mobilization of Russian forces in the Crimean Peninsula for the first time in a White House press conference. “The Ukrainian people deserve the opportunity to determine their own future,” he declared, and without explicitly specifying actions the United States would or would not take, assured Americans and Ukrainians alike that the United States “stands for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and democratic future of Ukraine.”¹ The press conference responded to the introduction of pro-Russian armed forces into the Crimean peninsula on February 26th. Throughout March and April, pro-Russian forces continued to push into Crimea. A referendum held on March 16th, declared to be a sham by most of the West, had passed with 97% in favor of joining Russia.

International attention focused on the media presence in the region after pro-Russian forces abducted *Vice* journalist Simon Ostrovsky. According to the 2015 Freedom House Press Freedom Index, while Ukraine is classified as “partly free,” Crimea in particular ranks as “not free” and one of the “worst of the worst” regions for press freedom.² One news site in particular, though, provided much of the news coverage reaching European and worldwide audiences throughout the year. Radio Svoboda — the Ukrainian branch of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty³ — was one of the leading news organizations with daily reports on the crisis, particularly after the launch of its Crimea-specific website in March. Operating with thirty-three journalists on the ground in Kiev throughout 2014, the Radio Svoboda website received 2.8 million page views on February 20, 2014 alone, and 150 million views throughout March and April. In April of 2014, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the US federal agency that oversees the operations of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and by extension Radio Svoboda, awarded the station the David Burke Award for Distinguished Broadcasting.⁴

Established sixty years prior under the United States Central Intelligence Agency, Radio Free Europe had initially been a major component of the United States Cold War media campaigns by promoting anti-communist news reports in the USSR and Soviet satellite states. While the Broadcasting Board of Governors now controls the funding and direction of the institution

instead of the CIA, the idea of a United States civilian international media operating in countries with limited freedom of the press continues to reach millions of people sixty years later.⁵

The current mission statement of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty is to “promote democratic values and institutions by reporting the news in countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established.”⁶ While the Radio Free Europe of 2015 operates in an entirely different media landscape than it did in 1950, many of the challenges in reporting on the self-determination of other countries are very similar to those at its inception. In the first decade of broadcasting, these challenges rested on the term “liberation.” In the most literal sense, liberation is the freeing of someone or something from imprisonment or oppression. While the term was occasionally used to refer to direct military intervention by the United States to free the region of Soviet control, more often than not, it was used in an esoteric sense with continuously changing connotations and implications. In the past few decades, this term has largely fallen out of the public lexicon when addressing conflicts abroad, but it was the central preoccupation of most involved with the Radio Free Europe project in the early 1950s. At a time when the recent technological innovations of the radio allowed for rapid cross-border communication not seen before, RFE/RL broadcasts became an avenue for experimenting with the dissemination of strategic political rhetoric.

This paper examines the origins of Radio Free Europe to explore the transfer and representation of American foreign policy to the citizens of Soviet satellite countries through the media. With an emphasis on liberation, I look at policy formulation in Washington, DC, and how it was interpreted by the institution and by the journalists broadcasting for Radio Free Europe. Three tiers of communication form this institution: one between Washington and Radio Free Europe directors and executives, one between directors and the émigré journalists employed by the institution, and the third between the journalists and citizens of Central and Eastern Europe through broadcasts. This paper focuses on these communication channels, and how the involved parties interpreted the discussion of liberation and how that discussion evolved over time.

Many historians have written on the varying strategies of the United States towards the Soviet satellites in this time period. In *Strategies of Containment*, John Lewis Gaddis traces the administrations from Truman to Reagan's approaches to the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc. Other works, such as Anne Appelbaum's *Iron Curtain*, a history of the makings of totalitarianism in the region post–World War II, discuss the presence of Radio Free Europe in the region as a facet of United States policy. There are a number of institutional histories of Radio Free Europe written by former executives and directors of the organization. Three books form the base of the historiography about the institution; *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* by A. Ross Johnson, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* by Arch Puddington, and *Cold War Radio: The Dangerous History of American Broadcasting in Europe, 1950–1989* by Richard H. Cummings. While these texts explore the origins and structural specifics of the institution in much greater detail than this paper can, their discussions are somewhat narrow in regard to the relationship between Radio Free Europe policy and on–air broadcasts.

To bring together the challenges of the three channels of communication, I look at a combination of policy documents, broadcast transcripts, and internal correspondence between journalists and Radio Free Europe officials primarily from the Hoover Institution Radio Free Europe archives at Stanford University, as well as the digitized Woodrow Wilson Center Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty collection online. From the corporate records collection housed at the Hoover, I draw on budgets, employee instruction manuals, audience research reports, and numerous letters between the staff. Most instrumental to this project, though, was the Ferdinand Peroutka Papers – an entire collection on one of Radio Free Europe's most prominent journalists. Peroutka, a Czechoslovak journalist who had been held by the Nazis throughout World War II and then immigrated to the United States after the communist coup in 1948, joined the Radio Free Europe team in 1951 as the Czechoslovak correspondent and began hosting the weekly Sunday Night Talks.⁷ In the next two decades, Peroutka became the leading voice connected to Radio Free Czechoslovakia and one of the most well respected

journalists and political pundits in the entire region. The personal collection is comprised of his letters to Radio Free Europe executives, newspaper articles written on him from both American and Czechoslovak sources, and transcripts of his weekly broadcasts. Peroutka provides the third layer in how policy was interpreted as it moved from United States presidents and their close strategists and advisors to the Radio Free Europe leadership, and from them to the individual journalists projecting these attitudes to the peoples of Central Europe through their broadcasts.

In this paper, I look at the roots of liberation ideology in the earliest years of Radio Free Europe and the political theories behind it in the era of George Kennan and the advent of the Eisenhower administration. From here, I examine the messy practice of promoting liberation on–air as RFE came to find its foothold after a few years before the shaking of destalinization and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, a profound failure and serious controversy for the station's liberation ideas. After 1956, the station lost some popularity because of its involvement in Hungary but also became less relevant as domestic presses gained more editorial freedom in the wake of destalinization. On the ground, Peroutka adapted the topics of his shows to fill a different niche for his home audience, and from above; directors in New York experimented with changing the policy guidelines for journalists, both believing the actions in their channels would most affect those of the other. In conclusion, I look to how the history of this institution can inform us about the relationship between self–determination, liberation, and American interests abroad, and how this relationship continues to be expressed across different media platforms.

Roots of Liberation

“This station daily pierces the iron curtain with truth, answering the lies of the Kremlin,” a forty–year old Ronald Reagan confidently proclaimed in a 1951 television Crusade for Freedom promotional video calling for public donations to Radio Free Europe.⁸ Created during Reagan's time as president of the Screen Actors' Guild and FBI informant of the Hollywood Blacklist era, the commercials reached many across the country eager to do

their part to fight the Kremlin. Among these viewers was a young Richard H. Cummings, future security director of Radio Free Europe and author of the book *Cold War Radio*. In the book, Cummings credits seeing these commercials in childhood as influencing his later decision to pursue a career at the organization.⁹

While the commercials called for donations to the pledge campaign, the allotted budget for Radio Free Europe (\$8.7 million dollars in 1951, roughly equal to \$60 million in today's dollars¹⁰) was sufficient to cover operations. Rather, the public donations fit into a branding of the campaign as a collaborative, American undertaking. The previous year, just as the new broadcasting facility in Munich was beginning daily reports, President Dwight D. Eisenhower had introduced the Crusade and the station in a Labor Day Speech. In the 1950 speech, Eisenhower describes the "campaign sponsored by private American citizens to fight the big lie with the big truth."¹¹ The following day, newspapers across the country published reports of excited citizens willing to join the effort and sign Eisenhower's Freedom Scroll.¹² The speech and the Reagan commercials extolled the idea of individual American citizens working together for this new enterprise — an enterprise backed by a cut and dry paradigm: Kremlin equals lies; America equals truth.

While the Crusade for Freedom campaign was one of the first public solidifications of this attitude at the time, these ideas had been developing since the end of World War II. In 1946, American diplomat George Kennan sent the now famous "Long Telegram" back home to President Truman from his post in the USSR, with the warning that "world communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue."¹³ Kennan proclaims that the United States must lead the world in opposing the Soviets by ensuring the "health and vigor of our own society."¹⁴ At the time of his writing, the Soviet Red Army had "absorbed" Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania into the Soviet Union and was occupying the eight countries which came to be known as the "bloc:" East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and Yugoslavia.¹⁵ The fear that this "parasite" would continue to spread past this area preoccupied American politicians and diplomats. The following year, Kennan coined the term "containment" — the idea that, rather than

directly combatting communism at any cost, the United States should focus on ensuring it did not spread. Containment, which came to be the governing Cold War ideology of the Truman administration, allowed for a range of responses that could shift depending on the area with which the United States determined to be of the most importance at the time.

Two years later, as Soviet control over the Central and Eastern European states had tightened, Kennan authored a memorandum on "Organizing Political Warfare" for the United States Policy Planning Committee and the National Security Council, introducing the idea of a "Liberation Committee." The government-funded committee, he outlines, should be comprised of "trusted private American citizens" and should strive to "provide an inspiration for continuing popular resistance within the countries of the Soviet world; and to provide a potential nucleus for all-out liberation movements in the event of war."¹⁶ Throughout the memorandum, he describes other mechanisms for promoting anti-communism groups and subversive elements within the Soviet-controlled countries, continuously invoking "American tradition" as the basis for the plans. The private-public enterprise of the liberation committee, for example, follows the "traditional American form: organized public support of resistance to tyranny in foreign countries."¹⁷ Through this reasoning, liberating the peoples of the Soviet satellite states continues a tradition of opposing tyranny abroad, rather than introducing a particularly new or revolutionary concept. This rhetorical strategy, likely employed to garner the necessary administrative and domestic support for the plan, was not without faults though; as the people the plan advocated liberating also came to believe in the American "tradition of liberation."

The subject of the memo has added significance, as George Kennan is most famously associated with the policy of containment, not liberation. While Kennan strongly opposed the creation of any definitive foreign policy statement stemming from his views, and so this document may not be the most representative of his legacy, it demonstrates the pervasiveness of the liberation conversation at this time.¹⁸ The following year, the National Committee for Free Europe (later renamed the Free Europe Committee) was created. While the outlines for the committee

do not follow Kennan's suggestions exactly, they do seem to express many similar sentiments. The Committee, in its original mission, aims to aid those anti-communist and anti-fascist leaders in useful occupations that have left their home countries for political reasons.¹⁹ Specifically, the committee aims to "engage in efforts by radio, press, and other means to keep alive among their citizens in Europe the ideals of individual and national freedom."²⁰ After the formation of the committee itself, members turned to planning for the broadcasting station, and in particular, which émigrés and groups would be selected to represent what would then become Radio Free Europe. After a few brief months of broadcasting out of New York, a period former Radio Free Europe director A. Ross Johnson refers to as the "poison factory" because of the incredibly negative nature of the early broadcasts, the Committee purchased the Munich facility and rebranded as a "surrogate broadcasting" station.²¹ Compared to the hands-on effort of CIA agents and American directors in New York, "surrogate broadcasting" meant that the American government provided the infrastructure and air space (and quite a bit more, especially in terms of suggested themes), but the émigré journalists did their reporting and broadcasting themselves. In 1951, around the same time as the airing of the Reagan commercials in homes across the country, the Office of Policy Coordination described Radio Free Europe's Soviet-specific sister project, Radio Liberty, as a "program of Russians speaking to Russians, not the U.S. government speaking to the Russians."²²

In *Strategies of Containment*, John Lewis Gaddis argues that, under Truman and Kennan, "process triumphed over policy" through their focus on restraining Soviet economic and military strength without much regard for long-term policy or goals.²³ When President Dwight Eisenhower took office in 1951, though, there was an increased focus on ideology in foreign policy development, particularly under the influence of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and his brother, CIA director Allen Dulles. One of Eisenhower's first foreign policy acts was Operation Solarium — a program designed to study three potential courses of action that the administration could consider adopting regarding Eastern Europe: continuing containment, deterrence, and lastly, liberation. According to Gaddis, while the official, public strategy

remained containment; Eisenhower's "New Look" foreign policy incorporated all three of these courses. It is the third that is particularly interesting to this study of Radio Free Europe, as it encompassed "political, psychological, economic, and cover means to 'roll back' Soviet influence areas."²⁴ The idea of psychological warfare, while not novel to this time period, did develop in a new sense under Eisenhower and the influence of the Dulles brothers. "The most conspicuous example of 'psychological warfare,'" Gaddis writes, is "Dulles' 'liberation' strategy for Eastern Europe."²⁵ This strategy, though, was not clearly defined or outlined anywhere and, some argue it did not actually exist to the degree Gaddis suggests.

A. Ross Johnson writes in his book that, "liberation was a long-term aspiration, never a policy that guided RFE broadcasts... 'liberation' was American political rhetoric, never U.S. foreign policy."²⁶ Throughout the book, Johnson continuously reaffirms this claim — especially when it later comes to the 1956 Hungarian Revolution — which clearly contradicts Gaddis's theory of Eisenhower embracing liberation aspects after Operation Solarium. As a former RFE director, Johnson may have a stake in preventing unnecessary responsibility from being placed on the shoulders of Radio Free Europe. Yet a 1954 policy document lists one of the primary objectives of the institution "to give the people of the captive countries reason to hope for liberation."²⁷ While A. Ross Johnson may argue that this was pure rhetoric and that giving people a "reason to hope" does not constitute actual policy handed down from the administration, the journalists tasked with transmitting these messages on air may not have interpreted them in that way, especially formal policy statements like the one from 1954.

Ferdinand Peroutka, as expressed in his correspondence with RFE officials, appeared to believe promoting liberation was an official stance of the institution. In a 1952 letter to Radio Free Europe chief Mr. Galantiere, Peroutka outlines what he sees as the station's tasks. "Answer the question of arming, the question of appeasement, and of the liberation of satellites sustained by the common will of the American people."²⁸ The questions are repeated throughout Peroutka's correspondence with Radio Free Europe officials and seem to be a point of internal conflict

regarding his role in translating the directives of the United States to the people of Czechoslovakia. In 1954, he writes again to Mr. Galantiere; “95% of the Czechoslovak population believed, up to the present, in a liberation continued but by war.²⁹” Johnson’s questioning of whether or not liberation was official policy seems much less important when examined with this in mind: if it was believed to be actual policy by those listening to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, it is not any different in impact than had it been official policy.

Liberation In Messy Practice

The 1953 report of the death of Soviet leader Joseph Stalin was heralded as one of Radio Free Europe’s most successful broadcasts at the time — they broke the news more than six hours earlier than the communist state news.³⁰ The ideological changes after his death, in particular following Nikita Khrushchev’s 1956 denunciation of Stalin’s crimes and the overall harshness of the regime, led to a period of “thaw” including the easing of restrictions of domestic press within satellite countries. Media sources within these countries began to include more local news, a wider array of voices, and less censorship by the communist administration. For Radio Free Europe, this meant that much of their daily broadcasting became less unique and less relevant, as sources closer to the listeners were able to break the same stories.

In 1955, Peroutka prepared a summary for Radio Free Europe in the wake of a Four Powers meeting. The document details the differing attitudes towards liberation of Western officials he had encountered. He writes that, from an American perspective, any “liberation policy” is no longer different from the policy of containment. “Still, for psychological reasons,” he advises, “it is better to refer to the containment policy as liberation policy.³¹” While official policy of liberation may no longer exist, the support for continuing to refer to it would come from Radio Free Europe. Communication of this policy by Peroutka and his colleagues to listeners, this report suggested, was more important than accurate transmission of policy from the United States government to the journalists.

Peroutka then goes on to discuss what he believes is a more promising term — “self-liberation.” Increasing in popularity

and use right around this time, especially by Western politicians, self-liberation is perhaps even more abstract of a term than liberation. “Self-liberation is not possible, but self-liberating movements of the masses behind the Iron Curtain are.” This, of course, has significant challenges as *self-* is predicated on the idea of the internal mobilization and lack of external control and can therefore not be adopted as any “official policy” by the United States. The term is particularly useful in that it does not imply commitment to any anti-administration groups or actions within the Soviet satellite states. Peroutka ends the memo with the two ideas he believes are “certain” at this time: first, that “it is not possible to promise liberation behind the Iron Curtain” but also that, “the hope of liberation can absolutely not be abandoned within the Eastern bloc or else the millions will assimilate into the monolith.³²” Reckoning these two goals with one another is essentially impossible, which he acknowledges, but he does provide recommendations for economic sanctions and political moves the United States could take to demonstrate a dedication to opposing the communist regime and encouraging internal opposition movements within Central and Eastern Europe. These sanctions, writes Peroutka, send a clear and reassuring message to those opposing the regimes domestically but do not carry the weight or expectation of military assistance or more forceful intervention.

At this same time, questions of station credibility often tied to the “liberation” attitude troubled many within the institution. In yearly Audience Research Reports, RFE and RL representatives would meet with groups of station listeners from the different broadcast countries who for specific reasons were able to travel to West Germany. While the institution acknowledges that this was not exactly the most representative sample of the actual listener composition, comparing the reports from year to year does create a picture of how attitudes towards the station formed over the years of its broadcasting. On the whole, these reports are overwhelmingly positive about Radio Free Europe’s programming and suggest high levels of trust in the reporters by listeners. The 1955 Report, though, while still complimentary, does include a few more serious concerns than seen in earlier years. Many respondents noted that, more than occasionally, RFE broadcasts turned out to be false.³³

Ferdinand Peroutka also addresses the concern in this same year. In one 1955 letter, Peroutka informs the New York bureau of his correspondence with friends back in Prague who have written to him warning that “RFE is losing the confidence of our people because of the false reports it broadcasts.³⁴” 1955 was characterized by attempts at smoothing out many of the wrinkles still in the broadcasting system, wrinkles which would run much deeper the following year as these two issues — the extent to which liberation would be promoted on-air and how the truth of the broadcasts were verified — came to head the following year in the Hungarian Revolution.

After Nikita Khrushchev’s “Secret Speech,” in which he denounced the many crimes of Stalin, was released to the press, countries across the region underwent leadership changes and reforms to rid much of the heavily entrenched Stalinism. In 1956, student protests in Budapest blossomed into a national uprising against Soviet control of the country and in support of Prime Minister Imre Nagy, who days earlier had announced Hungary’s withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact. On November 4th, Soviet forces entered the country with tanks to crush the rebellion and kidnap Nagy to the Soviet Union. Roughly twenty-five hundred Hungarians were killed in the process.³⁵ That same day, as Soviet tanks were crossing the Hungarian border, a Radio Free Europe on-air press review highlighted an article from the *London Observer*, which had confidently declared “the pressure upon the government of the U.S. to send military help to the freedom fighters will become irresistible.³⁶” After quoting this piece, the Hungarian broadcaster added, “in the Western capitals a practical manifestation of Western sympathy is expected at any hour.” This broadcast has since been accused by many of providing misleading information suggesting United States support for resistance fighters. After the news spread of how bloody the crushing of Budapest by the Soviet troops had been, Radio Free Europe came under considerable fire for their role.

To this day, the 1956 broadcasts remain one of the most significant controversies the institution has faced. In fact, A. Ross Johnson’s book began as the 2006 article “Setting the Record Straight: Role of Radio Free Europe in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956,” which seeks to defend the institution against

criticism that has continued well into the present day.³⁷ Much of his article is in response to Charles Gati’s book *Failed Illusions*, a portion of which was published in *The New York Times* in October of 2006, including the claim that “RFE kept encouraging its Hungarian listeners to keep fighting for all they sought and more — whether these goals were realistic or not.³⁸” Anne Appelbaum, in her 2008 book *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe*, is even more critical of RFE’s Hungarian broadcasts and their representation of American political interests: The Hungarian service of Radio Free Europe, based in Munich and staffed by angry émigrés, egged on the revolutionaries. But despite his earlier calls for the ‘rollback’ of communism and the ‘liberation’ of Eastern Europe, the hawkish American secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, could do no better than send the Soviet leaders a message: “We do not see these states [Hungary and Poland] as potential military allies.³⁹”

In the immediate aftermath, the United States government ordered multiple official investigations into the broadcasts in question. A preliminary memorandum from the Free Europe Committee dated November 12th opens with the following statement: “the degree to which the West...encourages the captive peoples to resist or change the present regimes whilst at the same time...is not willing or able to assist them in a situation like that in Hungary, presents serious questions which ought to be realistically thought through.⁴⁰” This is one of the most direct challenges to the institution’s practices from an internal source at this point in time, yet the suggestion for this to be “realistically thought through” is not a punitive condemnation, considering the problematic nature of encouraging resistance but not being willing to assist when that resistance comes to head. Two weeks later, the CIA prepared its official review of the situation, which reached two primary conclusions. “RFE broadcasts were generally consistent with U.S. policy toward the Satellites,” the report states, and “RFE did not incite the Hungarian people to revolution.⁴¹” While this decisive verdict may have been in line with policy of the time, it does seem to prematurely end the conversation and questions posed by the FEC memorandum and — much more strongly — by external critics of RFE concerned with its practices.

After the revolution and crushing, Ferdinand Peroutka addressed the matter in his November 17, 1956 Sunday Night Talk. In one of his most declarative and forthright statements, and much more directly than the CIA or RFE leadership, he stated: “We here are a broadcasting station — not a liberation army.”⁴² He then moved on to more optimistic tones quickly, though: the Hungarian Revolution is much broader than the defeat; the very existence of the uprising signaled the growth of democracy behind the Iron Curtain.⁴³

At this time, Radio Free Europe’s main challenge was the need to offer something different than the state news sources while simultaneously communicating to listeners that RFE’s aim was not liberation through direct intervention. While perhaps the institution was in support of self-liberation (discussion on this term became more mixed after the Hungary broadcasts and the thaw), it was certainly not — as Peroutka stated — a liberation army. Its livelihood rested on journalists like Peroutka convincing the people of Eastern Europe of this without making the impression that the Americans were turning their backs on them. In the following years, Ferdinand Peroutka’s broadcasts significantly shifted their scope and focus to encompass more international news and fewer domestic politics and affairs.

Soft Liberation: A Journalist Adapts

“Eleven years is a long time; not many things remained in their place,” Peroutka writes in his 1961 report to the Radio Free Europe board of directors entitled “The Political Situation.”⁴⁴ “RFE has a cleverer competitor now,” he writes of the evolution of the Communist state radio post-Stalin, noting the increased scope of their broadcasting and higher approval by citizens in the satellite states. Specifically in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution, and a perceived attitude of “passivity” by the Americans, the opinion of RFE has dropped in the satellite states. “The hope that was so lively when RFE was beginning and so closely allied to faith in the West’s superior might, is fading.”⁴⁵ According to Peroutka, discerning what the United States’ goals and tactics were towards the region at this point was “more difficult than it used to be to stimulate hopes of a not too distant liberation.”⁴⁶

This concern seems to influence the uncertainties he has of Radio Free Europe’s role as much as, if not more than, the death of Stalin. Not only was Radio Free Europe daily news less novel when it also came from stations at home, but the conclusive American rhetoric Peroutka used for inspiration had dwindled.

An undated, unsigned report in Peroutka’s personal correspondence file from around this time makes explicit policy suggestions for Radio Free Europe in the wake of destalinization.⁴⁷ The memo discusses how RFE’s ability to report scandals that listeners were unaware of due to the censorship of the domestic press led to its early popularity, but now “the position is reversed: now RFE learns about matters from domestic sources.”⁴⁸ The report suggests new programs such as “Read the *NY Times* with Us,” which would bring news from America and around the world to listeners in Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁹ These programs would also be more beneficial from the station’s perspective, as “not a word of propaganda would have to be added... the listener would gradually be shifting onto a different level.”⁵⁰ Radio Free Europe should pursue international and cultural reporting, the report concludes, if it wishes to retain listeners who are receiving more and more of their news from local sources.

As early as 1957, Peroutka began adjusting the topics of his shows in line with the suggestions in this report. On April 6th of that year, he opened his broadcast with a description of the view of Carnegie Hall from his New York office and broadened that to a more general discussion of the merits of the American tax system.⁵¹ On April 20th, his broadcast focused on civil rights in the United States, comparing his status in Czechoslovakia as much less than that of African-Americans. (“The Negro in America enjoys every civic right,” he announces, in a rather out-of-touch declaration).⁵² From 1961 through 1965, though, his Sunday Night Talks centered on the struggle for independence in Algeria and Laos, American involvement in Vietnam, and the Cultural Revolution in China. Much less often came discussion of Czechoslovak news and politics, and entirely absent were the rallying cries to rise up against the administration so common in his early years on the air.

This international focus seems to support the propositions set forward in the undated document about a broadening focus

on international events to support Radio Free Europe's relevance. But also, focusing on other countries — even ones going through their own liberation struggles — temporarily removed the focus from liberation within Eastern Europe. Shifting to international stories proved beneficial not only because it provided listeners with new information, but also because it removed some of the pressure of reporting on internal issues, especially in the wake of the Hungarian Revolution. In the next two decades, as those in Washington, DC were forced to examine many of the operational practices Ferdinand Peroutka had attempted to answer in his work for them years earlier, Peroutka himself left the station to author five books, including *The Democratic Manifesto* (his ideological response to *The Communist Manifesto*) before his death in 1978 in New York.

Soft Liberation: The Institution Adapts

Throughout the 1960s, as seeming evidence of some insecurity about the future of the institution in a changing domestic political environment, the United States government ordered more comprehensive studies of Radio Free Europe's operations. As public opinion moved away from the antagonistic attitude towards the Soviet Union of the 1950s, many questioned what role Radio Free Europe would fill in the long-term future. United States foreign policy was quite different by the 1960s as it had been at the conception of Radio Free Europe in 1949. In 1963, John F. Kennedy used the term "détente" for the first time to describe the relaxing of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States.⁵³ More formally adopted by President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in the following years, the détente period loosely refers to the years between 1963 and 1979 in which the Soviet Union and the United States increasingly negotiated with one another.⁵⁴ While John Lewis Gaddis argues that détente was not a substantively different goal than containment, as both aimed to alter Soviet behavior, this new strategy did encourage negotiations despite ideological differences.⁵⁵

The first of these reports was authorized in 1960, while the Cold War was considered quite "hot," and was tasked to the

President's Committee on Information Activities Abroad, referred to as the Sprague Committee after Chairman Mansfield Sprague. Overall, the report stated, the institution has been slow to adapt to the changes in the Soviet world, and much more frequent re-examinations of its progress was needed to ensure it keeps up with political and technological advances.⁵⁶ It also highlighted the "dependence on refugee or émigré script writers and announcers who have had difficulty adjusting their personal aspirations and resentments to our broadcast policy."⁵⁷ The report concluded with hope for the future, with an official recommendation in support of continued government funding of the institution, as long as it is accompanied by an increased frequency of performance reviews.

In the years following this report, domestic support for sweeping anti-communist rhetoric and policies by the government dwindled in large part due to the Vietnam War and revelations of CIA funding for the National Students Association and other organizations abroad. As early as 1964, the book *The Invisible Government* discussed Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty in its chapter entitled "Black Radio." However, it was three more years before the CIA connection was revealed by other media sources and, eventually, confirmed by a politician.⁵⁸ On January 21, 1967 Senator Clifford Case from New Jersey delivered a speech to congress publicly discussing the funding of RFE/RL.⁵⁹ In this speech, he cited earlier statements from Lyndon B. Johnson that "no federal agency shall provide covert financial assistance or support, direct or indirect, to any of the nation's educational or voluntary organizations" as support for the separation of the CIA and Radio Free Europe.⁶⁰

Amidst growing discussion over the ethical implications of the funding for the stations later that year, another report — authored by the Radio Study Group this time — was issued. It echoed many of the same sentiments as the Sprague Committee report had seven years previously, but pushed concerns about the association with the CIA further. In its policy suggestions, the report states "it will not be feasible to deny government support of the radios, and we propose that such support without identifying CIA explicitly as the source." It is clear that at this point, the group was aware of the negative public opinion implications of disclosing the CIA connection. The stations should not be

regarded as permanent, it states, but they are “not incompatible with a policy of bridge–building.⁶¹” Despite its discussion of the potential pitfalls in the government–funding model, the report ultimately advises that it does not see Radio Free Europe or Radio Liberty able to continue operations without this government support. “It will not be feasible to deny government support of the radios, and we propose that such support (without identifying CIA explicitly as the source) continues,” the report ends.⁶² In December of 1967, Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms approved “surge funding” (increased support) for Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty through 1969.⁶³ In the next two years, he predicted, the funding structure would likely become a bigger point of contention in the political arena, and the surge funding would ensure that Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty could continue to operate through 1968 midterm elections. Funding was extended in 1969 though, in an effort to leave the decision up to the next presidential administration.

Shortly after taking office in 1971, Richard Nixon signed a proposal by the Office of Management and Budget that recommended eliminating Radio Liberty’s funding altogether, and maintaining only a very small budget for reduced Radio Free Europe operations. Particularly interesting is the reasoning in the report to support the decision; that the institution “no longer stresses the need to liberate the Soviet Union from communism.⁶⁴” According to A. Ross Johnson, this characterization of the Radio’s role was indicative of a “fundamental misunderstanding” of the roles of RFE and RL by a new Budget Office unfamiliar with its workings.⁶⁵ Perhaps this document is an anomaly, and there was some misunderstanding by the office. Still though, the idea that funding could be cut because the radio is failing to stress liberation enough suggests that, as late as 1971, liberation was a worthy goal and an assumed function of the radio to at least some in the Nixon administration.

After outrage within Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe over the cuts, President Nixon agreed to reconsider his position and took the debate to Congress. On June 30, 1971, after days of debate on the floor, Congress passed a resolution to end CIA direct assistance for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The following day, the CIA issued its official declaration, stating that it would

cease all funding and other forms of support to both stations effective immediately.⁶⁶ In March of the following year, Nixon signed Senate Bill S–18, which designated the State Department the agency now responsible for all of the activities of RFE/RL.⁶⁷ The extent to which this change actually altered day–to–day operations of the institution is debatable, but similar to the debate over the use of liberation, the rhetoric and image purported by the decision proved as important to its continued existence as actual policy.

Internally, Radio Free Europe experimented with its own image modification strategies. The years following these reports, coinciding with a somewhat thawed relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, saw increased autonomy of journalists working with Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty. This attitude was short–lived, though, as a series of Russian broadcasts believed to be anti–Semitic and anti–American in 1975 and 1976 led to a reexamining of the recent changes in employee policies. An updated policy manual had been released in 1974, and had relaxed much of the language about promoting western–style democracy through radio programming. In response to the outcry, Radio Free Europe Vice President Walter Scott created a side–by–side comparison of the 1971 and 1974 official program policy guidelines. The 1974 policy manual, he writes in the attached letter to director Sig Mikelson, “played a role in triggering the unprecedented and disruptive ferment which has taken place in the Russian service.⁶⁸” Some journalists, Scott argues, took the manual’s relaxed language as a sign of the “weakening of American management’s positions as to the exercise of control over the basic thrust of programming and the exposition of democratic principles.” In the document following the letter, he highlights the key areas in the 1974 guidelines and places them next to their more pro–American, pro–democracy aims in the 1971 manual. For example, the “Purpose” section in 1971 read that RFE and RL were “dedicated to the task of helping citizens of the USSR in their efforts to achieve freedom from dictatorial rule,” whereas the 1974 “Purpose” section read that the institution was a “professional medium committed to the principle of free information as embodied in the United Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶⁹”

The emphases of these statements (freedom from dictatorial rule to free information) are clearly different from one another, and the international focus of the 1974 manual is noteworthy in its continuation towards an international focus to shift the burden of responsibility away from the United States.

In the Broadcasting Objectives section, an entire paragraph of the 1971 version describes the “Ultimate Goal” as seeing “all the people’s of the USSR acquire the opportunity to live in freedom with truly democratic political institutions.” While the 1974 manual does include a Broadcasting Objectives section that echoes some of the other goals present in 1971 — the broader objective of the dissemination of free information, for example — the “Ultimate Goal” paragraph is removed.⁷⁰ Scott created this document, he explained, to guide the creation of the new policy guidelines and a manual that would help avoid broadcasts of the sort that provoked this discussion. The creation process of the next round of policy guidelines lasted for many more years than perhaps Scott expected: a preliminary guide was released in 1982, but it was not until 1987 that the directors, government officials, and journalists finally agreed upon a final set of revised program policy guidelines.

The dozens of drafts and letters exchanged about these new guidelines sum up some of the most pressing questions Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty had faced since its inception thirty years earlier — what languages should they broadcast in? Is “self-determination” an acceptable term to continue to use? By the time that this new manual was released, the geopolitical landscape had again entirely changed. The 1987 Professional Code opens with the following statement: “The essence of RFE/RL’s mission is the practice of independent, professional, and responsible broadcast journalism in order to provide uncensored news.”⁷¹ By 1987, the tone is much closer to the 1974 international focus on responsible journalism as opposed to adamant support of democracy in undemocratic regimes. While the concerns Scott notes in his 1976 letter and report may have fizzled a decade later, the extensive discussions they prompted about journalist autonomy and the rhetoric of self-determination and autonomy demonstrate the continued challenges remaining since the drafting of the first policy documents in 1950.

Conclusion

Three years later, RFE/RL would contribute extensive — yet not always factually accurate — reporting on the fall of the Soviet Union and the democratic revolutions across the region. Most famously, a Radio Free Czechoslovakia broadcast during the first days of the November 1989 protests in Prague reported that state police had killed a student protester; later proved to be completely false. While the misstep raised similar concerns to the 1956 Hungarian broadcasts, potential controversy over the broadcast was overshadowed by the success of the demonstrations, and the sheer enormity of political overhaul at this time period. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the entire foundation of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty needed to be reexamined. Although some bureaus had begun to be established outside of Europe at this point, all of the journalists and infrastructure was geared towards Central and Eastern Europe. Since 1989 though, coverage has expanded to more than fifty countries “struggling to overcome autocratic institutions, violations of human rights, centralized economics, ethnic and religious hostilities, regional conflicts, and controlled media,⁷²” and the headquarters have since moved from Munich to Prague. The structure of the institution also changed dramatically in 1994 when President Bill Clinton ended State Department funding and control. To replace it, he created the Broadcasting Board of Governors, a bi-partisan agency that oversees RFE/RL, as well as other American radio operations, and receives funding from Congress each year.⁷³

With the exception of the crisis in Ukraine this past year, European coverage has diminished considerably since the mid 1990s, with an increased focus on the Middle East.

RFE/RL now operates “Under the Black Flag,” a blog on their website which tracks the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq.⁷⁴ Many stories in this collection of reports focus on those leaving their home countries of the former Soviet Union to join IS forces in Iraq and Syria. Bill Clinton’s decision to detach the institution from the State Department was designed to depoliticize RFE/RL. The stories published today, while always political because of the conflict areas they focus on, have a more detached, objective nature than the calls-to-action Peroutka broadcasted

in his early reports. Perhaps the largest shift for the continued operations of RFE/RL, though, has been the decline of the radio in general and the advent of digital social media. The United States' tradition of free press — the same tradition heralded as reason for establishing this institution — has always been ideologically at odds with the idea of a state-controlled media. The pluralistic, participatory media of today makes the very idea of a state agency controlling a media outlet — particularly one that yields considerable political and military power at home and abroad — seem archaic. However, the State Department's current efforts to combat IS on social media seem to have adopted practices from the earliest days of Radio Free Europe.

In 2014, the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism, a division of the US State Department, launched the social media campaign *Think Again Turn Away* on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and YouTube.⁷⁵ Through blurbs of 140 characters or less, @ThinkAgainTurnAway aims to sway those on Twitter — primarily teenage boys in the Middle East — on the fence about joining Islamic organizations such as IS. Extremist Islamic terrorist groups are increasingly relying on social media to recruit new members, and maintain active presences themselves, and if the United States does wish to enter this ideological battle, social media is an important arena. It is not apparent that the State Department is entering this arena in the most productive way, though. The account has been highly criticized for its practice of responding directly to the tweets of IS members and supporters, therefore disseminating their message to a wider audience. As Director of the international terrorism research center SITE Intelligence Group Rita Katz writes in her scathing review of the program “The State Department’s Twitter War with ISIS is Embarrassing,” the engagement has often been tactless on the part of the State Department — in particular she cites a conversation the account entered into with one former ISIS member about Abu Ghraib, not exactly a convincing argument for American moral supremacy.⁷⁶

Recent tweets from the department focus on petty rumors about individual leaders within IS in a way reminiscent of the early “poison factory” years at Radio Free Europe⁷⁷: “ISIS leader Abu Waheeb ‘appeared on many occasions wearing Adidas or Nike sneakers,’ even as ISIS bans Nike apparel.” In another

recent post, the account responds to a pro-IS photo collage posted by an Iraqi account that has now been removed with the following messages:⁷⁸ “Photos are old. Why does ISIS need to resort to recycling state propaganda photos? Must not perform enough good deeds.”

While most of the tweets denounce the organization for their acts of mass violence, the tweets like those above, which seem designed solely to provoke rather than actually provide meaningful information to the public, do not reflect well on the professionalism of the State Department. The ideology behind the account's existence, that the United States has an obligation to confront the messages of our “enemies” even if the messages are not initially aimed at us, recalls early Radio Free Europe rhetoric about “answering the lies of the Kremlin.” An occasionally fumbling United States media campaign attempting to “answer the lies” of IS seems to be the 2015 Radio Free Europe. And with that connection come the same questions and dangers as those of the 1950s. Is it the role of the State Department to address the peoples the US determines are “victims” of an enemy regime or organization? Do tweets necessitate engagement and support? Could tweets crafted by the State Department imply a commitment to fighting IS that may not actually exist?

In discussing Radio Free Europe with people, primarily those alive in the 1950s and 1960s, I am struck by how it is so often considered a relic of the American Cold War propaganda machine and not something with a visible presence today. Beyond its continuous operations out of Prague and coverage of events around the world, it has also laid blueprints for state-level use of media for other ventures. The *Think Again Turn Away* campaign is asking their journalists and policy makers to strive for the similarly impossible goals Peroutka outlined sixty years ago: America must show those in foreign countries that there is another way — a better, more democratic way — than what they are being told, yet we cannot, and should not, always pledge to these actions. In 1956, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty realized the dangers and impossibility of their original goals, and spent the next three decades attempting to continue “the fight” through means less destructive to the American image abroad. While the individual journalists and policy directors within the

institution may have successfully worked towards figuring this out internally, as a country, we continue to search for ways to responsibly exercise soft power abroad.

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IV.

GROWING UP GREEN
IN RAJASTHAN:
Feminism and Grassroots
Desertification Combat
in Piplantri Village

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To what extent did the Piplantri reforestation succeed in its goal to promote gender equality and empower women and girls in the village? This initiative has been examined on its own, as well as through the lenses of Social Movement Theory, Political Ecology, and Environment and Development, and results have been inconclusive. I found Environment and Development to be the most useful lens through which to study Piplantri, due to the depth of the relevant sources, which lent themselves well to a critical examination of the Piplantri case; however, due to the lack of information on the Piplantri case and the superficial nature of the news sources at my disposal, the examination proved inconclusive. Certain apparent factors indicate that the Piplantri initiative might very well precipitate female empowerment within the community and lead to greater gender equality in the future, but what little quantitative data exists is not particularly promising, and the lack of female involvement in both the decision-making and reporting processes is not encouraging. The Piplantri case may be an ecological success; however, its impact may prove detrimental to its purported beneficiaries.

The Case: Grassroots Afforestation in Rajasthan

In 2006, former sarpanch of the Piplantri village in Rajasthan's Rajsamand district, Shyam Sundar Paliwal, began an initiative to combat female feticide and empower girls and women, while also increasing the village's economic capacity and combating the forest degradation that has led to increased encroachment of the Thar Desert into Rajasthan.¹ The death of his daughter, Kiran, inspired the movement, and outwardly it has since been quite successful.² Upon the birth of a girl in the village, 111 trees are planted in her honor, donations of ₹21,000 by the village and ₹10,000 by the panchayat are placed into a fixed deposit (FD) account, and the family signs an affidavit promising not to engage in infanticide or marry off their daughter until she turns 18.³ As long as the parents adhere to the agreement and "the daughters are nurtured, educated and not prematurely married off," the family will have access to the fixed deposit money after 20 years.⁴ Parents are also required to "nurture the saplings till they are mature," and some have even gone above and beyond

these stipulated requirements; Gehrilal Balai, for example, now plants a new tree on his daughter's birthday, in addition to the 111 planted when she was born.⁵ This change in attitude appears striking when one considers this initiative's participants; in a village of approximately 8,000 residents, 60 girls on average are born each year, about half of whom are accepted with reluctance by their families⁶ and are considered disposable, according to Georges Arsenault, head of Unicef India.⁷ These girl-averse families are identified by a village committee, and it is these families to whom the proposal is made for a collection to be taken up.⁸ If Balai's change in attitude toward his daughter—that is, his decision to celebrate her birthday by planting a new tree each year, which is not required under the terms of the initial agreement—represents a general change in the attitude of the average family toward its daughters, then the initiative has been at least ideologically successful.

In the six years between the start of the initiative and 2013, according to *The Hindu*, 250,000 neem, sheesham, mango, amla, and other trees have been planted, along with aloe vera plants to protect the trees from termites.⁹ According to Mr. Paliwal, once the village realized that aloe vera was not only useful for protecting trees but also a marketable commodity, they brought in outside experts to train women to turn the plant into juice, gel, pickles, and other goods that could be sold for a profit.¹⁰ The mixed success of the initiative in promoting gender equality and environmental sustainability is visible in two ways: an overall increase in gender disparity, and an overall increase in village health and security. According to *The Hindu*, Piplantri has "banned alcohol, open grazing of animals and cutting of trees," and has reported no police cases since 2005 or '06,¹¹ though self-reported numbers should be subject to some scrutiny. At the same time, while a 2001 census reported a gender ratio of 1000:1000 females to males, the 2011 census reported a gender ratio of 990:1000 females to males. Though this is still higher than the overall Rajasthan ratio of 929:1000 females to males,¹² it nevertheless constitutes a decline in numerical equity between male and female children, and indicates that Paliwal's initiative might not have been as tangibly successful as *The Hindu*, *Hindustan Times*, and *Huffington Post* have claimed.

NGOs and Civil Society Advocacy:
Social Movement Theory

In an article on household drought coping strategies in Rajasthan, Jai Singh Rathore discusses agro-forestry and tree management alongside migration, livestock- and animal-husbandry, financial-based management, and other strategies. According to this article, farmers in the region have traditionally “maintained trees partly as a form of insurance for use in times of severe droughts, prolonged sickness, and other periods of critical scarcity.” Trees can be cut down and harvested for wood or sold for money in place of crops (which, in cases of prolonged sickness or drought, would be difficult to cultivate). Not only are trees such a lucrative commodity that “during drought years [they] fetch as high a price as foodgrains,” but they also provide a crucial service during rainy years, since “the crop yields around khejri trees and ber bush colonies are often higher than in other parts of the same plots.”¹³ In rural Rajasthan, the critical relationship between farmers and foliage is being undermined by ambiguity regarding the ownership and usage rights of common forest resources which has been caused by land reforms and property redistribution. This has weakened farmers’ ordinary system of harvest and crop planting and forest usage, and has “adversely affected farmers’ tree management systems.”

The case of Piplantri Village does not appear at first to have anything to do with farming. The initiative was begun as a commemorative act by Paliwal for his daughter. However, one must consider the reasons why Paliwal might have chosen this particular mode of commemoration. As Rathore’s article demonstrates, there is a clear history in Rajasthan of a close relationship between rural communities and trees as a source of life and livelihood, and it seems likely that Paliwal’s decision to commemorate his daughter by planting trees in her honor—and the community’s subsequent adoption of this practice—is the logical evolution of a cultural understanding into an institutional practice.

This cultural understanding of the critical importance of trees and of maintaining forest health is something which Udaya Sekhar Nagothu argues has been entirely ignored by the “researchers, state agencies and conservationists” who contribute

to mainstream attitudes of who is to blame for deforestation in Rajasthan.¹⁴ According to Nagothu, it is a matter of convenience for state agencies and other authorities to subscribe to these mainstream views and “exclude local communities from forests and protected areas,” such as the Sariska Tiger Reserve (STR) in Rajasthan, rather than deeply examine the realities of rural communities’ actual land use practices.¹⁵ Non-consumptive land use practices, such as the religious and social valuation of forests, have resulted in “rules and conventions” put in place through systems of local governance (such as panchayats like the one that governs Piplantri, which is partially responsible for the deposit of money into a family’s account). In addition, Nagothu explains that placing the blame for deforestation on rural communities ignores that their consumption and extraction “largely involves collection of dry and fallen wood rather than cutting of trees,” and that while it is true that rural communities are very reliant on wood fuel, their means of obtaining it are not traditionally as destructive as mainstream wisdom declares.¹⁶ “Local strategies,” Nagothu argues, “such as changing livestock composition, regulated grazing patterns, fodder production on private farms and restrictions on the use of resources from temple lands” are just as—if not *more*—effective than the mainstream top-down approaches to reforestation and the cessation of deforestation in Rajasthan currently practiced by India’s government.¹⁷ Nagothu advocates for a more “culturally appropriate” form of forest management, one which takes the wisdom, practices, and needs of local communities into account, and it is possible that Piplantri’s reforestation efforts and practices could be used as a viable model (though not a blueprint, since each village’s needs and practices differ, and therefore require subtly different approaches) for sustainable forest use policy. After all, Piplantri planted a quarter of a million trees in a six-year period, and found the aloe vera planted in the vicinity to be more marketable than the wood itself. This successful reforestation effort owes its success to community involvement and the empowerment and agency of local people. “Alienating local people from forests over which they previously had access and control can have negative implications for forest management,”¹⁸ and as the Piplantri case shows, communities which

have the power to control their land—and feel secure that doing so will provide them with long-term as well as short-term benefits—are more likely to invest in the future, rather than take what they need in the present.

Rajendra Singh, in his chapter on water harvesting in Rajasthan, echoes the sentiment expressed by Nagothu that local wisdom about conservation, reforestation, and other drought-mitigating practices is more effective than government approaches, but this wisdom is usually regarded with disdain or contempt by those who attribute degradation primarily to rural and impoverished communities.¹⁹ Singh's case study focuses on water conservation rather than reforestation and his home district of Alwar, Rajasthan rather than Rajsamad. But, there are several parallels between his case study and the case of Piplantri. Along with deforestation, one of the other causes of desertification and the encroachment of the Thar Desert into the Aravalli hills region of Rajasthan is the depletion of non-saline aquifers in the region and the inability of the ground to hold water for long enough that plant life has the opportunity to take root.²⁰ Singh describes how, when he and three others went to the village of Mangu Meena in 1985 intending to find ways to increase prosperity, the situation seemed so hopeless that two of the four gave up and departed. Singh, however, took the advice of a local lower-caste woman named Nathi Balai and began to implement a nearly forgotten water retention system. These *talabs*—dams which would prevent rainwater from running off immediately and give it time to seep into the soil and become groundwater—caused a swift improvement in the amount of vegetation and rejuvenated the local ecosystem, and was quickly taken up by other villages in the region.²¹ By 2009, when Singh's chapter was published in *The Other India*, a local NGO (headed by Singh) called Tarun Bharat Sangh (TBS, or “Indian Youth Association”) had turned the idea into an initiative, and 8,600 *talabs* had been dug in over 1,068 of the Alwar district's villages.²²

Singh's *talab* case exemplifies several key factors of civil society advocacy: 1) a return to local wisdom and traditional practices, 2) the efficacy of these practices over those preferred by long-standing institutional powers, and 3) the growth of grass-roots initiatives into organizations with institutional

power. Singh illustrates the staying power of the *talabs* by recounting how “during a heavy monsoon downpour in 1988, the people's *johads* [described as small reservoirs held in check by earthen dams, not unlike *talabs*] stood firm while the government built dam at Jaitpura [...] got washed away.”²³ A four-man initiative evolved into a district-wide NGO that has successfully brought water to semi-arid Alwar. If given room and time to grow, the Piplantri tree-planting initiative might do the same. Tree-planting is another way to combat desertification, and while it would be restricted to regions that have already built *talabs* and *johads* or whose naturally-occurring sources of fresh water are not too strained, the growth of Singh's initiative into something district-wide provides precedence for the spread of desertification-combatting grass-roots measures. It is therefore conceivable that what began as a village-wide means of investing in girls could, given the chance, eventually spread to other parts of Rajsamad, and possibly even Rajasthan in general.

However, the growth of such initially grass-roots NGOs is not necessarily a purely positive phenomenon; as with any sort of growth, according to a 2014 article by Saurabh Gupta, the expansion of a local NGO comes with drawbacks. Gupta argues that, while grassroots NGOs have the potential to “alter local power relations and caste-based discriminations,” they also run the risk of becoming too bureaucratic if the emphasis shifts toward efficiency and professionalism for the purpose of self-preservation and away from addressing root causes first and foremost.²⁴ According to Gupta, NGOs in India have become a force for development and real change. They have gone from “‘demanding’ development from the state to actually “‘delivering’ development” themselves.²⁵ However, Gupta argues that while NGOs are relying less on the political structure, they are also moving away from their beneficiaries in terms of hiring practices and focus on types of reform.

Gupta identifies two key trends: “the marginalization of the low-paid field-staff” in favor of urban, educated, higher-level professional staff; and the movement away from altering and dismantling power structures in favor of meeting donation targets and “investing in professionalization” through documentation of projects and increasing their accountability to

donors. These trends are the root causes and primary barriers to development, as they cause a bureaucratization of organizations, a resulting reduction in their efficacy, and the alienation of grassroots employees from the organization.²⁶ Gupta concludes that while NGOs in Rajasthan have a history of effectively disrupting power structures and creating tangible change within communities, they are at risk of *de facto* replacing the original power-holders if they become too preoccupied with meeting targets and quotas, relegate grass-roots workers to the bottom of the organization hierarchy in favor of urban professionals, and prioritize self-preservation over radical alteration of social landscapes.²⁷ This does not mean that Piplantri's initiative cannot eventually spreading to other parts of Rajsamad through NGOs. However, we must consider Gupta's analysis of the effect that growth has had on the socio-political trajectories of other Rajasthan NGOs. The risk that grassroots members of such an NGO would be marginalized in favor of urban outsiders is quite high, a phenomenon that ultimately undermines civil society advocacy and the importance of social movements in effecting real change. However, the case of Rajendra Singh's NGO demonstrates how effective such organizations can be in promoting local wisdom and implementing these methods on a relatively large scale. The Piplantri initiative's future might include growing into an NGO, but it is crucial to recognize what pitfalls it might then be subject to and the risks involved with Indian social movements becoming brick-and-mortar organizations.

Political Ecology:

Assessing India's Approaches to Conservation

Reforestation In Rajasthan—and India in general—is not new; India's first National Forest Policy (NFP) dates back to 1894. The interest in forests has shifted from timber production to conservation for its own sake, and the sake of the species that rely upon woodland ecosystems, but the target of 33% forest cover set by the 1952 NFP—which was confirmed by both the 1988 NFP and the 2006 National Forestry Commission report—has remained the same.²⁸ The 33% target is somewhat arbitrary, because instead of resulting from an holistic examination of India and its climates,

it was based on an analysis of “existing forest cover in various countries and regions of the world” and the reductive assumption that the positive correlation between forest cover and prosperity in other parts of the world was—at least in part—causal.²⁹ That the target was reiterated as late as 2009 is problematic, as it indicates a lack of self-awareness on the part of the central governing bodies responsible for forest restoration. This failing is exacerbated by lack of understanding in both academia and the Indian central government of the root causes of forest degradation. Articles—even articles critiquing certain aspects of the NFP—are still being published that list “excess removal of non-timber forest products, fodder, [and] fuelwood” as the primary obstacles to the realization of the NFP's goals.³⁰ The paradigm expressed by Joshi, Pant, et al., which renders its adherents more likely to advise playing with target numbers than to actually suggest reforming the top-down, centralized approach to reforestation, is outdated and old-fashioned. Its practical implementation is still, however, predominant in India.

According to a paper on Desertification Control and land degradation management (2004), the Thar Desert is expanding toward New Delhi at a rate of half a kilometer per year. Restoration and anti-desertification initiatives were implemented as early as the 1960s by the Rajasthan forest department, and include a 649 km-long canal from the Himalayas to the Thar, “stabilization of shifting sand dunes,” and the “creation of microclimates” through several afforestation strategies.³¹ The top-down focus of these initiatives is impossible to ignore. The afforestation strategies relied heavily on the introduction of “fast growing exotic tree species” from the United States, South and Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and Australia, to address the “slow growing” nature of indigenous species. According to Surendra Singh Chauhan, the growth rates of these introduced tree species are “very promising,” and the displeasure of the “desert dwellers” with the introduction of foreign vegetation constituted a puzzling phenomenon. Chauhan acknowledges that the native *Acacia senegal* “is of great socio-economic value to [desert inhabitants]” due to its high fuel, fodder, and gum resin yield, and also mentions that this particular species of tree is also “somehow linked with the food chain” of the endan-

gered Great Indian bustard.³² { [add a sentence to tie the recap of this article back to the point that indigenous species > exotic species] Chauhan also reports the success of sand dune stabilization through increased planting of indigenous and exotic desert species with root networks that bind together tightly and prevent moisture from causing soil erosion, as well as the effectiveness of shelterbelts in reducing wind velocity 20–46% and reducing soil loss due to wind by half. Other efforts by the state to combat desertification included aerial seeding (which Chauhan reports was, in fact, less productive than hand-seeding),³³ afforestation of old limestone and gypsum mines, the fencing off of certain sections of land for 5–20 year periods by the Jodhpur and Rajasthan forest departments, and a government attempt to replicate traditional methods of silvipasture (a mixture of trees and grasses) cultivation using fast-growing exotic tree species.³⁴ Chauhan concludes, unsurprisingly, that “ecological destruction of the desert ecosystem” and desertification is being caused by the “over-exploitation of fodder and fuel wood” by the very people who depend on those resources for their survival.³⁵

This entire article drastically oversimplifies the issue of desertification, and is resoundingly tone-deaf when considered in the context of the Piplantri initiative, which began two or three years after the article’s publication. The opinions of the Thar Desert’s inhabitants are relegated to footnotes and afterthoughts, and while Chauhan does acknowledge the contribution of local custom to the silvipasture cultivation strategy, it is briefly mentioned and swiftly forgotten in favor of listing the genera and species of the government’s chosen trees and shrubs. } However, the Rajasthani forest department’s initiatives are no more worthy of immediate dismissal than the hypothetical Piplantri village NGO, and some of the strategies have indeed been effective. While introducing invasive species to a region is perhaps not particularly wise—given the number of cautionary tales and horror stories that have arisen out of similar ecosystem management strategies in places like Australia—it is difficult to deny that such a substantial decline in soil erosion and wind velocity in tree-screen and shelter-belt plantations is impressive. In addition, the mindful cultivation of indigenous desert species whose root systems keep the sand in place and which are sturdy

enough to provide fodder and fuel even in times of extreme drought is a potentially life-saving tactic. At the moment, the Piplantri village planting strategy is limited in its scope; it is worth considering that additional planning with regard to tree and shrub species and location of planting might yield even greater benefits for the community.

Chauhan’s neo-Malthusian understanding of the relationship between people and nature is, according to Nagothu Udaya Sekhar, “predicated on the idea that local people [pose] a serious threat to natural resources” and that Garrett Hardin’s understanding of people as rational actors operating autonomously—resulting in a Tragedy of the Commons—is a paradigm that legitimately explains the cause of environmental degradation in rural areas.³⁶ N. Shanmugaratnam argues that not only is the neo-Malthusian approach too simplistic to be applicable in the context of rural Rajasthan, but it also is inapplicable to CPRs by default, since CPRs are by definition controlled through systems of governance which prevent the Tragedy of the Commons from occurring.³⁷ Sekhar examines whether or not the Joint Forest Management (JFM) policy, while outwardly a step towards decentralization of environmental protection, might in practice be “an attempt to institutionalize state dominance” of the STR,³⁸ and concludes that while the motivation for the new policy demonstrates an understanding of the counter-neo-Malthusian principles that have become more common in discourses surrounding local impacts on the ecology, the JFM policy has not so far led to any practical change.

One of the key reasons for this, according to Sekhar, is the corruption within the Forest Department and its reluctance to relinquish its authority.³⁹ During a study of the relationship between the Forest Department and local people, it was found to be “not congenial for a dialogue in most villages,” and there was significant tension between the parties which often resulted in conflicts over resource use—conflicts which were usually resolved through bribes and manipulation of the Forest Department’s permit system.⁴⁰ Another factor in the JFM’s lack of success is the fact that “the management of common-pool resources (CPRs) in traditional communities was mostly based on common property rights in the pre-colonial period,” and has not changed much

since.⁴¹ CPRs are still divided up along geographical lines which don't necessarily correspond to social and traditional lines, which restricts some communities from land to which they historically had access and grants access to some communities that historically had no right to those resources, which can lead to conflict.⁴² Sekhar advises better responsiveness by the Forest Department to local institutions which are already effective in managing CPRs, and a shift in its role from one of "direction" to one of "facilitation."⁴³ Ultimately Sekhar concludes that the Forest Department must include local people and traditional institutions in its plans for forest management, but also that the Department cannot be wholly discarded, as it is necessary for the protection of these traditional institutions against outside forces.⁴⁴

In some Rajasthani states, another barrier to sustainable land use is the panchayats themselves. According to Shanmugaratnam, panchayat circles of authority are too large for cooperation and a sense of community to be fostered within them, and that they are prone to regional and caste-based factionalism, which limits their "technical competence" and "political and administrative strength" on matters of land usage and grazing rights.⁴⁵ Additionally, Shanmugaratnam discusses the failure of panchayats to effectively reforest the commons under their jurisdiction, particularly in the states of Nagaur and Jaisalmer.⁴⁶ Ordinarily these trees have a very low survival rate due to panchayat failure to adequately water the seeds and protect the young trees from grazing animals. "There is not enough revenue," according to Shanmugaratnam, for panchayats "to plant trees and tend them until they are established."⁴⁷ Examined within this context, the case of Piplantri is particularly fascinating. When Sundar Paliwal began the initiative in 2006, he was still the sarpanch of the Piplantri panchayat, and to this day the panchayat remains a key participant in the collection of funds for and establishment of fixed deposit accounts for the families of the village's girls.⁴⁸ The reason for this seems to be that, while Paliwal was indeed a member of the local government, the methodology involved in establishing the tree planting initiative was grassroots and ground-up rather than a top-down imposition. As a result, participation is not mandatory; girl-averse families are identified and given the option of gaining access to ₹31,000

after twenty years as long as they plant the 111 trees and sign the affidavit promising to educate their daughter and not marry her off prematurely.⁴⁹ Additionally, it seems that the collection taken up among community members for the ₹21,000 might be a voluntary donation. Regardless, the success of the Piplantri initiative—given Shanmugaratnam's assessment of panchayats' typical reforestation success—appears atypical, and therefore somewhat puzzling. Clearly it is possible that a panchayat can be cohesive enough as a community to engage in long-term development and reforestation initiatives under the right conditions; the question, then, is how those conditions can be replicated among other Rajasthan panchayats that have displayed a lesser capacity for productive and effective land management. Further study would need to be undertaken in order to determine the causes of Piplantri panchayat's social cohesiveness and conclusively identify the underlying causes for the success of the 111 tree initiative.

Environment and Development: Ecofeminism and Ecocentrism in India

According to Chandan Kumar Gautam and Anand Prem Rajan of VIT Universty in Vellore, while India's environmental movements have been largely based on ideals rooted in ecocentrism, eco-feminism has been the driving factor of recent environmental movements in India, and women have been "the real heroes" of such movements.⁵⁰ The Chipko movement, in which people from several parts of India protected trees by refusing to move out of the way of woodcutting machinery or by tying sacred threads (symbolizing a sibling relationship in Hindu tradition) around trees which were in danger of being cut down, was initiated in the 1970s by women. It was also inspired by the story of a Rajasthani Bishnoi woman named Amrita Devi who, in 1730, protested the felling of a forest by holding onto a tree and "challenging the king's men to cut her before cutting the trees."⁵¹ This martyrdom on behalf of the forest inspired her three daughters and many other Bishnoi families to do the same, which in turn inspired the women who would begin the Chipko movement.⁵² In the Bihar district city of Muzaffarpur, on the other side of

India from Rajasthan, a tradition similar to the Piplantri initiative was begun around the same time that the Chipko movement was gaining traction; it differed from Piplantri in its intention, however, as the trees planted upon the birth of a girl were a practical investment in lieu of bankable liquid assets rather than a symbolic (and tangentially practical) gesture to supplement a bank account.⁵³ However, both traditions of tree planting in honor of a girl's birth, as well as the Chipko movement and the tale of Bishnoi self-sacrifice by which the movement was inspired, suggest a relationship not only in the Indian popular imagination between women and trees, but in quite practical terms between women and conservation.

This relationship can be understood through the experiences of Ela R. Bhatt, the founder of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), in her article on the relationship between women, power, and money; while the discussion takes place mainly within the context of SEWA, the power/money relationship and the empowerment of women by economic means is a common thread. Bhatt identified several challenges to women, including the interrelated nature of economic and social barriers, meaning that women—generally considered second-class citizens, especially within lower castes—face far greater challenges than their male counterparts, and are expected to do more. Bhatt explains it thus:

“Barriers to entry to labor as well as product markets [...] are closely connected with gender, caste, and class. Social institutions, social processes, and social structures have a huge influence over economic development. Moreover, social needs such as health, childcare, education, and housing are all linked to economic capabilities as well as to the provision of social security, by markets, and the state. Thus, it is the market and state structures that determine the poverty or well-being of the people.”⁵⁴

Market and state structures, according to this analysis, are the mechanism primarily responsible for inhibiting social movement among women in particular, and breaking the barriers of these structures by financial means can also be an effective means of social empowerment.⁵⁵ One of the reasons why communities such as Piplantri have historically been less than welcoming to

girls is that, in socio-historical terms, girls have been regarded as a burden on their families. According to Sundar Paliwal, girls in Rajasthan are undesirable especially among poor communities because “marriage is an expensive proposition” which families are often hard-pressed to afford.⁵⁶ It was for this reason that the village of Mustafagunj in the Muzaffarpur district began its tree-planting tradition in the 1970s; ten semal trees were planted on the birth of a girl, and these trees could be harvested at the time of her marriage and sold to pay her dowry.⁵⁷ While the tree planting portion of the Piplantri initiative is a little less cynical, it likewise involves a practical aspect: the fixed deposit accounts opened by the panchayat for the families of unwanted girls “give the parents a sense of financial security” and tangible financial incentive not to kill their daughter.⁵⁸ The trees themselves—or, more accurately perhaps, the highly profitable aloe vera cultivated around them—provide the women in the village with an additional source of income as the daughters for whom the trees were planted grow up and the FD accounts remain closed. According to Bhatt, money and mobility—not just social, but also the literal ability to move around outside the home—are inextricably linked, and a woman with money is a woman with sanction to go where she pleases and more tangibly and visibly contribute to her family's wellbeing.⁵⁹

Bina Agarwal of the University of Delhi critiques traditional notions of ecofeminism, especially traditional ecofeminist notions correlating oppression of women and degradation of land. Her critiques support Bhatt's findings with regard to women's role in households and economies. According to Agarwal, the mere involvement of women in environmental movements—contrary to what Gautam and Rajan imply—does not necessarily indicate a change in gender relations or a practical furthering of their particular interests.⁶⁰ Women, according to Agarwal, “have typically been present in a major way in these movements,” but that has rarely translated into a tangible change in social dynamics.⁶¹ The main problem as Agarwal understands it is that environmental movements—grassroots or otherwise—are mostly initiated and carried out by men, though they overwhelmingly impact women. Women are traditionally excluded from positions of government, and while greening

movements initiated at a grassroots level may seem outwardly successful simply due to an increase in foliage cover, the practical implications for women's equity can be disastrous.⁶² "Women's interests are linked [...] to the availability of fuel, fodder, and non-timber products" gathered from forests, and when access to these resources is restricted—for reasons from government intervention and fencing-off of protected areas to the autonomous greening initiatives of village men—it is women who overwhelmingly suffer.⁶³ Agarwal concludes that, in order for the relationship between women and men to be transformed, women's bargaining power must be enhanced through economic advancement, social support systems through family members and the state, and the dismantling of outdated conceptions of women's roles and responsibilities.⁶⁴ Bearing Agarwal's analysis in mind, further examination of the effects of the Piplantri case on women's economic and social status in the village is absolutely required. The initiative was, after all, begun by a man of great power and influence in the community, and while the media has reported the case as a success story, female perspectives are noticeably absent from every news source used in this paper.⁶⁵ What do the mothers of the girls born since 2006 think of the new tradition that has them planting over 3,300 trees a year? How has their socio-economic situation improved in the last decade, if it has at all? If this initiative is to be lauded as a resounding success for ecofeminism, much more rigorous study needs to be undertaken into its real, practical, tangible effects on the community, and the female community in particular.

Agarwal's view is reemphasized by later research undertaken by Dr. Maria Costanza Torri on the contributions of women to a grass-roots conservation initiative undertaken in Rajasthan's Sariska Tiger Reserve, in which she concludes that "the active participation of women in community organizations and their empowerment is a prerequisite to allow [sic] the woman to become a beneficiary of community-based conservation."⁶⁶ What Rajendra Singh fails to mention in his somewhat self-congratulatory article on the success of his NGO, Tarun Bharat Sangh, in promoting traditional methods of water harvesting⁶⁷ is that it was mostly women who were involved in the actual construction of the *johads*, according to Torri.⁶⁸ "After the massive emigration

of the men towards the big cities," women comprised the entire population of the village of Gopalpura; they built the *johads* with the help and guidance of the TBS, and after the project proved successful, the women of Sariska were "encouraged and motivated" to undertake similar conservation initiatives within the STR.⁶⁹ These initiatives include the construction of several thousand more reservoirs, as well as reforestation and ecosystem restoration within the reserve, which—according to the women whom Torri interviewed—has had a positive impact on their daily life.⁷⁰ Torri, like Agarwal, clearly emphasizes the importance of encouraging women "to play a major role in the management of the natural resources [...] through a process of empowerment," and like Agarwal, identifies the often contradictory interests of the men in power and the women responsible for the daily functioning of a household—and the prioritization by social hierarchy of the men's interests over those of the women. This crucial conflict can only be resolved through the dismantling of traditional gender roles and the promotion of women into positions of authority.⁷¹ It is not enough, Torri and Agarwal argue, for conservation to be undertaken and initiated at local and community levels—conceived and realized by male-dominated panchayats; women must be involved in the decision-making process, or they run the risk of being just as severely marginalized and adversely impacted by the results as they would have been under state-led initiatives.⁷²

Conclusions

What implications, then, does Torri and Agarwal's conclusion have for the sustainability and overall legitimacy of the Piplantri initiative in terms of social development and the empowerment of rural women? The Huffington Post lauds the initiative as a "possible antidote to gender discrimination," but the claims made by Agarwal and Torri call this into question; if women are not in positions of authority, if the social and economic agency of women is not improving, and if—as the statistics provided at the beginning of this essay demonstrate—the initiative has not produced a quantitative balancing of the gender ratio over the last decade, then it is a nice overture toward promoting gender equal-

ity, and little more. The economic benefits of the project through the sale of aloe vera may indeed be providing women with extra income, which as Bhatt argues is a crucial step in the process of empowerment. Additionally, the FD accounts established for the Piplantri girls—the eldest of whom are still nine years from legal marrying age—may, once the girls are old enough that their families can collect the money, strengthen their socioeconomic status and enhance their power in that sense. It will be interesting to see, in ten years' time, what the benefits have been to the financial and social climate of Piplantri as a result of this initiative; while it is possible that it is simply too soon for any real paradigmatic and ideological changes to have occurred and that it will take decades for them to become visible, there is also the danger that, due to the *de facto* paternalistic nature of the initiative, it may neither indicate nor cause ideological shifts. Given the limitation of the sources and the frustrating lack of in-depth journalism on the case itself, it is impossible at this time to determine anything about future outcomes or even the current atmosphere. Women's voices are absent, leading me to believe that this has been a male-dominated endeavor in spite of its overtly feminist appearance, and so I can make no claims either in favor or against the legitimacy of the Piplantri initiative as a tool for development.

I do, however, consider the lens of environment and development to be the most useful in examining this case, particularly because it raises more questions than it answers. Political Ecology is—at least in this case—simplistic at best and paternalistic at worst, and it fails to disentangle the complex relationships not only between rural people and the land they need for subsistence, but also between various castes, classes, genders, and other determinants of social hierarchy and political agency. Civil Society and NGOs under the umbrella of Social Movement Theory are useful to an extent, as the Piplantri case very clearly falls within the boundaries of a social movement with the potential to expand into an NGO; but like Political Ecology, the lens of Social Movement Theory also fails to consider the complex interplay between various sets and subsets of society, and Indian NGOs' history of growing increasingly problematic in their practices over time makes me think that the Piplantri initiative is perhaps better off at its current scale. Environment and devel-

opment, especially with regard to the social empowerment of women, is most useful for examining this case, as it allows for the greatest degree of criticism, and raises the most questions. Has the Piplantri initiative caused a noticeable change in female decision-making power within the village hierarchy? Has it increased their financial power? Their bargaining power? Have the rates of female infanticide seen a decline since 2006? Why are female voices not represented in the articles on Piplantri, and is this lack of voice through media indicative of a lack of voice in the village itself? Further study needs to be undertaken on the ground in Piplantri, through interviews with the local women both now and in perhaps ten years' time, when the initial beneficiaries of the FD accounts and ITI trees planted in their honor are old enough to have received the money, and their families have had time to notice a change—or lack of change—in the ease with which women can carry out their daily tasks. Slow change is better than no change at all, which is why further study ought to be undertaken in the future and judgment deferred until then—but no change at all means that the 'development' portion of the Piplantri initiative has failed in its goal to empower women, and that hypothetical failure will have implications for whether or not this is worth replicating on any sort of scale, and what changes ought to be made in order to make hypothetical replications viable in the long term.

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V.

THE IMPACT OF 2014 U.S
ECONOMIC SANCTIONS ON
RUSSIAN PUBLIC WELFARE AND
PUBLIC OPINION

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The use of economic sanctions as an alternative to military conflict can be traced back to Pericles' issuing of the Megarian Decree in 432 B.C.¹ While the exact reasoning for the sanctions is still debated, historian Donald Kagan contends the decree was issued to address a problem in a moderate manner that honored the Thirty Years Peace and prevented violence.² Since the Peloponnesian War, economic sanctions continue to be seen as an alternative to military conflict carrying smaller economic, political, and military costs.³

A majority of sanctions over the past century have originated from the United States.⁴ Most recently, the US has imposed economic sanctions on Russia to deter actions threatening Ukraine's democracy and sovereignty.^{5,6,7} A significant body of scholarship argues that 2014 US Russian sanctions have successfully eroded Russian public welfare and swayed public opinion against Vladimir Putin's government.^{8,9,10,11,12} In this study, us sanctions against Russia will be further deconstructed: in all, although us sanctions have negatively impacted Russian public welfare, they have yet to negatively affect Russian public opinion toward the Putin administration.

While much research exists on the effects of US sanctions on Iran, Iraq, and North Korea,¹³ little work exists on their effects in Russia. In Section One, I will examine literature that addresses economic and political theories on the effects of sanctions on citizens in targeted states. In Section Two, I will examine the 2014 US economic sanctions on Russia, using an empirical evaluation of their effect on general welfare and public opinion. In Section Three, I will analyze data from January 2014 to March 2015 to address how the Russian government has retained support in spite of American sanctions.

Section One

There has long been scholarly debate about the exact definition of economic sanctions. Scholar Dave Baldwin has established a well-recognized definition that will be used in this study: "an economic instrument which is employed by one or more international actors against another, ostensibly with a view to influencing that entity's foreign and/or security policy behavior."¹⁴

Other scholars posit broader definitions containing references to punishment or preventive action,¹⁵ but the above definition sufficiently addresses the wide scope of economic sanctions in its use of the term "influencing."

International relations scholar Dale Copeland argues that a disparity exists between perceived and actual effects of economic interdependence on international security. Liberalism contends that increased interdependence decrease conflict and heighten the value of trade. Contrary to these views, realist views posit that increased economic interdependence will increase the likelihood of war as a means of controlling greater pools of resources. Copeland argues that both liberalist and realist perspectives contain flaws, introducing a theory of future trade expectations: if there is an expectation for low or decreased future trade then realist theory will prevail, as dependent actors are likely to initiate war. If expectations for future trade are positive, war may be less likely.¹⁶

Copeland's theory leads one to consider the negative impacts economic sanctions may have on economic interdependence. US-imposed sanctions on Russia indicate an expectation of less future trade. Because Russia's dependence on the US economy is greater than that of the US toward Russia, Copeland's theory suggests the latter is inclined to initiate conflict in response to its threatened economic future. Similarly, Hufbauer et al. argue that sanctions are more effective when applied to countries that are typically allies, the opposite of what we find with the US and Russia in 2014.¹⁷ As states issue sanctions it is critical to understand the implications that limiting economic relations may have on overall international security.

Political science literature identifies four primary methods to apply economic sanctions: 1) impose trade controls such as embargos and selective tariffs, 2) suspend technical assistance such as via credit facilities, 3) freeze financial assets, and 4) blacklist companies.¹⁸ All have been applied in the recent case of US-Russia sanctions.^{19,20,21} Additionally, it is critical to understand how sanctions affect the general public in targeted nations. Targeted sanctions may impose negative economic consequences on all citizens of a state regardless of who is targeted. Similarly, freezing financial assets or blacklisting companies may primarily

affect the general public instead of economic or political leaders.

In recent years there has been “heightened attention to targeted sanctions” to prevent lower class citizens from extreme suffering.^{22,23} Johnston and Weintraub identify four principal concerns when evaluating the morality of economic sanctions: 1) comprehensive sanctions should be considered only in response to aggression or grave injustice, 2) the harm caused by sanctions should be proportionate to the good likely to be achieved, 3) there is a need to consider humanitarian exemptions, and 4) sanctions should ultimately aim to find “an effective political solution to the injustice.”²⁴ Furthermore, the UN Inter–Agency Standing Committee noted that economic sanctions “often directly affect the poorest strata of the population.”²⁵

Finally, Susan Allen finds that economic sanctions increase antigovernment activity, yet this activity is often mitigated by political structures in more autocratic states.²⁶ While sanctioning actors recognize sanctions’ generally negative impact on the general public, they do so with the expectation that it will cause a change in public opinion; if public opinion is not impacted, the rationale behind sanctioning tactics merits reexamination.

Section Two

The effectiveness of sanctions on Russia will now be examined, taking into account variables representing the general welfare of Russian citizens as well as public opinion toward the government after the 2014 sanctions. Previous research conducted by Hufbauer et al. analyzes the success of past sanctions via variables such as the duration of policy and if the purpose of the sanctions was achieved.²⁷ Neuenkirch and Neumeier identify that a significant body of research exists as to the humanitarian affect of economic sanctions, but empirical research on economic consequences is sparse.²⁸ Furthermore, there has been no research that uses empirical economic data, humanitarian statistics, and public opinion surveys to study the recent effects of the 2014 sanctions on Russia.

To conduct the empirical study, six variables will be used to determine change in Russian public welfare, along with data collected from opinion polls since January 2014. While these

variables cannot completely measure overall public welfare, they are representative of variables used in recognized indices such as UNDP’s Human Development Index (HDI), the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW), and the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI).²⁹ Previous studies have used similar methods to determine overall public welfare and public opinion.^{30, 31,32,33} Variables used incorporate economic welfare and social welfare data on Consumer Price Index, Russian Ruble Exchange Rate, Food Inflation, Employment, Consumer Sentiment, and Social Sentiment taken from Trading Economics and the Levada Center.³⁴

The empirical study measures the change in Russian public welfare and public opinion in relation to the implementation of US sanctions. One should also note that European Union sanctions toward Russia were issued in 2014, but for the purpose of this study only US sanctions will be addressed. Refer to Hufbauer et al. and Elliot et al. for methods to control for confounding variables and the Levada Center and Trading Economics for explicit descriptions of the data and polling collected.^{35,36,37}

The US government issued multiple Executive Orders imposing a variety of targeted sanctions on Russia such as travel bans and asset freezes. For this study, I will group these sanctions into three chronological groups. A series of sanctions were initially imposed in March 2014, followed by additional rounds in July 2014 and December 2014.^{38,39,40} Within this study, specific sanctions will not be investigated; they will instead be generalized as ‘targeted sanctions’ on major Russian companies and Russian leaders who maintain close relationships with President Vladimir Putin. Additionally, it is important to note that conclusions do account for delayed sanction effects. Selected numerical and graphical data can be found in Appendix A.

Section Three

Russian welfare and public opinion data demonstrate significant decreases in Russian general public welfare yet increases in approval ratings. Food inflation increased over 350% from January 2014 to March 2015. Sanctions in March 2014 and July 2014 had little direct effect on food inflation demonstrated by the consistent increase from January 2014 to November 2014, but we find that

the December 2014 sanctions dramatically affected food inflation. Similarly, the Ruble maintained its value until the December 2014 sanctions, at which point the exchange rate ballooned from 50.5 to 72 Rubles per US dollar over a two-month period.

The Consumer Price Index, which measures changes in the price of a basket of typical consumer goods, was not significantly affected by the sanctions. Data on employed persons demonstrates that from early 2014 to the first set of US sanctions, the number of employed persons grew. After March 2014, however, employed persons decrease steadily until February 2015, suggesting that 2014 US economic sanctions may have played a role in decreasing employment.

Also studied was consumer sentiment and social sentiment that measures the attitude of the Russian general population. Both consumer and social sentiment followed similar trends where an initial increase in sentiment was seen from January 2014 to March 2014; March 2014 to March 2015 both saw consistent decline. In all, the data suggest that the six variables representing Russian general public welfare were generally negatively affected by US sanctions.

Data on Russian public opinion demonstrates that US sanctions have not urged Russian constituents to alter their political preferences. Putin saw a 33% increase in approval from January 2014 to March 2015. Interestingly, month-by-month data show that in both March 2014 and July 2014 (when the US announced targeted sanctions) Putin's approval rating almost immediately increased. While December 2014 sanctions did not result in increased public approval ratings, the decrease was negligible. We see a very similar trend with sharp increases in approval after March 2014 and July 2014, more so than the increase in approval toward Putin.

Examining the relationship between the average percentage change of public opinion toward Putin and the Russian government against the average percentage change of consumer and social sentiment, we see regression trends in opposite directions. While public opinion was increasing in favor of Putin, variables central to general welfare, consumer and social sentiment, were decreasing. From this we can determine that the decreased public welfare did not translate to decreased public opinion and

increased likelihood of rebellion toward Putin as the US desired. From here it is clear that 2014 US economic sanctions saw limited results from January 2014 to March 2015 because 1) public opinion toward Putin has increased, 2) the Russian government has not altered its policy positions on the Ukrainian conflict, and 3) the Russian middle and lower classes have suffered disproportionately from the sanctions. Although the observed correlations cannot lead to the direct conclusion that US sanctions caused an increase in public opinion Putin's administration, the monthly basis of the data reduces the likelihood of confounding variables.

A potential concern is that Russian opinion polls were inaccurate and public opinion toward Putin has actually decreased. Yet the detailed methodology and anonymity of survey responses reduces the likelihood of this scenario.⁴¹ Furthermore, only certain datasets were available for this investigation due to the need for monthly data and the recent nature of American sanctions. Hence, it is reasonable to assert that sanctions have negatively impacted the general welfare of the Russian public, yet the Russian government has sought to mitigate the effects and maintain public opinion.

The Russian government has devised three major strategies to address the sanctions' effects. First, Russian law expert Eric Lorber noted that Putin's administration has used short-term loans to prop up companies that can no longer access western debt financing. Yet these actions by the Russian Central Bank in part drove inflation and the devaluing of the Russian Ruble, which collectively decreased the public's purchasing power (as seen in Appendix A). Second, Lorber suggests that the Russian government has redirected resources away from social programs and concentrated assets with more conservative oligarchs historically aligned with the government. While these claims are difficult to prove in the absence of financial data on Russia, such views are consistent with Putin's recent restructuring of inner circle of advisors.⁴² Third, Putin has employed media campaigns that have boosted his public image and eroded citizens' views toward western influence.⁴³

Conclusion

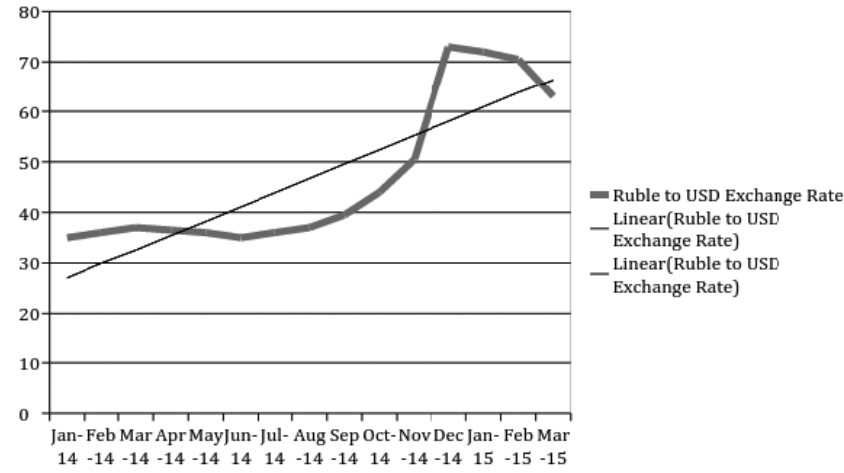
The 2014 sanctions have yet to net a positive political impact for the US, as the Russian government has not changed its policy positions on the Ukrainian conflict.^{44,45} Although welfare dropped after the 2014 rounds of sanctions, public opinion toward the Russian government increased during that same period and has since remained significant. Overall, data suggest that sanctions are correlated to high public opinions of Putin despite decreased welfare; to this end, the goals of US sanctions have yet to be reached.^{46, 47, 48, 49, 50}

Collins and Bowdoin recognize that “nearly all unilateral sanctions fail nearly all of the time” and with an increasing globalized world, the need to understand sanctions’ effects is imperative (Collins and Bowdoin, 1999).⁵¹ Moving forward, Russian mechanisms to mitigate sanctions could be considered to formulate improved sanctions that more forcefully call for Russian policy change or more strongly invite the Russian citizenry to oppose the incumbent government. Russia’s continued presence in Crimea calls for consideration as to how US–Russia relations will evolve.

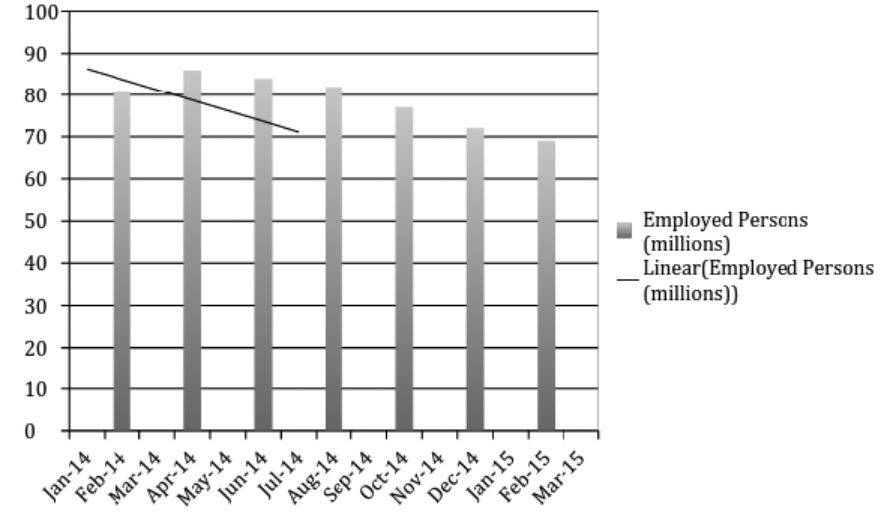
Future research could continue using recent data to investigate longer–term effects of the 2014 sanctions. Modeling and theories of network analysis, for instance, may help identify trends that contribute to scholarly work on conflict dynamics. The availability of newer data will allow for broader analyses of general welfare and mechanisms used by Russian elites to retain support and minimize the effect of American sanctions.

Date	Consumer Price Index	Food Inflation	Employed Persons (millions)	Ruble to USD Exchange Rate	Assessment of Country of Heading in the Right Direction?)	Approval of Putin	Consumer Sentiment	Social Sentiment
Jan-14		5.5		35	43	65	82	
Feb-14		5.8	81	36	47	69	80	80
Mar-14		6.5		37	60	80	82	
Apr-14	419	7	86	36.5	58	82	84	89
May-14	423	8		36	60	83	89	
Jun-14	426	9	84	35	62	86	87	90
Jul-14	428	9		36	55	85	83	
Aug-14	430	10	82	37	64	84	85	88
Sep-14	431	12		39.5	62	86	78	
Oct-14	435	12	77	44	60	88	78	86
Nov-14	441	13		50.5	59	85	78	
Dec-14	452	16	72	73	56	85	68	76
Jan-15	470	22.8		72	55	85	63	
Feb-15	480	26	69	70.5	54	86	63	75
Mar-15	486	25.5		63	57	85	66	
Percentage Change (1/14-3/15)	16%	364%	-15%	80%	33%	31%	-20%	-6.00%

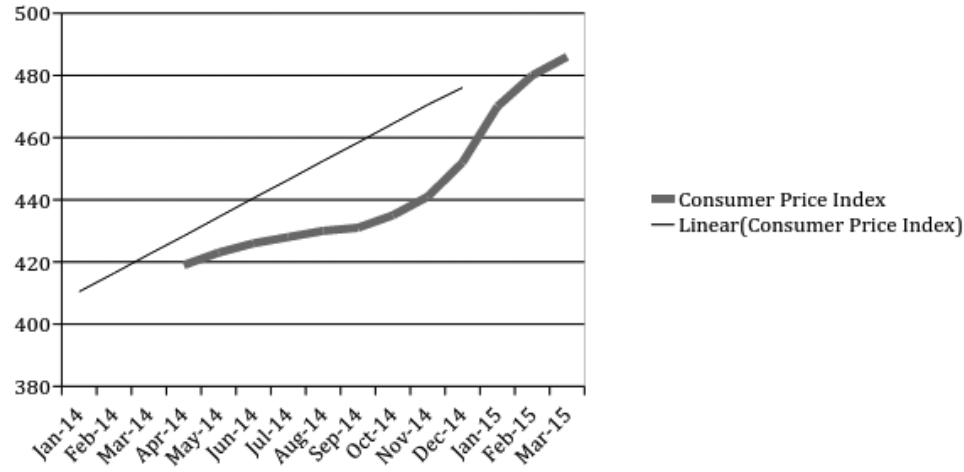
Rubles to USD Exchange Rate



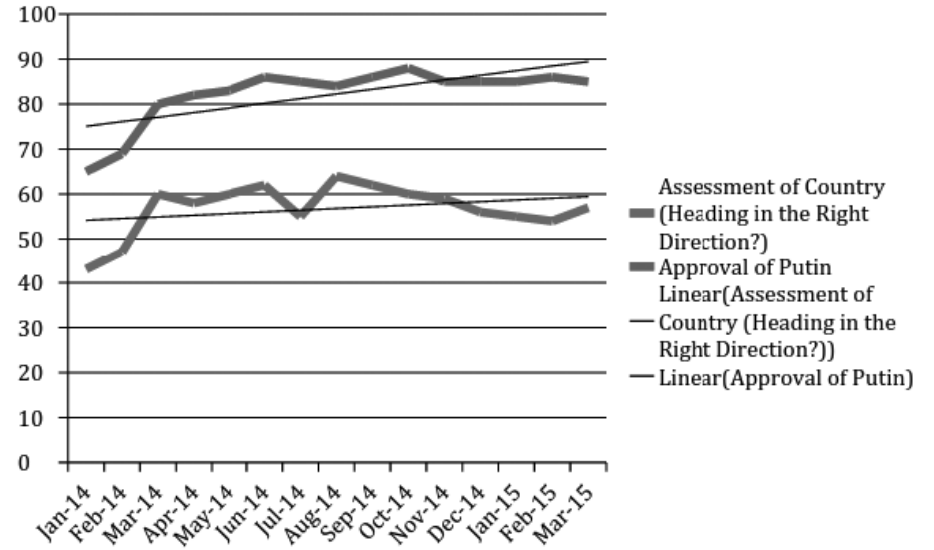
Employed Persons



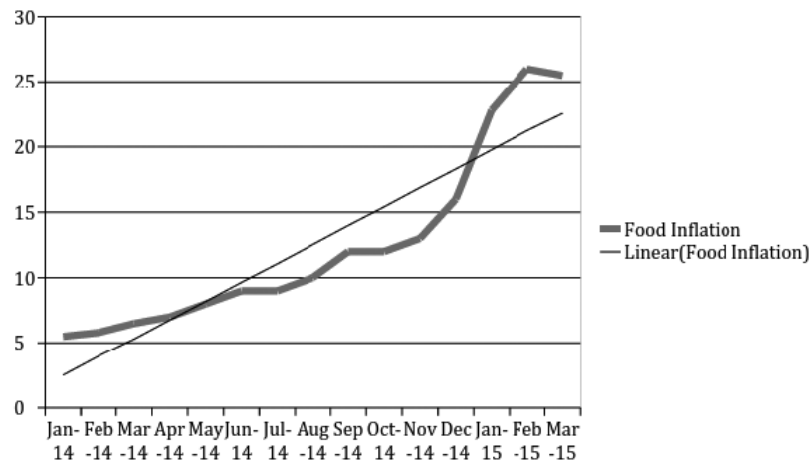
Consumer Price Index



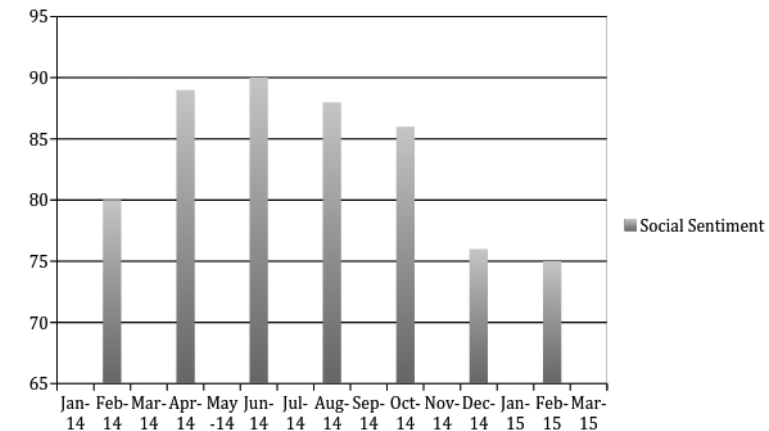
Russian Public Opinion Polls



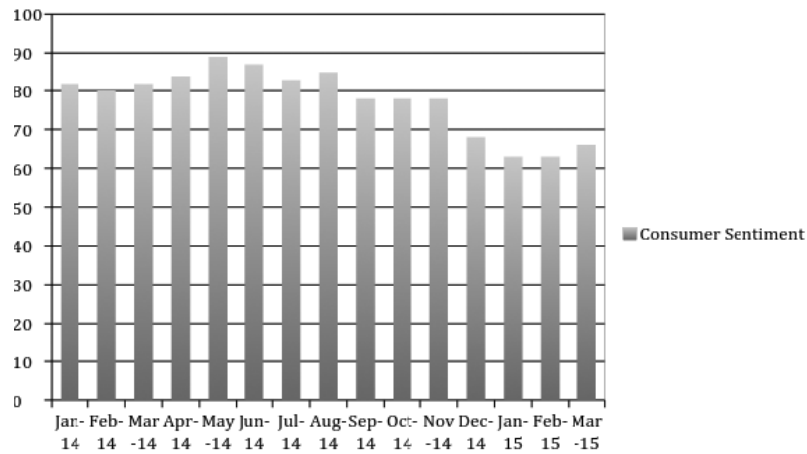
Food Inflation



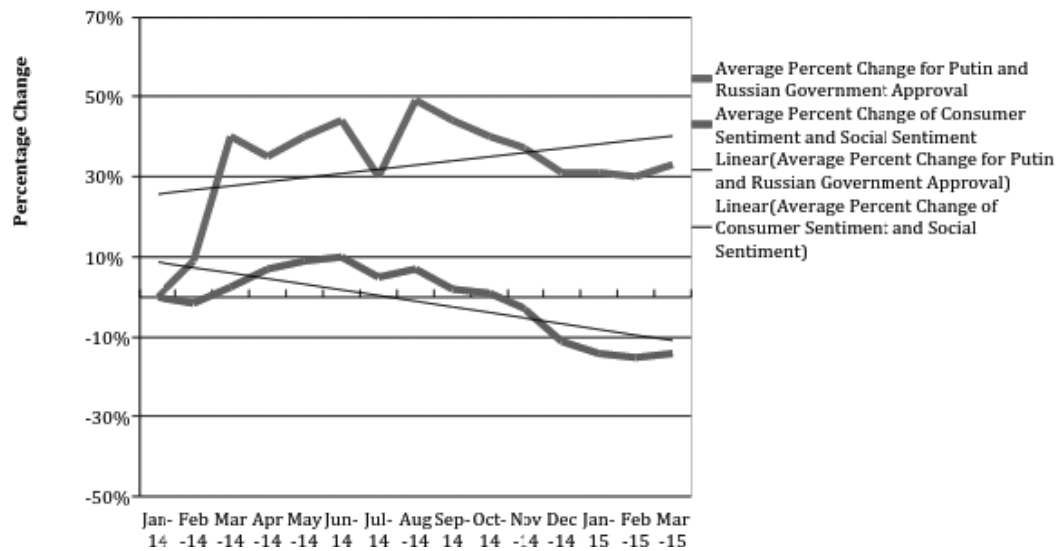
Social Sentiment



Consumer Sentiment



Average Percentage Change for Putin/Russian Government Approval vs. Average Percentage Change of Russian Consumer and Social Sentiment



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VI.

STRENGTHS, TENSIONS, AND
CONCERNS FOR US–SAUDI
RELATIONS FROM 1979
UNTIL PRESENT DAY:
How will Changing
US–Iranian Relations Affect
US–Saudi Relations?

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“The enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Often the foundation for unexpected diplomatic alliances, this intuitive, common notion can help explain why, on the surface, two unlikely allies — the United States, a liberal, Western democratic state and Saudi Arabia, a conservative, Islamist, autocratic kingdom — could enjoy over six decades of “strategic partnership” and “positive results.”¹ Whether this common threat (perceived or real) was the Soviet Union or post–1979 Iran, American–Saudi relations were held bound by mutual security interests. The us provided regional security for Saudi Arabia through its military power and in return Saudi Arabia provided economic security for the us through its power in the oil markets.^{2,3} But what happens if this common enemy’s interests begin to line up with one of the allied nations? That is to say, if Iran is considered to be a common threat to both the United States and Saudi Arabia, what would happen to us–Saudi relations if American and Iranian interests began to overlap? Between the chaos in Iraq, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Iran nuclear program negotiations, and the Arab Spring, at times it appears that this very well may be the case.

To establish a historical context, this essay will examine the collapse of the United States’ pre–1979 “twin pillar policy,” positive developments of us–Saudi relations before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the countries’ relations following the attack and the us invasion of Iraq. This essay will then comment on current Middle Eastern conflicts, including those where American and Iranian interests overlap, and why the existence of these conflicts is concerning for Saudi Arabia. Of particular focus will be the situation in Iraq, including the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, the conflict in Yemen, and the ongoing Iranian nuclear deal negotiations. While the overlap of us and Iranian interests should not be overstated, it is significant that there are some instances where their interests align in the Middle East. The notable progress made in the Iranian nuclear program negotiations is also of consequence and very much could affect and has affected us–Saudi relations. Finally, this essay will offer reasons the us and Saudi Arabia both have important stakes to maintain good diplomatic relations. This essay will posit that while us–Saudi relations are unlikely to deteriorate significantly in the future, the balance of power in

the region is changing in such a way that the United States and Saudi Arabia might look to expand diplomatic relations in order to achieve greater security and flexibility when it comes to concerns in the region. For the us, this might mean developing some level of a rapprochement with Iran, while for Saudi Arabia this might mean looking for other partners such as China or certain European countries, and in some cases, even with Israel.

Collapse of the “Twin Pillar” Policy

During the Nixon Administration, the United States relied on its “twin pillar” diplomatic policy to ensure stability and protection of American interests in the Middle East.⁴ Establishing alliances with the monarchical governments of Saudi Arabia and Iran, the us benefitted not only from good diplomatic relations with two of the three main regional powers in the Middle East, but also from the composite make–up of the countries that border the Arabian/Persian Gulf (“the Gulf.”). Serving as the two “twin pillars,” Saudi Arabia, as a Sunni and Arab nation, and Iran, as a Shi’a and Persian nation, allowed the United States to create alliances across sectarian lines as it strategically attempted to restrict the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union, its Cold War rival, and limit the spread of communism.

With the overthrow of the American–backed, Iranian Shah and with the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Iran became hostile to the United States and to other powers in the Middle East, including Iraq and Saudi Arabia. With one pillar collapsed and Iraq acting aggressively, the United States was forced to rely on Saudi Arabia as its primary ally in an important area of the world.⁵ Iraq fought a costly war with Iran throughout most of the 1980s and then invaded the tiny Gulf state of Kuwait in 1991. The former ended in a stalemate, and the latter ended in defeat with great economic, military, and diplomatic costs, as a massive international coalition including the us and Saudi Arabia repelled the Iraqi forces from Kuwait.⁶ Although Saddam Hussein remained in power until 2003 when the us invaded Iraq, by the end of the Gulf War only two of the original three regional powers remained: Saudi Arabia and Iran.⁷ With Iran and the us having hostile relations, and Iran and Saudi Arabia

remaining distrustful of one another, the us and Saudi Arabia had reasons to establish a strong alliance that has persisted into the twenty–first century.⁸

us–Saudi Relations Post–Iranian Revolution

(1979 – 2001)

In the 1980s, while Iraq and Iran were exhausting each other’s resources and capital, the us and Saudi Arabia were experiencing one of the strongest stretches in their alliance.⁹ The foundation of the alliance remained the same: security. As one of the world’s two superpowers, matched only by the Soviet Union until the 1990s, the United States could offer Saudi Arabia protection in a turbulent region dominated by the ambitious regional hegemony of Saddam’s Iraq and Khomeini’s Iran. In return, Saudi Arabia, the world’s largest exporter of oil and most powerful member of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries), could offer the oil–dependent United States economic security in fluctuating oil markets.^{10,11} This relationship extended into a number of diplomatic objectives for both countries, especially when it came to Saudi Arabia assisting the United States in its covert goals.

For instance, while the Reagan Administration is infamously known for the Iran–Contra affair scandal, it had been partaking in backdoor dealings long before then and relied extensively on Saudi support. As far back as the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia was assisting in us efforts, financially guiding Egypt away from the Soviet Union and converting Egypt into an American ally.¹² In 1979, Saudi Arabia engaged with escalating clashes between the pro–Soviet, People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen in the south of Yemen and the Yemen Arab Republic in the north, donating tens of millions of dollars on top of the arms and money the Saudis had been contributing since 1962.¹³ Another example of Saudi Cold War cooperation with the Americans was in the late 1970s when Saudi Arabia provided \$200 million to Somalia to bring the former Soviet ally onto the other side of the Cold War. This conversion benefitted the Americans by allowing the us to have naval bases with access to the Indian Ocean.¹⁴ The Saudis also supported the National Union for the Total Indepen-

dence of Angola (UNITA), working with South Africa to intervene in Angola, which many considered to be a “particular favor” to Reagan and the us.¹⁵ Saudi Arabia in return relied on the United States for security and for arms deals, including Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) aircraft.¹⁶

Despite a strong diplomatic reliance yielding favorable results, both the us and Saudi Arabia had to address domestic concerns about their relationship. Even with the Saudis’ support in a few Cold War conflicts, the Reagan Administration found it difficult to get a “reluctant” us Congress to agree to the AWACS deal, passing by a slim 52–48 Senate vote.^{17,18} On the other hand, Saudi Arabia rejected the United States’ “strategic consensus” initiative to formally establish an American military presence in Saudi Arabia and instead opted for a policy that would keep the us “over the horizon” rather than on Saudi territory.¹⁹

The arms–for–aid deals continued throughout the 1980s including with the Contra War in Nicaragua.²⁰ The us was heavily invested in trying to help the Contras overthrow the Nicaraguan government, eventually embroiling itself in the Iran–Contra affair.²¹ In April 1984, the us discreetly asked Saudi Arabia to contribute financial support to the Contras, to which the Saudis declined for four reasons: 1) there was “no quid pro quo,” 2) Nicaragua already leaned “pro–Arab,” 3) the Saudis doubted whether the us could keep a secret if they provided such clandestine support, and 4) the us had recently slowed arm sales to Saudi Arabia.²² The Reagan Administration responded to the fourth claim in May of 1984 by bypassing Congress. On the grounds of it being an emergency, and thus not needing Congressional approval, the administration authorized a \$131 million military aircraft equipment sale and 400 Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to be sent to Saudi Arabia.²³ In addition, President Reagan wrote a letter personally to King Fahd assuring him that the us would provide assistance to Saudi Arabia if a conflict with Iran were to arise.²⁴ At the end of the month, us funding for the Contras ran out and Congress refused to authorize more funds (they eventually would authorize “humanitarian” aid later in the year), so again the us asked Saudi Arabia to provide financial assistance to the Contras.²⁵ This time, the Saudis agreed and began funneling tens of millions of dollars of support to the Contras

that year.²⁶ After the United States approved the AWACS transfer, sent Stinger antiaircraft missiles, and assured assistance in the case of a Saudi–Iranian conflict, Saudi Arabia began to further assist the United States covertly, going as far, according to some reports, as to cooperate with “counterterrorist assassinations.”^{27,28} The arms–for–aid deals during the Reagan Administration brought the United States and Saudi Arabia even closer together as strategic allies, relying on one another for security and diplomatic objectives.

These covert instances of support — not all of which were publicly known at the time — demonstrate the closeness between the US and Saudi Arabia in the immediate years after the Iranian Revolution. One of the other most notable instances of cooperation at this time was the US–Saudi joint effort to expel the Soviets out of Afghanistan by empowering the Taliban.²⁹ This “strategic partnership” reached its pinnacle during the Gulf War when the two nations joined forces as part of a broader international coalition to repel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.³⁰ Since US–Saudi relations in these two conflicts are well addressed, this essay focused on some of the clandestine activities the two nations shared during the 1980s in particular in order to supplement the historical context with which to reflect on US–Saudi relations. In many ways, these backdoor arms–for–aid dealings demonstrate the degree of trust, reliance, and interdependence of US–Saudi relations. Along with the development of a strong US–Saudi Arabia partnership, the 1990s were then marked by two developments: the fall of Iraq as a regional power after being exhausted and internationally isolated from two wars, and the growth of the “salafi jihadist movement.”³¹

Post–2001 Tensions in US–Saudi Relations

The 1980s and 1990s were the decades in which US–Saudi ties were arguably the strongest, and this period was also the time of two of the biggest joint successes to come out of the relationship: the success of the jihad in expelling the Soviets out of Afghanistan and the Gulf War.³² The irony is that, ultimately, these two successes set into motion what would eventually lead to the 9/11 attacks and, consequently, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which

strained American–Saudi relations during these years.³³ Osama bin Laden, who joined and eventually helped lead the successful jihadist movement in Afghanistan, established al–Qaeda there.³⁴ He established ties with Ayman al–Zawahiri, founder of the Islamic jihad movement in Egypt, and continued to grow his network.³⁵ Emboldened by his victory over the Soviets (which was followed soon by the Soviet Union’s collapse), Osama bin Laden felt that he and his jihadists could protect Saudi Arabia and expel the Iraqis from Kuwait, but Saudi leadership rejected this proposal and relied on the US instead.³⁶ As a result, Osama bin Laden would leave Saudi Arabia, continue to grow his network based in Afghanistan, and in 1996 issue his “Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Mosques” and asserted that the Al Saud rule was an apostate regime.³⁷

In particular, US support of Israel has long been a complication when it comes to other American alliances in the region. Having a Western, pro–Israel country like the United States defending Saudi Arabia allowed Osama bin Laden to criticize the Saudi government. In fact, one of the things bin Laden used to justify his attacks on the Saudi government was their involvement in the Arab–Israeli peace process.³⁸ He often used rhetoric involving the Western “Judeo–Christian” alliance and argued that the Middle East was still essentially ruled by the West with many Arab leaders serving only as its puppets.³⁹ As will be discussed later in the paper, an “unholy alliance” is forming between Israel and Saudi Arabia as their interests significantly overlap in regards to a potential Iranian nuclear deal.⁴⁰

Following the attacks of September 11th, US–Saudi relations were severely strained. Fifteen of the nineteen hijackers were Saudi nationals.⁴¹ The US media was extraordinarily harsh on Saudi leadership and the American public began to seriously question the value of such an alliance.⁴² Accusations reigned from criticisms that Saudi Arabia “created a climate” that allowed radical Islam to flourish to those that suggested some Saudi officials were responsible for the attacks “through design or negligence.”⁴³ Many of the “enemy combatants” captured in Afghanistan when fighting the Taliban regime in late 2001

turned out to be Saudi as did many of the Sunni insurgents after the US invaded Iraq after 2003.⁴⁴

Saudi Arabia for its part vigorously denied any prior knowledge of the attacks and Saudi leadership was shocked by the events, especially by the fact that the hijackers mostly came from their kingdom.⁴⁵ At the same time, they were concerned about the harsh criticisms received in the US despite the moves Saudi Arabia made to try to maintain the relationship between the two nations.⁴⁶ Saudi leadership rightly pointed out that Osama bin Laden had his Saudi citizenship revoked in 1994.⁴⁷ Abdullah, who was Crown Prince at the time, “publicly castigated the Ulema for encouraging hatred and violence and failing to preach the true message of Islam of moderation and tolerance.”⁴⁸ The Saudis took additional steps, including Abdullah providing the *New York Times* a copy of his peace plan for Israel (Arab states would recognize Israel and establish normal diplomatic ties if Israel withdrew to its pre-1967 borders) and traveling to Crawford, Texas in 2002 to create closer ties to President Bush.⁴⁹ The Saudis were also exceptionally successful in assisting the United States in its counter-terrorism efforts, capturing and/or killing “all 19 wanted terrorists on a list published in May 2003 and all 26 on a second list published in December 2003.”⁵⁰

The United States’ decision to invade Iraq in March of 2003 further strained US–Saudi relations. While Iraqi–Saudi relations were not great, Saudi Arabia did prefer the Saddam Sunni regime in power to serve as a bulwark against Iran.⁵¹ Additionally, Iraq has a Shi’a majority, so a democratic state, as desired by the United States, would result in a Shi’a power in the region and one that would favor Iran.⁵² Saudi Arabia publicly opposed the US invasion of Iraq, asserting that it would not “participate in any way” although it did secretly provide the US some logistical support.⁵³ At the same time, in June of 2003, Saudi Aramco — the state-run oil company with historical ties to the United States (not to mention the America-related basis for the name “Aramco”) — ended stalled negotiations with US companies and opened up negotiations with Russian, Chinese, and European firms instead.⁵⁴ Saudi Arabia viewed Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki — who came to power in Iraq through elections and with American approval (as a product of the new “democra-

tized” Iraq) — as an Iranian agent.⁵⁵ Finally, after Saddam Hussein’s regime collapsed in April 2003, all remaining American combat troops left Saudi Arabia by September of that year.⁵⁶

After the September 11th attacks, there was a significant shift in US foreign policy, responded to a feeling that the old approach of “deterrence and containment” proved to be inadequate in protecting Americans and American interests.⁵⁷ A new approach, the Bush Doctrine, which was pushed by neo-conservatives in the Bush Administration, would instead rely on its global military superiority and use aggressive “unilateral” and “preemptive” measures when it believed necessary.⁵⁸ It was under this new approach, as well as huge psychological fear and paranoia of another 9/11-style “worst case scenario” attack, that justified the Bush administration’s decision to invade Iraq.⁵⁹ This strategy did not sit well with the Saudis nor did talk of President Bush’s “freedom agenda,” which included calls for political reform in Iraq.⁶⁰ A monarchical, autocratic state with about a 10–15% Shi’a minority, Saudi Arabia did not feel remotely comfortable with the idea of a democratic Shi’a state bordering to its north with probable ties to Iran.^{61,62}

These tensions did not dissipate as the first decade of the 2000s progressed. In September 2005, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al Faisal criticized the US for “handing the whole country [Iraq] over to Iran without reason.”⁶³ An Iraqi minister later responded by rejecting the comments and adding the cutting remark that “a whole country is named after a family.”⁶⁴ US officials pressed Saudi Arabia to help and not criticize the fledgling Iraqi state.⁶⁵ In November 2006, it was reported that about 12% of foreign fighters killed or captured in Iraq were Saudi nationals.⁶⁶ In addition, in the fall of 2006, there were reports of Saudi clerics encouraging support for Sunni insurgents in Iraq including through “honest resistance...one of the legitimate types of jihad.”⁶⁷

While these tensions did exist, it is important to note that the US and Saudi Arabia never officially broke ties and that the rhetoric of some of their domestic statesmen did not reflect legitimate policy changes. The ties between the two nations were considered “very deep,” and the “strategic considerations that brought them together continue[d] to be relevant.”⁶⁸ Additionally, both states want Saudi oil markets to remain “uninterrupted,”

face attacks from al–Qaeda, and have concerns about Iran, including Iran’s nuclear program.⁶⁹ In May 2003, Al–Qaeda began launching attacks within Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰ These attacks have provided the us and Saudi Arabia a common enemy and have been used by Saudi Arabia to dispel alleged reports that it was at one point funding al–Qaeda.⁷¹ The Saudi Ambassador to the us said, “Al–Qaeda is a cult seeking to destroy Saudi Arabia as well as the Untied States,” and rhetorically asked why Saudi Arabia would “support a cult that is trying to kill us?”⁷² While us–Saudi relations have been strained due to the events of September 11th and the invasion of Iraq, it would be misguided to allege that us–Saudi ties are still not strong, strategically important, and valuable to each nation.

US–Saudi Relations in light of the conflicts in Iraq, ISIS, Syria, and Yemen

This essay has so far examined the strongest and weakest points in us–Saudi relations since the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Since the collapse of the Shah, Saudi Arabia has been the United States’ primary ally in the region and Iran has been considered a threat to both countries. However, that balance of power has changed in recent years with the developments of the Arab Spring, the Syrian Civil War, and the rise of ISIS. The recent “us–Iran nuclear détente,” including the nuclear deal with Iran and their “superficial rapprochement” is very troubling to Saudi leadership.^{73,74} This final portion of the essay will reflect on how us–Iranian interests are lining up and how this might affect us–Saudi relations.

In many respects, it is surprising to see American and Iranian interests in the Middle East overlapping. The two nations do not have diplomatic relations with each other. The United States considers Iran part of the “Axis of Evil” and Iran labels the United States as “the Great Satan.”^{75,76} Yet when it comes to Iraq, ISIS, and Syria, their interests appear to be matching up. Iraq and ISIS line up together in that both the us and Iran consider the Sunni–based ISIS to be a severe threat and that a functioning, unified Iraqi state is the ultimate goal in the conflict.⁷⁷ For the United States, this would be the final realization of

a democratizing Iraq and eventually establishing a state model that can be replicated throughout the Middle East if or when the rest of the region experiences democratic change (as the United States suspects). For Iran, a democratic Iraq means likely a Shi’a government from Iraq’s Shi’a majority, which could be a useful ally in the region.⁷⁸ With respect to ISIS, both states have carried out airstrikes on the Islamic State but deny any collaboration. At the same time tough, each relies on “the Iraqi government to de–conflict...airspace” so that essentially the two nations are indirectly working together towards a common objective.⁷⁹

Saudi Arabia, while not supporting ISIS (although there are Saudi nationals who have joined ISIS), is not happy with Iraq since the United States’ invasion. While Saddam’s regime was at times considered a threat, it was a Sunni regime and one that provided a counterbalance to Iran. Now a Shi’a government is in place and one that has been subject to heavy Iranian influence.⁸⁰ Iran–us uncoordinated but simultaneous attacks concern the Saudi government and Iraqi Sunni lawmakers who worry that these airstrikes might eventually become coordinated if Iran and the us can work out a nuclear deal and establish some degree of relations.⁸¹ One Iraqi Sunni lawmaker was quoted as saying that if the us and Iran reach an agreement, it would mean “the Americans are handing over Iraq to Iran.”⁸²

In Syria, the split between Saudi Arabia and Iran continues and, again, the Saudis have concerns regarding their American allies. When protests initially developed in Syria, it appeared that the United States might offer legitimate support to rebels looking to overthrow the Bashar al–Assad regime. However, radical elements began to enter the conflict, making it difficult to distinguish who would or could benefit from a regime overthrow in Syria.⁸³ As the conflict grew chaotic and Assad persisted in power, the war–weary us seemed to downgrade its priorities “from the removal of the Syrian dictator to merely the removal of his chemical weapons.”⁸⁴ Additionally, it seems at this point that the us will avoid any direct intervention and that ISIS will continue to remain its primary concern.

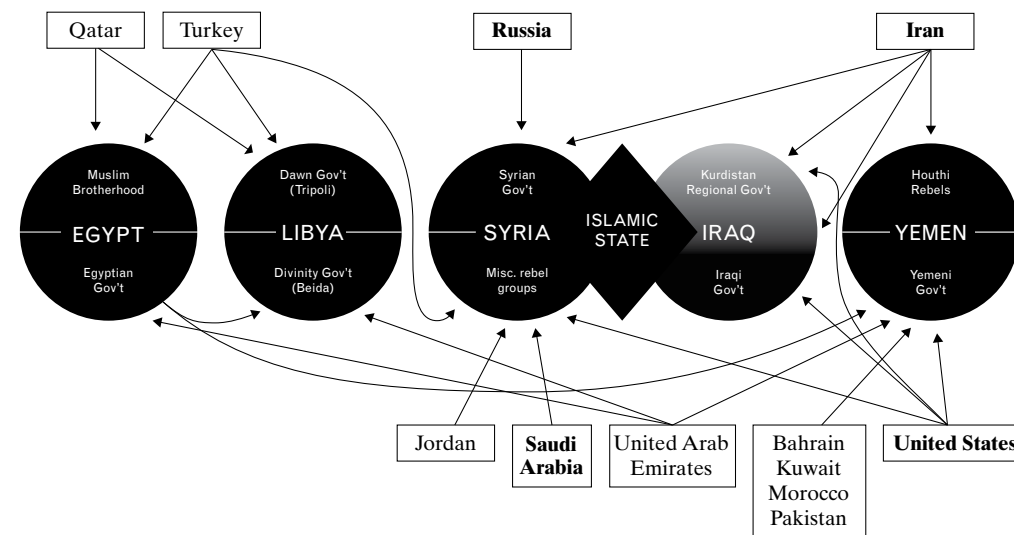
For Iran, this conflict has huge implications as Syria has been a steadfast ally — often times the only one in the region — with Assad, an Alawite (a Shi’a sect), ruling over a

Sunni majority Syrian populace.⁸⁵ A key strategic partner for the Iranian government, Tehran is doing all in its means to keep the Assad regime propped up, including providing “billions of dollars in loans, credits, and subsidized oil...conventional and unconventional military aid, as well as intelligence training and cooperation to help crush popular unrest.”⁸⁶ Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shia militia supported by Iran, is also involved in supporting and fighting for the Assad regime.⁸⁷ If ISIS or a disintegrated Syria is the alternative, it appears that the US might accept no regime change in Syria, something that again benefits Iran but worries Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has been supportive of the rebels in Syria but has reduced its support recently as the conflict has evolved into an exhaustive and chaotic “three-front struggle” between al-Qaeda affiliates (including ISIS, which later disavowed al-Qaeda), the Assad regime backed by Iran and Hezbollah, and other Sunni Syrian rebels.⁸⁸ With the rise of ISIS, it seems that the United States currently views the Islamic extremist elements of the conflict as more of a threat than the Assad regime. At the same time, the United States would like to see the end of the Assad regime, an issue that provides a future, common objective and may alleviate some Saudi concerns.⁸⁹

Finally, in Yemen, a new conflict has arisen. Houthi rebels, a Shi’a offshoot, took control of the capital Sanaa in September of 2004.⁹⁰ By March of 2015, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria became involved in the conflict, bombing two Shi’a mosques and killing over a hundred civilians.⁹¹ Today the conflict has turned into a proxy war, with Saudi Arabia launching airstrikes against the “Iranian-funded Houthis.”^{92,93} The chart below from *The Economist* highlights some of the instances in which actors in the Middle East are fighting against one another in one conflict but for each other in another conflict. For example, Iran and the United States are fighting on the same side in Iraq against ISIS, but ISIS is fighting on the same side of Saudi Arabia and the United States in Yemen against Iran. Moreover, in Syria, ISIS is fighting against the Saudi and American-backed Sunni rebels who are all fighting the Iranian-backed Assad regime. With the number and nature of conflicts embattling the region right now, perhaps it is not a surprise that hostile states sometimes find

themselves fighting on the same side and allies sometimes find their interests opposed.



Iranian Nuclear Deal Negotiations

In addition to all of the conflicts currently plaguing the Middle East, there are also ongoing controversial talks in Lausanne, Switzerland regarding Iran’s nuclear program. The so-called “P5 + 1” countries including the United Nations Security Council – United States, Russia, China, the United Kingdom, and France – and Germany are currently negotiating with Iran about curbing uranium enrichment activities to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon, at least in the near future. This essay will first provide a historical context for the deal, next attempt to briefly outline the main details of the proposed framework, and then analyze the effect a deal or no deal would have on US-Saudi relations and the region as a whole.

To begin, there have been efforts for years to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. As far back as 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel’s Prime Minister (who was Prime Minister in 1996 as well), addressed the United States Congress and delivered a similar warning to the one he issued when addressing the United States Congress in 2015: Iran as a nuclear power means severe instability in the region and poses a direct threat to Israel and a threat to the United States, and Iran is on the verge of

making this a reality.⁹⁴ But Iran is not the only power to pursue weapons of mass destruction. First, Israel, though not officially declared, has nuclear weapons.⁹⁵ Iraq and Iran, hostile neighbors who brutally exhausted one another in the longest war of the twentieth century (1980–1988), competitively stocked and developed weapon technology.^{96,97} Even as late as 2002, Saddam Hussein was uncooperative with the United Nations and the United States over Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction because he wanted Iran to think that Iraq might have weapons of mass destruction in order to project Iraqi power.⁹⁸ After the US invasion, Libya gave up its nuclear weapons pursuit after seeing the reaction of the international community.⁹⁹ Iran even came to the table to negotiate with the West and the United States after the US invaded Iraq in 2003, offering to cap its number of centrifuges, maintain low enrichment levels, and “convert its existing enriched uranium into fuel rods (which could not be put to military use).”¹⁰⁰ The United States declined the offer.

Fast-forwarding roughly ten years to today, Iran’s nuclear program is again a point of controversy and a key concern in the region. Ironically (and perhaps fortunately depending on one’s perspective), the chief Iranian nuclear negotiator back in 2003 was Hassan Rouhani, who is now the president of Iran and is strongly pushing for a deal to be reached.^{101,102} Instead of 164 centrifuges that it had in 2003, Iran currently has 19,000; in addition to amassing over 17,000 pounds of enriched uranium gas, Iran has also begun to advance construction of a “heavy water reactor at Arak that could be used to produce weapons-grade plutonium.”¹⁰³ While nuclear power reactors in the West use uranium enriched up to five percent, Iran has currently produced uranium enriched up to twenty percent; enrichment levels need to exceed ninety percent in order to be used for a nuclear weapon.¹⁰⁴ Finally, Iran’s current “breakout capability,” which is the “key yardstick of time needed to produce enough fissile material for one nuclear weapon,” is estimated to be currently at around two to three months.¹⁰⁵

In March of 2013, the Obama administration opened up “back channel” negotiations with Iran, secretly meeting on several occasions in Oman.¹⁰⁶ In June of 2013, Rouhani was elected

president and negotiations formally began in March 2014.¹⁰⁷ A year later, on April 2, 2015, a framework for a potential future deal was announced.¹⁰⁸ While the negotiations are a complicated process with many details to it, briefly, these are the main aspects of the April 2, 2015 deal as provided by *The New York Times*: As mentioned earlier, Iran had developed uranium enrichment levels up to twenty percent. Under the new deal, uranium enrichment levels will be limited to 3.7 percent and its stockpile of this type of uranium will be reduced from 10,000 kilograms to 300 kilograms for the next fifteen years. The number of centrifuges, which are responsible for isolating the U–235 isotope needed for a bomb, will also be reduced by two-thirds to about 5,000. The underground enrichment site at Fordo will be converted into “a center for nuclear physics and technology research” and the nuclear reactor at Arak will be “redesigned” so that it “will not produce weapons-grade plutonium.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, no additional heavy water reactors will be built over the next fifteen years. The International Atomic Energy Agency will be responsible for confirming these agreements and inspectors will be permitted to access facilities anywhere in the country.¹¹⁰ If these measures were put into place, Iran’s “breakout time” as described above, would increase from a couple of months to a year.¹¹¹

There are disagreements that persist still, some of them instrumental to the overall framework of the deal. First, the United States is seeking for the agreement, including the inspection measures, to last twenty years while Iran is calling for eight years.¹¹² There are fundamental disagreements over when some of the economic sanctions on Iran will be lifted. The United States and some members of the P5 + 1 have maintained that sanction relief will occur only after it has been confirmed that Iran has kept its end of the deal and “will come in phases.”¹¹³ Iran has conversely been adamant that sanctions will be lifted immediately under the current agreed terms.¹¹⁴ This has led to some embarrassment for the parties involved, and whether it will prevent a deal from being reached remains to be seen. July 1st has been agreed upon as the deadline for negotiations, which is after the time of writing for this essay.

There were mixed reactions after the deal was announced. Many Republicans and some Democrats in the United States

Congress have expressed skepticism of and concerns about the deal.¹¹⁵ Likewise in Iran, there is domestic opposition among some sections of society, such as the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as well as those against any dealings with the United States, frequently dubbed the “Great Satan.”¹¹⁶ On the other hand, this is a deal heavily lobbied by President Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry and is actually fairly popular with the American public considering its potential to devolve into a partisan issue.¹¹⁷ In Iran, there is a great desire for the sanctions to be lifted, especially among the general, civilian population.¹¹⁸

On the other hand, there are a few significant regional actors who are adamantly opposed to any deal, particularly Israel and Saudi Arabia. While the “unholy alliance” may seem unusual, similar sets of circumstances have brought these two states together. First, both states face unstable conflicts in the region between Lebanon/Hezbollah (for Israel), Syria, Iraq, and Yemen (for Saudi Arabia) and view Iran as a legitimate and direct threat. For Saudi Arabia, this threat lies right across the Gulf but is also manifested in proxy conflicts such as in Yemen and Syria. For Israel, the severity of this threat varies, and the rhetoric of Iran is certainly alarming, including former President Ahmadinejad’s threat of having Israel “wiped off of the map.”¹¹⁹ Both states are regional hegemonies in their own right and an increasingly powerful Iran, which is getting heavily involved in a number of the Middle Eastern conflicts, threatens to change the balance of power. Finally, both states are closely allied with the United States, relying on, at least to some degree, the US for security purposes. The United States’ eagerness to finalize a deal with Iran has, therefore, greatly concerned both states.

There are two main reasons Israel and Saudi Arabia are so adamantly opposed to an Iranian nuclear deal. First, and perhaps the more obvious reason, is that Israel and Saudi Arabia worry that an Iranian deal could actually make it easier for Iran to achieve a nuclear weapon in the future. The agreement does not “destroy Iran’s technical capabilities to maintain a nuclear program,” and it is a relatively short agreement.¹²⁰ Even if the United States gets its desired time frame of twenty years, that is still a relatively (very) short length of time, especially when it comes to the lifetime of states. Part of the reason Saudi Arabia

and Israel so greatly fear an Iranian nuclear weapon is because of how much it would alter the balance of power in the Middle East, a turbulent region, where many of the conflicts are proxy wars. If Iran had a nuclear weapon, could Saudi Arabia become as aggressively involved in Yemen as it is now? If Iran had a nuclear weapon, could Israel launch a serious military attack on Hezbollah? The rules through which the Middle East operates would drastically change, and the zero–sum game that is the balance of power would leave Iran a winner at Saudi Arabia and Israel’s expense. Finally, if Iran eventually developed a nuclear weapon, it quite possibly could set off an arms race in the Middle East with Saudi Arabia (and possibly other states such as Turkey or Egypt) also pursuing nuclear arms through development or possibly from another country.¹²¹ As far back as 1999, the Saudi Defense Minister visited Pakistan’s nuclear and missile facilities, and reports came out in 2003 that there was a secret agreement between the two countries involving “nuclear cooperation” on behalf of Pakistan in return for “oil at reduced prices.”¹²² In December of 2006, the GCC announced “an intention to develop peaceful nuclear energy” jointly, but not nuclear weapons.¹²³ Should Iran achieve a nuclear weapon, proliferation in the Middle East could become a real possibility, a potentially parlous development in an unstable region of the world.

The second reason Saudi Arabia and Israel are against the deal is because it would result in sanctions being lifted.¹²⁴ While the US and other countries levied sanctions against Iran because it is pursuing a nuclear program (and only those sanctions will potentially be lifted; sanctions levied against Iran for other reasons will remain), the truth of the matter is that Israel and Saudi Arabia benefit from the economic sanctions on Iran. While these sanctions may theoretically dampen potential trade and economic benefits that could spread across the region, they also serve to handicap Iran, which even with this economic hindrance, is still one of the most powerful countries in the region getting involved in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and now Yemen. A sanctions–free (or sanctions–lessened) Iran could achieve the economic relief it has been seeking for years and develop into an even stronger state. Iran produces oil like Saudi Arabia, but unlike Saudi Arabia, Iran also has a diverse economy and

has the geography and demographics to become the most powerful country in the region. Iran supports Hezbollah and the Assad regime and is fighting ISIS, as well as the Houthi rebels in Yemen. Having a strong economic backing would likely only further encourage Iran to pursue its regional interests. Israel and Saudi Arabia are concerned at the extent of Iranian influence that already exists in the region – and that is with Iran suffering from harsh economic sanctions.

US–Saudi relations are at risk of being strained during this time as Saudi Arabia is highly concerned about the potential deal. In particular, the “secretive nature of the talks” is worrisome, as is “the absence of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members” in the talk.¹²⁵ In fact, *Al Jazeera* had a recent line of stinging criticism when it wrote, “In Geneva, everybody concerned was present except for the Gulf states, which would be directly impacted by any kind of agreement in their backyard.”¹²⁶ Saudi Arabia (and the Gulf states in general) relies on the United States not only as a form of security, but in order to maintain a balance of power in the region. If the US begins to develop closer ties with Iran, whether real or perceived, then Iran may become further emboldened. Already there is speculation in the region that Saudi Arabia “will seek new alliances,” given the “unreliability of American assurances.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, the Iranian nuclear program negotiations come after the United States managed to remove Iran’s two biggest threats: the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq a little more than a decade ago. While the budding relations between the US and Iran may be frustrating at best, alarming at worst, to the Saudis, it is important to note that the US and Saudi Arabia align on a number of issues and conflicts, far more than the brief US–Iranian overlap that is happening right now in Iraq. Both the US and Saudi Arabia have concerns about Hezbollah, neither state wants the Assad regime to ultimately stand, both have concerns about ISIS, both had faced attacks from al–Qaeda, and the US supports Saudi efforts in Yemen. It is important to keep perspective before declaring that US–Saudi relations are severely strained or perhaps even deteriorating.

US–Saudi Relations Going Forward

The United States has been reassuring Saudi Arabia that it “remains the most loyal guarantor of Saudi security and interests.”¹²⁸ At times though, this can be difficult for the Saudi government to perceive. First, the invasion of Iraq removed a Sunni power and replaced it with an Iran–influenced Shi’a government.¹²⁹ Taking into account Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Assad regime in Syria, and now a Shi’a government in Iraq, it is not difficult to see how Jordanian King Abdullah II expressed grave concerns about the “crescent” of Shi’a power stretching from Tehran to Baghdad to Damascus to Beirut.¹³⁰ For Saudi Arabia, closer US–Iranian relations would be a form of “abandonment” and a security threat.¹³¹ If the US can negotiate for some degree of a détente between Saudi Arabia and Iran, on the condition the US can establish its own relations with Iran, then perhaps the United States would have the flexibility to work with both countries without alienating one country or the other.¹³²

While some will speculate as to whether Saudi–US relations will persist in light of the overlap between Iranian and American interests, it is important to remember the long history Saudi Arabia and the United States share. Economically and geopolitically, Saudi Arabia is still an important ally for the United States, and both stand to benefit from continued relations. On one hand, for the United States, capitalizing on overlapping interests with Iran, even if these overlapping interests exist in the relative short–term, may prove to be fruitful in the long–term as it tries to expand its allies in the region. But at the same time, risking the loss of a 60–year–plus ally, and regional power, in Saudi Arabia is clearly not in the United States’ interest. Moreover, while the US and Iran do have overlapping interests in Iraq when it comes to opposing ISIS, the US is indirectly fighting Iran and supporting Saudi Arabia in the Yemen conflict, which is serving as a proxy war. Additionally, there is opposition even within the United States when it comes to the Iran nuclear deal, so while this instance of US–Iranian interests overlapping should not be ignored, it is important to keep it in perspective relative to the significant overlap between the interests of the US and Saudi Arabia.

The balance of power is currently quite unstable in the Middle East as the futures of ISIS, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen remain uncertain (besides other potential conflicts in Lebanon, Israel/Palestine, and Bahrain). This imbalance of power might very well produce a Middle East where Saudi Arabia becomes the regional hegemon depending how the conflicts play out. On the other hand, Iran is in a strong position to further increase its influence in the area and become a dominant regional player. Regardless of the scenario, it would still benefit the Saudis to continue to enjoy relations with the United States for security and economic purposes. Like the United States, these times of instability in the Middle East that result in great uncertainty may force Saudi Arabia to seek out other allies, diversifying and expanding its own security network without abandoning one of its oldest allies.

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VII.

**WE “STILL WAITING”:
Barriers to the Achievement of
Social Equality in South Africa
through the Lens of LGBT Rights**

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During its transition to democracy in May of 1996, South Africa adopted one of the most progressive national constitutions of its time — the first in the world to explicitly prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, along with other identity classifications such as gender and race.¹ Yet despite the various steps towards social equality following the enactment of this constitution, such as the legalization of same–sex marriage in 2006, vast social inequality still persists throughout the nation almost two decades later.² Using the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA)³ social movement as a case study, this essay seeks to examine the factors which continue to inhibit the achievement of social equality within South African society following the transition to independence and democracy.

The paper, which is organized in four parts, will first provide a brief history of the LGBTQIA social movement up until the passage of the post–apartheid constitution. The second part of the paper serves to demonstrate the lack of social equality within South African society by illustrating the key issues that LGBTQIA citizens have faced during the post–apartheid era. This section will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical frameworks regarding social movements and equality that will be used to frame the essay’s further analysis. The final section of the paper will explore the dominant tensions and discourses functioning within South African society that serve to illustrate why social equality has yet to be achieved. It is important to note that this essay does not seek to portray South Africa as inherently homophobic or engage in what Jasbir Puar terms the “geopolitical mapping” of homophobia in non–Western countries, a phenomenon which removes all guilt of homophobia from those in the West.⁴ Ultimately, it is evident that South Africa is still in the midst of negotiating the processes of social change and transformation that are central to a postcolonial political transition.

Evolution of the LGBTQIA Movement in Apartheid South Africa

Some of the first instances of gay and lesbian political organizing emerged within South Africa during the 1960s, coalescing in response to repression from the apartheid state.⁵ Mirroring the

exclusionary racial politics of the time, this early activity was conducted predominantly by white South Africans rather than those of color. These early movements, however, diminished in scope over the course of the following decade due to increased attention and suppression by state authorities.⁶ During this time, those involved with the LGBTQIA movement chose not to conflate their political activism with anti–apartheid efforts, shifting towards a more closed and apolitical movement that focused on the security of LGBTQIA individuals and the creation of safe spaces for socializing and leisure.⁷

Responding to pressure from national and international groups, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the visible gay and lesbian movement, which had preserved its predominantly white constituency, shifted towards an inclusive style of organizing that combined LGBTQIA rights activism with a political condemnation of apartheid, as illustrated by the formation of groups such as Gays and Lesbians Against Oppression (LAGO).⁸

This period also was characterized by the growth of inclusive multiracial organizations such as Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), which was able to garner significant political power.⁹ During the democratic transition away from apartheid in the early 1990s, organizations used the period of social change as an opportunity to pursue greater LGBTQIA rights, such as adoption, marriage, and immigration rights for same–sex couples.¹⁰ Within the period leading up to South Africa’s first democratic elections, LGBTQIA activists became especially prominent in their lobbying of the African National Congress (ANC) and other political parties — even in the midst of significant levels of public homophobia.¹¹ Despite these difficulties, during the early 1990s the LGBTQIA movement as a whole successfully aligned its goals with the general themes of equality and non–discrimination championed by the ANC.¹² As a result, LGBTQIA social movement organizations successfully influenced the composition of the Equality Clause of the South African Constitution which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, thus securing national legal protection of LGBTQIA identities.¹³

Current Issues Facing LGBTQIA South Africans

The transition to democracy within South Africa marked the end of de jure heterosexism by the apartheid state by providing legally guaranteed equality, regardless of one's sexual orientation. Yet despite this improvement, there is still a disconnect between equality guaranteed by the constitution and the realities of everyday life, thus remaining a key issue affecting true social equality for LGBTQIA South Africans. As Allanise Cloete *et al.* note, "[the] constitutional right protects the freedom of sexual expression but its implementation and transformation of social and cultural daily practice have not been realized by many South Africans."¹⁴ This disjunction between the expectations of equality and its reality is apparent in the words of LGBTQIA South Africans themselves. After a performance as part of Johannesburg's Pride Parade, one of the most visible celebrations of LGBTQIA identities within South Africa, a drag queen being interviewed declared: "I'm in the constitution!" When prompted to further explain what this legal recognition meant for her, she stated, "My darling, it means sweet ... nothing at all. You can rape me, rob me, what am I going to do when you attack me? Wave the constitution in your face? I'm just a nobody black queen."¹⁵

A 2013 Pew Research Center study that reported that only thirty-two percent of South Africans agreed that homosexuality should be accepted by society.¹⁶ While this statistic must be read critically, considering the survey's relatively small sample size and significant margin of error, other instances also suggest an undercurrent of homophobia within South Africa. This is illustrated by various homophobic comments made by President Jacob Zuma, who has said: "When I was growing up, an *ungqin-gili* [a gay person] would not have stood in front of me. I would knock him out." President Zuma has also argued that same-sex marriages are "a disgrace to the nation and to God."¹⁷

As eluded to in the interview at Johannesburg's Pride Parade, one of the clearest examples of the disconnect between South Africa's equality legislation and the everyday realities for LGBTQIA citizens is the persistent threat of homophobic violence. This violence often manifests itself through acts of rape, gay-bashing and in some cases the murder of LGBTQIA persons

on the basis of their sexuality.¹⁸ One of the most troubling incarnations of this violence is the prevalence of the euphemistically termed act of "curative" or "corrective" rape — sexual violence used to "cure" LGBTQIA South Africans of their nonconforming sexual orientations.¹⁹ While these crimes are traumatizing and condemned within the LGBTQIA community, little attention is given to these issues in South Africa's mainstream media.²⁰ In a similar vein of invisibility, another issue facing LGBTQIA South Africans is securing adequate access to health or support services without receiving discrimination. This is particularly important for HIV-positive LGBTQIA South Africans, who experience a "layered stigma" due to both their HIV-status as well as their sexual orientation.²¹ As Cloete *et al.* state, "in addition to dealing with the issues of discrimination and stigma, many HIV positive MSM [men who have sex with men] find it challenging to access services that meet their HIV treatment and care needs," an issue that is compounded by the fact that "MSM are still discriminated against by healthcare practitioners working in mainstream public health facilities."²² In this way, it is evident that the conditions of everyday life for LGBTQIA South Africans do not align with the legislative guarantees of non-discrimination that are enshrined within South Africa's constitution.

A Theoretical Framework for Studying Social Movements and Equality

Barry D. Adam *et al.* asserts that "there has been a surprising neglect of gay and lesbian movements among social movement theorists," with studies that have specialized on these movements being predominantly Eurocentric.²³ This essay seeks to establish a theoretical framework for analysis based on themes such as the politics of visibility and intersectionality, as well as the role that democracy plays in social change. As Ashley Currier notes, "visibility matters to social movements. Public visibility imbues them with social and political relevance, enhancing activists' ability to disseminate their demands and ideas."²⁴ Not only does visibility grant organizations increased power, it also empowers individuals in their everyday experiences. Remarking on The Forum for the Empowerment of Women's (FEW) — a black lesbian social

movement organization based in Johannesburg — decision to rent office space in a former apartheid-era prison, Nomsa, a FEW member states: “women used to be locked up here; now women are coming out and saying, ‘We’re free, and we’re speaking our minds,’ in the same place that people were locked up.”²⁵ This assertion of visibility through the utilization of national symbols and images can also be seen as being part of a broader trend that has been used by other women’s movements throughout the African continent as a means for empowerment. In Burkina Faso, in what has been termed the “spatula uprising,” Burkinabé women mobilized against the government, taking to the streets with broomsticks and spatulas.²⁶ Justifying the use of national symbols in a similar way to the FEW, a woman from the Burkina Faso uprising explained the importance of the spatula: “the spatula is the most important cooking utensil for women. It has a symbolic weight in our traditions. When it is used to hit a man, it’s a sacrilege; the consequences are disastrous and irreversible ... this is the reason the women came out with spatulas.”²⁷ In this way, the utilization of national symbols and important spaces within the national consciousness have extraordinary power, consequently enabling social movement organizations to achieve their goals.

Intersectionality can be defined as a theoretical approach that views various identity oppressions as not only linked, but also multiplicative.²⁸ The importance of an intersectional analysis is demonstrated in Lisa Vetten’s work; she notes that, “gender identities generally structure social relations in a hierarchical fashion, with women subordinate to men. South Africa’s particular colonial and apartheid histories, almost by definition, impose race (and racism) on top of these gender identities.”²⁹ In this way, Vetten raises the importance of racial identity as an equally important factor in the achievement of equality within South African society. When considering the prevalence of homophobic violence that affects the LGBTQIA population, violence against queer women can be understood as an incarnation of a broader trend of gender-based violence.³⁰ Further, an intersectional analysis is particularly relevant considering that black South Africans are disproportionately affected by this violence.³¹ Thus, as Henriette Gunkel notes, “homophobia in apartheid and post-apartheid

South Africa cannot be separated from discussions around gender and race.”³² Further, an intersectional analysis is also relevant when exploring LGBTQIA organizing itself. Teresa Dirsuweit argues that LGBTQIA governance among groups in South Africa “has not been exempt from painful exclusionary politics with tensions existing along race, class and gender fractures.”³³ Similarly, Shireen Hassim explains that social movements that pursue “inclusionary” rather than “transformative” politics — as many LGBTQIA organizations do — have a tendency to become elite-based, thus functioning upon a hierarchy of identities.³⁴ Therefore, intersectionality provides a useful framework to analyze the lack of social equality in South Africa for LGBTQIA persons.

Studies of democratization as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of social change also serve as an integral factor to consider when analyzing the LGBTQIA movement in South Africa. As Aili Mari Tripp writes, within Africa, “in general, the shift from one-party to multiparty politics ... created favorable conditions for greater participation for sectors of society long marginalized under authoritarianism.”³⁵ This was clearly the case for the LGBTQIA social movement in South Africa, which successfully aligned itself with democratic principles of equality in the transition from apartheid.³⁶ It is evident that the transition to democracy in South Africa allowed for the passage of numerous pieces of progressive legislation protecting individual rights and enshrining principles of non-discrimination based on identity. However, this de jure transition to democracy is characterized by Staffan Lindberg as remaining “one-party dominant with well-known problems for democratic accountability and representation,” as the ANC has remained in power since the transition to independence.³⁷ This assertion raises significant questions surrounding the future of social change and the ability for the LGBTQIA movement to generate further progress, especially considering that some authors are now arguing that democracy in South Africa has “stalled.”³⁸

The Inequalities of Geographic and Spatial Locations

A significant factor that perpetuates social inequality in South Africa can be seen in the disparities between various geographic

and spatial locations throughout the country. A 2011 Human Rights Watch report about homophobic violence in South Africa asserted that LGBTQIA persons, specifically black lesbians and transgender men who are “living in townships, peri-urban and rural areas, and informal settlements are the most marginalized and vulnerable members of South Africa’s LGBT population.”³⁹ Further, the prevalence of LGBTQIA-friendly venues in certain areas of Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria is highly dependent on their geographic location in relatively urbanized areas — areas which are devoid of the various factors that “make such a sociocultural space unthinkable in the townships,” such as greater acceptance of same-sex relationships.⁴⁰ In reflecting on her time spent in South Africa conducting research on LGBTQIA organizing, Ashley Currier states that:

Although LGBT activists and I experienced travelling in Johannesburg somewhat similarly, our safety concerns differed because of where we lived. Many activists returned home to sometimes difficult township lives, whereas I was able to rent a room in an apartment in the white, gay neighborhood of Melville and, later, a room in a house in the adjacent, white neighborhood of Westdene, with numerous security features. My class position insulated me from the more volatile aspects of living in Johannesburg and its townships.⁴¹

In this excerpt, Currier not only addresses issues of geographic and spatial disparities that are present within South Africa, but also alludes to the importance of intersectionality when she mentions how her class status ameliorated her experience. Through qualitative research with LGBTQIA South Africans, Mikki van Zyl similarly found that LGBTQIA persons who lived in townships felt less physically safe than those who lived in more developed urban areas.⁴² Clearly, one of the key issues affecting LGBTQIA South Africans’ physical security is the disparity between rural and urban areas.

Tensions Between Tradition and Modernity

South Africa’s transition from colonialism and apartheid to independence and democracy has had significant implications for tensions surrounding the competing discourses of tradition

and modernity. In his discussion about the pressure felt by newly democratized nations such as South Africa, Neville Hoad notes that, “the emergent nation must simultaneously posit itself as the vehicle of economic and cultural progress — in short, as the agent of modernity — and as the custodian of a fixed (in all senses of the word) identity conferring precolonial past — in short, as the repository of tradition.”⁴³ The relevance of this tension for LGBTQIA South Africans’ equality lies in society’s portrayal of their sexual identities as either traditional or modern, with sexual identity often being employed as a critique for broader currents of change within the nation. Considering that nonconforming sexualities were repressed under colonialism and apartheid, these sexualities are now portrayed in the contemporary era as un-African and thus a foreign, imperialist import.⁴⁴ At the same time, same-sex relationships and the equal gender relations they represent serve to challenge the patriarchal order that was cemented within South African society during the colonial period.⁴⁵ As Vetten notes, “the current gap between the previous existing highly repressive controlled society and elimination of old structures of control, on the one hand, and adoption and implementation of new democratic institutions on the other, results in a dangerous transition period,” leading to “a gap between the old authoritarian ways and new democratic values.”⁴⁶ This notion of a gap existing between “old” and “new” African ways of life, and the subsequent questions that emerge from this fact can also be seen in Mariama Bâ’s novella *So Long a Letter*. Bâ’s text explores the often-contradictory decisions that the main character Ramatoulaye must make in negotiating life in a rapidly modernizing Senegalese society, while concurrently maintaining national customs and her traditional roles.⁴⁷ Accordingly, LGBTQIA rights are situated within larger South African considerations regarding the recognition of the past and visions for the future.

Implications of International Aid and Donors

Various LGBTQIA social movement organizations within South Africa receive both funding and ideological support from external donors and organizations, the majority of which are located in the Global North.⁴⁸ Relationships with these external groups

often allow South African organizations to increase their visibility and lobbying power domestically, while simultaneously becoming integrated within the global development industry.⁴⁹ Various authors have argued that this process of *NGO-ization* is ultimately disempowering rather than beneficial for local groups, as donors often attach demands to their funding, prompting organizations to be less concerned with needs of their constituents and more responsive to the demands of their donors.⁵⁰ Further, international LGBTQIA movement organizations that operate in South Africa, such as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), form the basis of what authors have termed the "Gay International" — a group of organizations which couch their efforts in Africa primarily in Western terms, thus rendering their tasks as missionary rather than collaborative and ignore the agency of South African citizens.⁵¹ Further, another significant implication of the relationships between South African LGBTQIA organizations and those from abroad is that highlighting linkages and partnerships with Western organizations is often used by the LGBTQIA movement's opponents to discredit their work and "African identity."⁵² As Currier notes, "the international dimension and alleged foreignness of LGBT movement organizations' visibility threaten[s] to undercut their credibility with state actors and unsympathetic audiences within their national sociopolitical fields."⁵³ Negative attitudes towards foreign organization's efforts to eradicate homophobia are emblematic of broader distrust of Western organizations throughout Africa, largely due to the legacy of colonialism and undesired foreign intervention. For example, Habil Oloo *et al.* note that international organization's efforts to persuade communities to abandon practices of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Kenya "[are] largely seen as colonial imperialism."⁵⁴ Thus, while beneficial in providing necessary monetary support for many South African LGBTQIA organizations, international presence has resulted in a movement that is viewed as "un-African" and even as an inherently negative force in South Africa.

Negotiating a Queer African Identity

Efforts to secure minority rights and general social equality in South Africa, specifically those relating to LGBTQIA persons, have been refuted largely through the employment of nationalist and Africanist discourse.⁵⁵ As Mikki van Zyl notes, "the discourse claiming that homosexuality is un-African is embedded in wider hegemonic relations of power centering "true' African identities in contrast to perceived colonial identities of 'Western imports.'"⁵⁶ Sylvia Tamale refutes the notion of homosexuality as un-African with her argument that, "although imperialism attempted to racialize sexuality, and while it is true that sexuality has some cultural particulars (which are themselves not inherent, natural, or fixed), sexual orientation transcends racial and ethnic identity."⁵⁷ Despite this reality, "there is a long history of constituting homosexuality [in South Africa] as something outside tradition and culture and thus outside the nation."⁵⁸ Accordingly, discourse that posits homosexuality as un-African allows individuals and political leaders to combat what is seen as Western "gay imperialism" — including Western funding and political lobbying.⁵⁹ The detrimental effect of this rhetoric, as Zyl notes, lies in its power to maintain the disconnect between South Africa's equality legislation and the everyday realities for LGBTQIA South Africans: "in this process of (re)fashioning heterosexual patriarchal 'African' identities, collective identities relating to different gender and sexual norms are effectively erased from the Equality Clause ... remaining at the margins of society and denied full citizenship."⁶⁰ Overall, the largest implication of the homosexuality as un-African discourse is its power to deny LGBTQIA persons visibility within the larger community and a rightful place in the national consciousness, thus rendering them unequal within society.

Conclusion

It is evident that there is a clear contradiction within South African society between the *de jure* protection of LGBTQIA rights and the *de facto* reality of discrimination. This paper seeks to explore the various tensions and discourses that function within

society and contribute to the persistence of inequality. First describing the evolution of the LGBTQIA social movement during the apartheid era and transition towards democracy, the paper then explored the contemporary issues facing the movement that illustrate the lack of social equality within the nation. The theoretical framework used to shape the discussion composed of the politics of visibility, intersectionality, and the role of democracy in generating change. The final section of the paper explored the various tensions and discourses circulating within South Africa that influence the national consciousness and ultimately form the basis for why social equality has not yet been reached for LGBTQIA South Africans. As activist Zackie Achmat notes, "In South Africa we have a really good legal framework, what we need now is a change in our social understandings, our attitudes."⁶¹

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