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Dear Reader:

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the 2016 Spring Issue of *The Yale Review of International Studies*. We're proud to continue and renew our commitment to providing the best possible platform for outstanding student scholarship at Yale. Having welcomed work from around the globe in our last issue of *The Review*, we return in this installment to our roots: highlighting the diversity and depth of our student body's work. The pieces we have chosen once again reflect a number of the concerns our international community faces today.

Within these pages are essays on: Eurovision and the making of queer (counter-)cultural diplomacy; the American media and government responses to the Armenian and Darfur genocides; the Bharatiya Janata Party and the state of consociational rule in India; modeling aid-driven conflict in Malian society; migration, survival, and the "disinherited" underclass in Tehran (1950–1980); using music to bridge the US–Cuban divide; and finally an essay titled "Tribal Rugs," which examines the modern carpet industry in Afghanistan.

Joining this remarkable crop of essays are two fine commentary pieces from our editorial staff. Our Managing Editor, Stephen Mettler, writes a short piece on the need for a new US policy on North Korea. Complementing his piece is a comment on the short-sightedness of America's pivot to Asia, authored by Harry Seavey, one of our new freshman editors, in his YRIS debut. Working with our peers at Yale has been nothing short of an immense pleasure, and we at *The Review* are extremely grateful to not only those who gave us permission to publish their writing in this issue, but also to those who took the time to submit. We had an overwhelming amount of high caliber submissions this spring.

Once again, it has been our pleasure to collect these pieces and bring them together for your enjoyment. We hope you relish reading them as much as we did, and we hope you will consider submitting your own work for publication. In the meantime, we're already getting a head start on our next issue: *The Acheson Prize*.

All the best,
The Editors

I.

YRIS COMMENT

NORTH KOREA:
The Need for A New
U.S. Policy

Stephen Mettler
Saybrook College, '18

North Korea is a mistake of history created by outside forces. The country has nuclear weapons, an advancing missile program and the world's most brutal totalitarian regime. This regime is a threat to its own people, to its neighbors and to the stability of East Asia. It limps along despite an impoverished population and a critically inefficient command economy. American policy on North Korea is merely treading water, trying only to prevent the situation from getting worse while hoping that the problem will be resolved internally. As a nation which claims to lead the free world, to defend basic human rights and to promote nuclear non-proliferation, America has a responsibility to do more.

The U.S. needs to more assertively address the North Korean regime's human-rights abuses, weapons programs and exports, and aggressive behavior towards U.S. allies. The 372-page United Nations investigation into human rights violations in North Korea, issued on February 17th, 2014, is the most damning and comprehensive report to date. It details North Korea's extensive prison network, which holds an estimated 80,000 to 120,000 political prisoners subjected to inhumane conditions, torture, and the constant threat of execution.¹ The Chairman of the U.N. commission, Michael Kirby, has compared the Kim regime's atrocities to the Nazis' in the Holocaust.² The regime also spends massively on its military, including missile and nuclear programs. In addition to threatening U.S. allies South Korea and Japan, North Korea shows an alarming enthusiasm for shipping weapons and technologies to rogue regimes and terrorist groups. The Kim regime maintains close ties with Syria's Bashar al-Assad and has sent arms to Hezbollah and Hamas via Iran, and has a history of threatening nuclear proliferation.³ The international community and the U.S. have a responsibility to end North Korea's trafficking of weapons and nuclear technology, to increase stability and protect vulnerable civilian populations in East Asia, and to stand up for the basic human rights of 25 million North Koreans.

Regardless of U.S. policy, the Kim regime and its inefficient Stalinist economy are unsustainable. The country's food rationing

1 "World Report 2014: North Korea." *World Report 2014: North Korea*. Human Rights Watch. Web.
 2 Stuart, Hunter. "North Korea Atrocities 'Strikingly Similar' To Nazis, UN Says." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 18 Feb. 2014. Web.
 3 Davis, Carlo. "North Korea's Weapons Trade: A Look At A Global Business." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 17 July 2013. Web

system has not worked properly since environmental factors, government incompetence and the loss of Soviet support led to between 600,000 and 2.5 million deaths in the 1994–1998 famine.⁴ Today, most North Koreans live in extreme poverty, and malnutrition and even starvation are widespread. A 2013 U.N. investigation found that food consumption is "borderline or poor" in 84% of North Korean households.⁵ North Korea's economy can only find new life in market-oriented reform, which the regime will not consider at this time. Any hope that Kim Jong-un would adopt such a path suffered a critical blow when he publicly executed his uncle, Jang Song-thaek, the chief North Korean envoy to Beijing and an advocate of Chinese-style economic reform.⁶ The regime fears, perhaps correctly, that any reform might fatally loosen its political grip. Meanwhile, informal liberalization through black markets has already increased North Korean citizens' willingness to express dissent. Black markets emerged during the 1990s famine, when North Korean citizens turned to illegal market exchange to survive the collapse of the government food-distribution system. Since the famine, black market activity has steadily increased throughout the country, decreasing citizens' dependence on the government and creating incentives to smuggle goods and information from the outside world. The regime has tried to curtail this activity, most notably in 2009 with a "currency reform" which wiped out the private wealth of trading citizens. Citizens responded with anger and riots across North Korea, forcing the government to take an unprecedented step back. The regime offered some subsidies as compensation for losses, and even publicly executed the official identified as responsible for the idea.⁷ This event proved to the regime that any economic liberalization, which would increase free trading, could bring serious challenges to its political authority. As a result, the regime does not appear to be considering an economic change in course even though its current path is unsustainable. This state of affairs, and the Kim regime, cannot continue indefinitely.

U.S. policy on North Korea has become complacent and must be reevaluated and reinvigorated. The U.S. remains officially commit-

4 Stanton, Joshua, and Sung-yoon Lee. "Pyongyang's Hunger Games." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 07 Mar. 2014. Web.
 5 Presse, Agence France. "Widespread Malnutrition Still The Norm In North Korea Despite Increase In Food Production." *Business Insider*. Business Insider, Inc, 28 Nov. 2013. Web.

6 Terry, Sue. "A Korea Whole and Free." *Foreign Affairs*. Council on Foreign Relations, July–Aug. 2014. Web.
 7 Hong, Adrian. "How to Free North Korea." *How to Free North Korea*. Foreign Policy, 19 Dec. 2011. Web.

ted to using the “stick” of new sanctions and the “carrot” of aid to negotiate the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. However, North Korea has a long history of signing agreements and breaking them later, while the aid and sanctions relief it receives only help prop up the Kim regime. The regime will not willingly give up nuclear weapons. North Korean officials carefully watched what happened to Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, whose falls suggest that giving up nuclear weapons programs surrenders the only effective deterrent against U.S.–imposed regime change. Meanwhile, the U.S. cannot simply wait the regime out, because the only way for the regime to cede power peacefully is through the unlikely route of long–term economic and political reform. More likely scenarios include an internal uprising, a sudden government implosion or even a conventional war, with consequences ranging from dangerous to disastrous. These outcomes would risk humanitarian crises and regime use of nuclear weapons. This unstable situation is one of the reasons the U.S. has failed to more actively press North Korea, but doing nothing is not the answer.

Encouraging broad–based attitude shifts among North Korean citizens themselves could help gradually pressure the regime to change, and would carry less risk than sudden crises or outside intervention. North Korean citizens proved with their fiery response to the regime’s 2009 currency “reform” that they are capable of making the government change course, and the U.S. can help them. The U.S. should encourage defection from North Korea, as escaped North Korean citizens have been extremely dedicated and effective at smuggling outside news into their country. Elite defectors can be offered American guarantees of safety and immunity if they provide the U.S. with essential information on the internal workings of the North Korean government. American officials have admitted that they are far behind their Chinese counterparts in their understanding of internal North Korean politics.⁸ In addition, the U.S. should support non–governmental civil society organizations which smuggle pamphlets, radios, DVDs and even USB drives into North Korean black markets. These groups’

8 Kaplan, Robert D., and Abraham M. Denmark. “The Long Goodbye: The Future North Korea.” *World Affairs Journal*. World Affairs, May–June 2011. Web.

combined annual budgets do not exceed \$1 million,⁹ and the U.S. can significantly expand their funding. The U.S. can also offer these groups diplomatic support, especially in China, where their activities are often illegal. These initiatives could encourage gradual change within North Korea with relatively low risk.

Finally, the U.S.’s most difficult but potentially most effective option regarding North Korea is to quietly bring China to the table. Providing essential aid and diplomatic support, China is vital to the Kim regime’s existence, maintaining North Korea as a buffer state between its own border and American troops in U.S.–allied South Korea. U.S. outreach to China would have to be entirely secret and could only pursue limited goals. China will not help to topple the Kim regime, at least not under current conditions, and may reject discussion outright. However, even a less tolerant Chinese attitude towards North Korea could help pressure the regime to change its course. The U.S. should work to assuage China’s fears of losing North Korea as a buffer state. American officials could promise that, in the event of a regime fall and Korean reunification, the U.S. military will never establish any bases north of the current DMZ. The U.S. can also pledge that if American forces must enter North Korea to help South Korean troops secure the North’s nuclear weapons, those troops will stay away from China’s border and withdraw once their objectives are complete. For its part, South Korea can restate its policy that it is not interested in nuclear weapons, and can promise that a reunified Korea will not have a nuclear weapons program. Given China’s fear that millions of North Korean refugees will flood across its border in the event of a regime collapse, the U.S. and South Korea could promise to assist with the humanitarian costs of a refugee crisis. If the North Korean regime suddenly collapses, outside powers may need to intervene quickly to avert military and humanitarian disaster. Any preceding discussion between China and the U.S. will help prevent disastrous miscalculation if the countries do not have time to coordinate their actions. The stakes are too high for the U.S. not to attempt to open a dialogue with China on the future of North Korea.

9 Lloyd, Thor Halvorssen And Alexander. “We Hacked North Korea With Balloons and USB Drives.” *The Atlantic*. Atlantic Media Company, 15 Jan. 2014. Web.

The North Korean regime is a threat to its own people, to East Asia and to the world. Inside the country, black-market activity is pushing North Korean citizens to become increasingly self-reliant and aware of the outside world, and less willing to take government abuse. If the regime continues on its current path, its fall is inevitable. The only questions are how much more suffering must be endured by its people, and how dangerous the regime's fall will be to regional security. The U.S. should encourage further defection of North Koreans and support NGOs which smuggle information into the country, in order to empower North Korean citizens to gradually pressure their regime from within. The U.S. must also reach out to China to assuage its fears of losing North Korea as a buffer state, and to foster cooperation in the event of a regime collapse. Both the continued existence and the inevitable fall of the North Korean regime pose grave threats to East Asian and global security, and current American policy exacerbates the risks by doing too little. In a situation as dangerous as this one, the U.S. must consider all available policy options.

II.

YRIS COMMENT

THE SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS
OF AMERICA'S PIVOT
TO ASIA

Harry Seavey
Calhoun College, '19

The United States' China containment policy is a robust one. American troop deployments run the length of the Western Pacific, with soldiers from Paju on the Korean Peninsula to Darwin in Australia's Northern Territory. Naval and air bases dot Southeast Asia and Japan. The Seventh Fleet sails the waters off the coast of Indonesia eyeing the disputed nine-dashed line.¹ A retired Chinese admiral compared such a scheme to a man with a criminal record "wandering just outside the gate of a family home." Can he, or anyone else in China, be blamed for thinking so? Though the United States does not publicly acknowledge its military presence in the Pacific as part of a strategy of containment, it looks suspiciously similar to one.² Such a strategy is destined to bring China and the United States into conflict in the future. The United States could best understand this if it were to consider three things: what its reaction would be if it were in China's position, its history of failed containment strategies, and its own road to becoming a superpower.

The ultimate folly of American foreign policy is that notions of American exceptionalism direct it. As a result, American foreign policymakers often mistakenly assume that foreign states are fundamentally unlike the United States, and as such, behave differently than the United States does in the international system. However, a certain set of natural rules intrinsic to the international system governs all states. Paramount among these rules is the security of the state is its most important concern and states will always seek greater security when possible. Accordingly, a useful thought experiment presents itself: what would the United States' reaction be if China were to pursue a strategy of containment against it? Analyzing the United States' reaction to hypothetical containment by China would provide valuable insights about China's own response. Imagine that scenario. Chinese troops are stationed in Cuba and Bolivia; Chinese air bases are maintained and operated in Nova Scotia; Chinese naval bases exist in Vancouver, and its own massive Pacific fleet sails outside the territorial waters of California.³ Not only would the United States consider itself justified in taking aggressive steps to address an obviously provocative

1 Jeffrey Bader, Richard Bush, Jonathan Pollack, Kenneth Lieberthal, Jeffrey Bader, Claude Barfield, and Lt. General Wallace "Chip" Gregson, Jr., "Understanding the U.S. Pivot to Asia," *The Brookings Institution*, 31 Jan. 2012.

2 Michael D. Swaine, "Beyond American Predominance in the Western Pacific: The Need for a Stable us-China Balance of Power," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 20 Apr. 2015.

3 "China and America Spar at Sea: Naked Aggression with an Impeccable Sense of Timing," *The Economist*, 12 Mar. 2009.

military strategy by an enemy nation, but doing so would be a strategic necessity. No American president could imagine sitting idly by while another country cordoned the United States off from its most immediate areas of influence, even if that country made its best effort to honestly explain such a position was purely for defensive means.⁴ If there were a world where China actually attempted to contain the United States, there could only be two outcomes: a military withdrawal on China's part, or war.⁵ Such is exactly the position China is in with the current American containment strategy, and a Chinese leader would be equally concerned about his country's security as, and perhaps more willing to take aggressive steps to improve it than, an American president.

A second major mistake American foreign policymakers have made is not learning from America's foreign policy failures. Most recently, American leadership in Libya was indeed tactically successful—the country's brutal dictator, Muammar Gaddafi, was killed—but strategically proved a bumbling catastrophe. Today the country stewes in civil war as the United States learns for a second time what happens when it kills the dictator of a stable country but does not have a plan to stabilize the chaotic aftermath. As Libya came after Iraq, the United States' treatment of China comes after the failure of dealing with a post-Soviet Russia. In the wake of the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the shattering of the Soviet Union, President Clinton and American policymakers leaped at the opportunity to isolate Russia and ensure it never had the opportunity to significantly threaten American interests again. The result was the expansion of NATO and the swallowing up of former Soviet bloc countries, threatening to fully isolate Russia from its past allies. This myopic strategy of the Clinton administration has now thrust Eastern Europe into a state of unease as Russia adventures into Ukraine and hungrily looks south towards Georgia, a country it has already waged war with in the last decade. The post-1991 enlargement of NATO provided both a real reason and an unspoken self-justification for Russia's recent aggression. Faced with the threat of the American led NATO military machine

4 Andrew Browne, "Can China Be Contained?" *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 June 2015.

5 Joseph Nye, "Only China Can Contain China," *The World Post*, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 11 Mar. 2015.

virtually on its boarder, Russia was presented with a difficult choice: lie down and allow itself to be cordoned off from its former sphere of influence and its future source of power, or aggressively compel NATO to back down. Russia chose the latter — and it seems to be working. Though the expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders and the positioning of American military infrastructure and personnel near China are not identical situations, they share a basic truth: powerful countries do what they can to prevent containment. Russia reacted hostilely to Western containment once it had the capacity to do so, and there is no reason to think China will not as well.

A third major mistake American foreign policymakers make is failing to appreciate their own country's early history. It takes only a cursory understanding of the early history of the United States to notice that states seek to throw out foreign powers from their spheres of influence and establish regional hegemony.⁶ At the birth of the American nation, its thirteen colonies lay in a precarious position — not only because the mighty British Empire was planning to subdue its subversive colonists by way of war, but also because the nascent country lay in a literally precarious geographic position in North America. An infant United States of America was surrounded—essentially contained—by numerous great imperial powers. The Spanish occupied land to the south of the thirteen colonies, the British to the north, and a combination of squabbling empires to the west. The history of the first century and a half of the United States would be one of expelling these foreign powers from North America and attempting to establish regional hegemony, often by bloodshed. We should not suppose that China, a relatively young state in a world of now established superpowers, will act any differently than the similarly young United States did in expelling its rival foreign powers. Indeed, why should we suppose China will act differently than any other state in history that has gone to war to prevent containment, establish itself as the regional hegemon, or increase its national security?

It would take a significant degree of humility for the United States to dismantle its complex military security network in the

⁶ Ashley J. Tellis, "Balancing without Containment: A U.S. Strategy for Confronting China's Rise," *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2013.

Western Pacific. However, so long as the United States continues to pursue a policy of containment against China, ignoring its own history and blindly embracing the dangerous myth of exceptionalism, conflict is inevitable.

III.

TRIBAL RUGS:
Weaving Modernity
Into Afghanistan

Nelson Reed
Berkeley College, '17

The complexity of Afghanistan's carpets extends well beyond their appearance. Afghan tribes have been weaving in Central Asia for thousands of years, using their hands to create vibrant masterpieces of all sizes. These carpets became involved in almost every part of tribal life. Tribes, including the carpet-savvy Turkmen, differentiated their work by weaving a particular *göl*, or pattern, just as they branded their cattle with a specific *tamgha*.¹ The arrival of Russia and other foreign powers in the 19th century, however, began to alter the role of carpets in Afghanistan. External interest in the works created markets that linked weavers with consumers. This new intersection transformed the appearances of carpets. Producers, dealers, and middlemen began designing rugs targeted at customers. The 20th century, with its progressive forces of technology and war, symbolically and literally tore Turkmen carpets apart. "War rugs" emerged in response to foreign involvement in Afghanistan and questioned modernity's impact on the country. Today, the carpet industry is a key component of the Afghan economy, but faces many problems. The Western fascination that underpins the industry complicates notions of authenticity in the rugs of Central Asia. In many ways, the Turkmen carpet is an apt symbol of Afghanistan, an intricate interweaving of unresolved tensions between rural and urban, East and West, and ancient and modern.

This essay examines the Afghan carpet with a focus on the Turkmen tribe. Carpets are first introduced through two historical examples, which are followed by a contextualization of carpets within Turkmen life. Then an analysis is provided of the Russian influence on carpets in the 19th and 20th centuries, with particular focus on the "war rug." Next, a brief overview of the current Afghan carpet industry is provided, as well as its role in the nation's broader mixed feelings toward modernity. Finally, there is an investigation of Western interest in original Afghan carpets, which speaks to the relationship between Afghanistan and the world. Due to language and literacy barriers, evidence and arguments will stem primarily from Western sources, not from the weavers themselves. This perspective is important to note given the subjective nature of interpreting carpets.

1 Louise W. Mackie and Jon Thompson, *Turkmen: Tribal Carpets and Traditions*. (Washington, DC: Textile Museum, 1980), 16.

Even the oldest intact carpet contains signs of the interplay between those within and without civilization. The predecessor to the carpet was the animal skin. Humans used skins for practical purposes like maintaining warmth or carrying possessions. As they became more civilized and selective breeding allowed for higher quality fibers, humans slowly replaced these skins with woven objects. Though basic weaving techniques are thought to predate history, more refined levels of the skill can be traced back to over 2,500 years ago in the Asian Steppe.² It was in this area around the fifth century B.C. that the Pazyryk Rug was likely created and buried,³ only to be unearthed thousands of years later in 1949 by the Russian archeologist Sergei Rudenko. The Pazyryk features "strong Achaemenian associations, the horses and mounts in the primary border, which correlate strikingly with horse-and-groom relief carvings at the ancient city of Persepolis."⁴ By combining Persian elements, such as the similarities with "stone floor carvings at Nineveh,"⁵ and nomadic themes, most notably the horses' saddle covers, the artifact demonstrates that the contact between tribal weavers and urban centers played out on carpets even before the Common Era.

Rugs were also involved in early interactions between the East and the West. When Egypt's last pharaoh, Cleopatra, first met Caesar, "she knew that he would not allow her to enter his presence if recognized, and therefore she cleverly had herself carried into his palace wrapped in a rug of the finest texture."⁶ This anecdote suggests a Western objectification of the East and its exotic treasures. Even further, it is one of the first symbolic examples of the Western appropriation of non-Western objects: While Caesar would have rejected Cleopatra based on her looks, however striking, he gladly accepted her rare rug solely based on its appearance. Finally, the subservient nature of the meeting foreshadows future relations between Afghanistan with its weavers and the West with its consumers.

Before carpets could be appropriated, they were a mainstay of Turkmen society. Nomadic tribes in Central Asia from as early as the ninth century A.D.,⁷ the Turkmen lived on, in, and near carpets. As Robert Pinner notes, life was bookended by rugs: "How could the

2 Ibid., 19.

3 Patricia L. Baker, "Twentieth-century Myth-making: Persian Tribal Rugs," (*Journal of Design History*, 1997), 370.

4 James Opie, *Tribal Rugs: Nomadic and Village Weavings from the Near East and Central Asia* (Portland, OR: Tolstoy Press, 1992), 30.

5 Ibid., 32.

6 Rosa Belle Holt, *Rugs, Oriental and Occidental, Antique and Modern: A Handbook for Ready Reference* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1927), 18.

7 Mackie and Thompson, *Turkmen*, 16.

Turkomans not make the most beautiful carpets in the world when their first steps in childhood were taken in a child's rug, the *salatchak*, and the departed were mourned and taken on their last journey in a funeral carpet, the *ayatlik*?"⁸ In between these two phases, carpets carried out both decorative and practical functions. *Yolami*, *bou*, *yup*, *kapunuk*, *ensi*, and *dip khali* rugs all ornamented or insulated tents. *Tsherlik* and *at-cheki* rugs went on horses as saddle covers and knotted girths. As migrants, Turkmen needed many bags to carry their possessions. The *mafrash*, *torba*, *boktsche*, *chuval*, and *khordjin* were all woven goods of various sizes that served this purpose.⁹ For the most part, women were the primary weavers. The work was far from simple:

Two poles, of a length suited to the width of the carpet to be made, are placed at a distance apart to correspond with its length. From one pole to the other the warp is extended and spaced to suit the fineness of the carpet. The warp is made taut by twisting one of the poles, which are securely staked to the ground to prevent their being drawn together, and to preserve the necessary tightness... A short length or tuft of the woolen thread is dexterously entwined between several threads of the warp, and secured by a loop which is cut off at a length about double that which the pile is intended to be when finished. After several courses are completed, the pile is driven together by the metallic comb, and is then clipped off with great care and skill to the proper length.¹⁰

Depending on the size of the carpet, women could spend up to a year weaving, tying over 400 knots per square inch.¹¹ Such a complex, time-consuming process indicates the significance tribes placed on each rug. Through it all, women used only their memories for designs, an aspect that still baffles historians and experts. This fact only confirms the omnipresence of rugs in Turkmen life: they could not get carpets out of their heads.

Carpets were particularly important in weddings. During the

8 V.G. Moshkova, "Tribal Göl in Turkoman Carpets," from Pinner, Robert, and Michael Franses, *Turkoman Studies I: Aspects of the Weaving and Decorative Arts of Central Asia* (London: Oguz Press, 1980), 17.

9 Siawosch Azadi, *Turkoman Carpets and the Ethnographic Significance of Their Ornaments*, (Fishguard, Wales: Crosby Press, 1975), 16–19.

10 J.W. Bookwalter, "Among the Turkomans," from Pinner and Franses, *Turkoman Studies I*, 66.

11 Brian Spooner, "Afghan Wars, Oriental Carpets, and Globalization," *Expedition* 53, no. 1 (2011): 16.

procession, camels marched in donning all sorts of woven decorations. The *asmaluk*, a pentagonal knotted rug, flanked the bride's camel. An example of this piece, created by the Yomut tribe in the late 19th century, shows how mastering the art of weaving provided "tangible evidence of a young woman's aesthetic sensibilities, enhancing her stature."¹² The carpet boasts at least six different patterns, each symmetric and clean. The weaver, likely the bride herself, uses patterns that are far from simple, with diagonal white stripes crossing the interior and color schemes alternating every fourth ornament.¹³ With its extraordinary attention to detail, the *asmaluk* acts almost as an advertisement for the bride's economic potential. If a woman could weave, she could certainly provide for her family. Thomas Barfield confirmed this appeal, observing how "Turkmen bride-prices reflect[ed] the high value of female labor in carpet production."¹⁴ In exchange for their daughter and her skills, families received dowries filled with new carpets. Turkmen weddings, which on the surface resembled the matrimony of two humans, are in reality closer to a financial arrangement, and further resemble the marriage of a Turkmen to his rugs.

This is not to say that the female carpet makers did not receive any credit for their efforts. The economic value of tribal rugs, which increased as external interaction and trade increased in the 19th century, translated into relatively high standing for females in Turkmen society.¹⁵ Status did not necessarily mean complete freedom, however, as women would often spend up to 12 hours a day weaving a single square foot of carpet.¹⁶ Though designs varied across tribes and generations, a Turkmen rug's general ornamentation conformed to "a single stylistic group."¹⁷ Main floor carpets, most importantly the *khali*, contained a primary ornament in its center, called the *göl*. Each major Turkmen tribe displayed its own *göl* on its rugs as "a symbol of a tribe's independence and pride."¹⁸ If a large tribe defeated a smaller one, "members of the defeated tribe were forced to cease knotting main carpets with their own *göl*, or to stop weaving main carpets altogether."¹⁹ If they wanted to weave carpets, the losers had to use the *göl* of their conquerors. Carpet patterns, therefore, did not simply signify

12 Ibid.

13 Azadi, *Turkoman Carpets*, plate 28.

14 Thomas J. Barfield, *The Central Asian Arabs of Afghanistan: Pastoral Nomadism in Transition* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 79.

15 Spooner, "Weavers and Dealers," 209.

16 Ibid., 208.

17 Moshkova, "Tribal Göl," 18.

18 Azadi, *Turkoman Carpets*, 31.

19 Ibid.

economic or social status; they also had definite political meaning. They also had religious significance: Turkmen göls often featured animals, especially birds. According to the 13th century Persian historian Rashid al-Din, each animal, or *onighun*, was sacred to its representative tribesmen, who could neither hunt nor touch the creature.²⁰ Turkmen carpets simultaneously wielded real and symbolic power.

Though Westerners were likely ignorant of the ethnographic importance of Turkmen carpets, they were still drawn to the intricate woven creations. To pre-industrial Europeans, carpets from Central Asia were precious treasures that demonstrated wealth and a connection to distant lands. A 15th century painting by Carpaccio Vittore portrays an Italian building that boasts Oriental rugs hanging from its balcony.²¹ It was only toward the end of the 19th century, after the construction of the Trans-Caspian Railway and “‘pacification’ of the Tekke after the fall of the town Goek Tepe” during the Second Anglo-Afghan War, that a carpet trade opened up to the West.²² Before long, though, tribal patterns had traveled all the way to Chicago, Illinois, showcased on sofa cushions at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition by the German Koch und te Kock firm.²³ Turkmen rugs were no longer for camels in wedding processions; they were now displayed on storefronts and expo booths, newspaper and magazine ads. Western companies transplanted the popular, exotic patterns to anything they could sell, such as Liberty and Company’s “Saddle Bag Furniture,” which was allegedly “covered with fine old Persian rugs and bordered with mohair velvet.”²⁴ The appropriation and commercialization of the Oriental carpet had begun.

This change had an immediate impact on the carpets emanating from Turkmen weavers. Certain groups, including the Tekke, began borrowing Persian motifs, like the *parsi* ornament,²⁵ to “meet the demands of the market.”²⁶ The weaver now considered her designs in a new, commercial light. As anthropologist Brian Spooner concludes, “When the tribal organization was disrupted by Russian encroachment and domination toward the end of the nineteenth century, the relationship between the carpets and their social context...broke

20 Ibid., 25

21 Holt, *Rugs*, 20.

22 Rodris Roth, “Oriental Carpet Furniture: A Furnishing Fashion in the West in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 11, no. 2 (2004), 52.

23 Ibid., 45.

24 Ibid., 49.

25 Ponomaryov, O., “The Motifs of Turkoman Carpets—Salor, Tekke and Saryk,” from Pinner. and Franses, *Turkoman Studies* I, 32.

26 Ibid., 27.

down.”²⁷ The prevailing “context” for tribal rugs was no longer the wedding or tent—it was now the global marketplace. After World War II, for example, Tekke carpets were in high demand and short supply, so “the Yomut Turkmen of Iran responded... by abandoning the traditional Yomut designs and began to weave a simplified version of the Tekke design.”²⁸ They also switched from natural to synthetic dyes, which had been invented accidentally by Sir William Henry Perkin in the 1850s. Despite their simplicity and cheap price tag, synthetics placed Turkmen tribes at a disadvantage: Now “dyeing was already out of the control of the domestic unit” and was “better suited to commercial production or to household production that was financed from a market center.”²⁹ On both a design and material level, modernizing forces were directly altering Turkmen carpets and their makers.

As the Russians maintained a strong presence in Afghanistan toward the end of the 20th century, they continued to influence the area’s rugs. The Soviet invasion of 1979 created an entirely new product—the “war rug.” These carpets were striking, often lined with Kalashnikov rifles, Soviet tanks, and mini soldiers. The works retained tribal motifs, including the elaborate borders and repeated göl ornamentation, but traditional forms clashed with the violent images they surrounded. Although not from a Turkmen tribe, one Baluchi war rug encapsulates this juxtaposition. Symmetric shapes and alternating diagonals bind the edges of the rug, while two birds sit just inside the center section, framing the piece within a tribal context. Though difficult to distinguish among the explosion of shapes and colors, eight tanks roll across the carpet’s face, cannons raised.³⁰ The jarring composition, chaotic and set in fiery shades of red and orange, presents an apocalyptic episode in which tribal society has been crushed and its members struggle to interpret and represent their changing environment. In a sense, though, the rug can be viewed as consistent with the history of Turkmen carpets. The tanks, the mark of the victorious Soviet “tribe,” are simply replacing the göls of Afghanistan’s defeated tribes.

Still, war rugs were novel in that they overtly signaled the consumer’s complete domination of the rug market. The Soviet military,

27 Spooner, “Weavers and Dealers,” 214.

28 Mackie and Thompson, *Turkmen*, 38

29 Spooner, “Weavers and Dealers,” 207.

30 Edoardo Marino, *Guerre a Tappeto: toria Dell’Afghanistan Nelle Trame Dei Tappeti Di Guerra* (Rome: GBE, 2009), 99.

responsible for the destruction depicted by the carpets, was also the original patron of these new war rugs. Weavers incorporated Russian figures and weapons, especially the AK-47, into their work. One piece made in the 1980s is practically bare except for a Kalashnikov rifle that stretches the rug's length.³¹ Early war rugs sometimes included "writing resembling Cyrillic script,"³² which "suggests their makers expected a Russian audience."³³ For Soviet soldiers, officers, and officials, the rugs acted "as keepsakes and mementoes of having served in particular ways...in the Afghanistan military theater."³⁴ This trend was much more than the simple copying of Persian shapes. Tribesmen were now designing radically different carpets with real-life images to suit the desires of their foreign invaders. War rugs revealed a nascent carpet industry in which the consumer's perspective of the weaver's world made for a popular design.

At the same time, these rugs exhibited the physical devastation of Afghanistan caused by war. When interviewed in 1988, Sayed Ahmad Gailani, the leader of the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, pointed out that war rugs were not merely commercial in nature:

You must understand that a terrible violation of my country has taken place. A whole generation grew up knowing nothing besides the war. All they know how to do is fight. Think of the beautiful Afghan rugs for which my country is famous. Even as recently as ten years ago, people embroidered them with pyramids and camels. But today there are only tanks, military planes, and bombers.³⁵

While the rugs and their violent imagery may have appealed to Soviet buyers, they also reflected the daily realities of tribes like the Turkmen. The Soviet Afghan War killed around one million civilians,³⁶ leading many to look for ways to cope with such brutality. Deborah Deacon believes that these rugs "allow[ed] the weavers to record events occurring around them, providing a sense of control and optimism for the future."³⁷ Regardless of why weavers created war rugs, the rugs were

31 Ibid., 87.

32 Such as a Baluchi rug in Marino, *Guerre a Tapeto*, 93.

33 Tim Bonyhady, "Out of Afghanistan" (*The Rugs of War*, 2003), 2.

34 Gary Wheeler, "Visual Expressions of Violence and Symbolic Speech: Gendered Arts of War" (Miami University, 2004), 3.

35 Bonyhady, "Out of Afghanistan," 4.

36 Ann Taylor, "The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979-1989" (*The Atlantic*, 2014).

37 Deborah A. Deacon, "Textiles of War: Women's Commentaries on Conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan," (*Textiles and Politics: Textile Society of America 13th Biennial Symposium Proceedings*, 2012), 2.

certainly a response to events both in Afghanistan and thousands of miles away. A number of rugs depicted the September 11th attack on the World Trade Center. One rug shows the two flights, both labeled, colliding into the towers in front of a map of Afghanistan.³⁸

A tiny stick figure free-falls down towards American and Afghan flags and a battleship marked "USA." While the olive branch-holding dove between the two flags implies a hope for peace, the bird seems to fade, overpowered by the adjacent explosions and disorder. War rugs were a platform for the convergence of these violent 21st century visions and ancient tribal forms.

While war rugs make up a small portion of total Afghan carpet production, the national industry also reflects this tension between traditional and modern forces. Following the Soviet invasion of 1979, at least a million Afghans, many of them carpet weavers, fled to Pakistan.³⁹ Though most weavers have since returned to Afghanistan,⁴⁰ even now their carpets must be shipped through the neighboring country and labeled, "Made in Pakistan." Afghanistan simply does not have the cutting and washing facilities to process its own rugs, sending around 80 percent of them to Pakistan for these final steps.⁴¹ This problem stems primarily from the country's battle with bureaucracy and modernity in general. Between 80 and 90 percent of total Afghan GDP comes from the "informal sector," those goods and services beyond public or private administrative reach.⁴² Carpets fall within this category, with close to 95 percent of rugs produced by freestanding looms in the home.⁴³ Although many countries have adopted a factory model of carpet production, the domestic essence of weaving that originated in the nomadic tent has endured in Afghanistan. The nation's lack of control over its rich carpet trade is largely a result of "a poor investment climate resulting from state erosion and lack of capacity, infrastructural and financial constraints, and insecurity."⁴⁴ While the outside world has globalized the carpet industry, Afghanistan has yet to even nationalize its own. The country, like its carpets, cannot choose between the old and the new.

38 Marino, *Guerre a Tappeto*, 109.

39 Emmett Eiland, *Oriental Rugs Today: A Guide to the Best in New Carpets from the East* (Berkeley, California: Berkeley Hills Books, 2000), 150.

40 4.2 million returned between 2002 and 2005, from Hayes, Geoffrey, *Afghanistan: Transition under Threat* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008), 158.

41 "An Analysis of Business Opportunities within Afghanistan's Carpet Sector" (*International Trade Administration*, 2007), 4.

42 Hayes, *Afghanistan*, 91.

43 "Business Opportunities within Afghanistan's Carpet Sector," 10.

44 Hayes, *Afghanistan*, 91.

On the other hand, carpets help move Afghanistan towards modernity. By trading in markets as distant as the United States, carpet dealers “interact with the world around them” in new ways, crossing “the boundaries that have isolated them from the modern world over the past century.”⁴⁵ Meanwhile, by considering the perspective of their more modern consumers, weavers experience increased “psychic mobility” and “empathy,” Daniel Lerner’s primary mechanisms of modernization.⁴⁶ Carpets also promote a homogenous Afghanistan. Despite the many different tribal rugs still produced in the country, the “Afghan rug” is now its own category, characterized by its “neutral and calm” patterns and “red color.”⁴⁷ Often war rugs show a map of Afghanistan, visually accepting the country’s definition along modern cartographic lines. One carpet made in Western Afghanistan expands this idea to include the rest of the world,⁴⁸ a woven map that places the supposedly unified nation within a global context. The Turkmen weaver in her tent is now an Afghan citizen in a modern, interconnected world.

Afghanistan’s transition challenges the authenticity Western rug consumers covet. According to Spooner, Western interest in Afghan carpets comes from “Ruggism,” which “is characterized [*sic*] by a disenchantment with western modernity; an idealization [*sic*] of the Other; and a yearning for pre-modern ways of life where (supposedly) work is meaningful.”⁴⁹ Carpets are tangible symbols of a romanticized tribal society that has survived the onslaught of progress. Even carpet experts sentimentalize rugs, glorifying their “degree of perfection that can only arise from an ancient tradition,”⁵⁰ and asking questions like, “Will our modern restless way of life ever allow us to return to the conditions needed to create artistic work of such lasting value?”⁵¹ But Afghanistan has not survived modernity unscathed. War rugs shatter idealized assumptions of isolation and antiquity. While they may have been popular among Soviet officers, some view these products as inauthentic. One critic believes that weavers instead “should have been using traditional designs and vegetable dyes that would preserve ‘an invaluable part of the cultural heritage of Afghanistan.’”⁵² The idea that Afghans are simply responding to the chaos foreign powers

45 Spooner, “Afghan Wars,” 20.46V. F Costello, *Urbanization in the Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 59.

47 Knut Larson, *Rugs and Carpets of the Orient* (London: F. Warne, 1962), 161.

48 “Afghan Rugs: The Contemporary Art of Central Asia” (Boca Museum of Art, 2014), 14.

49 Pennina Barnett, “Rugs R Us (and Them): The Oriental Carpet as Sign and Text,” *Third Text* 30, (1995): 14.

50 Werner Loges and Raoul Tschell, *Turkoman Tribal Rugs* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), 12.

51 Carl Hopf, “The Carpets of the Yomut,” from Pinner and Franses, *Turkoman Studies I*, 12.

52 Bonyhady, “Out of Afghanistan,” 4.

have brought them does not satisfy these Ruggists. Nor have consumers realized that their projected interpretations of carpet designs can actually appropriate tribal cultural forms. By demanding certain motifs, patterns, or images in carpets and claiming to know “the cultural heritage of Afghanistan” better than Afghans do, Westerners hinder the same authenticity that they crave. And “thus we destroy that which we seek, as the Other adapts to suit our tastes, and carpets become ‘our art, not theirs.’”⁵³ Having imported violence to Afghanistan, the West now effectively “destroys” its prime export.

Stretched apart by two poles, one ancient and tribal, the other modern and urban, the Afghan rug is the symbol of a nation that is unsure whether to move with or against the course of modernity. Carpets had once been the centerpieces of Turkmen life, serving the tribe in practical and figurative capacities. Russian intrusion started the process in which outsiders shifted the rug out of the tent and into their own homes. Weavers adapted to change with new designs that either marketed consumers, portrayed real world events, or both. The Afghan carpet industry that developed from this globalization had its own problems, which were also related to the unstable mixture of old and new. Finally, after pulling rugs away from their tribal context, Western consumers lamented the decline of “authenticity.” Afghanistan is like a carpet the Western world has been trying to buy for years. When that has failed, the West has simply walked all over Afghanistan instead.

53 Barnett, “Rugs R Us,” 28.

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IV.

**FACING THE FACTS:
American Media and
Government Responses
to the Armenian and
Darfur Genocides**

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The American media has long been tasked with the daunting duty of reckoning with evil and presenting it to a relatively naive public. Genocide—“the darkest word in the human language”—a term not coined until the mid twentieth-century, is the basest of those evils.¹ The Armenian Genocide and the Darfur Genocide are two of the most infamous examples of this atrocity. Claiming between 600,000 and 800,000 lives from 1915 to 1916, the Armenian Genocide was the Ottoman Empire’s systematic slaughter of its Armenian Christian minority. The Young Turk triumvirate had adopted an aggressive brand of Turkish nationalism aimed at creating a “new brotherhood of race,” in which Armenians had no place and so were dubbed enemies of the Turkish state “to be dealt with.”² The Darfur Genocide began in 2003 when two rebel movements, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) aggressed the Sudanese government because they were frustrated by its failure to protect African farmers from nomadic Arab tribesmen.³ The government responded by unleashing Arab militias known as Janjaweed, or devils on horseback, to displace and murder the African members of the Xaghawa, Masaaliet and Fur tribes, who are referred to derogatorily as *zurqas*, meaning anti-Arab reactionaries.⁴ The genocide has claimed 400,000 lives and displaced over 2,500,000 people since it began in 2003; each day, 100 civilians die as a result of the ongoing conflict.⁵

This paper will explore how the American press shaped public understanding of and response to the Armenian genocide, the first non-colonial genocide of the twentieth-century, and the Darfur genocide, the first of the twenty-first century. Despite great changes in the international legal framework, the actions that the United States government has taken in the face of incidents of mass-extinction and violence have failed to evolve substantially between the Armenian and Darfur genocides. The United States government remains reluctant to admit the gravity of situations like these for fear of having to act—a fear only worsened by the obligations formalized in international law later in the twentieth century. However, these international agreements, namely the 1948 “Convention on the

1 Richard G. Hovannisian, *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1998), 9.

2 Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 415.

3 “Genocide in Darfur,” *United Human Rights Council*, updated in 2014, accessed November 28, 2014, <http://www.unitedhumanrights.org/genocide/genocide-in-sudan.htm>.

4 Samantha Power, “Dying in Darfur,” *The New Yorker*, August 23, 2004, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/08/30/dying-in-darfur>.

5 “Genocide in Darfur.”

Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” and the 2005 “Responsibility to Protect,” have succeeded in improving the media’s coverage of genocide and in making the press a more effective tool for inciting action.

What historians now widely recognize as the Armenian Genocide finds its roots in a deep-seeded racial hatred of the Christian minority by some of the Muslim majority that arose in the final years of the nineteenth century. Seen from this historical perspective, the Armenian Genocide can be understood as the culmination of escalating ethnic tensions in the Ottoman Empire. In 1894 and 1895, the government of the Ottoman Empire under Sultan Abdul-Hamid massacred 100,000 Armenians, looted and pillaged thousands of their homes, and forced many to convert to Islam. Persecution of the Armenians continued into the first years of the twentieth century: in 1900, Kurdish villagers attacked and murdered approximately 400 Armenians in the mountains of the far eastern region of the Ottoman Empire. In 1905, as minority tensions heightened in the Russian Empire, the Muslim Tatars, now known as the Azeris, murdered hundreds of Armenians and destroyed Armenian villages in the Russian-controlled provinces of Baku, Tiflis and Erevan in the name of an Islamic Holy War against the Christian minority. Because the Russian Bolsheviks had aligned themselves with the Armenians, the Tsarist authorities broke from tradition and supported the Tatars. In the final major event leading up to the genocide in 1909, the Turks massacred 20,000 Armenians in Adana and Tarsus for political, economic and religious reasons, a harrowing precursor to the genocide that would begin six years later.⁶

Each of these acts of persecution set a critical precedent for the events that occurred during the Armenian genocide and for the way in which the American media would cover this atrocity. The nineteenth-century episode predicted the religious brand of Turkish nationalism that provoked the annihilation of the Christian “other” in the pursuit of a Turkish state in 1915. It also provided the historical backdrop for the American press’ Biblical framing of the crisis:

6 Jay Winter, “Introduction: Witness to Genocide,” *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 9–13.

“Armenians died on ‘Bible Lands’...that formed part of a common sacred tradition for American Catholics, Protestants, and Jews... ‘CRUCIFIXION IS REVIVED’ was the headline in the lead story of the *Los Angeles Times* in the Easter season of 1915.”⁷ This religious narrative made an otherwise distant crisis and its Christian victims more relatable and sympathetic to the American public. The 1900 episode of Kurdish brutality in the far-east pointed out that Armenians populated remote areas of the Ottoman Empire, which made it difficult for the American media to acquire reliable information in a timely manner. The Ottoman Empire granted few visas to American journalists, and most of the reporters who were able to enter the country did not venture beyond Constantinople. The Russian Tsar’s support of the Tatars in 1905 stands in contrast with the Russian courting of the Armenian minority following Russia’s entrance into war against Turkey in October 1914. The Tsar declared on December 30th of that year, “a most brilliant future awaits the Armenians.”⁸ By 1915, the Russians considered the Armenians a potential asset rather than a threat due to their strategic location on the border between Russia and its newly created Turkish enemy. Russian support, however, intensified Turkish persecution of the Armenians.⁹ The brutality endured by the Armenians of Southern Anatolia in 1909 revealed the cruelty that the Turkish forces were willing to unleash upon the Armenian minority.

Similarly, the genocide in Darfur that began on February 26, 2003 was the result of decades of dormant ethnic tensions. It traces its origin to an ongoing southern Sudanese civil war that began in the latter half of the twentieth century, a conflict in Chad and Libya that spilled over into Darfur in 1976, and local droughts and resource scarcity throughout the 1980s. However, the ethnic and religious tensions between Africans and Arabs that fueled these events date back to the beginning of Sudanese history. Arab geographers named the region *Bilad as-Sudan*, or Land of the Blacks, to broadly define Black Africa, reflecting the racist attitudes of the Arabs, who saw themselves as a separate and superior people.¹⁰ While resource scarcity was the most tangible and immediate cause of the crisis, as “scarce water resources

7 Thomas C. Leonard, “When news is not enough,” *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 304.
8 Winter, 13.
9 Ibid.
10 Gérard Prunier, *Darfur: The Ambiguous Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2005), 1.

and grazing land has caused intense rivalry between cattle-raising Arab tribesmen and African farming communities,” this was merely symptomatic of a larger ethnic rivalry that was playing out nationally across Sudan and internationally throughout Northern Africa.¹¹ Though the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice Equality Movement (JEM) struggle for government recognition of the Arab oppression of Africans in Darfur is not directly related to the South Sudanese civil war between the Sudan People’s Liberation Army and Khartoum’s National Islamic Front, “both conflicts have in common... the refusal to accept any longer the Islamic fascism that has ruled Sudan for the last fourteen years.”¹²

Darfur’s geographic location allowed the similar Arab–African conflict raging in Libya and Chad during the 1970s and 80s to spill across the border when the Sudanese president, Gaafar Nimeiry, decided to support the Chadian leader, Hissen Habre, allowing his armed forces into Darfur. This move “decisively worsened the regional ethno–political landscape. Tribes which had seen themselves primarily in local terms were suddenly catapulted into a broader artificial world where they were summoned to declare themselves as either ‘Arab’ [progressive and revolutionary] or ‘zurqa’ [anti–Arab and reactionary].”¹³ The civil war in southern Sudan and the spill-over from the Chadian–Libyan conflict contextualize the Darfur genocide as part of broader geographic and historical tensions rather than as an isolated event. This context should have altered the international discussion of the Darfur situation to place its ethnic–cleansing element at the forefront.

Though the genocide began in 2003, it garnered almost no American media attention until Secretary of State Colin Powell publically labeled it as “genocide” in September 2004.¹⁴ In fact, The New York Times only mentioned Darfur once in 2003 as part of a “World News” brief.¹⁵ Any other coverage the conflict had received dismissed it as “tribal clashes in Western Sudan” over scarce resources, with “no mention of the political and military dimensions of the crisis: demands of rebels for power–sharing, the challenge to the Sudanese

11 Abdel Salam Sidahmed, Walter C. Soderlund, and E. Donald Briggs, *The Responsibility to Protect in Darfur: The Role of Mass Media* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 73.
12 Eric Reeves, *A Long Day’s Dying: Critical Moments in the Darfur Genocide* (Toronto: The Key Publishing House Inc, 2007), 19.
13 Ibid, 46.
14 Sidahmed, xv.
15 Ibid, 96.

government posed by rebel military attacks, or how the government intended to deal with the insurgency.”¹⁶ The media either simplified, or did not address, the genocide for its first year.

This simplification of the causes of the genocide demonstrated the same lack of attention to the actual history of the conflict of which the media was guilty during the Armenian Genocide. Just as many Americans had little awareness of the isolated Armenian population, few Americans had ever heard of Darfur before the genocide began: “its [Darfur’s] history was a mystery nobody particularly wanted to plumb, but now there was a good story: the first genocide of the twenty–first century.”¹⁷ The Convention in 1948 introduced the solemn term “genocide” into the official lexicon for describing mass–extermination. Secretary of State Powell’s use of this powerful nomenclature gave the media its angle of moral outrage with which it could carry coverage of the conflict, despite the fact that many specific details of the genocide remained unclear. Unlike in the Armenian case, the press was able to call attention to Darfur by engaging in the debate over whether it was genocide. Still, there was great confusion in the early years of the crisis: few understood what exactly was occurring.

The American mass media often ignores the historical roots of conflicts to focus on the attention–grabbing gore of carnage, the politically–minded plea for relief efforts, and the emotional recounting of Western rescue missions. Media consumers, whether in the last ten or 100 years, have always been largely uninterested in reading about the historical origins of conflicts. Sensationalism is the central tenet of the media’s strategy for disseminating information; headlines such as “WHOLESALE MASSACRES OF ARMENIANS BY TURKS” and “THE MOURNFUL MATH OF DARFUR: THE DEAD DON’T ADD UP” certainly attracted more readers than a focus on historical accuracy would have. While it is important that the American media recognizes atrocities, one must contemplate whether a thoughtful consideration of the conflict’s historical causes could have strengthened the media’s calls for intervention. Perhaps this sort of approach would have provided the American people with the information necessary to sympathize with

¹⁶ Ibid, 73.

¹⁷ Prunier, 127.

the persecuted groups while constructing a justification for intervention that could survive even after emotional sensationalism had faded.

Regions that are culturally and geographically remote from the United States, such as Armenia and Darfur, have proven particularly poor at attracting American media attention. *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof, who was one of the first to cover the Darfur crisis beginning in 2004, quoted CNN’s Rick Sanchez, “If today, Britney Spears is caught shoplifting topless,” and CNN prioritizes Darfur, while another news station covers Spears, “they will have a million viewers to our 20,000 if we decided we’re going for Darfur.”¹⁸ Though Kristof criticized the public’s obsession with tabloid journalism, he himself utilized the scandalous title of “Topless Celebrity Shoplifting vs. Darfur” to attract readers, highlighting that shallowness and celebrity were perhaps necessary to attract an audience. Journalists themselves were and are often uninformed about the historical backdrop of the conflicts they cover, which has profound implications for the public’s conception of them. Had the public comprehended the decades of ethnic–religious hatred and tension that culminated in genocide in Armenia and Darfur, they would perhaps have had a human story with which to connect and a strong rationale to press for government action.

The Armenians, more than two million concentrated in Turkey’s eastern provinces, with no political power and high taxation, had long been oppressed by the Ottoman Empire.¹⁹ On April 24, 1915, the genocide began when the Young Turk triumvirate ordered the arrest and, ultimately, execution of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals.²⁰ The government’s attack quickly escalated as the “government disarmed and slaughtered most of the able–bodied Armenian men so that the Turkish authorities could ensure that they could not defend themselves against a state–imposed genocide...[and] liquidat[ed] the leaders and intellectuals for the Armenian community beginning in the capital city of Constantinople.” By the end of summer 1915, most Armenians in Turkey had been displaced and sent on death marches across the Syrian desert to concentration camps—it was clear by then that these deportations of men, women and children were in fact mass murders.²¹

¹⁸ “Topless Celebrity Shoplifting vs. Darfur,” *Nicholas Kristof Blog*, accessed November 27, 2014, <<http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/17/topless-shoplifting-vs-darfur/>>

¹⁹ Richard D. Kloian, *The Armenian Genocide: News Accounts From the American Press (1915–1922)* (Berkeley, CA: Anto Printing, 1988), xii.

²⁰ John Kifner, “Armenian Genocide of 1915: An Overview,” *The New York Times*, December 7, 2007, sec. Times Topics, <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/timestopics/topics_armeniangenocide.html>

²¹ Kloian, xv.

The atrocities were sufficiently documented by various Western diplomats, missionaries, doctors, travelers and other workers who were incensed by what they had witnessed.²² United States Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, Henry Morgenthau, wrote in a telegram to the State Department on July 10, 1915, “Persecutions of Armenians assuming unprecedented proportions. Reports from widely scattered districts indicate systematic attempts to uproot peaceful population... turning into massacre, to bring destruction and destitution on them.”²³ Though eyewitness accounts were frequently sent to the United States government, the American press did not report on the mass deportations and genocide of the Armenian people in a timely fashion due to many factors that obstructed up-to-date coverage. A poor technological infrastructure made it difficult for news to be dispatched to the US, and the geographical remoteness of the different provinces hindered the collection and evaluation of reliable data that would support the theory that the killings were methodological. Furthermore, many were skeptical about the scale of the slaughter, as no one in the West could comprehend that a government would seek to eliminate an entire race of its people. The greatest obstacle to accurate reporting by the Western news media, however, was the Turkish government’s campaign to prevent information about the genocide from leaving the country. Internal telegrams from consuls to Ambassador Morgenthau relaying information about local massacres in their areas were censored, and the Turkish authorities intimidated many consuls in an attempt to prevent them from sending information to Ambassador Morgenthau or the United States.²⁴

Despite all of these obstacles, Morgenthau was eventually able to report extensively to the State Department, though his reports often arrived long after the relevant events had transpired. The American press subsequently rose to the occasion, sensing a thrilling story about Turkish atrocity that was a newsworthy event in its own right and that could be framed as part of the larger partisan narrative of World War I. The geopolitical angle was to paint the genocide as a matter of the Central Powers, represented by Turkey, versus the Allies, represented

²² Kifner.
²³ Kloian, xv.
²⁴ Kloian, xvi.

by Russia, with the Armenian population sandwiched politically and geographically in the middle. *The New York Times* afforded the issue a great deal of coverage, publishing 145 articles on the topic in 1915, labeling the Armenian genocide as “‘systematic,’ ‘authorized,’ and ‘organized by the government.’”²⁵ Though the United States government and media cooperated to influence relief and aid projects, their efforts were ineffective, as the Turkish government resisted all pleas from both the American public and government. Still, the US government never directly contributed financial resources, only touted the contributions of private charities.

Yet, there was a pervasive belief across the American media that it was acceptable for the United States government to remain uninvolved, as the Armenian Genocide was ultimately a problem for the European continent. On July 5, 1913, *The Literary Digest* quoted Prime Minister Lord Salisbury who offered, “our ships cannot climb the mountains of Armenia,” to explain why England could not intervene on behalf of the Christian Armenians “whose homes and farms were being desolated and drenched with the blood of massacre by Turks and Kurds” during the 1896 atrocities under Abdul-Hamid.²⁶ Like the American government, the British thought that the Armenian question should be left to continental Europe. Though this article was written nine months before the start of the Armenian Genocide, the tensions were already mounting and the Americans would soon find themselves in the same position as the English—President Woodrow Wilson would have to offer a reason for why he would not interfere on behalf of the Armenians. President Wilson and the media both recognized the limitations of American power to assist Armenia, taking into account the larger international context in which Turkey was situated. President Wilson spent the better part of two and a half years trying to maintain United States neutrality in World War I. Even after the US militarized in April 1917 on behalf of the Allied Powers, President Wilson viewed Turkey as a mere tool of Germany, and, therefore, did not consider Turkey an enemy of the United States. As a result, media coverage was largely devoid of anti-Turkish

²⁵ Kifner.
²⁶ “Young Turks Misrule in Armenia,” *The Literary Digest*, July 5, 1913 in Kloian, 1.

propaganda throughout the duration of the Armenian Genocide.²⁷

Most newspapers and magazines reported on both sides of the conflict, though there was a general sense of outrage over the treatment of the Armenians. *The New York Times* published a piece written by the Turkish Minister of War Enver Pasha on April 20th, in which he proclaimed: “This is not a war of the Turkish Government but a war of the Turkish people.”²⁸ Minister Enver framed Turkey’s persecution of the Armenians and entry into World War I as defensive acts that were intended to protect the country’s threatened nationalism. He said, “we Turks feel that we have a right to exist, especially when the best of us are straining every effort and are catching up with other countries in intellectual and material development. I feel that there is much good in the Turkish people, contrary to what our traducers say.”²⁹ The Minister’s account stands in direct contrast to the narrative put forth by the Armenians, in which they fell victim to an aggressive brand of Turkish nationalism. Throughout the conflict, the American media attempted to reconcile these disparate accounts, investigating whether the persecution of the Armenians was targeted or merely a part of the Young Turks’ broader retaliatory enterprise against enemies of Islam and the Turkish state. Under the latter interpretation, the Armenians were merely one enemy of the Turkish state, with others including Russia, Turkey’s “hereditary enemy,” and Great Britain, “the power which subjugated Islam.”³⁰

The American media rarely addressed that while the Young Turks received active military support from the Central Powers, the Armenian population was largely ignored by the Allies. Charles Vellay, a French author who accurately predicted that the genocide would come to fruition, bemoaned the fact that the “safety of the Armenians themselves unfortunately counts for next to nothing” to the Allies.³¹ While the Turks were a valuable asset to the Central Powers, the small Armenian population posed no strategic benefit to the Allies, and, therefore, protecting the Armenians was not an important goal for the Allies.

Nonetheless, the American press did publish many of the cries for help that came from the Armenian leaders, American missionaries

27 Lloyd E. Ambrosius, “Wilsonian diplomacy and Armenia,” in *America and the Armenian Genocide of 1915* edited by Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115.

28 “Enver Says Turks Had to Fight,” *The New York Times*, Tuesday April 20, 1915 in Kloian, 7.

29 Ibid.

30 “Talaat Says Turks Fight for Life,” *The New York Times*, February 18, 1915 in Kloian, 4.

31 “Young Turks Misrule in Armenia.”

and officials bearing witness to the crimes in the Ottoman Empire, and relief committees and organizations which were sending money from the United States. In one such article, *The New York Times* quoted letters calling for help sent to the offices of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) with the hope that exposing readers to the horrors of the genocide would motivate them to contribute to the Committee. The letters offered gruesome accounts from within the Empire. Reverend Richard Hill, a member of a relief commission in Tiflis wrote, “the situation here in regard to the Armenian refugees is as bad as we have been led to believe, and to attempt to describe the horrors of it would be altogether beyond me.”³² The ACASR used the media to make a plea to the American public rather than directly to its lawmakers. The hope was that outraged Americans would force US government intervention by making the Armenian Genocide an issue of national, rather than distant foreign, concern.

The media’s power lies in the dissemination of information to a large and diverse readership: a tool that has always raised morale and effected change, but one that is far more honed now than it was in the twentieth-century context of the Armenian Genocide. The great majority of articles about the Armenian condition posed the questions: “Do the people of the United States propose to do anything about such a state of affairs?” and “Is it not time for America to *act* on behalf of these unfortunate peoples?”^{33,34} While some articles in journals such as *The Outlook*, *The Nation*, *The Missionary Review of the World* and *The Literary Digest* adopted an analytical approach to the events, the vast majority of media coverage came in the form of short articles with sensational headlines that sought to provide readers with shallow insights into the atrocities being committed. Body counts, references to Christianity, and hypotheticals that made what was happening in Armenia more relatable to the American readership dominated coverage. One particularly haunting hypothetical proclaimed that “If the ghosts of the Christian civilians who have perished miserably in Turkey since the commencement of the great holocaust should march down Fifth Avenue twenty abreast...they would then take four days

32 “ASKS FUND TO SAVE MILLION ARMENIANS; American Committee Publishes Letters Describing Misery of Starving Hordes. BABIES DIE WITH MOTHERS Clergyman Tells of Nearly 250,000 Homeless Sufferers Plodding Across Great Plain.” *The New York Times*, February 27, 1916, <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9D-06E0DC1F38E633A25754C2A9649C946796D6CF>>

33 “The Turkish Atrocities in Armenia,” *The Outlook*, September 29, 1915 in Kloian, 46.

34 “The Plight of the Armenians,” *The Missionary Review of the World*, October, 1915 in Kloian, 49.

and eight hours to pass the great reviewing stand.”³⁵ A great deal of attention had to be paid to helping readers understand, as most had never witnessed mass-killing and could not begin to comprehend what was at stake.³⁶

The media focused on reporting to raise awareness and start “conversations and even draw people to meetings on the Armenian massacres” throughout the United States.³⁷ The emphasis on exposure rather than analysis was likely born out of the extraordinary nature of this type of crime. The media had largely accepted that its powers to influence the response to this tragedy stopped at drawing people to discussion as the likelihood of government action diminished. An article in *The Literary Digest* offered, “The Government has made informal representations to Turkey through Ambassador Morgenthau ‘pointing out the bad effect upon public opinion in the United States of the treatment of the Armenians,’ but beyond this, so Washington dispatches say, nothing further can be done.”³⁸ This sense of hopelessness was echoed throughout the mainstream press during the final months of the genocide. The United States government was unable to bring about tangible change, although Tribunal Sentences were issued in 1919 and the Allied Powers had made wartime promises. Ultimately, media coverage alone was not enough to bring about justice for the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

Since the Armenian Genocide, the American government has been faced with genocidal situations to which it could not turn a blind eye. In the 87 years between the end of the Armenian genocide in 1916 and the beginning of the Darfur genocide in 2003, international policy, America’s role on the global stage, and mass media all underwent massive transformations. In particular, two resolutions ratified by the United Nations, the 1948 “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide” (Convention), which defined genocide in legal terms, and the 2005 “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), which obliged the international community to intervene to protect populations from genocide and mass atrocities, have enabled the United States media and government to take a more active role

35 Leonard, 295.

36 Ibid, 296.

37 Ibid, 299.

38 “Who Can Save Armenia?,” *The Literary Digest*, October 30, 1915 in Kloian, 92.

in influencing mobilization on behalf of victims. In 1943, Raphael Lemkin coined the term genocide, using it in print for the first time in his book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (1944), in which he referenced the Armenian case as a seminal example of genocide.³⁹ He went on to help the United Nations write the first draft of the Convention, which was adopted on December 9, 1948. The Convention changed the rhetoric for discussing attempted decimation of populations and empowered victims of extermination by giving a legal definition for genocide and placed responsibility on the international community to intervene.

However, while it has encouraged the media to use more forceful language when discussing genocide, the Convention has not been successful in persuading governments to intervene on behalf of the victims of genocide. In April 2003, the United States reported to the UN Commission on Human Rights that brutalities including rape and ethnic cleansing were occurring in Darfur. In September of that year, Secretary of State Powell first called the situation genocide.⁴⁰ The government of Sudan signed the Convention on October 13, 2003 after the mass-violence and killings had begun, and tensions had been escalating particularly quickly since the high profile April attack by the SLA on the El Fasher airport.⁴¹ Though the Sudanese government continues to deny any allegations that the situation in Darfur is genocidal, the United States has determined it to be so, and President Bush publically labeled it a genocide on June 1, 2005.⁴² The Sudanese government has been under pressure from the international community since 2003 to stop the violent genocide in Darfur, but it has continuously refused, proving that the Convention has been ineffective in bringing an end to these atrocious crimes.

The problem extends beyond just the failure of resolutions. The United States government has not been sufficiently proactive in labeling genocidal events as such. Samantha Power, current United States Ambassador to the United Nations, concluded in her seminal 2002 book “*A Problem from Hell*”: *America and the Age of Genocide*:

39 Peter Balakian, “Raphael Lemkin, Cultural Destruction, and the Armenian Genocide,” *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 27, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 57.

40 Sidahmed, xv.

41 “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Signatories,” *United Nations Treaty Collection*, updated March 12, 2014, <https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=iv-1&chapter=4&lang=en>

42 “The Crisis in Darfur,” *International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect*, Accessed November 30, 2014, <<http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/index.php/crises/crisis-in-darfur>>

Despite graphic media coverage, American policymakers, journalists, and citizens are extremely slow to muster the imagination needed to reckon with evil. Ahead of the killings, they assume rational actors will not inflict seemingly gratuitous violence. They trust in good faith negotiations and traditional diplomacy. Once the killings start, they assume that civilians who keep their heads down will be left alone. They urge cease-fires and donate humanitarian aid.⁴³

Ambassador Power's analysis of the American response to genocide captures perfectly the way in which the United States handled the Armenian genocide nearly a century before the publication of her book—by largely ignoring the problem and issuing pleas for the violence to stop without actively intervening. Furthermore, according to Ambassador Power, the United States has learned little from the “century of genocide,” as the twentieth century is commonly referred to, still not offering any policy-related relief in response to genocide.

Ambassador Power's words unfortunately continue to hold true for the response to the Darfur Genocide. During the first two years of the crisis, before the ratification of R2P, the United States and the United Nations were both hesitant to refer to the situation as genocide, repeating the pattern that had emerged a decade earlier during the Rwandan genocide, out of fear that doing so would obligate them to intervene. A Humanitarian Officer in Darfur, Allan Thompson, offered in 2004 that “[b]y most accounts, North American media have drastically underplayed the situation in western Sudan, despite evidence of massive violations of human right and a government supporting forces wreaking havoc on innocent civilians.”⁴⁴ Ignoring the facts and portraying the events occurring in Darfur as mere instances of fleeting tribal conflict allowed the United States to defer action. The ratification of R2P placed responsibility on every State in the UN to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or ethnic cleansing and obliged the international community to assist States in fulfilling these responsibilities by using diplomatic,

43 Samantha Power, Preface, “A Problem from Hell”: *America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), xvii.

44 Sidahmed, 52.

humanitarian, and other means. The ratification of R2P in 2005 coincided with increased media attention to the atrocities in Darfur.⁴⁵ However, though Darfur was the first test case for R2P, *The New York Times* did not invoke R2P by name in discussions of Darfur until January 2008, when it acknowledged that the policy had not helped end violence in the region.⁴⁶ Again, this second resolution, despite its powerful language, did little to motivate governments to intervene.

According to historian Gérard Prunier, the Western world perceived Darfur as the archetypal “African crisis”: “distant, esoteric, extremely violent, rooted in complex ethnic and historical factors which few understood, and devoid of any identifiable practical interest for the rich countries.” He continued, “Once the international media got hold of it, it became a ‘humanitarian crisis’—in other words, something that many ‘realist’ politicians saw (without saying so) as just another insoluble problem.”⁴⁷ Prunier echoes Power's point: the international community remains fundamentally incapable of addressing genocidal situations in a constructive manner. As in the Armenian case, the government deemed the situation in Darfur too difficult to resolve and therefore gave it little real policy attention.

Rather than accepting the government's shortcomings as it had during the Armenian Genocide, the media became a powerful outlet for political discourse on the topic. In the eighty-seven years between the Armenian and Darfur genocides, the nature of the American press had drastically transformed. Most importantly, the sheer number of news outlets and stories published had increased exponentially since the Armenian genocide. In 1970, *The New York Times* introduced its op-ed pages to “provide a forum for writers with no institutional connection with The Times—writers whose views would very frequently be completely divergent from [The Times'] own.”⁴⁸ As a result, more perspectives have entered the news—politicians, humanitarians, and historians now write in the mainstream press, not just reporters. Coverage of Darfur was therefore more analytical than the incident-focused articles that dominated the press coverage of the Armenian Genocide. Improved methods of transportation and

45 “Office of The Special Adviser on The Prevention of Genocide,” accessed November 26, 2014, <<http://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/adviser/responsibility.shtml>>

46 Warren Hoge, “Intervention, Hailed as a Concept, Is Shunned in Practice,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 2008, sec. International / Africa, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/20/world/africa/20nations.html>.

47 Prunier, 124.

48 David Shipley, “And Now a Word From Op-Ed,” *The New York Times*, February 1, 2004, sec. Opinion, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/01/opinion/01SHIP.html>>

communication such as more efficient commercial air travel, superior photographic technology, cellular phones, enhanced video capabilities, the television, satellites, and the internet all provided the media greater access to Darfur than was possible in 1916.

As a result, reporters and politicians could more easily travel to Darfur, though in many cases visas could take more than six weeks to procure or would not be granted at all. Like the Ottoman Empire did during the Armenian genocide, the Sudanese government has taken extensive efforts to block reporters from accessing the Darfur region. The Sudanese government mandates an escort be present if the press is granted access and “even then, soldiers can limit access to pillaged villages or displacement camps.”⁴⁹ However, these methods are no longer as effective as they were during the Armenian Genocide. In April 2005, Sudanese authorities placed Brad Clift, a photographer from the *Hartford Courant* under house arrest after he “photographed displaced people in Nyala without proper authorization.”⁵⁰ Luckily, he was able to communicate with the *Courant* by cellphone to tell them that he had been unjustly accused. Publicizing stories like Mr. Clift’s further sensationalized the situation in Darfur and rendered it more significant to a US audience as US reporters became invested and placed in positions of potential harm.

Perhaps even more notably, Darfurians could relay their own experiences to the international community: individual stories of the genocide’s victims were and continue to be told in the mainstream press—a feat which was impossible during the Armenian genocide. *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristoff recorded the story of “a real expert,” Magboula Muhammad Khatat, a 24-year-old widow who was gang raped along with her two sisters by the Janjaweed and whose husband was murdered by the Janjaweed.⁵¹ Samantha Power spent the first half of her influential August 2004 piece in *The New Yorker*, “Dying in Darfur: Can the ethnic cleansing in Sudan be stopped?” chronicling the genocide through the experiences of a Darfuri refugee living in Chad named Amina Akaber Mohammed.⁵² In a particularly gruesome episode, Ms. Mohammed

49 Sidahmed, 54.

50 Marc Lacey (nyt), “World Briefing | Africa: Sudan: Hartford Courant Photographer Detained,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 2005, <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html>>

51 Nicholas D. Kristof, “Dare We Call It Genocide?,” *The New York Times*, June 16, 2004, sec. Opinion, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/16/opinion/dare-we-call-it-genocide.html>.

52 Power, “Dying in Darfur.”

witnessed her son being beheaded by the Janjaweed. “I wanted to find the rest of his body,” she told Power, but she was too afraid of the Janjaweed to do so, so she buried his head.⁵³ These individual accounts gave the conflict a human element, one that had been lacking in the reports of the Armenian Genocide.

Throughout the Armenian genocide, quantifying the dead was the most powerful and shocking way in which journalists could frame the crisis: they did not have access to the victims’ stories. The only individuals quoted by the press were Americans describing what they had witnessed and Ottoman officials attempting to justify or minimize the atrocities that were occurring. Similarly, the aggressors have been provided a voice during the Darfur genocide: Samantha Power recorded a conversation with Musa Hilal, the coordinator of the Janjaweed in Darfur, who was number one on Secretary of State Colin Powell’s “Most Wanted” list of Janjaweed killers.⁵⁴ Though she chronicled his story with as much diligence as she did Ms. Mohammed’s, she passed harsh judgments, exposing him as a murderer who was merely courting “Western journalists, staging elaborate shows of African–Arab unity.”⁵⁵ However, this kind of condemnation was never expressed in the press during the Armenian genocide.

During the Darfur Genocide, more compelling, detailed, and frequent relaying of individual stories combined with aggressive calls to action have given the media a new central role in swaying public opinion and forcing government awareness. Powerful photographs and videos from Darfur make the conflict appear more urgent to the American public—the media no longer asks its audience to picture the suffering, but instead supplies the graphic illustrations. Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus call this “presumed shift in power away from the foreign policy machinery of government to a more diffuse array of nongovernmental actors, primarily news media organizations” the CNN effect.⁵⁶ In the twenty-first century, the news has evolved to become a primary source of pressure on the US government and United Nations, urging these bodies to take decisive action. The media is essential in both “alerting” governmental authorities

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Steven Livingston and Todd Eachus, “Humanitarian crises and U.S. foreign policy: Somalia and the CNN effect reconsidered,” *Political Communication* (George Washington University Press, 2010), 415.

and the general public to crises and in “helping build a consensus on the appropriate response to” these events.⁵⁷ Media coverage and bias can spur action in a particular direction. Scholars Peter Hoffman and Thomas Weiss argue in their book, *Sword & Salve: Confronting New Wars and Humanitarian Crises*, “Media tools are part of the arsenal of new wars. Among both high–technology and low–to–no–tech actors, information management is critical to shaping the political and military battlefields...[it] can influence the strategies and resources available to the belligerents.”⁵⁸ The media’s power of persuasion in the age of the Darfur genocide has extended far beyond that of the alerting function it served during the Armenian genocide.

The increased power of media has transformed the Darfur genocide into an international issue in which the general public can engage. Media coverage has spurred celebrity advocacy, ad–campaigns and visits to refugee camps— notable activists include George Clooney, Matt Damon, Benicio del Toro and Angelina Jolie. Heightened media pressure has also resulted in the US government providing over \$1.2 billion in aid to Darfur, an amount that is particularly striking considering that no aid was given to the Armenians.⁵⁹

Despite offering increased amounts of aid, the United States has yet to take decisive and firm actions to end the genocide in Darfur. Ambassador Power has criticized this complacency and has called for the US to take on a more active role: “again, the United States and its allies are bystanders to slaughter, seemingly no more prepared to prevent genocide than they were a decade ago...ten thousand international peacekeepers are needed in Darfur.”⁶⁰ Two years later in 2006, Kristof reiterated Power’s argument, quoting Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel: “‘Let us remember what hurts the victim most is not the cruelty of the oppressor but the silence of the bystander.’ And it is our own silence that...[is]...inexplicable,...[because]...[i]n Darfur, we have even less excuse than in past genocides...yet we’re still paralyzed.”⁶¹ On February 26, 2013, the US Department of State released a press statement that “The United States strongly supports international efforts to bring peace, security, and humanitarian relief

57 Sidahmed, xvi.

58 Peter J. Hoffman and Thomas G. Weiss, *Sword & Salve: Confronting New Wars and Humanitarian Crises* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), 77,59 “Sudan,” Global Humanitarian Assistance, accessed November 30, 2014, <<http://www.globalhumanitarian-assistance.org/countryprofile/sudan.>>

60 Power, “*A Problem from Hell*,” xvii.

61 Sidahmed, 84.

to the people of Darfur,” but the government itself has yet to take any actions necessary to bring about this goal.⁶²

In the 87 years between the end of the Armenian Genocide and the beginning of the Darfur Genocide, the American media grew in power and influence, but the United States government remained relatively paralyzed in the face of genocide, despite promises and new policies. The press has improved both in creating a framework that allows individuals to form opinions and in revealing the horrors of genocide to the American public through the use of photographs, videos, and detailed eyewitness accounts. While the Convention and R2P have largely failed at improving the United States government’s response to genocide, they led the media to adopt a stronger vocabulary when discussing systematic extermination. In a speech at Yale University on December 1, 2014, Samantha Power argued that the United States needs to simultaneously address immediate crises while also thinking about the long–term, a difficult challenge in the context of any conflict, but a particularly daunting one when it involves genocide.⁶³

The media aspires to objectivity and therefore gives voice to both sides of conflicts. When it comes to genocide, however, there is a clear moral imbalance between the sides. The press increasingly weighs in with critical opinions while still providing a voice to the perpetrators of genocide. Despite the media’s willingness to take a firm moral stance, governments have resisted changes that would push them toward intervention. Because the media and the government have different things at stake when dealing with these sorts of situations, they have adopted different approaches to dealing with the atrocity of genocide. For governments, challenging a state’s sovereignty by intervening is fraught with political risks and costs in blood and treasure. On the other hand, it was much easier for the media to intensify its coverage of genocide, as doing so only took a review of conscience and a few additional risks incurred by reporters. Despite the political controversy surrounding intervention, the international community cannot allow governments to become complacent in the commission of genocide and other crimes against humanity. Although

62 Bureau of Public Affairs Department Of State. The Office of Website Management, “Ten Years of War in Darfur.” Press Release|Press Statement, *us Department of State*, (February 26, 2013), <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/02/205233.htm.>>

63 Samantha Power, us Permanent Representative of the United Nations, “Presentation at Yale,” The Chubb Fellowship of Timothy Dwight College Lecture Series, Yale University, December 1, 2014.

the Convention, R2P, and the media's ability to hold governments accountable have resulted in some small changes, more must be done to prevent these atrocities from occurring.

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V.

**ACROSS THE BORDER:
Using Music to Bridge the
US–Cuban Divide**

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Introduction

While cultural interactions between the US and Cuba have taken place even during tense political times, they will inevitably increase in the near future due to recent announcements by both countries to normalize relations. These increased interactions could help establish dialogue between the people and governments of both countries, reverse stereotypes, and restore normalcy. This paper focuses on the potential impacts of musical interaction — a crucial form of cultural interaction — on establishing peaceful relations between the US and Cuba and aiding the White House's stated goal of promoting democracy in Cuba. I research and analyze two kinds of music. The first, classical music, was used by diplomats to boost US–Cuban political relations prior to the breakdown in the 1960s. The second, rap music, found its way to the Cuba through informal, non–state channels but has now attracted the interest of the Cuban state as well as the US. Both classical music (“high art”) and rap music (“popular art”) can be useful in different ways for diplomacy and dialogue. However, they will be successful in peace building only if the musical interactions are two–way and acknowledge Cuba's sovereignty vis-à-vis the US. As in other instances of cultural diplomacy, music serves as merely an impetus to the political process, and cannot by itself lead to wide–sweeping democratic reform in Cuba.

The New Negotiations: Music to the Ears?

On December 17th, 2014, US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro simultaneously announced their intention to normalize relations between the US and Cuba. Among other things, the announcement and preceding negotiations promised to release political prisoners, improve trade relations between the two countries, and initiate a review of Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism. Yet the agreement comes after decades of hostility and tension between the US and Cuba.

US–Cuban relations were cordial during the first half of the twentieth century, with the US exerting strong political influence over Cuba. This influence also manifested itself in the cultural sphere, with several American orchestras, such as the Minnesota Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic, touring Cuba in this period.

Yet US–Cuba relations took a dramatic turn after the Communist Revolution of the 1960s led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. The US subsequently imposed a trade embargo on Cuba and labeled Cuba a “state sponsor of terrorism.” This breakdown in political relations affected musical interactions as well, as both states were reluctant to provide licenses and visas to musicians traveling to the other country. However, music from both countries, such as rock and roll, salsa, and, in the 1980s, rap, continued to travel through informal channels.

US–Cuban relations have improved gradually in the past five years. The Obama administration revoked several travel restrictions to Cuba imposed by previous administrations in 2009 and has also expressed commitment to a “new beginning with Cuba” on several occasions.¹ Like his American counterpart, Cuba's current president, Raul Castro, is more amenable to negotiations with the US than his brother and predecessor Fidel. To this end, Raul Castro has passed partial liberalization reforms and has withdrawn Cuba's support for communist revolutions in Africa and Latin America.² The commitment of political leadership on both sides has spearheaded the latest agreement between the two nations.

Aside from spelling hope for improved economic and political relations, the negotiations will also provide a boost to *cultural* relations. The reforms provide general licenses to people giving public performances to travel between the two countries without burdensome state intervention.³ This is a marked departure from earlier policies that made it difficult for musicians from both countries to get state licenses to travel between the US and Cuba. Aside from crucial license reform, the US also plans to engage with Cuba's government to improve Internet penetration in Cuba. Expanded Internet penetration can remarkably improve the speed and scale of cultural interactions and enhance collaboration between musicians from both countries. Several reforms to increase trade, foreign direct investment, remittances, and travel specified in the new agreement will lead to greater commercial and artistic exchanges, and will all help to stimulate musical interactions.

¹ Jorge I. Domínguez, “Reshaping the Relations between the United States and Cuba,” in *Debating US–Cuban relations: shall we play ball?* ed. Jorge I. Domínguez et al. (London: Routledge, 2012), 43.

² Karl Penhaul, “A new era in US–Cuba relations,” CNN, January 20, 2015, accessed April 1, 2015, <<http://www.cnn.com/2015/01/18/politics/a-new-era-in-u-s-cuba-relations/>>.

³ The White House: Office of the Press Secretary, *Fact Sheet: Charting A New Course On Cuba*, December 17, 2014, accessed April 1, 2015, <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/17/fact-sheet-charting-new-course-cuba>>.

Improved musical and other cultural initiatives between the two states could lead to better people-to-people dialogue, which in turn would increase mutual awareness, reverse stereotypes and animosities, and (hopefully) aid the peace process. In his paper on public diplomacy principles, the historian Nicholas Cull discusses how student exchange programs and the establishment of French and German cultural institutes in each other's countries helped smooth over France and Germany's historical enmity.⁴ According to Cull, the factors that contributed to the success of this exchange initiative were the two countries' ideological similarities, the scale of their enmity, and the benefits that the exchanges offered to both.⁵ While the US and Cuba are not as ideologically similar as France and Germany, they certainly meet the latter two conditions. If the US establishes peace with Cuba, it can bolster its relations with other Latin American countries that are allied with Cuba. Conversely, given that its economy has suffered severely due to the US' economic embargo, Cuba would want to increase interactions with the US. Normalizing relations would benefit both countries, and promoting people-to-people exchanges would be a crucial step in the normalization process.

While the new agreement highlights the common ground between the two countries, it also reveals the inherent conflicts between American and Cuban goals. While official sources suggest that the US' only intent is to promote human rights in Cuba through the agreement⁶ many scholars suspect that the US has larger and more vested interests to make Cuba a fully capitalist, open, and democratic nation. For instance, the scholar Sheryl Lutjens remarks that academic and cultural exchanges between the US and Cuba were viewed by the US state as an instrument of achieving the collapse of the Cuban regime.⁷ Cuban scholar Rafael Hernández takes this a step further, adding: "nothing indicates that the US government would be content with a form of market socialism; it seeks nothing less than of a capitalist revolution."⁸ Thus, it appears that the US ultimately seeks to expand its influence in Cuba by making Cuba more politically and economically open.

4 Nicholas Cull, "Public diplomacy: Taxonomies and histories," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616:1 (2008): 41.

5 Ibid., 42.

6 The White House, 2015.

7 Sheryl Lutjens, "The Subjects of Academic and Cultural Exchange: Paradigms, Powers and Possibilities," in *Debating us-Cuban relations: shall*

we play ball? Ed. Jorge I. Domínguez et al. (London: Routledge, 2012), 220.

8 Rafael Hernández, "Intimate Enemies: Paradoxes in the Conflict between the United States and Cuba," in *Debating us-Cuban relations: shall we play ball?* Ed. Jorge I. Domínguez, Rafael Hernández and Lorena G. Barberia (London: Routledge, 2012), 11.

On the other hand, Cuba's leadership, while open to dialogue with the US, emphasizes Cuba's sovereignty and is wary of US intervention. After the recent announcement, President Raul Castro remarked: "Ever since my election...I have reiterated on many occasions our preparedness to hold a respectful dialogue with the government of the United States based on sovereign equality."⁹ Castro's views on Cuba's sovereignty were more explicitly expressed in an earlier context, when he offered an olive branch to the US and agreed to talk as long as there were no preconditions or double standards.¹⁰ While open to discussion on issues such as trade and political dialogue, Castro is committed to preserving Cuba's sovereignty and maintains that the US cannot impose preconditions of democratic reform. Critical to Cuba's sovereignty is its ability to maintain its socialist state and economic structure. The US will need to negotiate with Cuba over a long period of time before it can convince the Cuban government of any kind of political reform, let alone a transition to democracy and full-fledged capitalism.

In the absence of state cooperation, the US could possibly promote a democratic revolution by galvanizing the Cuban people. But evidence shows that even the Cuban population is not in full support of the kind of democracy that the US desires to implement. Hernández points out that Cuban admiration for various Western traditions, such as modern technology and baseball, does not necessarily translate into political support for the US' model of democracy.¹¹ Moreover, Cuban socialists who support democracy envisage not only an end to the military dictatorship, but also envisage elections with highly regulated political parties.¹² Their version of democracy is very different—and much more limited in its scope—than the American brand of democracy. For this very reason, promoting democracy among an ambivalent Cuban population would ultimately prove ineffective.

The divergent goals of the two states and their people reveal that the agreement is still in a very nascent stage. While it offers much promise for better diplomatic relations and enhanced dialogue, it will not lead to immediate political and economic reform in Cuba. Pushing

9 "Obama hails 'new chapter' in us-Cuba ties," BBC News, Dec 17, 2014, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-30516740>>.

10 Hernández, *Intimate Enemies*, 12.

11 Ibid., 19.

12 Ibid., 20.

for aggressive reforms could risk damaging the US' newfound relationship with the Cuban state. Thus, the role of music must be directed towards reducing past hostilities rather than promoting democracy. The relationships between music and democracy in Cuba are explored further in a later section.

Music Today:

How can it be used, and who are potential ambassadors?

Revival with Renewal: Classical Music

Although classical music was the primary vehicle for American music diplomacy during the Cold War, it has recently taken a backseat to popular music styles such as hip-hop. However, classical music could be a very useful form of diplomacy in the Cuban context due to the US and Cuba's history of musical interaction, the Cuban state's great respect for classical music, and the ability of classical orchestras to send out an undiluted message from the US to Cuba.

As discussed above, the US and Cuba had a history of classical music interactions prior to the Cuban Communist Revolution. After the recent negotiations, a number of orchestras have announced their plans to tour Cuba this summer. The Minnesota Orchestra, which had played in Cuba before the 1960s, recently announced its plans to perform two concerts in Cuba in May.¹³ According to Osmo Vanska, the Minnesota Orchestra's director, as many as 24 other orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, will be touring Cuba soon.¹⁴ The orchestral tours are positive news, especially after previous instances in which the US government refused to grant travel licenses to Cuba. Such orchestral tours could possibly allow the US to draw on its history of cultural collaboration with Cuba and improve relations with the Cuban state.

Aside from being a tool of state-to-state diplomacy, classical music could also be effective for public diplomacy. The Cuban state began cultivating a mass appreciation for classical music as it attempted to block out American music after the revolution and

¹³ Michael Cooper, "'Minnesota Orchestra going to Cuba,'" *New York Times*, Feb 12, 2015, <<http://artsbeat.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/12/minnesota-orchestra-going-to-cuba/>>.

¹⁴ Pamela Espeland, "Osmo Vanska on Sibelius, softness, the Cuba tour and the Minnesota Orchestra today," *MinnPost*. Feb 18, 2015.

embargo. The scholar Robin Moore argues that state-sponsored free music education enabled the rise of classical musicians from common, non-elite backgrounds, thus creating a widespread appreciation for classical music.¹⁵ Not only did the Cuban state sponsor free classical music education, it also created conservatories and academies to foster talented and passionate musicians.¹⁶ According to Moore, the Cuban state even took symphony orchestras and virtuoso cellists to the countryside to promote an appreciation for classical music among the farmers outside of schools.¹⁷ Although many of the initial efforts by the Cuban state fell into decline due to the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, they created a number of talented musicians whose legacy remains in Cuba today. It is unclear whether the US is cognizant of the popularity of classical music—traditionally “high” art—in Cuba, but recognizing this fact would allow it to use classical music as an effective tool for reaching out to Cuba's people.

Classical music performances in Cuba could be a viable strategy for the US to overcome the Cuban state's criticism of its music industry and hence combat its poor image in Cuba. Classical music can help the US combat its image problems in three ways. First, it could help display the US as more egalitarian, rather than merely as an elite, capitalist nation. Ever since its Communist Revolution, the Cuban state has condemned capitalist states for not making greater attempts to promote classical music among the masses and for making classical music exclusive to a limited elite. For instance, in 1965, Guevara remarked that “[p]erformers of classical repertoire [in capitalist systems] do not often disseminate their art to the masses; nor do they valorize the expression of other groups.”¹⁸ Guevara blames classical musicians in the US and the West for not attempting to popularize classical music. While Guevara seems opposed to Western interpretations of classical music, the state sponsorship of academies and conservatories shows that the Cuban state was not opposed to classical music per se. Using classical music as a form of diplomacy could reverse the Cuban state's poor opinion of the American classical music as a “high art” restricted to appreciation by American elites.

¹⁵ Robin Moore, *Music and revolution: Cultural change in socialist Cuba*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 80.

¹⁶ Kim N. Tran, “The emergence of Leo Brouwer's Compositional Periods: The Guitar, Experimental Leanings, and New Simplicity,” Unpublished Senior Honours Thesis (Music Department, Dartmouth College, 2007).

¹⁷ Moore, *Music and revolution*, 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

Second, classical music could counter Cuba's criticism of the American music industry as commercial and disconnected from social problems. Cuba has often criticized American popular music for commercializing pertinent economic issues without a commitment to solve them, reinforcing its perception of the unequal nature of America's capitalist society. According to Moore, communist states like Cuba often criticized the capitalist music industry for co-opting and then remarketing the popular music of the poor.¹⁹ Thus, Cuba not only saw US popular music as commercialized and homogenous, but also as exploitative. If the US is able to use classical music, rather than just pop music, to reverse Cuban stereotypes about the American musical climate, it might also be able to reverse larger ideas of the exploitative nature of US society.

Third, if classical music draws on local Cuban musical traditions in its performances in Cuba, it could signal that the US is sensitive to cultural differences, thereby countering Cuba's criticism of American music as homogenous. Moore comments that the capitalist music industry, particularly in the US, is so profit-driven that it fails to appreciate the diverse and less familiar music traditions that exist around it.²⁰ In contrast, the Cuban state has chosen to promote classical music by drawing on a mix of universal and local musical traditions. Kim Tran mentions that immediately after the Communist Revolution, the Cuban state promoted Grupo de Renovación Música (GRM),²¹ a pre-existing musical collective that drew on the universality of classical music, yet emphasized local musical traditions and musicians. The use of classical music from a variety of traditions and countries could help the US combat Cuba's criticism of America's music homogeneity.

Aside from reversing several stereotypes about the US, classical music is an effective way of sending out an undiluted, unilateral message to Cuba in a benign and non-interventionist manner. In her paper on symphony orchestras, Gienow Hecht points out three main reasons why symphony orchestras are good channels of establishing influence: they allow for unilateral communication and prevent miscommunication by making audiences sit and listen through the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Tran, 20.

performance; they generally use historical, universally recognized musical pieces; and the conductor (usually from the host country) determines the protocol and structure of the performance.²² The repertoire for the Minnesota Orchestra's twin concerts in Cuba this May exemplifies Gienow Hecht's points. It included Beethoven's 3rd Symphony, earlier played by the orchestra when it toured Cuba for the first time in 1939, and Overture to Egmont, a tribute to the power of music. The newspaper *MinnPost* points out that Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* (the third piece played) carried special significance as a composition of a Soviet musician and a story of two warring factions coming together in tragedy. All of these pieces reflect the US' and Cuba's rich musical histories and renewed commitments towards overcoming hostility through cultural interaction. But observers unanimously agree that the most memorable part of the evening was when the orchestra played the Cuban and American national anthems in succession to an audience that sang along. The national anthem performance helped cement all that the orchestra had been trying to express through its previous performances in the minds of its audience, who, in that one moment, perceived themselves as equal stakeholders in the concert and what it hoped to achieve. The Minnesota Orchestra was able to send out a strong and direct message in its entirety, free of being misconstrued by opposing voices. At the same time, it did not attempt to impose any views on its audience. While this was an independently funded concert, its success carries several lessons for the US government if it were to use orchestras as a tool of state diplomacy.

It is important to note here that sending a unilateral message through a single orchestra performance is different from making classical music interactions completely unilateral. As important as it is for the US to convey its message to the Cuban state and people, it also needs to listen to the Cuban side in order to further the negotiation process. Respecting Cuba's musical composers, institutions, and traditions would be a preliminary step in demonstrating to Cuba the US' readiness to listen. Historically, while the founders of the GRM,

²² Jessica C.E. Gienow Hecht, "The World Is Ready to Listen: Symphony Orchestras and the Global Performance of America," *Diplomatic History* 36, no. 1 (2012): 27

Harold Gramatages and José Ardévol, were close to the Cuban state post-1960, they also received awards from and toured the US for their outstanding classical work.²³ The Minnesota Orchestra also successfully drew on cultural interactions during its recent tour. While on tour, the Minnesota Orchestra had a joint rehearsal with the youth wing of the Orquesta Sinfonica Juvenil Amadeo Roldán. It concluded the rehearsal with a piece by Cuban composer Guaguancó. Gwen Pappas, a tour team member, mentioned in an interview that the complex rhythms of the piece were unfamiliar to the American orchestra and that the Cuban youth orchestra led the concluding piece.²⁴ According to Pappas, “moments like this really exemplified the spirit of the tour.”²⁵ The entire tour was replete with inspiring examples of musical exchange and interaction with Cuba, a practice that must be kept alive by future orchestras touring Cuba. Using Cuban repertoire in public musical performances would serve the two-fold purpose of focusing on the historical successes of US-Cuban interactions and on convincing Cuba of the US’ commitment to the success of future negotiations.

Rethinking Rap: From Protest to Diplomacy

Unlike classical music, rap has never been used as a form of diplomacy between the American and Cuban states, as it evolved long after the US-imposed embargo. But its continued popularity among the youth in Cuba could make it an effective tool of public diplomacy. The interactive and vocal nature of rap makes it all the more imperative for the US to encourage two-way collaboration in this genre. However, Cuban rap’s relationship with the Cuban state highly complicates its use as a diplomatic tool by the US.

Only certain kinds of rap can be used by the US for diplomacy purposes. Broadly, there are two kinds of rap music: rap that discusses generic themes such as love, drugs or crime; and rap that talks about grave political or social issues. Scholars such as Sujatha Fernandes often use the terms “commercial” rap and “underground” rap to distinguish between the two.²⁶ While both kinds of rap will get an economic impetus as channels of communication open up between

23 *Engsh Biographies of Cuban Composers*, (New York: The Cuban American Music Group, 1946).

24 Christina Kenny, “Historic us Orchestra Tour to Cuba,” *Sinfini Music*, May 29, 2015, <<http://www.sinfini.com/uk/features/news/minnesota-orchestra-forge-cultural-inroads-with-historic-havana-cuba-tour-may-2015>>.

25 Ibid.

26 Sujatha Fernandes, “Fear of a black nation: Local rappers, transnational crossings, and state power in contemporary Cuba.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 76:4 (2003): 575–608.

the US and Cuba, “underground” rap carries special significance for diplomacy and peace initiatives. Globally, underground rappers have been instrumental in spreading awareness about Black rights, leading rapper Chuck D to call them the “CNN of Black People.”²⁷ Moreover, a large number of these rappers are from America. In Cuba, the scholar Deborah Pacini Hernandez notes that many local rappers acknowledge politically conscious American rappers such as Queen Latifah and Public Enemy as early influences.²⁸ Its social messages and American ties make underground Cuban rap a particularly potent diplomatic tool, if used sensibly.

Developments in communication techniques, as well as the recent negotiations’ focus on improving Internet penetration in Cuba, can help overcome the barriers to exporting politically conscious rap from the US to Cuba. As Cuban artists rap in Spanish, they have a limited understanding of English and have often misunderstood the messages of American rappers. In his book on Cuban rap, Geoffery Baker relates an incident where three feminist rappers from Cuba enthusiastically sang along to the Ludacris track “Move Bitch”, and were shocked to realize the misogynistic message after Baker explained it to them.²⁹ The incident shows how many politically conscious Cuban rappers have adopted American rap styles while grossly misinterpreting the message due to language barriers. However, recent developments could help smooth over language and translation issues. For example, Baker mentions that moving visuals and documentaries were instrumental in transmitting American rap to Cuba and had a better impact than audio recordings.³⁰ A possible increase in Internet penetration in Cuba will allow information about politically conscious American rap to reach Cuba at a larger scale than ever before through subtitled documentaries and music videos, thus curbing misunderstandings like the one with the feminist rappers.

A renewed export of politically conscious rap from the US to Cuba could then encourage people-to-people interaction on important diplomatic issues and, in the process, could help reverse stereotypes about the US. In his paper on “Arts Diplomacy,” the scholar John Brown

27 Dipannita Basu and J Lemelle Sydney, *The Vinyl Ain’t Final*, (Ann Arbor: Pluto Press, 2006): 3.

28 Deborah Pacini Hernández and Reebee Garofalo, “Hip Hop in Havana: Rap, Race and National Identity in Contemporary Cuba.” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 11, no. 1 (1999): 23.

29 Geoffery Baker, *Buena Vista in the Club: rap, reggaetón, and revolution in Havana*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011): 250.

30 Ibid, 297.

argues that high art can contextualize US society.³¹ In this sense, the political commentary in “underground” rap makes it come close to John Brown’s definition of “high art.” In a process similar to John Brown’s understanding of how high art contextualizes countries, rap that conveys the struggles of poor minorities could help reveal the positive aspects of the US’ multi-faceted, free and diverse society to Cubans.

While exporting American rap to Cuba, the US also needs to engage with Cuban rap and recognize it as an important genre in its own right. Cuban rap is much less “commercial” and much more “underground” than American rap, and it should be emphasized in public diplomacy initiatives. The evolution of Cuban rap from an American import to a socially conscious, widely popular genre offers many opportunities for the US to use it as a public diplomacy instrument. Additionally, rap in Cuba is evolving from the “CNN of Black People” to a platform for those who are anti-establishment and wish to discuss larger issues like poverty, corruption, and unemployment. Pacini Hernandez points out that rap enjoys popularity among Cubans of all colors and has also influenced other popular genres in Cuba, such as rock.³² Many rappers, such as Los Aldeanos, rarely discuss racial issues in their socio-political discourse.³³ Due to rap’s widespread popularity, the US can use it to generate discussion and gauge public opinion on issues related to Cuban society, such as the economic embargo imposed by the US.

The focus on Cuban rap is also necessitated by its very markedly localized context and content. Cuban rap was initially influenced by American rap and remains stylistically similar to its “parent genre.” However, Cuban rap has now adapted itself to discuss issues deeply rooted in the local Cuban context. Fernandes points out that Cuban rap music has localized through its frequent mentioning of local affiliations and names of prominent places in the city, creating a feeling of collectiveness among Cubans.³⁴ Cuban rap, which initially started as an offshoot of American rap, has now evolved into a distinct genre, and the US must be cognizant of this distinction when engaging in rap diplomacy in Cuba. While US rap diplomacy in Cuba could aid the cause of public

31 John Brown and William P. Kiehl, *Arts diplomacy: The neglected aspect of cultural diplomacy* (Washington, 2006): 59.

32 Hernández and Garofalo, *Hip Hop*, 22.

33 Baker, 274.

34 Sujatha Fernandes, “Made in Havana City: Rap Music, Space, and Racial Politics,” in *Havana beyond the ruins: cultural mappings after 1989*, ed. Anke Birkenmaier et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 175.

diplomacy, it is also risky due to Cuban rap’s complex relationship with the Cuban state, as recent decades have witnessed several instances of the Cuban state promoting rap. Fernandes points out that while the Cuban state initially only promoted commercial rappers, it is now also promoting underground rappers who speak out against it.³⁵ While state promotion gives rappers better access to audiences and concerts, it allows the Cuban state to control rap’s political anti-state messages. Rap’s relationship with the state offers both opportunities and risks for public diplomacy initiatives.

The effectiveness of using rap for public diplomacy depends largely on the social and political messages it sends out and the freedom of rappers to speak out against the Cuban state. Many scholars suggest that the state “co-optation” of rap has somewhat diluted rap’s character. In her article on popular music in revolutionary Cuba, Simone Christine Munz expressed her reservations about the state censorship of rap, predicting that rap will lose its political character, authenticity, and popularity as it aligns with the state, in the same way that other popular and revolutionary genres, such as *timba* and *nueva trova*, have lost their appeal in Cuba. Fernandes demonstrates a possible example of Munz’s theories as she points to the fragmentation in the rap industry and the emigration of several prominent musicians and producers outside Cuba, especially in the recent decade.³⁶ Additionally, Baker points out the decline in underground rap in favor of commercial reggaetón from 2003 onwards and the dwindling audiences for state-sponsored rap festivals. According to these scholars, state involvement in rap has diluted its messages, with rappers fearing state censorship and restricted access to audiences.

Despite scholarly claims that rap is declining in Cuba, there is reason to believe that rap will retain its appeal as a medium of political discourse for quite some time. Since 2007, there has been a partial renaissance in the rap scene. Several scholars mention the prominence of Los Aldeanos, a political anti-establishment rap group, in the post-2007 rap scene. According to Baker, the Los Aldeanos-led La Comisión Depuradura dominates the Cuban rap scene today and

35 Fernandes, *Fear*, 595.

36 Fernandes, *Made in Havana City*, 182–83.

is largely independent of the state. While the number of politically conscious rap groups has declined, the numbers of people listening to rap have increased due to digital media. Baker speculates that Los Aldeanos commands a listenership of about 1 million people due to the digital revolution, whereas the rap groups of the 1990s and 2000s relied on live performances for their listenership.³⁷ Increasing Internet penetration in Cuba, a key feature of US foreign policy, will help rappers like Los Aldeanos reach a wider audience, enable discussion on serious political issues, and possibly lead to the emergence of more underground rap groups.

Newer forms of rap have been somewhat successful in distancing themselves from the Cuban state and retaining their authentic messages. The Cuban state now provides rap groups a certain degree of autonomy in expressing their views as long as they somewhat dilute their political messages. Abel Prieto, who served as Minister of Culture until 2012, took several steps to promote rap musicians and protect their freedom. Nevertheless, the Cuban state continues to retain some measure of control on the rap groups. The scholar Annelise Wunderlich summarizes this trend: “Anonimo Consejo’s lyrics are edgy...but getting too edgy could end their careers. The girls in *Exposición Feminina* try to be tough in the macho rap scene, but still rely on their sex appeal to get through the door. Each day is a political and social balancing act.”³⁸ The balancing act of Cuban rappers vis á vis the Cuban state has resulted in benefits for both, allowing the rappers to express their dissent with the economic situation and the Cuban state to prevent this dissent from turning into a full-blown democratic revolution.

Rap continues to be popular and political and is thus an effective channel for American diplomacy. Even if Cuban rappers do not entirely agree with US state ideology, they will likely be eager to receive patronage from the lucrative US music industry. The samples of Cuban popular music that have reached the US, particularly Afrocentric forms such as rap, have been very well received. Referring to popular music albums such as the *nueva trova* album

37 Baker, *Buena Vista*, 335–336.

38 Annelise Wunderlich, “Cuban Hip Hop: Making Space for New Voices of Dissent.” in *The vinyl ain’t final: hip hop and the globalization of black popular culture*, eds. Dipannita Basu et al. (Ann Arbor: Pluto, 2006), 168.

“Dancing with the Enemy” in her paper, the scholar Deborah Pacini Hernandez argues that once Cuban popular musicians got access to international audiences, there was heightened interest in Cuban rap all over the world, with major labels such as Sony expressing interest in Cuban rap.³⁹ While they are extremely keen on establishing a presence in the US, Cuban musicians have very limited engagement with and understanding of the market for music in the US due to the embargo. Pacini Hernandez points out that many Afro-Cuban musicians are unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the racially charged images used to promote Afrocentric forms of music to the American audience.⁴⁰ It is likely that Cuban rappers will face similar challenges while trying to market their music in the US. In the aftermath of the US–Cuba negotiations, rap musicians might be open to working with the US music industry to better access and market their music to an appreciative American audience, while simultaneously retaining their authentic style. The Cuban state, which previously used music as a source of overseas revenue, will encourage these efforts as long as they do not threaten its position.

In the absence of a formal Cuban music industry, rap promoters, producers, and DJs have emerged as important players in Cuba’s rap scene and could emerge as a critical channel for the US to engage with the rap musicians in Cuba. Rap promoters serve a multi-fold role: as patrons to aspiring rap artists, intermediaries between the Cuban state and rappers, and a source of information on American musical trends and tastes. Pacini Hernandez gives several examples of key older and well-traveled figures in the rap industry playing the roles of mentors for Cuba’s nascent rap scene.⁴¹ Redolfo Rendolzi, a rap promoter, was instrumental in organizing the first major rap festival in Alamar in 1995 without bypassing state regulations and censorship. The festival, attended by rappers such as Dead Prez and the US-based Black August Collective, was a huge success, and helped Cuban rap reach an international audience.⁴² Rap producers such as Pablo Herrera and Julian Fernandes are fluent in English, have traveled to the US, and serve as mentors to the rappers in Cuba.⁴³ Through

39 Deborah Pacini Hernández, “Dancing with the enemy: Cuban popular music, race, authenticity, and the world–music landscape,” *Latin American Perspectives* (1998): 110–125.

40 Ibid., 121.

41 Pacini Hernández and Garofalo, *Hip Hop*, 37.

42 Ibid., 26.

rap promoters and “pseudo–ambassadors,” the US can engage with rappers in Cuba and reach out to the Cuban people. While some of these rap producers have recently emigrated from Cuba, many of them retain close connections with Cuban society and could be used as advisors and possible channels of communication.

Rather than promoting one–time concerts between Cuban and American musicians, the US must focus on long–term collaboration through workshops and improvisation sessions between Cuban musicians and the US as a way of enhancing cross–cultural understanding. In his article on public diplomacy, the scholar Nicholas Cull describes exchange diplomacy, a form of public diplomacy, as “based on mutuality” and “an international learning experience in which both parties are transformed.”⁴⁴ Cull believes that the emphasis on mutual learning in exchange diplomacy could help both countries understand each other better. If the US were to adopt an exchange rather than advocacy approach in rap, it could help bridge the understanding gap between not only Cuban and American rap musicians, but also between the Cuban and American people. Historical evidence shows that close interactions over a long period of time can help bridge communication divides. For example, in 2001, a series of hip–hop workshops in Brooklyn conducted by three Cuba–based rap groups over a month increased American appreciation for socially conscious rap music.⁴⁵ Similarly, NextLevel, a State Department initiative, allows hip–hop artists from the US to visit foreign countries and conduct workshops with local musicians and hip–hop enthusiasts, culminating in a concert.⁴⁶ Since rap music is not completely universal and adapts itself to local contexts, such collaborations are essential to successful diplomacy. Since rap is constantly reshaping and evolving itself, long term musical interactions could help form innovative melodies and deepen understanding of US and Cuban musicians for each other’s culture, a key goal of US policymakers.

Music and Democracy: Jazz of the 21st Century?

In the previous section, I have discussed at length the ability of music to promote peace and dialogue between the US and Cuba. I now turn to a more precise discussion of the ends of using music. I see two major goals of US foreign policy in Cuba: the first is reversing hostilities by increasing communication with the Cuban state as well as the Cuban people. The second is promoting democracy in Cuba. The above sections have demonstrated how music can be used to meet the former. I will now demonstrate why music cannot be used to meet the latter.

Classical music is not the best way to promote democracy, as most classical musicians are not vocally against the Cuban state. While several popular musicians emigrated from Cuba from 1960–74, many classical musicians have stayed back in Cuba and have even allied with the state. Moore mentions that despite restrictions on international travel, many Cuban classical musicians remained in favor of revolutionary ideals and saw the restrictions as a small cost for their heightened status in Cuban society.⁴⁷ The high reputation of classical musicians in the Cuban socialist state, as well as the economic and psychological challenges associated with immigration, made them favor Cuban state policies. Moore mentions that the musicians Gramatages and Árdevol were very active in Cuba’s music scene in the 1960s, reprogramming the classical music station CMZ to include classical music from a diverse range of composers and establishing a musical division under the new cultural organization Casa de las Américas.⁴⁸ While classical music is certainly popular in Cuba and an effective means of outreach to the Cuban people, classical performers’ and composers’ support for Cuba’s revolutionary ideals and their closeness to the Cuban state, means that classical music is unlikely to start a revolution in Cuba.

US State Department officials seem to recognize the futility of using classical music for democracy promotion; for this reason, they have focused on hip–hop—a much more political and

43 Ibid. 37.

44 Cull, 33.

45 Mireya Navarro, “Giving Hip–Hop a Cultural Beat: Rappers Visiting From Cuba Find Welcoming Audience,” *New York Times*, Oct 24, 2001.

46 “Next Level: At a Glance,” US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, last accessed April 14, 2015, <<http://exchanges.state.gov/us/program/next-level>>.

47 Moore, *Music and Revolution*, 70.

48 Moore, 82.

anti-government form of music—in their democracy promotion efforts. US officials suggest that despite hip-hop's anti-establishment sentiment, its critical nature and American origins will help foreign audiences appreciate the freedom in American society, a place where all voices, including those of the oppressed, are heard. For instance, the democratic movements of the Arab Spring, are seen to be a direct result of perceived Arab support for US ideals exported through hip-hop.⁴⁹ Thus, the US State Department believes that exporting rap to other regions could similarly prompt support for US ideals and lead to democracy.

However, rap is not a viable means to promote democracy. First, there exists no historical precedent for rap's success as a democracy promotion tool. Despite US State Department claims to the contrary, scholars actually claim that the hip-hop initiatives of the US have not had a measurable impact on the Arab Spring. In his article, Hishaam Aidi claims that the regions where hip-hop is widely enjoyed have not seen revolts.⁵⁰ Second, in the Cuban context, the Cuban state has taken several steps to collaborate with rap musicians and, in the process, moderate their anti-establishment and possibly pro-democracy sentiments. Fernandes mentions that rap groups are organized under a system of music enterprises run by the Ministry of Culture.⁵¹ She also talks about the state-organized rap festival Alamar, which has been taking place since 1995.⁵² While the producers and organizers of these rap festivals retain some autonomy, they need state approval to successfully carry out their concerts, and this influences the messages they choose to project. Fernandes mentions that while Cuban rappers have tried to build networks with American rappers, they simultaneously engage in a critique of global capitalism to get patronage from the Cuban state.⁵³ As a result, while artists talk of social change, they are very careful when it comes to engaging with the government and will be reluctant to make strong political statements for democracy.

Additionally, many rappers support the revolutionary ideals of socialism in principle and believe these principles have been eroded

49 Hishaam Aidi, "Leveraging hip hop in US foreign policy," *Al Jazeera*, Nov 7, 2011, accessed Feb 15, 2015, <<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/10/2011103091018299924.html>>.

50 Ibid.

51 Fernandes, *Fear*, 596.

52 Ibid., 580.

53 Fernandes, *Fear*, 592–96.

in practice. For example, Fernandes notes that the song "El Barco" by Los Paisanos not only discusses police harassment of Blacks in Cuba but also includes the lines "seremos como el Che"⁵⁴ or "we will be like Che." This suggests that the group looks to Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban Revolution, as an inspiration, even if they are against current, oppressive state policies. Fernandes also discusses that the same group criticized other rap groups for being more commercial and less political in their messages and practices.⁵⁵ Thus, while Los Paisanos are against government policies, they are not eager to engage with the US either. Cuban rap musicians' subtle support of revolutionary ideals, and their reluctance to align themselves with foreign powers, makes it difficult for the US to groom them as pro-democracy activists.

The failed US funding of Los Aldeanos, an anti-government rap group in Cuba, is another example of the problems with using rap to promote democracy. From 2009–2012, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) spent millions of dollars trying to promote dozens of rap musicians in Cuba, sponsor their concerts, connect them with foreign musicians, and groom them as potential democracy activists.⁵⁶ The plan severely backfired when the Cuban government discovered the covert mission and took over the organization of the concerts. The mission failed for two reasons. First, the Cuban state's takeover demonstrates that it has a degree of control even over musicians radically against the state. The scholar Gamez Torres says that Los Aldeanos constantly has to test the limits of its disobedience of the state through its messages,⁵⁷ thus implying that Los Aldeanos does not enjoy complete freedom of expression. Second, rappers attempt to steer clear of taking a clear stance on controversial political issues, choosing instead to focus on problems of poverty and unemployment. After the USAID mission was revealed, one of the founders of Los Aldeanos denied having any connections to the US mission or awareness of the mission objectives. "Neither the American government, nor the Serbs, nor the Cuban government, not anyone, can control my thoughts and my heart," founder Bian Rodriguez said.⁵⁸ Rodriguez's quote represents the desire of

54 Fernandes, *Made in Havana City*, 179.

55 Fernandes, *Fear*, 582–83.

56 "Cuba: Rappers targeted by USAID program 'victims,'" *Daily Mail*, Dec 12, 2014.

57 Nora Gamez Torres, "'Rap is War': Los Aldeanos and the Politics of Music Subversion in Contemporary Cuba." *Revista Transcultural de Música* 17 (2013): 17.

58 "Rappers targeted," *Daily Mail*.

Los Aldeanos, and other rap groups, to distance themselves (or at least appear distant) from political players—whether the state or the American authorities—and to not get trapped in ideological debates. The case of Los Aldeanos reveals the difficulties and complexities in using rap to promote a particular ideology, in this case democracy.

At a macro-level, the US must understand that Cuba now sees itself as a sovereign state and not a US satellite state. Thus, its relationship with Cuba in the present will be different from its relationship with Cuba prior to the breakdown in relations. Rafael Hernández points out that before 1959, Cuba's limited sovereignty meant that the US did not treat Cuba in the same way as other sovereign states.⁵⁹ In his book on Good Neighbor diplomacy, Gellman mentions that several economic policies allowed the US to control Cuba's markets to suit its own economic and political interests.⁶⁰ The US' emphasis on openness in the present agreement seems to suggest that the US somehow wants to go back to its past relationship with Cuba and influence its political affairs. However, long decades of hostility and isolation have allowed Cuba to develop a distinct national identity, and the US can no longer see Cuba as an extension of itself. Using music to promote democracy would cause more harm than good in the Cuban context.

Conclusion

The recent negotiations between the US and Cuba offer several opportunities for musical interactions between the two countries, which can improve people-to-people interaction and foster new dialogue. Simultaneously, events such as US' botched funding of the Los Aldeanos concert reveal the risks of poorly-thought cultural interaction. Keeping in mind the changing context of US-Cuban musical and political relations, the US must take care to not immediately promote a political agenda through music diplomacy and ensure that the interactions are two-way, recognizing Cuba's sovereignty and equality with the US. The distinction between classical and rap music blurs in

⁵⁹ Hernández, *Intimate Enemies*, 20.

⁶⁰ Irwin F. Gellman, *Roosevelt and Batista: good neighbor diplomacy in Cuba, 1933-1945*, (University of New Mexico Press, 1973), 6.

Cuba, making both effective instruments of diplomacy. While classical music has become “art for all” due to state efforts to promote it to the Cuban masses, rap music discusses “high” and refined messages of social and political consciousness. A combination of traditional orchestral performances that convey US presence in Cuba, and rap concerts and workshops that promote increased collaboration and dialogue, would help the US increase its engagement with its neighbor. Yet neither form can be used to immediately promote *democracy*. Let's save that for another day.

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VII.

EUROVISION AND
THE MAKING OF QUEER
(COUNTER-)CULTURAL
DIPLOMACY

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Irish drag artist Panti Bliss once joked that May 23, 2015 “has the potential to be so gay that the Earth’s orbit is affected,” since the Eurovision Song Contest and the Irish marriage equality referendum were scheduled to be held on the same day.¹ Indeed, many queer Irish fans found themselves in a dilemma as to whether they should travel to Vienna to watch the contest, or stay home to vote in the historic plebiscite. Yet the triumphalism of queer activists did not go unchallenged, with Sweden sending a singer who has called homosexuality an abnormality. This anecdote illustrates the extent to which Eurovision has become entangled in the transnational politics of sexuality. Although it is tempting to focus on contemporary controversies at Eurovision, any analysis of its queer character must be grounded in an examination of the contest’s *longue durée*.

Founded in 1956, the Eurovision Song Contest is one of the longest-running television programs in the world, with viewership figures that rival those of the FIFA World Cup. Consequently, many scholars have written about Eurovision in recent years. In the process, two major historiographical schools have emerged. The first strand of research approaches Eurovision as a conduit for the political and diplomatic history of the region, while the second strand views the contest through the lens of gender and sexuality. However, these interpretive frameworks are actually interconnected. While Eurovision has facilitated the enfranchisement of queers in the project of cultural diplomacy, nations have simultaneously exploited the queerness of Eurovision for their public diplomacy agendas. As such, this paper aims to address the strategic and ethical dilemmas raised by queer diplomacy.

Historical and Theoretical Context

Before we examine Eurovision’s role in queer enfranchisement, we must establish that Eurovision is, in fact, a form of cultural diplomacy. This assumption should not be taken for granted, since the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) has always maintained that Eurovision is apolitical.² To begin with, the role of the state in Eurovision is indirect

¹ Nick Duffy, “Could May 23 be the gayest day ever?” *Pink News* 21 Feb. 2015, Web. 27 Apr. 2015.

but not insignificant. The EBU, which organizes the contest, is made up of state-run and public-interest broadcasters from member states. Many governments directly fund these broadcasters. Although some countries select their Eurovision entry by popular vote, most conduct an internal selection process. For instance, producers unilaterally selected drag performer Conchita Wurst as the Austrian entry in 2014, after public votes yielded weak entries in previous years. While the state generally appears to be passive at Eurovision, it has intervened when performers transgress unspoken boundaries. For example, the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA) withdrew support and sponsorship from the 2000 Eurovision gay band PingPong, after the group waved the Syrian flag at a rehearsal.³ “They will compete there, but not on behalf of the IBA or the Israeli people,” the IBA chairman said.

Critically, even if the state is not directly involved, Eurovision is still a platform of national self-representation—one of three core functions of diplomacy.⁴ At Eurovision, contestants compete in the name of their countries, rather than as individuals, cementing the link between performer and nation. Moreover, over 180 million people watch Eurovision on television every year. According to musicologist Yossi Maurey, it is a “prime arena for nations” and “provides a popular authentication of European-ness that corresponds to, but is different from...legal authentication.”⁵ The aim of this discussion is not to show that Eurovision conforms to traditional notions of diplomacy, but to suggest diplomacy has become increasingly similar to Eurovision: a confluence of state organs, media outlets, international bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and market forces working in tandem to produce corporeal embodiments of the nation in a mediatized post-modern environment.⁶

To understand how Eurovision has queered cultural diplomacy, it is necessary to set out a “straight” reading of international relations. As a historical problem, the diplomatic sphere has marginalized queers. For most of the Cold War, governments viewed queers as security risks and excluded them from sensitive diplomatic positions. Many officials believed that homosexuals were at risk of blackmail.

² Tim Hume, “Eurovision: It’s soft politics, but it’s politics,” *CNN* 24 May 2012, Web. 21 Apr 2015.

³ Apostolos Lampropoulos, “Delimiting the Eurobody: Historicity, Politicization, Queerness,” *Tragaki* 151–72.

⁴ Rebekah Ahrendt, Damien Mahiet, and Mark Ferraguto, “Introduction.” *Music and Diplomacy from the Early Modern Era to the Present*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, Print.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Andrew Fenton Cooper, *Celebrity diplomacy*, Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2008, Print, 11.

Governments also questioned the loyalties of homosexuals, who were perceived to be part of a transnational cosmopolitan community.⁷ The media linked homosexuality to Communist subversion, drawing upon anti-Semitic tropes from the pre-World War II era. Hence, as late as 1989, the Security Department of the UK Foreign Office cautioned civil servants that homosexuals were “open to compromise if they indulged in unlawful activities, or mix with unsavory elements in louche bars.”⁸ The first openly gay European ambassador was only appointed in 2004 by Britain, and many other European countries have yet to achieve this milestone.⁹

Within the context of cultural and public diplomacy, states have also portrayed themselves in heteronormative terms, using normative sexuality as a symbol of strength and colonial virility. Beginning in the 17th century, but escalating with the New Imperialism of the 19th century, European cultures orientalized homosexuality, seeing same-sex attraction as a sign of civilizational degeneracy and cognitive frailty.¹⁰ Thus, there was little room for sexual subjectivity in portrayals of the nation. For example, when the Soviet Moiseyev Dance Company visited the United States in 1958 on a state-sponsored tour, its dancers “acted out ‘traditional’ relationships...displaying their bodies in heteronormative interactions,” according to historian Victorian Hallinan. Seen in this light, the queerness of Eurovision, which stretches from the 1960s, is remarkable.

Yet the queer dimension to Eurovision is also unsurprising, since music has traditionally subverted the insularity of diplomatic circles and facilitated the inclusion of marginalized groups. As far back as the Congress of Vienna, music and festivity gave the illusion of eradicating class differences, allowing commoners to dance alongside aristocrats. In terms of gender, music historians Ahrendt et al. argue that “[music] empowered women to partake in the conduct of diplomacy, engaging both genders in transnational sociability.” Similarly, the use of Jazz Diplomats by the US State Department brought black music and musicians to the forefront of American consciousness.¹¹ That Eurovision should do the same for queers is not unexpected.

7 George Chauncey, *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate on Gay Equality*, New York: Basic Books, 2005, Print, 19.

8 Charles Crawford, “The Love That Dared not Speak its Name in the Foreign Office,” *The Independent*, 30 Mar 2010, Web, 31 Mar 2015.

9 “Britain Sends out First Gay Ambassador with Partner.” *The Scotsman*. 2 April 2004. Web. 24 Nov 2015.

10 Naoko Shibusawa, “The Lavender Scare and Empire: Rethinking Cold War Anti-Gay Politics,” *Diplomatic History* (2012) 36.4: 723–53, Web, 31 Mar 2015.

11 Lisa Davenport, *Jazz Diplomacy*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009, Print, 8.

In line with this heritage, Eurovision has brought the queer cultural style of camp into the fold of cultural diplomacy. Beginning in the 1960s, Eurovision entries became increasingly camp in their appeal, often featuring a kitsch aesthetic. This self-conscious theatricality was encapsulated in the trope of the Eurovision diva, who often donned an audacious costume and basked in feminine affectation. The carnivalesque atmosphere at the contest enabled the suspension and subversion of the norms of the usually straight-laced realm of international relations, much like the festivities at the Congress of Vienna centuries before. Given that camp had been associated with gay men since the pre-World War II years as a subterranean identity signifier, its emergence at Eurovision represented a “coming out” of sorts on the international stage, even if respectability remained an elusive prospect.

Indeed, camp served as an important metaphor for the evolution of international relations, much like the 19th century idea of the “Concert of Nations.” Eurovision scholar Robert Tobin argues that “camp humor has proven to be one of the best tools to maintain a sense of cultural identity while critiquing essentialism,” providing a solution to the tension between national and global citizenship.¹² Camp mocks the idea of nationality, breaking down national boundaries in the process. For example, the 1979 West German Entry, Dschinghis Khan, sang about “bringing fear and despair to every land” to a campy dance tune. The site of the contest was Israel, and yet by confronting its Nazi past head-on with satire, West Germany was able to win over its audience, coming in a respectable fourth place.¹³ The song shocked many Germany critics, and carried the risk of being offensive, but the links between camp music, sexual liberation, and pacifism had reconfigured old notions of threat and power in international politics, if only momentarily. Camp might not have enacted comprehensive change to world order, but it helped to subvert it.

12 Robert Tobin, “Eurovision at 50: Post-Wall and Post-Stonewall,” Raykoff and Tobin, 34.

13 Peter Rehberg, “Winning failure. Queer nationality at the Eurovision Song Contest,” *Queer Eurovision*. Spec. issue of *Journal of Queer Studies in Finland* (2007), Web, 31 Mar 2015, 64.

Largely due to its camp appeal, Eurovision developed a substantial gay fan base. In 2009, a staggering one in four Irish queer respondents reported watching Eurovision on television.¹⁴ As result, Eurovision fandom has served as an alternative kinship network through which queers can build a sense of community.¹⁵ Consequently, Eurovision has alternately been called “a gay Christmas,” “the gay World Cup,” and “Passover for the homos.”¹⁶ In the context of this paper, this phenomenon has been significant, because it has rendered Eurovision one of few platforms on which queer audiences became a major constituency of cultural diplomacy.

As an exercise in cultural diplomacy, Eurovision has also aligned the national and sexual identities of queers, enabling them to celebrate both concurrently. The contest challenges the hetero-normativity of cultural citizenship, reconciling national allegiance with queer pride. Consequently, Eurovision has offered a platform for queers to engage in citizen diplomacy, defined by the Center for Citizen Diplomacy as a process “where individuals and communities benefit from person-to-person interactions that result in greater understanding between people and cultures” (2014). According to Singleton et al., many queer fans recall that Eurovision introduced them to other languages embedded in foreign entries, although this might have diminished following the abolition of the native-language requirement for entries. For a generation of European queers, however, it was their first experience of “transnational sociability.”¹⁷

Moreover, Eurovision has evoked a powerful sense of queer nationality, creating a gay consciousness that has subverted territorial markers.¹⁸ This sense of community has been reinforced by the fact that queers have, according to Tobin, “increasingly found an ally in the new supranational Europe,” with its extensive protections for LGBTQ rights. Such an alternative form of pan-European citizenship carries many manifestations, from travelling across the border-free Schengen Area to watch Eurovision performances, to meeting other queers at gay bars hosting Eurovision nights. Seen in this light, queer Eurovision raises pertinent questions about the parameters of

14 Out Now Consulting, *Just How Gay is Eurovision?*, 8 May 2011, *Out Now Global*, Web, 15 Feb 2015.

15 Brian Singleton, Karen Fricker, and Moreo Elena, “Performing the queer network. Fans and families at the Eurovision Song Contest.” *Queer Eurovision*. Spec. issue of *Journal of Queer Studies in Finland* (2007): 12–24. Web. 31 Mar 2015, 14.

16 Catherine Baker, “The Gay World Cup?: the Eurovision Song Contest, LGBTQ Equality, and Human Rights after the Cold War,” *Catherine Baker*, Feb 2014, Web, 15 Feb 2015.

17 Ahrendt et al., 8.

18 Dafna Lemish, “Gay brotherhood: Israeli gay men and the Eurovision Song Contest,” Raykoff and Tobin 128.

diplomacy in today’s Europe, which simultaneously aspires towards federalism but is also a collection of sovereign nation-states. In a post-modern world, Eurovision blurs the distinction between diplomacy and nation-building, forcing queers to juggle their national and transnational loyalties.

However, it was only in the late 1990s that Eurovision truly “came out” as a queer event. In that period, openly queer performers started representing their countries at Eurovision, serving as de facto ambassadors for their nations, and engaging in what political Andrew Cooper terms celebrity diplomacy. In 1997, Paul Oscar became the first out gay man to participate in Eurovision, reinforcing Iceland’s national narrative as a forerunner in LGBTQ rights.¹⁹ The following year, Dana International became not just the first transgender contestant, but also the first transgender winner of Eurovision. These milestones were fiercely contested—Dana had to be protected by armed guards in a bulletproof hotel room when she represented Israel in 1998.²⁰ Critically, however, this development proceeded and prefigured the eventual visibility of queer diplomats, transforming the unimaginable into a realistic possibility. In Eurovision, as elsewhere, celebrity diplomats served as mediators between the masses and the institutional apparatus of the nation-state.²¹

Incidentally, the “outing” of Eurovision coincided with the abolition of the requirement that an orchestra from the host country accompany every entry in 1999. Leading scholar Jessica Gienow-Hecht portrays the music director as a “hegemonic master of life and death” who asserts national dominance. In the light of this interpretation, the demise of the orchestra could have signaled a repudiation of the state’s monopoly over national self-representation, which in turn facilitated the rise of liberal individualism exemplified by overtly queer performances at Eurovision. From a semiotic perspective, symphonic performance is also gendered: the conductor (almost invariably a man) wields a phallic object (the baton) to direct the orchestra towards an orgasmic climax.²² Thus, the decline of the Eurovision orchestra also represents the diminishing of normative sexuality in the contest.

19 Baker.

20 John O’Connor, *The Eurovision Song Contest: 50 years: The Official History*, London: Carlton, 2005, Print, 153.

21 Cooper, 126.

22 Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongür, *Women in Europe Between the Wars: Politics, Culture and Society*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007, Print, 197.

While it is impossible to establish a causal link, the removal of the symphony dramatizes the queering of Eurovision diplomacy.

Queerness as Public Diplomacy

Although queers initially exploited Eurovision for their own purposes, nations later re-appropriated the queerness of Eurovision in support of public diplomacy, defined by American diplomat Edmund Gullion as communication with foreign audiences to influence attitudes towards a country.²³ Queer acts and performers have become a powerful symbol of a nation's liberalism and modernity, which positively affects its image and reputation abroad. In particular, embracing the queerness of Eurovision validates a country's membership in the European community. Social scientist Eric Fassin argues that "sexual democracy" demarcates the borders of Europe, which have become increasingly contested following the collapse of the Iron Curtain.²⁴ Under this paradigm, tolerance of sexual subjectivities sets Europe apart from its neighbors. Indeed, the External Action Service of the European Union has made the promotion of LGBTQ rights a priority, demonstrating the centrality of the issue to its global image. For countries seeking to assert their European identity, the queerness of Eurovision is an attractive discursive device. Queer theorist Jasbir Paur terms "the instrumentalization of sexual freedom" homo-nationalism, through which nations legitimate their superiority by appealing to their apparent progressivity.²⁵ Its logical corollary is pink-washing, the use of an LGBTQ-friendly image to deflect attention from other human rights issues.

Participating countries have used both "homonationalism" and "pink-washing" as diplomatic tools at Eurovision.²⁶ In 1998, Dana International provided one of the earliest, but also one of the most striking examples of homonationalism in action. Despite opposition from ultra-orthodox elements, the Israeli Broadcasting Authority (IBA) defended the decision to send Dana, asserting "we should be seen as a liberal, free country that chooses songs on their merits, not

on the basis of the body of the man or woman."²⁷ The word "seen" indicates the extent to which nation-branding is a priority in Israel's participation in Eurovision. Given that the IBA is directly funded by the Israeli government, its statement is a proxy for Israel's soft power strategy—to capitalize on its gay rights record, divert criticism of its militarism in Palestine, and contrast itself positively to the Arab states, which are comparatively less tolerant in this respect.²⁸ Paradoxically, Dana had to appear apolitical in order to achieve this goal. In the lead-up to the competition, she avoided discussing current affairs, thus distancing her from the state.²⁹ Her song, "Diva," made pretensions of universality by celebrating a cross-cultural and trans-historical array of powerful women like Cleopatra, the Roman goddess Victoria, and the Greek goddess Aphrodite. Although she performed "Diva" in Hebrew, most of the lyrics were accessible in other languages, ensuring a broad-based appeal. Yet when Dana emerged victorious, she went on stage with the Israeli flag in a highly unusual move, demonstrating that national representation remained an integral part of the contest.³⁰

This pink-washing strategy proved to be an attractive model for Serbia, another country on the fringes of Europe that sought to showcase its coming-of-age. In 2007, Marija Šerifović's "performance of her song Molitva (Prayer) clearly steered viewers towards understanding it as queer," even though she had not come out as bisexual at that point. Šerifović's victory confirmed the vision of a post-Balkans Serbia in the eyes of a European audience. Šerifović was more a figure of national unity than a representative of sexual minorities in her country—she proclaimed that she was "proud to be Serbian" and that her victory was for "all Serbia."³¹ In this way, she asserted her role as an ambassador of Serbia.³² That said, Šerifović's was not just a passive performer of her country's European-ness. Her bold act was also an exercise in Butlerian performativity, repudiating Serbia's religious orthodoxy in favor of Western modernity. In the process, she transformed the iteration, and not just the image of her nation, bolstering its self-confidence on the global stage.

23 Nicholas J. Cull, "Public Diplomacy before Gullion: The Evolution of a Phrase," *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, Ed. Nancy Snow and Philip M. Taylor, New York: Routledge, 2009: 19–23, Print.

24 Milija Gluhovic, "Sing for Democracy: Human Rights and Sexuality Discourse in the Eurovision Song Contest," Fricker and Gluhovic, 195.

25 Karen Fricker, and Milija Gluhovic, "Introduction: Eurovision and the 'New' Europe," Fricker and Gluhovic, 22.

26 Gluhovic, 195.

27 Ivan Raykoff, "Camping on the Borders of Europe," Raykoff and Tobin, 11.

28 Gluhovic, 203.29 Yossi Maurey, "Dana International and the Politics of Nostalgia," *Popular Music*, 28.1 (2009): 15 Feb 2015, 86.

30 Ibid., 98.

31 Marijana Mitrović, "Colours of the New Face of Serbia: National Symbols and Popular Music," *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA LV1 I (2)*: 7–1, Web, 5 Apr 2015.

32 Elaine Aston, "Competing Femininities: A 'Girl' for Eurovision," Fricker and Gluhovic, 174.

From here, it is evident that queer diplomacy at Eurovision can be a compelling apparatus for public diplomacy.

Nonetheless, queer diplomacy has taken place at a more superficial level as well, illustrating the diversity of ways in which queer acts can be used and abused. A case in point is Russia's t.A.T.u entry, which participated in Eurovision in 2003. The singers publicly admitted that their faux lesbian performance was intended as a commercial gimmick to maximize their chances of winning Eurovision, which was an issue of prestige and reputation for Russia in the midst of social and political upheaval.³³ The homoeroticism of t.A.T.u was instrumentalized as a pathway to success by way of appeal to male heterosexual "girl-on-girl" fantasies. Yet, the artifice of t.A.T.u also made a deeper point. By presenting an alternative modality of queerness, it critiqued the homogenizing effect of Western sexual identities and provided what Heller calls a "stylized performance of post-Soviet Russianness as disobedient, disdainfully proud, and infinitely powerful."³⁴ From here, it is clear that irony and self-reflexivity can unravel multiple layers of meaning in public diplomacy, especially as it relates to gender and sexuality.

Although queer diplomacy has been especially popular amongst countries on the European periphery, "Old Europe" occasionally finds it necessary to market and export its progressiveness as well. This impetus is particularly true amongst the Nordic and Scandinavian countries, for whom tolerance has long been part of their national identities. In 2013, Krista Siegfrieds of Finland performed "Ding Dong," which was themed around marriage equality and featured two women kissing on stage. During an interval, a Swedish comedian put up a cabaret featuring images of Swedish life like elks, meatballs, and a minister marrying two grooms, followed by the lines "follow our example." The intent of these performances was clear: Finland and Sweden were posturing themselves as models of European diversity for other nations to follow.

The replication of queer diplomacy by such a broad range of nations proves that there is a generic template for a successful queer

³³ Dana Heller, "'Russian body and soul': t.A.T.u performs at Eurovision 2003," Raykoff and Tobin, 197.

act at Eurovision. Campy Europop dance music, inspirational lyrics, flamboyant costumes, and pyrotechnic extravaganzas, combine to appeal to the sensibilities of the Eurovision queer male fandom. As Šerifović's performance and the Russian t.A.T.u case show, however, there is still room for parochial expressions of queerness, although such particularism tends to emerge in the subtext rather than the text of the performance. Another paradox of queer Eurovision diplomacy is that it generally features lesbians and trans acts, even though, and perhaps precisely because, the bulk of the queer Eurovision fandom comprises cisgender men. This imbalance could be due to the fact that lesbian culture is rich with tropes and role-play that can be dramatized on stage, like the butch-femme dynamic. Hence, lesbian and trans acts possess widespread appeal amongst heterosexual audiences. In any case, they can fall back on a storied history on the lyric stage. Conversely, the t.A.T.u performance would probably have fallen flat if it had been enacted by two pubescent teenage boys, or if Dana had undergone female-to-male (rather than male-to-female) sex reassignment surgery. The viscerally transgressive nature of lesbian and trans acts makes it a useful tool of queer public diplomacy.

Although staging a queer performance at Eurovision is an effective act of public diplomacy, hosting Eurovision is arguably an even more significant tactic. Given the large number of LGBTQ fans who travel to Eurovision, as well as the queer reputation of the event, organizing the contest reinforces a nation's reputation for being open-minded. For instance, when Serbia hosted Eurovision in 2008, its President promised to keep LGBTQ visitors safe, and arrested homophobic rioters. The Ministry of Culture even funded a website on LGBTQ issues.³⁵ The absence of hate crimes, despite initial fears, conveyed the impression that Belgrade was a welcoming European capital.³⁶ As with most assessments of public diplomacy, it is difficult to establish the chain of causation: did international scrutiny bring about such changes, or did Serbia host Eurovision to vindicate itself? Decoupling bidirectional causality is an impossible task, but either way, the queerness of Eurovision presents a unique

³⁴ Ibid., 117.

³⁵ Joe Bolognese, "Of Sequins and Suppression," *The Yale Globalist*, 22 Oct 2010, Web, 5 Apr 2015.

³⁶ Gluhovic, 194.

international public relations platform for the host. The same is true for ostensibly more inclusive countries. When Copenhagen hosted Eurovision in 2014, Copenhagen Pride was a significant fixture. The city held same-sex wedding ceremonies for overseas couples during the week of Eurovision to showcase Denmark's attainment of marriage equality, confirming the importance of LGBTQ acceptance in its nation-branding efforts.³⁷

Although governments have capitalized on Eurovision, non-state actors like LGBTQ groups arguably have more to gain from the contest. When a country hosts Eurovision, queer activists, both domestic and foreign, have a unique opportunity to bring the world's attention to LGBTQ issues in the nation. For instance, activists held the first Slavic Pride Parade during Eurovision in Moscow in 2009, despite the mayor's attempt to suppress the movement.³⁸ The event received heavy coverage by a number of news outlets like the BBC, and EU missions from the British, Swedish, Norwegian, and Finnish embassies served as observers to monitor the events. A more light-hearted example can be found in the example of Stonewall, a British LGBTQ charity. In the lead-up to the 2015 edition of Eurovision, it has urged schools, companies and individuals to hold Eurovision parties, providing recipes for snacks and cocktails, and other peripherals. The purpose of its efforts is to raise funds, as well as to draw attention to the LGBTQ situation in different European countries. Indeed, teachers are encouraged to use Eurovision to explore the issue of global LGBTQ rights with their students. On its website, Stonewall also links Eurovision to the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, which takes place the week before Eurovision.³⁹ Consequently, Eurovision can be a platform for international activists to lobby governments for change while raising awareness of LGBTQ issues amongst global audiences.

There is, however, a more insidious way in which politicians of "Old Europe" exploit LGBTQ issues at Eurovision to apply coercive pressure on other countries, implicitly asserting their own primacy. In

³⁷ Baker.

³⁸ Bolognese.

³⁹ Stonewall, Eurovision Song Contest, 2015, Web, 21 Apr 2015.

2002, a Slovenian jury chose the transvestite act, Sestre, to represent the country at Eurovision, offending the predominantly Catholic population. Street protests ensued, and Members of the European Parliament who opposed EU expansion used the incident to cast aspersions on Slovenia's readiness to join the EU (Jordon 57). Queer diplomacy is thus a multi-faceted dynamic, and does not possess static messaging.

Queer Diplomacy and its Discontents

Although queer diplomacy at Eurovision can be a powerful instrument, it has its drawbacks. The perception that the state is endorsing sexual liberalism can invite backlash from conservative nations, straining relations and deepening a sense of civilizational clash. In particular, countries on the margins of Europe face a double whammy, because they are simultaneously accused of being illiberal, and of not being orthodox enough.

For example, when Azerbaijan hosted Eurovision in 2012, Iranian clerics accused the country of holding a "gay parade," even though there were no plans for such an event. Consequently, Iran recalled its ambassador from Baku, claiming that Azerbaijan had engaged in anti-Islamic behavior. In the words of cultural studies scholar Katrin Sieg, "overt homophobia became a privileged vehicle for expressing patriotism." At the same time, LGBTQ activists called for a boycott of the contest, on the grounds that Azerbaijan had a poor track record on LGBTQ rights. Thus, Azerbaijan's attempt to harness cultural diplomacy for foreign policy objectives backfired.⁴⁰

Another paradigmatic example of conservative backlash is the Russian reaction to the victory of Austrian drag queen Conchita Wurst in 2014. The popularity of the performer was seen as a repudiation of Putin's new anti-gay law; indeed, the British magazine *New Statesmen* commented before the contest that "a vote for Wurst is another vote against Russian homophobia and transphobia, and a win would send out a strong message of defiance eastwards."⁴¹

⁴⁰ Murad Ismayilov, "State, identity, and the Politics of Music: Eurovision and Nation-Building in Azerbaijan," *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 40:6 (2012): 844, Web, 5 Apr 2015.

⁴¹ Thomas Calvocoressi, "Can a bearded Austrian drag queen give Putin birds?" *The New Statesman* 28 Apr 2015, Web, 5 Apr 2015.

When Wurst won Eurovision, Russian politicians launched an invective against Europe; the Deputy Prime Minister posted on Twitter that the result “showed supporters of European integration their European future: a bearded girl.” While Europe’s support for Wurst is laudable in principle, one wonders if it merely antagonized Russia further, contributing to the growing East–West divide, and making Putin even more determined to press on with its crackdown on queers.

The animosity generated by Wurst’s victory is reflected in a 2014 New Year’s Eve broadcast on Russian television. A singer parodied Wurst belting the gay anthem “I Will Survive,” giving a Nazi salute to evoke Wurst’s homeland, Austria, and repeatedly yelling “Russia, I love you” at the end of the song. New York Times columnist Gary Shteyngart interpreted the performance in the following way: The message is clear: Europe may have rejected homophobia, a value it once shared with Russia, by giving a musical prize to a drag queen, but Russia, like Gloria Gaynor herself, will survive, never to succumb to the rest of the world’s wimpy notions of tolerance.

Far from being transcendental, queer musical diplomacy can fan the flames of nationalism and worsen existing fractures. Even if we reject Shteyngart’s interpretation of the parody as an over–reading, the fact that it appeared in a leading national publication is likely to lead to deterioration in goodwill between the Russian and American people.

Surprisingly, the queerness of Eurovision has at times been received with as much hostility in the West as in the East. If the eastern bloc presents queer visibility as evidence of moral degeneration in the west, far–right western commenters have projected Eurovision’s queerness onto the East, conflating the sexual other with a geographical one.⁴² For instance, German Eurovision personality Stefan Raab and former BBC Eurovision host Terry Wogan have both denounced the queerness of Eurovision as being antithetical to the ethos of their own nations. Even liberal Finland has experienced a degree of backlash against Eurovision.⁴³

Crucially, the appropriation of queerness at Eurovision has elicited mixed reactions from the LGBTQ community itself. Queer left critics

42 Peter Rehberg, “Taken by a Stranger: How Queerness Haunts Germany at Eurovision,” Fricker and Gluhovic, 179.

43 Mari Pajala, “Closeting Eurovision. Heteronormativity in the Finnish national television,” *Queer Eurovision*, Spec. issue of *Journal of Queer Studies in Finland* (2007): 25–42, Web, 31 Mar 2015.

argue that this phenomenon has made queerness a tool of cultural imperialism, causing it to lose its radical subversive potential. For instance, the British Marxist libertarian periodical, *Spiked*, lamented in an editorial that Wurst had been “weaponised by establishment voices looking for a way to say ‘the West is best.’” To be sure, this critique is largely an elite discourse; the majority of queer Eurovision viewers were thrilled by Wurst’s triumph. However, as queer theorist Mikko Tuhkanen has established, there is also a “narrative of decline” amongst an older generation of queer fans, who resent the assimilation of queerness into the mainstream of Eurovision. Although much of this sentiment is probably nostalgia for a romanticized past, it raises important questions about the ethics of cultural appropriation in cultural diplomacy. The left–wing attack on Eurovision is well–documented as part of a broader discourse on celebrity diplomacy.⁴⁴

A final criticism of queer diplomacy at Eurovision is that it appeals to the sensibilities of a gay, white, male, middle –class fandom, creating a new homo–normativity which marginalizes lesbians and trans and bisexual people, and which ignores the intersections of sexuality with race, gender, and socio–economic status. Even when lesbian and trans acts like t.A.T.u and Šerifović appear on Eurovision, their performances are frequently refracted through discourses of cisgender heterosexist desire. Queerness has transformed diplomacy at Eurovision, but diplomacy has similarly transfigured the modalities of queerness in the process.

Conclusion

In spite of these sobering qualifications, Eurovision illuminates the potential for musical diplomacy to serve as a platform for inclusion, as well as the role of queerness in public diplomacy. If music does not always have Apollonian effects, it can at least serve a Dionysian function, opening the field for the contestation of hegemonic sexuality in the realm of international relations and foreign policy. Nonetheless, more research into the intersectionality of nationality, diplomacy, and sexuality

44 Cooper, 13.

is needed to determine whether the trajectory of queer Eurovision is an exception or a rule.

Despite this, the story of Eurovision offers three lessons for practitioners and scholars in the newly-emergent study of music and diplomacy. First, musical diplomacy is not confined to the linear transmission of high culture or mainstream popular culture, which dominate most state-sponsored efforts. Eurovision demonstrates that sub-culture, and counter-culture all play a role, especially in the way queerness permeates the competition.⁴⁵ Second, this diversity, irony, and self-reflexivity is an opportunity rather than a threat, for it offers nations the platform to burnish their pluralistic credentials. In some senses, artistes like Dana International and Conchita Wurst were “extreme antidiplomats—impervious to the pull of socialization.”⁴⁶ However, this resistance was what made them so attractive as diplomatic tools. Third, in the Darwinist world of diplomacy, Newton’s law still holds true: every action has an equal and opposite reaction. Queer diplomacy will always face contestation, drawing cultural diplomacy into the culture wars. The alternative to acknowledging these realities would be to live in blissful ignorance, and trust the EBU rules which state that “no lyrics, speeches, or gestures of a political or similar nature shall be permitted.”⁴⁷ For better or for worse, this utopian ideal is neither enforced, not enforceable.

45 Tragaki, 5–6.

46 Cooper, 4.

47 Hume.

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VIII.

THE BHARATIYA JANATA
PARTY AND THE STATE OF
CONSOCIATIONAL RULE
IN INDIA

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Power-sharing theory holds that democracy is possible in deeply divided societies but only if their type of democracy is consociational, that is, characterized by 1) grand coalition governments that include representatives of all major linguistic and religious groups, 2) cultural autonomy for these groups, 3) proportionality in political representation and civil service appointments, and 4) a minority veto with regard to vital minority rights and autonomy... consociational theory maintains that power sharing is a necessary (although not a sufficient) condition for democracy in deeply divided countries.

–Arend Lijphart, “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation,” p. 258

Introduction

India proudly claims its place as “the world’s largest democracy.” With over one billion inhabitants, more than 20 official languages and frequent internal and external security threats, the country still manages to hold regular free and fair elections for all levels of government. However, India has undergone periods of political instability, often after the assassinations of Prime Ministers, and has historically been a one-party state under the political control of the Gandhi–Nehru family. Thus, the idea that India stands as an “exception” to the South Asian trend of authoritarianism has come under intense scrutiny. In “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation” (1996), Arend Lijphart uses consociational theory to demonstrate that India possesses a stable power-sharing system of government. Despite being a one-party state, Lijphart argues, the ruling party stands as a “party of consensus,” in which individuals throughout the political spectrum can voice their concerns. Additionally, Lijphart continues, the federal system of government and extensive protective framework for minority groups ensure regional and minority interests are represented in government. However, the Indian National Congress (or “Congress”), the ruling party that Lijphart analyzed in 1996, has since been replaced by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a right-wing Hindu–nationalist party. Though the BJP led India under a National Democratic Alliance (NDA) coalition from 1998 to 2004, it most notably won a majority—and not just a plurality—of seats in Parliament in 2014 (282 seats to Congress’ 44). Under the leadership of

former Chief Minister of the Indian state of Gujarat, Narendra Modi, the BJP claimed the first majority victory in 30 years.¹ As Congress struggles to recover from its crushing defeat in the 2014 general elections, the BJP remains unchallenged by any single party on a national level and arguably stands as the ruling party in a one-party state.

To Lijphart in 1996, the BJP was “clearly anti-consociational, and its growing strength [represented] a major potential danger to power sharing in India.”² As a fierce representative of one religion, the BJP potentially endangered the diverse interests, ethnicities, languages and religions of the world’s largest democracy, and stood as a threat to minority rule and the de facto proportional representation of the Westminsterian system under the secular Congress “party of consensus.” Yet, the BJP has evolved significantly since Lijphart published “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy.” Notably, Modi pushed a more popular “narrative of development-oriented governance”³ to attract voters regardless of class, language and religion during the 2014 general election and to consolidate support immediately after his victory. Thus, to what extent does the current-day Bharatiya Janata Party threaten the consociational nature of Indian government?

Although the BJP has evolved in recent years, I argue that the non-democratic internal structure of the party as well as its inherently anti-democratic values and policies threaten the proportional representation, cultural autonomy, and “minority veto” as they have existed historically in India since independence in 1947. However, as Indian voters ousted Indira Gandhi after the authoritarian “Emergency” period of 1975–1977, they have similarly begun to challenge the usurpation of rights Modi has attempted as Prime Minister.

A New Party of Consensus?

For Arend Lijphart, India met the first condition of consociational theory—possessing a grand coalition government—given the role of Congress as a “party of consensus” within a single-party state.

1 “BJP Reaches India’s Minority Voters as the Party’s Popularity Soars.” *The Daily Mail India*. May 17, 2014.
2 Lijphart, Arend. “The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation.” *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (1996): 258. Accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082883>, 264.

3 Singh Bal, Hartosh. “Radical Shift: The Sangh’s Loosening Grip on Its Fringe Elements.” *The Caravan*. Delhi Press, 1 Nov. 2015.

Lijphart writes:

The Congress Party's repeated manufactured majorities have not come at the expense of India's many minorities due to its special status as the 'party of consensus,' which has been deliberately protective of the various religious and linguistic minorities. Indian cabinets, which have been mainly Congress cabinets, also have accorded shares of ministerships remarkably close to proportional... to the Muslim minority of about 12% and even much smaller Sikh minority (roughly 2%), as well as to the different linguistic groups, states and regions of the country.⁴

Although Congress has become "organizationally weak"⁵ and less democratic (even "dynastic") over time due to the consolidation of power by the Gandhi–Nehru family, it "remained a broadly inclusive party, but less by means of representation from the bottom up than by representativeness from the top down."⁶ As the BJP replaces Congress as the new leading political party, to what extent can it be considered a "party of consensus"?

The fact that the BJP won a majority of seats in the lower house of the parliament has profound implications on its role as a facilitator of a "grand coalition." Unlike Congress, which has relied upon minority parties to come to (and hold on to) power, the BJP of today has the luxury of filling the government almost exclusively with members of its own party. For instance, only four of the 29 Cabinet Ministers belong to non-BJP parties,^{7,8} which hardly seems to exemplify a "grand coalition" encompassing a range of political parties involved in a power-sharing agreement. As a Hindu–nationalist party, the BJP does not wish to share its power with seemingly "misguided" politicians belonging to other parties or religions.

Yet, voter support for the BJP during the 2014 elections transcended firmly divided identities such as caste and class⁹ by appealing to Indians of diverse backgrounds. For instance, while the BJP

4 Lijphart, 261.
5 Weiner, Myron. *The Indian Paradox: Essays in Indian Politics*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989, 32.
6 Lijphart., 264.
7 "Union Council of Ministers." National Portal of India. February 4, 2015.

8 Of these four ministers, one belongs to the controversial Shiv Sena, another to the far-right Shiromani Akali Dal
9 "BJP Minority Voters."

endorsed "good governance" and the expansion of development programs to attract the lower classes, it also called for a reduction in environmental and labor regulations to gain support from wealthy constituents.¹⁰ Nevertheless, as a Hindu nationalist party, the fundamental ideology motivating the BJP may alienate many more voters than a secular party such as Congress, which has appealed to Hindu and Muslim voters alike. With the BJP's strongest supporters living within the "Hindi belt," the BJP may isolate other political groups due to linguistic differences. Further, as a center–right party, the BJP is less likely to be a forum for both left– and right–leaning politicians the way the centrist Congress party appears from Lijphart's perspective. Thus, if the BJP possesses a democratic internal organizational structure, its membership—regardless of a supposed emphasis on development—does not represent the actual diversity of Indian politics to the extent that Congress tends to.

The BJP may have been more democratic internally (at least relative to Congress) under I. K. Advani, who helped lead the party's rise in popularity in the 1980s. The party gained supporters during this period through the "Ram Janmabhoomi" campaign, which called for the construction of a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, the supposed birthplace of Rama, the seventh avatar of the Hindu deity Vishnu. According to Indian journalist Saba Naqvi, in those times "the BJP was a voluble party in which people spoke their minds and competed for power. It was more democratic in its inner functioning than parties that are built around an individual or a family."¹¹ In part, this democratic internal structure helped bring Modi to power, who "promised to slay the 'ma–beta' (mother and son)¹² Congress government under Sonia Gandhi and her son Rahul. However, under the current Narendra Modi–Amit Shah (President of the BJP) partnership, "all powers are centralized and decisions [are] taken unilaterally without any attempt at building a consensus."¹³ Saba Naqvi notes that the leadership structure "has certainly stifled voices and sprits within the party. Those who speak out... are individuals who have calculated that they have little left to lose anyway."¹⁴ Further, the Modi–Shah axis clearly

10 Jaffrelot, Christophe. "Gujarat Elections: The Sub–Text of Modi's 'Hattrick'—High Tech Populism and the 'Neo–middle Class'" *Studies in Indian Politics*, 2013, 79–95.
11 Naqvi, Saba. "Among the Modi Government's Main Challenges—a Deficit of Both Trust and Talent." *Scroll*. in. 11 Nov. 2015.

12 Khare, Harish. "The Modi Presidency Is Over." *The Wire*. 9 Nov. 2015.
13 Katyial, Anita. "BJP Old Guard Fix Spotlight on Party's New Autocratic Culture but Can They Force Real Change?" *Scroll.in*. 11 Nov. 2015.
14 "Modi Main Challenges."

lacks the “representativeness” of Congress upper–echelon leadership, given their views on groups that fall outside their Hindu nationalist ideology, most evident recently as they “have tended to become more brazen about using emotions around caste and religion to upstage the opposition.”¹⁵ The BJP’s internal structure, therefore, may have been more democratic than that of Congress in the past, but Modi and Shah have since practiced an exclusionary form of leadership both within the central government and their own party.

The existence of a consolidated front, however, could benefit Indian democracy in the long run. Much political conflict in the past stemmed from the need to form coalitions, and the incoherent policies that often arise from that process. Seen as a tough ruler that brought rapid economic progress to Gujarat, Narendra Modi has marketed himself to voters as a leader who will modernize India much more efficiently and effectively than Congress, which saw slower GDP growth rates for the last years it was in power. With a majority in Parliament and a focus on development, the BJP could bring about a long–term strengthening of Indian democracy through implementing policies that may be difficult to pass under a divided coalition. These reforms could confront controversial topics such as property rights or trade barriers, which arguably limit the nation’s development potential as they stand today.¹⁶ Also, if development (instead of Hindu–nationalist) policies will keep the BJP popular and in power, it may be likely to avoid many of the anti–consociational policies that Lijphart feared in 1996.

Yet, as the BJP has grown in strength, its ability to control radical right–wing groups has waned, and risks being “outflanked” by these factions, a phenomenon Indian politics has witnessed before.¹⁷ Indian journalist Hartosh Singh Bal claims,

BJP–led governments have shown us more than once that when political parties with communal ideologies come into power, violent extremists to their right, and out of their control, are also given an impetus. But this is a pattern that predates them. In [the Indian state of] Punjab, the Shiromani Akali Dal, which

15 Venu, MK. “Modi Is Fighting Not Just to Win Bihar But to Retain Full Control of the BJP.” *The Wire*. 28 Oct. 2015.

16 Banerjee, Abhijit, and Lakshmi Iyer. “History, Institutions, and Economic Performance: The Legacy of Colonial Land Tenure Systems in India.” *American Economic Review* 95.4 (2005): 1190–213.

17 “Radical Shift.”

claims to speak for Sikh interests much in the same way that the BJP seeks to appeal to Hindu sentiments, had to contend with the rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in the late 1970s. Bhindranwale, initially backed by the Congress, outflanked the Akalis in the early 1980s, by agitating for the implementation of the very demands the Akalis had made of the Indian government... which called for Sikhs to have greater autonomy in their affairs.¹⁸

Currently, the BJP has been forced to respond to the Hindu–nationalist organizations who espouse ideals that counter Modi’s narrative of development–based governance. Historically, the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh—the BJP’s “ideological parent”—calmed more right–wing factions of the Hindu nationalist movement by demanding moderation as they relied upon coalitions to rise to power.¹⁹ Since their majority victory in the 2014 general election, the Hindu–nationalist cultural agenda of these groups is now as important to the Modi government as “good governance” in order to appease more extreme elements of the Hindu–nationalist movement. This has grown increasingly clear since regional elections in the state of Bihar, where “Modi himself... [made] sharp references to caste and religion to polarize votes.”²⁰ Therefore, the “united political front” focused on pro–consociational policies such as development has since been replaced by a BJP that threatens to be “outflanked” by other Hindu–nationalist groups if it does not expand its Hindu–nationalist—and anti–consociational—cultural platform. As a result, the rights and autonomy of minorities—which are key conditions for consociational rule—stand vulnerable to Modi’s politics.

Hindu Nationalism and Indian Minority Rights

The ideological shift of Modi’s government undeniably represents a threat to the rights of minorities throughout India, and has done little to control more extreme factions of Hindu nationalism.

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 “Modi Is Fighting.”

Hartosh Singh Bal writes,

Ever since the BJP came to power at the center, it has given tacit or explicit approval to a number of attempts at cultural re-engineering, including so-called reconversions to Hinduism, restrictions on beef consumption, and violent responses to inter-religious marriage. From these strategies, it hopes to reap electoral benefits. In the background, other issues that the BJP has kept long simmering to serve its political ends remain, such as the construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya.²¹

Hindu-nationalist groups have inspired a series of violent attacks on Indians who oppose their ideals. In September, Mohammad Akhlaq Saifi, a 52-year-old Muslim resident of Dadri, Uttar Pradesh, was viciously murdered by Hindu residents who accused him of keeping beef in his home. Though forensics later concluded the meat was actually mutton,²² this terrifying “beef lynching” reveals a growing trend of violence against individuals who “threaten” Hindu beliefs (such as the sanctity of the cow).²³ Modi, however, has only commented that the incident was “unfortunate,” even though several suspects are known associates of a local BJP leader.²⁴ Senior BJP officials have visited Dadri to defend the beef lynching,²⁵ while a member of the National Coalition for Minorities has noted that the entire incident appears to have been planned.²⁶ BJP responses to these attacks clearly demonstrate their lack of regard for—or even aggressive attempt to repress—religious minorities in India, in particular Muslims.

This is not a new trend. Narendra Modi himself was judged by many to have facilitated the 2002 Gujarat riots that killed up to 2,000 Muslims.²⁷ Arguably, the most severe consequences for Modi were visa restrictions placed upon him by Western countries such as the United States and United Kingdom. No decisive actions were taken against him in India. Most appallingly, Indian essayist Pankaj Mishra notes,

Among the few people convicted was... a fanatic called Babu Bajrangji, who crowed to a journalist that he had slashed open

with his sword the womb of a heavily pregnant woman, and claimed that Modi sheltered him after the riots and even changed three judges in order for him to be released on bail (Modi has not responded to these allegations).²⁸

The communalism these riots manifest continues to thrive today, for instance in the Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh) riots in 2013, which killed almost 100 people.²⁹ Even after the Minority Rights Group held the BJP responsible for incubating the fearful atmosphere between Hindus and religious minorities that caused the riot in Muzaffarnagar,³⁰ the BJP has continued to divide Indians along religious lines. During regional elections in Uttar Pradesh, several BJP leaders suggested that Muslim men often commit “Love Jihad” by marrying Hindu women and then forcing them to convert to Islam.³¹

It is clear that religious minorities are seen as a direct threat to the ruling party’s ideology. They have been the subject of vicious attacks by Hindu nationalists both before and during Modi’s rise to power. They are seen as everyday terrorists. Even as Modi claims to focus on economic development for all, he continues to depict Muslims as an enemy that will snatch affirmative action reservations from lower castes, which “must surely count as the most cynical use of identity politics.”³² When thousands of Muslims have been murdered under pogroms supported by the BJP, it is clear that minority rights along religious lines are no longer culturally autonomous or respected. The BJP fails to meet this consociational condition.

Linguistic minorities are under threat as well, though not to the same extent. The BJP government is accused of “saffronizing” education, or reforming it to reflect Hindu-nationalist ideals. Critics claim the government has imposed Sanskrit onto the three-language formula in public education,³³ which was implemented initially to expand the use of languages apart from Hindi and English in the classroom, including South Indian, foreign and regional languages. By imposing Sanskrit (notably the language of ancient Hindu texts) as the third language, the BJP government limits the extent to which

21 “Radical Shift.”

22 Aradhak, Purusharth. “Dadri Lynching: Meat in Akhlaq’s Fridge Was Mutton, Not Beef” *The Times of India*. Times Group, 9 Oct. 2015.

23 Though most Hindus do not consume beef, many practicing Hindus, for instance in Kerala, do consume beef.

24 “Radical Shift.”

25 Ibid.

26 “Fact-finding Mission: Dadri Lynching Was Not Spontaneous, Says NCM Member.” *The Indian Express*. The Express Group, 21 Oct. 2015.

27 Jaffrelot, Christophe. “Communal Riots in Gujarat: The State at Risk?” *Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics* (2003): 16.

28 Mishra, Pankaj. “Narendra Modi: The Divisive Manipulator Who Charmed the World.” *The Guardian*. 9 Nov. 2015.

29 Jain, Bharti. “Government Releases Data of Riot Victims Identifying Religion.” *The Times of India*. Times Group, 24 Sept. 2013.

30 Mukherji, Anahita. “Report by Minority Rights Group Paints BJP Black.” *The Times of India*. Times

Group, 3 July 2013.

31 “Now, BJP Regrets Raking up Love Jihad.” *The Hindu*. August 27, 2014.

32 Roy, Indirajit. “Why Development in Bihar Is About Social Justice.” *The Wire*. Delhi Press, 9 Nov. 2015.

33 “Smriti Says Sanskrit Will Be Optional, but KV Schools Have Nothing Else to Offer.” *FirstPost India*. 24 Nov. 2014.

students can develop regional identities, or establish connections with South Indians (where BJP support is weaker) or foreigners.

Finally, Modi has remained largely silent with regard to women's rights. Although there is a long-standing history of violence against women in India, Modi has not included the advancement of women's rights in the ten-point plan he laid out when he came to power.³⁴ Especially considering Modi is seen as an exceptionally vocal head of state on all issues, Monobina Gupta sees meaning in Modi's silence,

So, when and where does Modi prefer silence to communication? Here are two telling examples that could be signifiers of deeper meaning. Not so long ago, two teenage girls were raped and hanged in Badaun, Uttar Pradesh. In Meghalaya, a woman's head was blown off by insurgents after they raped her. Somewhere on the outskirts of Mumbai, a woman bus conductor was stripped by a male commuter. Modi did not tweet about these ghastly incidents... the prime minister is powerless to speak on communal or gender violence because his landslide victory in the Hindi heartland and elsewhere, to a large extent, was propelled by communal polarization and the consolidation of the majority Hindu vote bank. The specter of 2002, which included unimaginable brutalities against women, and the facts of Hindu consolidation and repressed violence haunt Modi's refusal to speak. By speaking on these issues—which he is not entirely free from—he might implicate himself in a past he tries constantly to escape. Therefore, the fact that he chooses to remain silent says a lot.³⁵

Though the vulnerable position of women in India is not a new issue, a rapid improvement in women's rights in a country where the head of state refuses to defend—or even mention—women seems dubious.

As Monobina Gupta theorizes above, Modi's silence on the issue may originate from his reliance upon a voter base that encourages communalism and male supremacy. As its voter base and

34 Kumar, Sanjay. "India's Shame: Women's Rights." *The Diplomat*. 6 June 2014.

35 Gupta, Monobina. "Narendra Modi's Unsettling Silence on the Disturbing Events of the past Month." *The Caravan*. Delhi Press, 30 June 2014.

membership is primarily North Indian, Hindu and male, they have a disproportionate representation in the central government, especially compared to Muslims and women.³⁶ This thus visibly violates the consociational condition of proportionality in political representation.

However, as Pankaj Mishra astutely argues, it is hypocritical to claim that these infringements on minority rights represent an exclusively BJP phenomenon.

In India itself, the prostration before Mammon, bellicose nationalism, boorish anti-intellectualism, and fear and hatred of the weak predates Modi. It did not seem so brazen previously because the now supplanted Indian elite disguised their hegemony with what Edmund Burke called "pleasing illusions": in this case, reverential invocations of Gandhi and Nehru, and of the noble "idea of India." Thus, the Congress party, which first summoned the malign ghosts of Hindu supremacism in the 1980s and presided over the massacre of more than 3,000 Sikhs in 1984, could claim to represent secularism. And liberal intellectuals patronized by the regime could remain silent when Indian security forces in Kashmir filled up mass graves with dissenters to the idea of India, gang-raped with impunity, and stuck live wires into the penises of suspected militants. The rare protestor among Indian writers was scorned for straying from literature into political activism. TV anchors and columnists competed with each other in whipping up patriotic rage and hatred against various internal and external enemies of the idea of India. The "secular" nationalists of the ancient regime are now trying to disown their own legitimate children when they recoil fastidiously from the Hindu supremacists foaming at the mouth.³⁷

While communalism and government-approved violence existed before Modi, rights have nevertheless suffered veritable degeneration under the current government. When the Prime Minister fails

36 "Union Council of Ministers." National Portal of India.

37 "The Divisive Manipulator."

to control or even condemn the spread of violence—much of which originates from his own party—it tacitly encourages the continuation of such trends. As other factions within the BJP wish to escalate anti-minority efforts such as the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign, the internal ideological shift of the the ruling party from development to cultural “reform” may further threaten the position of minorities within India and the Indian government.

India’s “Democratic Soul”:

Structural Mechanisms and Public Responses to BJP Rule

Representing the rise of the BJP as the death of Indian democracy grossly oversimplifies and underestimates Indian democracy and democratic ideals. Some of these values are exemplified by the structural robustness of linguistic federalism, public responses to BJP attempts to consolidate power and intra-party dissent.

From a structural perspective, India’s consociational state depends upon the maximal power the BJP can wield within the federal system. Currently, only eight of 31 state chief ministers are BJP politicians. Although the central government holds more power in India than in other federal systems, the State List of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India provides 61 items over which the state level has exclusive authority, while the Concurrent List outlines another 52 items over which the central and regional governments have joint control. The Concurrent List includes land policy—which is of utmost importance to the 68 percent rural population³⁸—and affirmative action programs. The latter most pertinently determines (mainly caste and ethnic) minority representation in regional governments as well as their access to education and government employment. In some states, “backward” Muslim populations are granted reservations as well. As stated previously, Modi claimed during the Bihar elections that the rival coalition wanted to steal reservations from Hindu groups and transfer them to Muslims. This poignantly demonstrates the extent to which the reservation system may repre-

38 “Rural Population (% of Total Population).”
The World Bank.

sent an obstacle to Modi’s consolidation of power.

Furthermore, although the BJP government has interfered in the three-language formula in public education, the autonomy of linguistic minorities remains relatively unaffected due to federalism. India adopted linguistic federalism in the 1950s, when Jawaharlal Nehru drew state lines according to linguistic groups.³⁹ For instance, the state of Madras was divided into Tamil-speaking Tamil Nadu and Telugu-speaking Andhra Pradesh in 1953, which helped eliminate language as a source of political division.⁴⁰ The creation of regions based on language thus bolsters the strength of regional governments against the attempt to saffronize education throughout India and guarantees the political representation of linguistic minorities.

Myron Weiner elaborates in his essay “The Indian Paradox: Violent Social Conflict and Democratic Politics” that the state government must be able to manage ethnic and religious conflicts on a local level. Otherwise, unrest may escalate to “confrontations between regional interests and the center,” which has increasingly been the case since the 1960s.⁴¹ The escalation of unrest threatens the consociational state of Indian democracy, as such conflict may encourage consolidation of power by the central government, which was the excuse Indira Gandhi used during “The Emergency” (1975–1977) to impose a quasi-dictatorship for 21 months (though it must be noted that the Prime Minister herself also ended this period of democratic suspension).⁴² Yet, relations between the BJP and state governments, and not only the capacities of individual state governments themselves to carry out consociational policies and prevent communal violence, determine the existence of cultural autonomy, proportional representation and minority rule. If the central government sees the administration of a regional government in opposition with its goals, it is more likely to attempt to assert control over that region.

So far, however, Indians have deftly countered efforts to consolidate BJP power. For instance, Biharis interpreted the communalist BJP campaign during the recent state elections—in which Modi and Shah relentlessly crusaded for the ejection of the incumbent left-wing coali-

39 Lijphart, 260.

40 Ibid.

41 Weiner, 33.

42 Ibid., 22.

tion—as a threat to their regional sovereignty. Harish Khare notes,

Bihar also highlighted Narendra Modi’s single-minded pre-occupation with the relentless accumulation of power. After Bihar, it would have been West Bengal, then Uttar Pradesh. The unspoken message was clear: Control the [upper house of the Parliament], become invincible, answerable to none, or may be, if at all, only to the [Hindu-nationalist] bosses. Bihar was invited to pay its democratic obeisance to the new Mughal. The invitation was spurned... to suggest that Modi would be Prime Minister for the next 10 years, the Indian people’s democratic soul became restless.⁴³

Thus, even in Bihar, ground zero for the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, Indians recognized the manipulative tactics Modi employed as he attempted to gain control over the state. To renowned Indian author Salman Rushdie, Bihari voters “proved that they are tolerant, inclusive and pluralistic. They have made it clear that they do not want to live in a Hindu fanatic country.”⁴⁴

The failure of the BJP during the elections in Bihar is part of a larger and historical trend in India. Apart from the large class of professionals who rely upon employment through democratic institutions and thus have a vested interest in the continued survival of Indian democracy,⁴⁵ other Indians have tended to reject political groups that encroached on their autonomy. Currently, over 40 Indian literary figures have returned government awards from the Sahitya Akademi, India’s National Academy of Letters, in protest of heightened attacks on free speech under Modi.⁴⁶ Historically, after The Emergency in 1977, the largely illiterate peasantry that had suffered the brunt of Indira Gandhi’s authoritarian politics ejected Gandhi and her party from power. Congress lost more than 200 seats in the Indian parliament it once held. One could thus interpret the BJP’s defeat in Bihar as demonstrative the public’s intolerance of any attempts to reduce Indian democracy to a Hindu-nationalist monarchy, especially in a

43 “Modi Presidency Over.”

44 Tatke, Sukhada. “Salman Rushdie on the Bihar Results, Twitter Trolls and India as a Hindu Nation.” Scroll.in. 11 Nov. 2015.

45 Weiner, 33.

46 “The Divisive Manipulator.”

47 “Modi Presidency Over.”

nation as heterogeneous and “argumentative”⁴⁷ as India. Even within the BJP there has been an outcry over the party’s anti-democratic organizational structure. After the Bihar elections, the BJP old guard published a statement berating the new, “emasculated” party “forced to kow-tow to a handful” whose “consensual character has been destroyed,”⁴⁸ a clear reference to the Modi-Shah partnership. Although a consensual party leadership would plausibly attempt to expand Hindu nationalism and not development policies, the old guard’s “banner of revolt”⁴⁹ may demonstrate the incompatibility of—or at least difficulty to reconcile—religious fundamentalism and economic development for all citizens, including minorities.

Conclusion

The implications of BJP rule on consociational government in India are varied and complex. While a platform of development could transform the BJP into the new “party of consensus,” its long-standing Hindu nationalist ideals—to which it has returned in recent months—threaten to prevent the representation of a broad range of constituencies within the party. As Modi continues to expand exclusionary Hindu-nationalist policies for the sake of appeasing factions within the BJP, he jeopardizes the rights of linguistic and religious minorities, in addition to the rights of women. However, linguistic federalism, state rights and long-standing democratic ideals restrict the extent to which Modi can exert absolute control over Indian politics and society.

Ultimately, the state of consociationalism in India depends upon how Narendra Modi and the BJP react to their defeat in Bihar. If Modi understands that he was not “elected to an all-powerful presidency”⁵⁰ and decides to re-shift his focus to development for all, the majority BJP government could undertake swift and expansive reforms at the expense of traditional Hindu-nationalist aspirations. However, were the current path to communalism to continue for the sake of appeasing right-wing political interests, Modi’s government should expect to encounter the same difficulties that previous administrations

48 “In Salvo Against Modi, BJP Veterans Demand Accountability for Bihar Defeat.” The Wire. Delhi Press, 10 Nov. 2015.

49 “BJP Old Guard.”

50 “Modi Presidency Over.”

failed to foresee—a long-standing popular tradition of resistance to non-democratic—and anti-consociational—ideals. The BJP must rally behind the platform of development that brought it to power, or else acknowledge its eventual defeat.

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VIII.

**“THE DISINHERITED”:
Migration, Survival, and
the Underclass in Tehran
(1950–1980)**

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In early spring of 1979, after the exile of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and amidst the rule of the Provisional Government, Iranians from a diverse set of backgrounds rejoiced in the streets of Tehran and other major cities as voices on the Tehran radio and around the world reported their victory.¹

The April 1st referendum had yet to establish the Islamic Republic of Iran and mark the official recognition of a successful revolution, yet the end of the Pahlavi dynasty represented a significant achievement in the eyes of many. This period was, nonetheless, marked by a series of confrontations. Rising unemployment forced many jobless laborers to enact a sit-in in the Ministry of Labor compound, demanding social welfare and job creation programs. On March 20, Zahra Dorostkar, a woman denied work and whose husband, a factory worker, was recently discharged, spoke to a crowd of protesters:

I want to know why radio and television do not broadcast *our* grievances to inform the world of our sufferings and to make them appreciate how little [the authorities] are offering us. I am telling you, I will not leave this place unless [the authorities] consider my living conditions!²

Dorostkar’s demand elegantly signifies the contradictions and ironies of the 1979 Revolution and its aftermath. Revolutionary upset provided the space within which she and other poor women and men could lend voice to their struggles and enter into the newly re-constituted political sphere. And yet, in the following years, the state’s brutal disciplinary apparatus imposed new restrictions and the shift toward neoliberal structural adjustments forced poor and underclass populations into even greater precarity and destitution.³

This paper represents an intervention into the historiographical debates surrounding the rise of the underclass from the mid-20th century to the 1979 Revolution and its aftermath. The literature is generally divided into two broader groups. First, there is a vast

1 Asef Bayat, “Workless Revolutionaries: The Unemployed Movement in Revolutionary Iran.” In *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by Stephanie Cronin (New York: Routledge, 2008), 97–8.
2 Ibid., 98.

3 Valentine M. Moghadam, “Islamic Populism, Class, and Gender in Postrevolutionary Iran.” In *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, edited by John Foran, 189–217. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 217.

literature that attempts to ascertain the causes and detail the history of the 1979 Revolution,⁴ in which the underclass—rarely the object of analysis—frequently materializes, narratively, at the moment of contestation (and cooperation) between leftist guerilla groups and Islamist forces in urban spaces and factories.⁵ Second is the sociological literature, which frequently places urban impoverishment and rural-to-urban migration within a world-systemic context. Migration is understood as the result of exploitive, dependent capitalism’s⁶ tendency to force the “reserve army of labor” into squatter communities, shantytowns, and informal Third World economies.⁷ While valuable and deeply relevant, these theories arguably neglect specific historical and ideological circumstances in order to facilitate generalization.⁸ This paper does not attempt to establish one central cause of the Islamic Revolution, or to explain the influx of urban migrants to various cities in the so-called developing world throughout the 20th century. Rather, it seeks to contextualize the struggles of the underclass in Tehran within these broader narratives, and to show the particular discursive, political, and social battles poor people undertook in the periods before, during, and after the 1979 Revolution. Two significant scholars of poor Iranian migrants—Farhad Kazemi and Asef Bayat—will be read together and against each other. From peasantry to squatters, from Pahlavi to Islamic rule, the narrative reveals that the underclass engaged in daily struggles for survival and entertained a complex set of connections with the ideological and social forces of the period. These struggles were profoundly political, despite attempts to frame the underclass as passive, excessively ideological, or ignorant of social context.

Methodologically, this paper utilizes a comprehensive range of source material: secondary-source histories of the Revolution; theories of marginality and subalternity; Iranian economic and survey data; ethnographic research; and the speeches, lectures, and publications of Ayatollah Khomeini. The following pages are divided—more or less chronologically—into several sections: an account of the phenomenon of underclass migration from the countryside to urban

4 John Foran, “The Iranian Revolution of 1977–79: A Challenge for Social Theory.” In *A Century of Revolution: Social Movements in Iran*, edited by John Foran (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 160–188.
5 Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 257.

6 See Robert Rhodes, *Imperialism and Underdevelopment: A Reader* (New York: Monthly Review, 1970).
7 Samir Amin, *Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review, 1976).
8 Farhad Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran: The Migrant Poor, Urban Marginality, and Politics* (New York, New York: New York UP, 1980), 9.

centers like Tehran; historical background on the Revolution and an assessment of the literature regarding the role of the disenfranchised; and finally an analysis of the discourse surrounding the urban migrant population. Yet first, we must turn to questions of naming.

Naming the Mustaz'afin and Questions of Class Formation

Social classes are abstractions. The so-called underclass is especially indefinite and its borders are therefore fluid; economic precarity, by definition, implies passage from one occupational endeavor to the next, from one social context to another. The approach of classical economists to quantify social classes as functions of capital/income is helpful in a limited sense, but ultimately ignores what Marx conceptualizes as the fundamentally *relational* nature of class formation.⁹ This insight is particularly important in the Iranian case, where, as Kazemi notes, conditions such as migratory status, lack of political participation, and concentration in urban slums defined the underclass experience.¹⁰

While it remains tempting to conceptualize the underclass as a category of persons without employment (the "workless") or as persons laboring outside the mode of production ("informal laborers"), these categories are far too rigid. Many Iranians passed from one category to the next.¹¹ Some migrants were members of the industrial working class; most failed to secure entry into formal employment.¹² Most were migrants who lived in south, southeast, and southwest Tehran communities in numbers estimated from 500,000 to 1 million, yet some gained access to more permanent housing.¹³ Housing strategies ranged from squatting¹⁴ to shantytown dwelling. These differences were both fluid and important for structuring social arrangements, making a flexibility of analysis important for our purposes. As Michael Denning has argued so persuasively, studying the condition of the wageless is important for decentering the figure of the formal employee in the picture of global capitalism: "The fetishism of the wage may well be the source of capitalist ideologies of freedom and equality, but the employment contract is not the

9 John Milios, "Social Class in Classical and Marxist Political Economy." (*American Journal of Economics And Sociology*: Kansas City, April 2000), 283.

10 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution*, 4.

11 Bayat, "Workless Revolutionaries," 98.

12 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution*, 97.

13 Ibid., 4.

14 Defined as "forcible preemption of land by landless and homeless people" in Ibid., 46.

founding moment. For capitalism begins not with the offer of work, but with the imperative to earn a living."¹⁵ Studying the underclass Tehran offers insight into the functionings of the state, society, and capitalist economy in Iran.

Lastly, there is the question of how the underclass has been named and discursively mobilized in Iran. Khomeini appropriated the term "*mustaz'afin*" (the disinherited) from Ali Shariati's translation of Frantz Fanon's *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*).¹⁶ Altered from the Qur'anic meaning, which implies meekness and humility, *mustaz'afin* came to signify the oppressed classes.¹⁷ These masses were largely undifferentiated (broad enough to appeal to bazaaris, merchants, and anti-imperialists) and yet also imagined as the shanty dwellers, the downtrodden, the hungry, and the destitute on whose behalf the Revolution was said to be fought.

We shall turn to the discursive mobilization of this concept later on. For now, it is useful to note the extent to which Khomeini's evocations of the *mustaz'afin* bring us full circle. This concept, coming so fortuitously to Khomeini via Ali Shariati via Fanon, finds its origin in Marx's *lumpenproletariat* from the *Eighteenth Brumaire*. Marx distinguished the lumpenproletariat—thieves, beggars, and vagabonds—from the industrial working class, which he thought possessed the only real revolutionary potential.¹⁸ Fanon disagreed and repurposed the term for the anti-colonial context when he wrote: "Abandoning the countryside...landless peasants, now a lumpenproletariat, are driven into the towns, crammed into the shanty towns and endeavor to infiltrate the ports and cities, the creations of colonial domination,"¹⁹ and later, "These jobless, these species of subhumans, redeem themselves in their own eyes and before history."²⁰ The phenomenon Fanon was describing with such revolutionary aspirations, rural-to-urban mass migration, is widely detailed in the dependency theory literature.²¹ In the Iranian case, it is particularly significant for understanding the underclass in Tehran.

15 Michael Denning, "Wageless Life" (London: New Left Review, 66, November–December 2010), 3.

16 Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 47.

17 Ibid., 43–44.

18 Denning, "Wageless Life," 11.

19 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: New York, Grove Press, 2004), 66.

20 Ibid., 81–2.

21 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution*, 8.

From Rural Peasantry to Urban Poverty:
Modernization and Migration

At the beginning of the 20th century, Iranian population size was steady. By the end of World War II, however, population growth increased so drastically that by 1976 more than 46 percent of the population lived in urban areas and the boundaries of cities were enlarged a substantial amount, incorporating many peasants into urban life without the need for migration.²² Yet peasant migration to the cities was substantial, accounting for more than 35 percent of the population increase within a matter of decades.²³ This created a strain on the residential system, with a shortage of 78,000 housing units in Tehran in 1966.²⁴ It is within this context that Tehran witnessed a rise in shantytowns and squatting communities.

This process finds its origins in the authoritarian state—building and modernization initiatives of Reza Shah. When the early Pahlavi regime attempted to exert control over the periphery, landowners and state officials resorted to bribery; living standards for the poor vastly decreased, therefore, because of commercialization of the land and the increasing tendency to extract surplus value from tenants, many of whom were poor and became landless.²⁵ While Reza Shah adopted many of the tendencies of earlier nationalists and constitutionalists, he was largely uninterested in land reform, and his economic policies in fact produced a concentration of land and resources among elites friendly to the regime.²⁶

Subaltern and landless peoples were not passive observers of these events. Rather, they employed a set of strategies to contest landowner, khan, and regime power, such as village riots, tax evasion, and the withholding of rents.²⁷ This is significant for two reasons. First, it foreshadows other forms of protest and subversion that future generations utilized in order to survive amidst state and private exploitation. Second, it demonstrates the historiographical issues of concern: that elite narratives frequently conceal these actions from the domain of “political history.” From 1962–1971, Mohammad Reza Shah enacted

22 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution*, 14.

23 *Iran, Plan and Budget Organization* (Iranian Statistical Center, “Barrisi-yi Ijmali-yi Muhajirat bih Mantiq-i Shahri”), qtd. in *Ibid.*, 14.

24 Mohammed Hemassi, “Tehran in Transition: A Study in Comparative Factorial Ecology,” in *The Population of Iran: A Selection of Readings*, ed. Jamshid Momeni (Honolulu: East–West Population Institute, 1977), 364.

25 Stephanie Cronin, “Resisting the New State: The Rural Poor, Land and Modernity in Iran, 1921–1941.” In *Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa*, edited by

Stephanie Cronin, 141–170. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 63–4.

26 *Ibid.*, 63.

27 *Ibid.*, 143, 164

land redistributions. Yet nearly one million peasants failed to receive assistance.²⁸ Despite these and earlier attempts from Mossadegh’s Nation Front government to limit landowner profit, by the 1970s the “highly mechanized agricultural operations,”—jointly financed by private, public and foreign capital—made rural life difficult for the emerging underclass. By the late 1970s, following the 1973 oil boom, agricultural output was merely 9.4 percent of the national economy.²⁹

Those left out of processes such as industrialization and modernization increasingly fit the image of Fanon’s wretched of the earth. Massive dislocations of peasants from the countryside and into the cities (Tehran in particular, but also Arak, Shiraz, Ahwaz, and others) reached their apogee by 1980, when nearly one million poor inhabited slum dwellings, according to the Tehran Census.³⁰ Settlement typically took the form of squatting and gradual illegal seizure of unoccupied land, or the formation of shantytowns in South Tehran. This gradual infiltration is distinct from the formation of Latin American squatter settlements, which might have prevented some group solidarity and cohesion that would normally result from “large-scale invasion... of preempted land.”³¹ Nevertheless, the discrimination and struggles faced by the underclass in Tehran produced a series of resistances. The following section analyzes the contested relationship between the underclass and the 1979 Revolution.

Marginality or Mobilization?
An Assessment of the Literature

The 1979 Revolution has been attributed to various forces—repressive state activity, economic depression in the 1970s despite the oil boom, cultural resistances, and dependent development.³² Many scholars have attributed the immediate appearance of opposition to Carter-era human rights discourses that opened the space for political critique in the press.³³ An article insulting Ayatollah Khomeini instigated protests in Qum, leading to the deaths of protesters. Large-scale protests followed with mass participation in various cities

28 *Ibid.*, 165

29 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution*, 34.

30 Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People’s Movements in Iran* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 174.

31 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution*, 48.

32 Foran, “The Iranian Revolution,” 181.

33 Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 231.

and carried out by diverse social groups: secular and religious people, men and women, leftists and conservatives. There were middle-class and elderly remnant supporters of the National Front, and revolutionary guerilla groups like the Mujahidin (with Marxist and Muslim offshoots) and the Feda'iyān (with various subgroups and constituencies).³⁴ The children of bazaaris and 'ulama—groups left out of incorporation into the world economic system and state centralization respectively—were frequent sources for these movements,³⁵ as were students, workers, and some members of the underclass. While it is not possible to summarize the literature here, to assess matters regarding the "disinherited" vis-à-vis the Revolution is to necessarily address two important questions: first, who was mobilized and why, and second, how did the clergy's organizational preparedness and discursive deployment of the *mustaz'afin* compensate for any lack of literal mobilization, and in doing so, help to confer victory?

With regards to the first question, there is ample historical and statistical evidence that suggests the underclass—residents of shantytowns, squatters, the jobless or informally employed—were not the major participants in the Revolution.³⁶ This is confirmed in the anthropological literature surrounding the poor in South Tehran³⁷ and in a statistical survey of the economic statuses of 646 protesters killed from August 1978 to February 1979.³⁸ While this represents a point of agreement between Bayat and Kazemi, the two scholars disagree in several important regards. This paper argues, against Kazemi, that lower levels of underclass participation in the 1979 Revolution do not indicate passivity or lack of participation in the newly re-articulated political sphere, but rather the opposite. In contrast, and against Bayat, disenfranchised people's daily struggles for survival did not make them impervious to the ideological and political manipulations of Islamist, leftist, or other groups. In short, the underclass existed within a *particular* historical and ideological context distinct from the experiences of other poor and disenfranchised people in the Global South.

Kazemi's analysis³⁹ employs the concept of marginality as a structuring analytic tool for assessing the subalternity of urban migrants:

34 Ibid., 239.

35 Ibid., 238.

36 Bayat, *Street Politics*, 38–9; also see Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran*, 88.

37 Janet Bauer, "Poor Women and Social Consciousness in Revolutionary Iran," In G. Nashat, ed., *Women and Revolution in Iran*. (Boulder: Westview, 1983), 160.

38 Sohbattollah Amjad, "Social background of the martyrs of the Islamic revolution, August 23, 1978–February 19, 1979 (University of Tehran, 1982); Unpublished master's thesis; qtd. in Bayat, *Street Politics*, 39. P. 178–79 for the thesis; qtd. in Bayat 39.

39 Importantly, Kazemi's study was published in 1980, one year after the establishment of the new government. In such times of political upheaval, the subtleties

of the poor's relationship to the regime had yet to be subjected to historical analysis. Moments of tactical skill and political resistance might appear as mere disorganization in the face of tremendous mobilization by a variety of organized political movements.

These poor migrants lead a marginal life on the fringes of urban society. They are products of an economic system that has created and perpetuated their marginality, whether in the countryside as the sharecropper or in the city as the migrant poor. The migrants' marginality is attested by their socioeconomic position as underclass, by their political participation as nonparticipant, and by their status position as non-privileged.⁴⁰

While some of the extreme poor participated in the 1978–79 demonstrations in Tehran against the regime, Kazemi conceives of this as unexceptional given the diverse cross-section of antiregime activity. Further, he finds that official party membership was strikingly low, with 6 percent of migrants interviewed reporting party affiliations; further, lack of education, access to networks of activism, and preoccupations with pressing concerns such as food and sustenance might have decreased the potential for agitation.⁴¹ The available ethnographic and economic data further support this argument. Nonsquatting poor migrants (those legally, if not comfortably, housed in slums) were more likely than squatters to participate in anti-Shah activities,⁴² perhaps because of access to networks in shantytowns that would connect migrants to the merchant, artisan and religious organizations that isolated (and unlawful) squatters would not experience.⁴³ Further, the increasing maldistribution of wealth⁴⁴ likely angered the underclass, whose struggles could be placed alongside those of Iranians belonging to different social classes.

Kazemi's focus on political marginality, lack political awareness, and lack of formal party affiliation is arguably problematic in two respects. First, it risks a certain level of condescension insofar as elite political know-how becomes the sole benchmark for access to the public sphere. Second, it overlooks the ways in which, as Bayat describes, the underclass used the opening created in the late 1970s to mobilize in their *own* political struggles for housing, jobs, and security from state violence. Bayat describes underclass struggles as the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary." Engaging with James Scott and Antonio Gramsci by

of the poor's relationship to the regime had yet to be subjected to historical analysis. Moments of tactical skill and political resistance might appear as mere disorganization in the face of tremendous mobilization by a variety of organized political movements.

40 Ibid., 4.

41 Ibid., 74.

42 Ibid., 88.

43 Foran, "The Iranian Revolution of 1977–79," 179.

44 M.A. Pesaran, "Income Distribution in Iran," In *Iran: Past, Present, and Future*, ed. Jane Jacqz (New York: Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1976), 280.

countering the revolutionary/passive dichotomy implicit in much of their work, he argues that underclass mobilizations are sometimes gradual, often driven by necessity more than ideology, and frequently self-generating.⁴⁵ Yet he refuses to romanticize the figure of the disenfranchised, noting for instance that many of the ultra-poor viewed the Shah as a great patron and savior for all Iranians.⁴⁶ What makes Bayat's account more compelling than Kazemi's, in certain ways, is a broader definition of "political" or "revolutionary" activity. This enables Bayat to notice a different set of histories and voices. As one South Tehran squatter declared after Khomeini returned from exile: Swear to God, this is unfair; we are told: 'a revolution has occurred.' Then we came to believe that our situation would change. And that we would not suffer that much anymore. But the only thing we saw of the revolution was this: one day we heard from the tv that the Shah had gone and Mr. Khomeini had returned! And nothing else.⁴⁷

The nature of 1970s revolutionary upset provided a space within which poor Iranians could make political demands, and insist that the government (whichever it was) be held accountable for its promises.

Starting in autumn of 1977, the Pahlavi regime began demolition programs of informal ("cavelike") settlements in the following neighborhoods in Tehran's suburbs: Afsariyeh, Mushiriyeh, Kavousiyeh, Mesgarabad, and Dowlatabad.⁴⁸ Emboldened, yet acting independent of any organizations, the poor engaged in strategies of resistance and subterfuge, setting cars on fire, throwing shovels and clubs at municipality officers, and refusing to leave the compounds in which they lived.⁴⁹ These strategies strongly resemble the strategies of noncompliance employed by the rural, peasant underclass in response to financial pressures from rural elites and Reza Shah's regime just forty years earlier.⁵⁰ Once the historian broadens her or his conceptualizations of political mobilization, moments of political expression that were foreclosed within elite histories become increasingly significant and ever more visible.

Bayat's insights are significant for another historiographical reason. To suggest that rural dislocations produced migration, which

45 Bayat, *Street Politics*, 6–7.

46 *Ibid.*, 39.

47 *Ibid.*, 35.

48 *Ibid.*, 46.

49 *Ibid.*, 46–7.

50 Cronin, "Resisting the New State," 63–4. 51 Moghadam, "Islamic Populism, Class, and Gender," 192, 199.

produced the Islamic Revolution, is to ascribe to an extremely teleological view of history. In this framework, actions are legitimized and recognized as revolutionary (or at least "non-passive") only to the extent that they conform to post-hoc notions of revolutionary victory. With regards to the 1979 Revolution especially, it is important to understand the series of upheavals that resulted in Islamic victory as a sequence of highly contested interactions, which resulted in the institutionalization and consolidation of the "Islamic" republic; in other words, as Moghadam argues, the outcome of the 1977–1979 Revolution was not at all predetermined.⁵¹ Furthermore, ascribing to a teleological view that posits all antiregime agitation as ultimately producing an Islamist victory erases not just the history of the underclass, but also of many women, students, leftist groups, and ethnic minorities (especially Kurds, Azeris, Beluchis, and Iranian Arabs⁵²) who all participated in various social movements from which they were sometimes forced to retreat.

Despite Bayat's useful emphasis on daily, non-ideological struggles for survival, Kazemi is correct in highlighting the occasional successes of Islamic mobilization of Tehran's poor. As Kazemi points out, the Shi'i clergy had deep historical connections to the poor, who frequently attended mosques and shrines during Shi'i festivals.⁵³ This proved useful for mobilization of the underclass. For example, Khomeini was able to utilize the Shi'i festival during the month of Moharram (which commemorates Imam Husayn's death at the hands of the Sunni Caliph, Yazid) in the following manner:

Moharram, the month of courage and sacrifice, has arrived. This is the month during which the blood of martyrs defeated the sword and truth overcame falsehood, rendering the satanic rule of tyrants futile...Islam is for the oppressed today and the peasants and the poor.⁵⁴

Bayat insists that allegations regarding clergy use of Moharram and other holidays to mobilize the underclass are largely unfounded;

52 Bayat, "Workless Revolutionaries," 93.

53 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran*, 94.

54 Ruhollah Khomeini, "The Message of Ayatollah Khomeini to the Brave People of Iran on the Occasion of Moharram," *Iran Interrupts*, ed. Ali-Reza Nobari (Stanford: Iran-America Documentation Group, 1978), 229–31.

he cites evidence that the *mustaz'afin* only entered Khomeini's rhetoric at the climax of the revolution to "disarm the left's proletarian discourse."⁵⁵ This remains a point of contention. Bayat rejects demeaning and problematic tendencies to frame the Third World poor as excessively ideological and passive. And yet, as Kazemi notes, to the extent that the underclass mobilized in the 1979 Revolution, it was often within a religious context, shouting *Allahu Akbar* [God is Great] from rooftops and using religious symbols in combat against the Shah's forces, for instance.⁵⁶ In all likelihood, underclass participation in the 1979 Revolution varied from survival strategies to left or Islamist motivations. What is clear, however, is that the underclass continuously reappeared *discursively* on the side of the Islamists.

Islamic Populism:

A Close Reading of Khomeini

As Ervand Abrahamian has argued, Khomeini's rhetoric during the mid-1970s framed the *mustaz'afin* [the disinherited] as the responsibility of 'ulama, whose obligation was to protect these masses from the West and everything it signified: the Pahlavi regime, capitalism, exploitation, and impiety.⁵⁷ Especially post-1970, due to the influence of Ali Shariati and the Mujahidin,⁵⁸ Khomeini began to make statements that transformed its Qur'anic meaning: "In a truly Islamic society, there will be no landless peasants," "We are for Islam, not for capitalism and feudalism," and "Islam represents the shanty town dwellers, not the palace dwellers."⁵⁹

A careful reading of Ayatollah Khomeini's 1970 *Velayat-e faqih* [Governance of the Jurist] revealed a similar discourse, deploying the poor masses (and other concepts) in an attempt to secure the necessity of Islamic guardianship or governance (i.e. theocratic rule). In essence, the text (which was originally a series of lectures delivered to his disciples) fused "religion and politics in the institutionalized figure of the jurisprudent,"⁶⁰ who was responsible not to the people but to Islam. Popular legitimacy was fortuitous, perhaps, but not centrally

55 Bayat, *Street Politics*, 43.

56 Kazemi, *Poverty and Revolution in Iran*, 95.

57 Ervand Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 22.

58 Abrahamian, *Khomeinism*, 47

59 qtd. in Abrahamian, *The Iranian Mojahedin*, 22.

60 Amr G.E. Sabet, "Wilayat al-Faqih and the Meaning of Islamic Government" In *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini* ed., Arshin Adib-Moghaddam (New York: Cambridge University Press 2014), 81.

necessary.⁶¹ Despite this central preoccupation, the poor appeared (paradoxically) to lend legitimacy to the regime: "They [the elites, backed by the West] want us to remain afflicted and wretched, and our poor to be trapped in their misery. Instead of surrendering to the injunctions of Islam, which provide a solution for the problem of poverty, they and their agents wish to go on living in huge places and enjoy lives of abominable luxury."⁶² Yet the text also held the destitute as a means to a greater Islamic end: "The taxes Islam levies and the form of budget it has established are not merely for the sake of providing subsistence to the poor...they are also intended to make possible, the establishment of a great government."⁶³ In this respect, the Islamic Republic is best described, as Moghadam argues, as *Islamic populist* for its combination of the traditional with the modern, the popular with the theocratic.⁶⁴ Discursively, the *undifferentiated* quality of the *mustaz'afin* and the flexibility and permeability of the concept helped Shi'i clergy appeal to bazaaris, merchants, religious elites, and devout sectors of the general population, all of whom witnessed the massive dislocation and migration of poor and underclass people into their cities, in addition to authoritarian pressures and economic transformations that characterized the history of 20th century Iran.

Conclusion:

The Disinherited and Globalization

History has not been kind to the Iranian *mustaz'afin*. An estimated 2.5 million Iranians (21 percent of the workforce) lost their jobs after the 1979 Revolution, following economic difficulties, the abandonment of construction projects, and the termination of restaurants, theaters, and enterprises deemed too "Western."⁶⁵ As the protesters who occupied the Ministry of Labor compound realized extremely quickly, their fates laid in the hands of a government less interested in the down-trodden once the tides had turned. As Bayat notes, the Provisional Government offered loans to 180,000 jobless laborers and attempted job creation programs in the short term, but these were partial steps

61 Ibid., 81.

62 Imam Khomeini, *Governance of the Jurist (Velayat-e Faqih)*. Trans. Hamid Algar. (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, International Affairs Division 1970), 14.

63 Ibid., 24.

64 Moghadam, "Islamic Populism, Class, and Gender," 192.

65 Bayat, "Workless Revolutionaries," 94.

and most were forced to return to petty trade, peddling, and vending on the streets.⁶⁶ In the postwar and post-Khomeini era, the Iranian government enacted popular worldwide shifts towards “economic liberalization and self-administered stabilization programs,”⁶⁷ marking the end of populist economic policies and signaling the reintegration of Iran into the capitalist world-system. A comprehensive study from the International Federation for Human Rights reports that foreign-imposed sanctions, unemployment, and lack of labor rights weigh especially heavily on the Iranian poor today.⁶⁸ Future research will be required to assess the role that neoliberal structural adjustments, foreign economic domination, and the removal of social safety nets have exerted on the underclass in Tehran and in cities across the Global South. At the moment, it seems Fanon’s dream of the wretched of the earth redeeming themselves before their eyes and before history has yet to be realized.

This paper has sought to re-articulate the history of subaltern migrants to Tehran without falling into the dominant historiographies of modernization and development on the one hand, or the teleological view of an inevitably “Islamic” revolution on the other. To speak of the Islamic revolution as a monolith suppresses the experiences of “the powerless, the poor, minorities, women, and other subaltern[s]”⁶⁹ whose struggles, however incomplete and ongoing, marked an important moment in the history of 20th century Iran.

66 Ibid., 110.

67 Moghadam, “Islamic Populism, Class, and Gender,” 190.

68 “Iran: Rising Poverty, Declining Labor Rights,” *League for the Defense of Human Rights in Iran* (Paris: International Federation for Human Rights, 2013).

69 Bayat, *Street Politics*, 5.

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VIX.

A MULTITUDE OF SINS:
Modeling Aid-Driven
Conflict

Dhruv Aggarwal
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“We are poor not because of a lack of aid; we are poor because aid does not reach the targeted populations.”

—Timbuktu secondary school teacher¹

In 2012, the Muslim Tuareg minority in northern Mali rebelled against the federal government. The ensuing civil war precipitated a coup d'état that deposed the president and ended only after intervention from France, Mali's former colonizer. This paper principally argues that in cases like that of Mali, foreign aid can prompt the onset of civil war because of differential access to aid rents among different members of the population. I shall modify the Acemoglu–Robinson economic model of coups and revolutions to show an unequal yet peaceful society “tipping over” and falling prey to civil war due to elite capture of foreign aid.²

This modified model predicts that both pre-existing income inequity and unequal allocation of aid among inhabitants of the recipient country increase the chances of violent civil conflict. Its results are then used to suggest optimal policies that avert civil conflict by redistributing resources to marginalized groups in society. The amount of redistribution needed to avoid conflict increases if it is easier for marginalized groups to revolt, or if the inequality in the distribution of income is greater.

Section I of this paper argues that aid stolen by societal elite can trigger the onset of civil war. Section II presents the modified Acemoglu–Robinson model as well as its predictions on the impact of aid on civil conflict. Finally, Section III explains the applications and implications of the model.

Aid Stealing and Civil Conflict

Humanitarian aid has emerged as one of the principal instruments through which governments, corporations, and people in the developed world have extended support to conflict-stricken countries. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD),

1 “Analysis: Mali's Aid problem,” *IRIN News*, August 5 2013, <<http://www.irinnews.org/report/98528/analysis-mali-s-aid-problem>>.

2 The particular formalization for the Acemoglu–Robinson model used in this paper is derived from Ben Olken's publicly available class notes for his Political Economy class at MIT (Course 14.75).

for example, estimates that its member countries spent more than \$474 billion on foreign aid in 2012, accounting for both governmental and private contributions. However, aid transfers from the developed to the developing world have been subject to significant criticism over the past forty years.³

I focus my model to showcase one such criticism: the adverse impact of aid stealing and elite capture of humanitarian aid in inequitable societies with governmental failure. A corrupt government can easily abuse the fact that aid distribution depends on its bureaucracy, and disproportionately allocate aid to groups that support the regime. Furthermore, aid recipients often have multiple donors, causing a collective action problem in which differing principles and levels of scrutiny from donor countries lead to poor administration among recipient governments. Therefore, in a country with civil conflict and a corrupt government, armed factions could seize a large proportion of foreign aid.

Donors may seek to circumvent a corrupt government by channeling aid to non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, even ignoring the inefficiencies in the operations of NGOs, the impact of these organizations on total aid disbursement pales in comparison to that of government institutions. The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development estimated that, historically, the percentage of overseas aid channeled to NGOs has never exceeded six percent.⁴ Hence, addressing the inefficiencies in aid distributed through the government apparatus is the primary challenge in evaluating the long-term impact of foreign aid.

Illicit gains from aid rents enrich both state and insurgent forces, fattening the wallets of individual commanders and supporting larger strategic goals. The state, upon capturing aid material, can use aid to support its armed forces and constituents, simultaneously freeing resources to fund counterinsurgency operations. Insurgents, on the other hand, presumably lacking the resources available to the state, use the aid to directly fund their war efforts. This “capturing” of aid rents by insurgents may take the form of the aid that does reach the marginalized group represented by insurgent groups. The captured

3 Claudia Williamson, “Exploring the failure of foreign aid: The role of incentives and information,” *Review of Austrian Economics* 23, no. 1 (2009).

4 Catherine Agg, “Trends in Government Support for Non-Governmental Organizations: Is the ‘Golden Age’ of the NGO Behind Us?” *Civil Society and Social Movements Programme, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development* 23 (2006).

aid may also be material stolen from government warehouses or delivery systems in areas where insurgents are stronger. Potential gains from capturing aid for both sides explains why up to eighty percent of aid is lost en route to its intended recipients.⁵

Insurgents do not just use these materials directly—they also profit from trading them. The influx of foreign aid is accompanied by the establishment of businesses dealing exclusively in stolen or secondhand aid goods. Other establishments may provide services to large numbers of aid workers: one can think of restaurants, brothels, and drug rings as some of these supporting “businesses.”⁶ Paul Henze, for example, went so far as to call Djibouti the “free trade area” of the Horn of Africa because of the vast amount of smuggled aid materials traded there.⁷

Mali is a case study that supports the hypothesis presented in this paper. The United Nations noted that the country, long hailed as a model low-income democracy, displayed characteristics that led to the 2012 civil war: untrammelled executive power, little executive accountability, and the regional divide between southern and northern Mali.⁸ The Malian government has been accused of giving disproportionate amounts of aid to favored ethnic groups, discriminating against a subset of the Tuareg.⁹ Crucially, it was the same group of Tuareg that allied with Al-Qaeda and rebelled against the federal government in 2012.

II. A Model for Aid-Driven Conflict

This section develops a formal model of aid-driven conflict, based on the Acemoglu–Robinson model used in political economy to explain coups and revolutions. In 2001, Acemoglu and Robinson explained the conditions under which developing societies with inequity face revolutions or civil conflict. Further, they proposed policies of transfers from the incumbent, elite social group to the oppressed segment of society that could prevent the latter from revolting or starting an insurgency. This paper formulates a model that extends the Acemoglu–Robinson

5 Linda Polman, *The Crisis Caravan: What's Wrong with Humanitarian Aid?* (New York: Picador, 2011).

6 Matthew LeRiche, “Unintended Alliance: The Co-option of Humanitarian Aid in Conflicts,” *Parameters: U.S. Army War College* 34, no. 1 (2004).

7 Paul Henze, “The primacy of economics for the future of the horn of Africa,” in *The Horn of Africa*, ed. Charles Gurdon (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 18–24.

8 United Nations, Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, S/2012/894* (28 November 2012), available from http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2012/894.

9 Georg Klute and Trutz von Trotha, “Roads to Peace: From Small War to Parasovereign Peace in the North of Mali,” in *Healing the Wounds: Essays on the Reconstruction of Societies after War*, ed. Marie-Claire Foblets and Trutz von Trotha (Portland: Hart Publishing, 2004), 109–143.

formulation to the sphere of foreign aid, accounting for the impact of elite capture of aid material in exacerbating civil conflict. The model then proposes policies which the aid-receiving state can adopt to transfer enough resources to the marginalized group in order to avoid conflict and revolution.

I assume that there is a developing country with two population groups—the governmental group (G), which is the incumbent power and enjoys a greater share of the country's resources, and the insurgent group (I), which is locked out of political power and access to state resources. I normalize the total population of this country to be 1, and take the average income of the country to be \bar{y} . Assume that the governmental group accounts for a fraction δ of the population.

I now incorporate the fact that developing countries like Mali are often unequal, with the ruling class controlling a disproportionate share of income θ_1 . The governmental group G probably controls a disproportionate share of the country's income. I call this share of the income θ_1 , such that $\theta_1 > \delta$. This indicates that the group G controls a larger share of the country's income than its proportion of the nation's population. It follows that the group I controls a $1 - \theta_1$ share of the nation's income.

Hence, the average income of a person belonging to group G is:

$$y^G = \frac{\theta_1 \bar{y}}{\delta}$$

Similarly, the average income of a person belonging to group I is:

$$y^I = \frac{(1 - \theta_1) \bar{y}}{1 - \delta}$$

I can now include aid in the model. Let us assume that the country receives a total aid income of A from the outside world every time period. The research on elite capture of foreign aid can be modeled by factoring in the disproportionate amount of aid income captured by the governmental group G. I may call the share of aid income seized by group G as θ_2 , where $\theta_2 > \delta$, again signaling the inequity in distribution of aid.

Accounting for aid, I write the average incomes of the two groups as follows:

$$y^G = \frac{\theta_1 \bar{y} + \theta_2 A}{\delta}$$

$$y^I = \frac{(1 - \theta_1) \bar{y} + (1 - \theta_2) A}{1 - \delta}$$

II.1 When will Group I revolt?

Given the levels of inequity in the distribution of both average income and aid income, represented by θ_1 and θ_2 respectively, Group I faces an optimal strategy problem of deciding when to revolt. In order to predict the group's decision, I make two further assumptions:

1. Conflict is Costly: Group I will incur costs from challenging the authority of the state. The costs of civil war are clear from the death tolls and economic destruction witnessed in conflicts ranging from Darfur to Yugoslavia. This cost to group I is modeled by introducing "L," the cost each member of Group I bears for revolting.
2. Aid consumption is not forward-looking: I assume that all the aid received by members of groups I or G is consumed in the same period it is received, with no savings. Additionally, aid inflows stop when a revolution occurs. Hence, when a revolution occurs, both sides wish to capture the added income in the economy made up by previously sent food, industrial, or military aid. I assume that refugee camps and other forms of wartime humanitarian/medical aid are economically insignificant. This indeed was the case in Mali, where countries such as the United States suspended aid in the wake of the coup.¹⁰

¹⁰ Jamie Crawford, "U.S. suspends aid to Mali in wake of coup," CNN, last modified March 27, 2012, <http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/26/world/africa/mali-us-aid-suspended/>.

Hence, if Group I revolts and succeeds at capturing all the resources of the economy, the income of the average member of Group I would be:

$$y^I_{\text{Revolution}} = \frac{(1 - L) \bar{y}}{1 - \delta}$$

Group I only revolts if $y^I_{\text{Revolution}} > y^I$, where y^I is what the member of I would have received absent a revolution. Hence, the condition for revolting is:

$$\frac{(1 - L) \bar{y}}{1 - \delta} > \frac{(1 - \theta_1) \bar{y} + (1 - \theta_2) A}{1 - \delta}$$

$$\rightarrow (1 - L) \bar{y} > (1 - \theta_1) \bar{y} + (1 - \theta_2) A$$

$$\rightarrow -L \bar{y} > -\bar{y} \theta_1 + (1 - \theta_2) A$$

$$\rightarrow L < \frac{\theta_1 \bar{y} - (1 - \theta_2) A}{\bar{y}}$$

$$\rightarrow \text{Loss to insurgents} < \frac{\text{Government share of income} - \text{Insurgents share of Aid}}{\text{Average Income of the Economy}}$$

This equation offers a simple indication of what leads marginalized groups to become insurgents. An increase in either θ_1 or θ_2 raises the chance of a civil conflict. It is not therefore just inequity in the pre-existing average income that causes conflict—it is also a disparity in the distribution of foreign aid.

II.2 Optimal Transfer Policy

The elite in group G can preempt and avoid a revolution by offering economic incentives to members of the opposing group I. To model this, I introduce lump sum tax payments in this system. While analyzing the impact of taxation, I assume that the government in power has the capacity to tax the populace, and a system to redistribute tax income between the two groups in the country. If I let the tax rate be τ , the income of the i th person in the economy will be

$$y_{i, \text{after tax}} = (1 - \tau) y_i + \tau \bar{y}$$

Note that I am assuming the government *does not tax aid*—relaxing this assumption changes the result later. In a setting where the members of the powerful group, G, set taxes, their optimal choice of τ shall be zero, as this will maximize y^G . In this case, the analysis will be the same as above, and Group I will revolt if:

$$y^I_{Revolution} > y^I$$

Now, for a given τ , the members of Group I revolt if:

$$\begin{aligned} y^I_{Revolution} &> y^I_{after\ tax} \\ \rightarrow \frac{(1-L)\bar{y}}{1-\delta} &> (1-\tau) \frac{(1-\theta_1)\bar{y} + (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} + \tau\bar{y} \end{aligned}$$

The members of Group G now set τ so that revolution is just avoided, i.e.

$$\begin{aligned} \rightarrow \frac{(1-L)\bar{y}}{1-\delta} &= (1-\tau) \frac{(1-\theta_1)\bar{y} + (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} + \tau\bar{y} \\ \rightarrow \tau \left(\bar{y} - \frac{(1-\theta_1)\bar{y} + (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \right) &= (1-\bar{y}) \frac{(\theta_1-L)\bar{y} - (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \\ \rightarrow \tau \left(\frac{(\theta_1-\delta)\bar{y} - (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \right) &= \frac{(\theta_1-L)\bar{y} - (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \\ \rightarrow \tau (\theta_1 - \delta) &= (\theta_1 - L) \\ \rightarrow \tau &= \frac{(\theta_1 - L)}{(\theta_1 - \delta)} \end{aligned}$$

Again, this simple dynamic equation for τ holds important results. If the cost of a revolution (L) decreases, the government must respond by redistributing more wealth to members of Group I in order to avoid conflict. The government must also similarly increase redistribution if inequality (θ_1) increases.

As a final modeling exercise, I now assume that the government is also taxing aid.

$$y_{i, after\ tax} = (1-\tau)y_i + \tau(\bar{y} + A)$$

In this case, the revolution condition $y^I_{Revolution} > y^I_{after\ tax}$ implies:

$$\rightarrow \frac{(1-L)\bar{y}}{1-\delta} > (1-\tau) \frac{(1-\theta_1)\bar{y} + (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} + \tau(\bar{y} + A)$$

As before, Group G sets $y^I_{Revolution} > y^I_{after\ tax}$ to stave off the revolution.

$$\begin{aligned} \rightarrow \frac{(1-L)\bar{y}}{1-\delta} &= (1-\tau) \frac{(1-\theta_1)\bar{y} + (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} + \tau(\bar{y} + A) \\ \rightarrow \left(\bar{y} + A - \frac{(1-\theta_1)\bar{y} + (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \right) &= \frac{(1-L)\bar{y} - (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \\ \rightarrow \tau \left(\frac{(\theta_1-\delta)\bar{y} - (\theta_2-\delta)A}{1-\delta} \right) &= \frac{(\theta_1-L)\bar{y} - (1-\theta_2)A}{1-\delta} \\ \rightarrow \tau &= \frac{(\theta_1-L)}{(\theta_1-\delta)} + \frac{(\theta_2-L)}{(\theta_2-\delta)} \\ \rightarrow \tau &= \frac{2(\theta_1\theta_2 + \delta L)}{(\theta_1-\delta)(\theta_2-\delta)} \end{aligned}$$

This equation for τ says that, *ceteris paribus*, a decrease in the cost of revolution— L —or an increase in *any kind* of inequality—inequality of income, measured by θ_1 , or inequality of aid income, measured by θ_2 — would necessitate an increase in redistribution. This simplified model assumes redistribution as a single payout from each member of group G to each member of group I. A government may alternatively structure the payouts across a span of time, hence gradually eroding the income gap between the two groups and averting a rebellion by group I.

Discussion and Conclusion

The crisis in Mali may be viewed as more than just a clash between a powerful government and a disaffected regional insurgency. The persistent income inequality between the north and south in Mali may have been compounded by the unequal distribution of foreign aid

controlled by the government in Timbuktu. The contribution of this model to literature on civil conflict in countries like Mali stems from the term θ_2 , both in predicting when groups revolt and in evaluating how much redistribution is needed to prevent revolt. As the inequality of aid distribution (θ_2) increases, the model predicts that civil conflict will be more likely, and that greater redistribution will be needed to avert civil war. This finding has important policy implications, as it suggests that the Malian government's discrimination against the Tuareg in the distribution of aid may have been partly responsible for the civil war.

The predictions of this paper align with those of the model established by Scott on the "moral economy" of the peasant. Scott put forth two major arguments—first, that peasants are risk-averse rational economic actors, and second, that they rebel when they feel exploited.¹¹ Both of these arguments are nested in the assumptions made in Section II. The rebels of group I are indeed rational and risk-averse economic actors—they only rebel when the gains from rebellion outweigh the expected losses from taking up arms against the government. The second argument is also seen in the way members of Group I rebel when a combination of θ_1 and θ_2 makes them feel oppressed and exploited enough. We may claim that the Tuareg rebelled when a combination of income inequality (θ_1) and aid income inequality (θ_2) displaced their moral economy sufficiently. If this moral economy were restored via the redistribution policies discussed in Section II, the Tuareg may no longer feel the need to rebel, and as risk-neutral rational agents, continue to live under the federal government.

A major advantage of this model is that it is agnostic about the level of analysis conducted. The specific identity of opposing groups does not change the model, provided one group starts off controlling a disproportionate share of resources. Returning to the Mali example, Groups G and I may be generalized to refer to various competing groups. This flexibility in the model could, for example, allow us to explain the 1994 war between the powerful Ifoghas Tuareg and the rival, subservient Imghad Tuareg. The Ifoghas, the

¹¹ James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

most elite clan within Tuareg society, had the support of the Timbuktu government and a larger share of both pre-existing income and government-supplied aid material (Lecocq 2010). They could hence be seen as group "G," and the poorer, less resource-rich Imghads could be thought of as group "I."

It should be noted that this model does not condemn humanitarian aid outright. Aid is predicted to cause civil conflict only when the combination of θ_1 and θ_2 is sufficient to decrease the expected loss to rebelling insurgents. Even if aid is disproportionately distributed—i.e. θ_2 exceeds δ —the country may not slide into civil conflict if θ_1 is not large enough. On the other hand, aid may actually cause conflicts in otherwise peaceful countries if θ_1 by itself is insufficient to cause conflict and if θ_2 reduces the expected losses to insurgents enough to spark rebellion. Identifying the types of countries where the additional effect of θ_2 increases the likelihood of conflict is a key empirical puzzle posed by the model moving forward.

While this model does not seek to address the impact of foreign aid shocks, I can see evidence for empirical research on this issue from the results. Aid shocks have important real-world consequences: the massive reduction in foreign aid received by Mali between 1984 and 1989 caused a Tuareg rebellion in 1990.¹² In this model, this "aid shock" can be replicated as taking A to now become zero. This value of A would suggest that the rebels, in this case the Tuareg, would rise in rebellion when the expected loss (L) would be less than θ_1 . Civil conflict may hence be far more likely than it was when there was aid material in the economy, and L had to be less than

$$\frac{\theta_1 \bar{y} (1 - \theta_2) A}{\bar{y}}$$

for group I to rebel. Foreign aid shocks hence *lower the bar* for civil conflict to occur, making it easier for marginalized groups such as the Tuareg to wage war against the federal government.

¹² Rich Nielsen, Michael Findley, Daniel Nielsen, Zachary Davis, and Tara Candland, "Do Foreign Aid Shocks Cause Violent Armed Conflict?" *American Journal for Political Science* 55, no. 2 (2011): 219–232.

Policymakers face a unique dilemma in this situation. Too much foreign aid, given a combustible combination of θ_1 and θ_2 could stoke the flames of rebellion among marginalized groups denied their share of foreign aid. On the other hand, cutting off foreign aid could provoke conflict too, due to the impact of the aid shock described above. Policymakers in donor countries should hence evaluate and weigh two criteria. The first criterion is whether the combination of pre-existing income inequality (θ_1) and unequal aid distribution through the recipient government's machinery (θ_2) can indeed provoke conflict in an otherwise peaceful developing society. The second criterion is to estimate to what extent aid can be cut without provoking conflict via the mechanism of a foreign aid shock. Balancing the two criteria—i.e. not supplying so much foreign aid as to allow the marginalized group to rebel, but not cutting aid enough to cause an aid shock—may yield an optimal outcome.

Three avenues for future research may be pursued. The first relates to agency and decision-making within opposing groups in developing societies. In this model, for instance, I assumed that each opposing group is organized and can be mobilized for immediate action. Furthermore, I assumed that every member of groups G and I has the same decision-making power. The spontaneous mobilization of groups and equal decision-making ability for each group member is an evidently unrealistic assumption. A more comprehensive model would either subdivide groups into collective decision-making units or construct an individual-level framework to predict conditions for civil conflict. Second, future research may focus on strategies to encourage the optimal transfer strategies discussed in Section II. While redistribution could effectively reduce the chances of civil conflict, governments in aid receiving countries may be unwilling to enact such transfer policies. A better model would account for government and leader preferences and predict if different developing countries would be able to enact the required redistribution policies. Finally, it should be noted that some forms of aid, e.g., food, may be redistributed more easily. However, redistributing materials like vehicles, oil and water may be more difficult. A more sophisticated model may thus incorporate the ease of divisibility of the aid material.

In all, the noble intentions behind foreign aid may be undone by the income inequality pervasive in many developing societies, compounded by the unequal distribution of the aid itself. Although the

amount of aid given to a country could increase the purchasing power of its people to an extent, the increase in inequality could offset this gain in purchasing power by prompting civil conflict. International development agencies and policymakers would do well to consider local conditions and inequality when constructing aid programs in the future.

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