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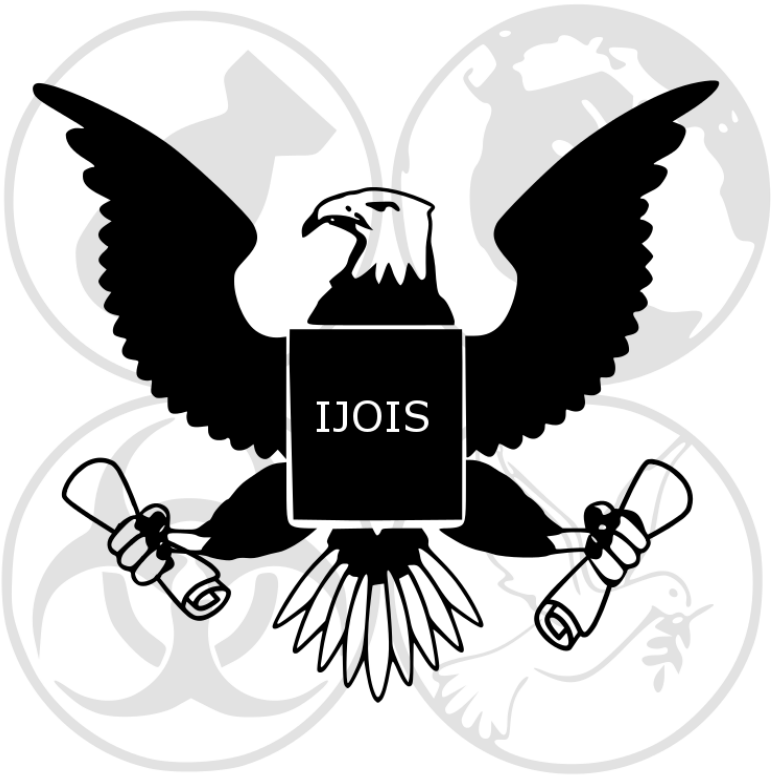

Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

On behalf of the IJOIS Editorial Board, the Program in Arms Control & Domestic and International Security, the University Library, and the supportive academic community of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, we would like to thank you for reading the eighth issue of the Illini Journal of International Security (IJOIS). IJOIS is a peer-reviewed academic journal founded in September 2015 by undergraduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in an effort to publish exceptional undergraduate papers on topics within international security or foreign affairs.

For our eighth issue of the journal, we are excited to publish outstanding undergraduate papers that explore some of the most pressing issues within international security and foreign affairs, covering a wide range of topic areas and geographical regions. Furthermore, IJOIS is excited to announce the commencement of a brand-new *Notes* section. These *Notes* are comprised of shorter papers that discuss the themes of the journal but in a more concise and argumentative manner. The editorial board created this section in an effort to align further with other professional academic journals and law reviews.

In our *Notes* section, the first paper presented in this edition, "Public Right of Access to America's War on Terror" written by Joseph Lehman delves into pressing issues regarding the growing debate between privacy and security. The second paper, "A Response to Patrick Pexton's *What About Israel's Nuclear Weapons*" by Ayah Jaber is an argumentative response to Pexton's article. The third paper, "The Ratification Question: Why the United States Should Ratify the Convention of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities" by Anthony Valiaveedu concerns the CRPD and its impact on international security. The fourth paper, "The Political Psychology of Regime Change in Iran" written by Ryan Vetticad explores the psychological factors that have impacted regime change in the Middle-Eastern nation.

In our *Articles* section, the first paper "On Private Military Companies and Hybrid Warfare" written by Norman De Castro - a master's candidate at Sciences Po Paris, concerns the impact that PMC's hold on terrorism and gurilla warfare. The second paper, "Divide and Conquer: Separatism in Transcaucasia and Russian Intervention" by James Monroe is a regional paper discussing the motives Russia held in its intervention in Transcaucasia. The third paper, "The Race for Artificial Intelligence" coauthored by Anthony Valiaveedu and Peter F. Rybinski explores the impact the intersection between Technology and AI holds on international security. The fourth and final paper, "Analysis of the Effects of Large-Scale Disasters on the Behavior of Non-State Violent Actors in Countries Already Under Duress" written by Dylan Hyams is a thorough analysis of the effect that disasters hold on NSVA's.

These exceptional undergraduate papers present novel arguments on a wide array of issues within international security and foreign affairs. We hope that these papers will challenge and inform our readers, spark discussion, and encourage undergraduate students to explore these pressing issues or pursue international studies further. We hope you enjoy reading.

RyanVetticad

Ryan Vetticad
Editor-in-Chief

About the Illini Journal of International Security

The Illini Journal of International Security (IJOIS) is a peer-reviewed undergraduate academic journal that was founded in September 2015 by undergraduate students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. IJOIS is published biannually through the University of Illinois Library with the support of the Program of Arms Control & Domestic and International Security (ACDIS) and consists of exceptional undergraduate and graduate papers on topics related to international security or foreign affairs. IJOIS utilizes a cross- disciplinary approach and accepts papers from students studying the social sciences, STEM fields, business and the humanities that analyze international security issues from innovative perspectives. While IJOIS is run by students at UIUC, the Journal accepts submissions from students at all University of Illinois campuses (Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield).

IJOIS Editorial Board

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Public Right of Access to America's War on Terror

Joseph Lehman

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Abstract

The saga of Guantanamo Bay litigation continued into a new area of law earlier this year. In an opinion written by Judge Justin Walker, the United States Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit dismissed an attorney's petition to observe a tribunal hearing of an Islamic terrorist. While Judge Walker's opinion ultimately dismissed the attorney's petition, the opinion left open the possibility that American citizens could demand access to Guantanamo hearings under the First Amendment. Lively debate exists over whether or not enemy combatants enjoy certain constitutional rights. But regardless of whether a terrorist has a Sixth Amendment right to a public trial, American citizens – under the original understanding of the First Amendment – have a qualified constitutional right to observe the hearings of enemy combatants.

I. Introduction

The saga of Guantanamo Bay litigation continued into a new area of law earlier this year. Instead of habeas corpus litigation on behalf of detainees, "a defense attorney… (with no client) petitioned a court (with no jurisdiction) to reverse a procedural ruling (excluding the public from a classified hearing) in an appeal filed by other attorneys who…have no client."[1] If that sounds convoluted, then as Judge Walker said in his opinion in this case: "welcome to Guantanamo Bay."[2] While Judge Walker's opinion ultimately dismissed the attorney's petition, he left open the possibility that American citizens could demand access to Guantanamo hearings under the First Amendment. Rightly so. The original understanding of the First Amendment surely guarantees a right to access hearings of Guantanamo Bay detainees.

II. Background

Ibrahim al Qosi is an Islamic terrorist. Ten years ago, he was arrested and charged with two counts of terror-related charges. During the criminal proceedings, attorneys from the Military Commissions Defense Organization represented al Qosi. Counsel for al Qosi, either employed by the Department of Defense, or civilian defense counsel retained by the accused at his own expense[3], ultimately entered two pleas of guilty. In exchange for the pleas of guilty, the government released al Qosi after a prison sentence of only two years. After being released to Sudan, al Qosi had no contact with his defense attorneys. Once back in Sudan, al Qosi joined al Qaeda, became a leader in the organization, and began encouraging terror attacks on the United States.

Mr. al Qosi has yet to be eliminated, and is still at large.[4] In spite of al Qosi's continued terrorist actions, and the fact that he has had no subsequent contact with his counsel, the DoD attorneys who represented him "continue to challenge [al Qosi's] conviction."[5] This is where Philip Sundel comes into the picture. Mr. Sundel works as an attorney for the Department of Defense, but is not – and never was – counsel al Qosi. Nevertheless, Mr. Sundel wished to attend a closed-to-the-public classified hearing on the al Qosi case. After asking both the military judge and then the Court of Military Commission Review for access to the hearing and both denied his petitions. Mr. Sundel appealed to the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, asking for access to the hearing.

III. The Court's Ruling

The D.C. Circuit, in a panel made up of Judges Henderson and Walker, and Senior Circuit Judge Silberman, dismissed Mr. Sundel's petition for lack of subject matter jurisdiction. The court found that it could "review a challenge only if it is, among other things, a final

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[1] *Philip Sundel v. United States,* No. 19-1234, 1 (D.C. Cir. Jan. 26, 2021).
[2] *Id.* at 2.
[3] Office of Military Commissions, *Organization Overview,* Department of Defense (Last accessed April 28, 2021). https://www.mc.mil/ABOUTUS/OrganizationOverview.aspx
[4] *Supra* note 1 at 2.
[5] *Id.*

judgement."[6] Since Mr. Sundel was appealing the military judge's decision to seal the hearing, the court found that Mr. Sundel's appeal concerned a decision rather than a judgement.[7] The court, however, carefully emphasized that "it is an open question whether the public has a First Amendment right to attend hearings related to detainees at Guantanamo Bay."[8]

IV. The First Amendment Versus National Security

Military tribunals are a curious forum of adjudication in America. They have often appeared during times of conflict, and disappeared soon after. Yet, one constant in these military tribunals is that government officials have sought to keep them confidential, often under auspices of national security. While the First Amendment extends a right of access to Article III judicial proceedings, no court has considered whether or not that right applies to military tribunals.[9] This permits courts to seal tribunals for national security purposes, and to erode "the primary purpose of the First Amendment [which is that citizens] understand the issues which bear upon our common life."[10] With this vital civil liberty being balanced against the government's interest in maintaining national security, the touchstone for determining how far the government may go is the original understanding of the First Amendment.

V. Original Understanding of the Right to Access

At the time of the Founding, the public considered freedom of the press (from which the right to access flows) to be of paramount importance. In his essay ``Rights of Man'' Thomas Paine lamented that the English government had corrupted the press, "most English newspapers are directly in the pay of the government or, if indirectly connected with it, always under its orders."[11] Paine further explains that this severe and dangerous restriction on press came as a result of the "miseries of war and the flood of evils it spreads over a country."[12] Far from seeing war as justifying restrictions on the First Amendment, Paine argued that governments abused their powers in war time to curtail fundamental rights.

This impression of the importance of public access continued through to the historic trials of Thomas Preston and William Wemms in 1770. Preston and Wemms – two English soldiers – stood trial for the Boston Massacre. Inflamed passions were the obvious result of the massacre, and the court delayed the trial to let passions cool, so as to not taint the proceedings with unfair prejudice.[13] During the delay in the trial, both sides used the press to air their versions of events. [14] Once trial began, however, the press motioned to sell accounts of the massacre itself, but was

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[6] *Supra* note 1 at 5.
[7] *Id.*
[8] *Supra* note 1 at 4.
[9] *Richmond Newspapers, Inc. v. Virginia,* 448 U.S. 555 (1980) (Plurality opinion).
[10] Alexander Meiklejohn, *Free Speech and its Relation to Self-Government,* 75 (1948).
[11] Thomas Paine, *Common Sense, Rights of man, and Other Essential Writings of Thomas Paine,* Signet Classics ed., 131 (2003).
[12] *Id.*
[13] Indeed, the colonists deeply desired a fair trial for these soldiers because of the vindication that comes with a properly wrought guilty verdict. To this end, the Defense was furnished with high-quality counsel including future president John Adams.
[14] Hiller Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* 206, 221 (1970).

denied out of concern that such accounts could "unduly prejudice those whose lot it might be, to be jurors to try these causes."[15]

In spite of these restrictions, the trial of Preston and Wemms remained open to the public, and the public attended regularly. Eventually, Preston and Wemms were acquitted, and a jury found only two soldiers (in a different trial) guilty. The Boston Massacre trials evidence that, even in one of the most divisive times in American history, the public demanded access to the trial of foreigners who had murdered Americans.

The *Boston Gazette* lent even more support to this expectation of free access and freedom of the press when they lamented that British authorities had started suppressing speech about the quartering of British soldiers in American homes. The author argued that "since those journals have been discontinued, our troubles from that quarter have been growing upon us."[16]

This expectation of openness continued after the Founding. The Sedition Act Trials further demonstrate that the freedom of speech and press extends to watching trials implicating national security.[17] Between 1798 and 1801, the United States prosecuted at least 26 individuals with "publishing false information, or speaking in public with the intent to undermine support for the federal government."[18] Taking a step back, the Federalist Congress passed the Sedition Acts in response to international conflict with France and to target Republican authors and speakers who criticized the Adams Administration.

The government, in all of these cases, alleged that the defendants attempted to stir up sedition, and undermine the American government itself. In spite of this, none of these trials were sealed and the public could access them freely. So free was the press coverage and access to these cases that one defendant, Matthew Lyon, "wrote a widely publicized account of the trial…[and]…won reelection to the U.S. House of Representatives."[19] The wide media coverage "reflected public interest in the sedition trials, many of which became public events that attracted large and often prominent audiences."[20] So intense was the debate over the sedition acts that it "prompted debates on the nature of constitutional government itself" including two state attempts to nullify the federal law on First Amendment grounds.[21] In 1800, a Senator Charles Pinckney supported Thomas Jefferson's candidacy for president by "arguing that sedition prosecutions were a threat to the public's right to free discussion of public affairs."[22]

Fast forward to the American Civil War. President Abraham Lincoln suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and had begun trying American civilians in military tribunals. In Indiana, the government arrested one man, Lambdin Milligan, who challenged his detention (in part) on the

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[15] Article Signed "Vindex" (Boston Gazette, Dec. 31, 1770), The Writings of Samuel Adams 110 (1904-1908).
[16] Boston Gazette (March 12, 1770).
[17] The irony of using Sedition Act prosecutions as evidence of an American fidelity to free speech is apparent. But while the rights of the defendants may have been trampled, the fact that the public had to these trials demonstrates the importance of free access under the First Amendment.
[18] Bruce A. Ragsdale, *The Sedition Act Trials,* 1 (2005).
[19] *Id.* at 4.
[20] *Id.* at 43.
[21] *Id.* at 43.
[22] *Id.* at 44.

grounds that the government denied him his right to a "public trial before an impartial jury."[23] As it relates to the right of access, the Supreme Court ruled that, in order to abrogate American civil liberties "necessity must be actual and present, the invasion real, such as effectually closes the court and deposes the civil administration."[24]

VI. Limits of the First Amendment

Even accepting this long history as true, it may be argued, it is irrelevant to modern military tribunals because the defendants are enemy combatants, and that the defendants do not have any rights under the Constitution. On this point there is much debate, but the resolution of such debate is not relevant to the point here. The question here is not whether *enemy combatants* have a Sixth Amendment right to a public trial, but whether *American citizens* have a First Amendment right to access military tribunals. The government did restrict the press in the Boston Massacre case, and the *Milligan* court recognized that civil liberties could be curtailed in situations of actual military necessity, but these restrictions were always narrowly tailored, and were the least restrictive means by which to achieve the government's compelling interest in national security. For better or worse, the First Amendment is not absolute, and there are cases where a judge could reasonably seal a military tribunal for actual military necessity. But the original understanding of the First Amendment strongly supports a presumption that military tribunals be open to the public, just as other judicial proceedings are.

VII. Conclusion

Even in the times of deepest division in America, from the Revolution, to suspicions of sedition, to a Civil War, the American public enjoyed wide-open access to all manner of proceedings. Limits were imposed, but the American people ratified the First Amendment with the understanding that it prevents the government from restricting their right of access to hearings and tribunals.

This brings us back to Judge Walker's open question in 2021: is there a First Amendment right of access to detainee hearings? The original understanding of the First Amendment certainly suggests that, while there may be limits, the First Amendment does protect that right. Hopefully a court addresses this issue soon and closes the issue. The longer it remains unanswered, the easier it is to "slide from a case of genuine military necessity, where the power sought to be exercised is at least debatable, to one where the threat is not critical and the power either dubious or nonexistent."[25]

The meaning of the First Amendment has not changed since the states ratified in 1791. Whether or not the Guantanamo detainee has a right to a public trial, American citizens have a Constitutionally protected right to keep a watchful eye on governmental prosecution.

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[23] *Ex Parte Milligan,* 72 U.S. 2, 62 (1861).
[24] *Id.* at 127.
[25] William Rehnquist, *All the Laws but One,* Vintage Books, 224 (2000).

A Response to Patrick Pexton *What about Israel's nuclear weapons?*

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Abstract

While Israel has never come forward to confirm that their nuclear weapons exist, it has become a general understanding among states that they exist. The state has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and made it clear in the late 1960s that they would not be the first state in the Middle East to "introduce" nuclear weapons. However the ambiguity of their use of the word has led many to believe that it refers to openly testing and confirming their possession. Even though the basic perception supports the existence of Israel's nuclear weapons, the United States has notably not pushed for them to be officially confirmed. This puts the average American worker in a compromising position, leaving them unable to either acknowledge these weapons of mass destruction nor criticize them without risking a halt in their professional progression. Although Pexton condemns the systems which have created this position, specifically denouncing the media's lack of comprehensive analysis and coverage of Israel's nuclear weapons, his piece is deficient in giving the reader a thorough detailing of Israel's relationship with nuclear weapons. Continuing the confidentiality Israel displays on the issue along with the laissez faire attitude adopted by the United States cannot allow for nuclear balance to ever be truly achieved or sustained.

Quite often, Israel is viewed as a delicate subject in the American political field. Our questionable ties to the state results in each individual and system holding their opinions on the matter quite strongly. While there are passionate, opposing beliefs, the discourse concerning the state of Israel and our connection to it is not often discussed in the manner it should be. Especially not on platforms that hold much weight. This bleeds over into the way workers in America discuss the issue. The passive nature of many American professionals regarding Israel is dangerous in regards to maintaining nuclear balance. They seemingly try to take the pressure off of themselves and place it onto other professionals however still attempting to seem engaged. Pexton, although criticizing this very occurrence, demonstrates it perfectly in his piece.[26]

While, understandably, a dangerously passive nature of communicating a certain topic can not be overwhelmingly positive, there are some positive outcomes. Pexton discusses one benefit of the United States not pressuring Israel to be open about possessing nuclear weapons -- that there is no added pressure for other Arab states to have their own nuclear weapons. For many, keeping the number of states with access to nuclear weapons as low as possible is a main concern. So, the United States' underwhelming reaction to Israel's nuclear weapons helps achieve that goal. However, there is another benefit that Pexton does not address. Without other Arab states having control over nuclear weapons, there is less reason for the United States, and other nations, to call war onto those states under false pretenses. However, that is where the benefits end. Pexton goes on to mention the fear of criticizing Israel among American professionals as he says that it is almost an immediate way to stop the progression of one's career. This idea is supported by the mere existence of the Israel Anti-Boycott Bill.[27] Introduced in 2017, this bill would have criminalized individuals with involvement in foreign commerce supporting boycotts of Israel proposed by international government organizations. Yet, this bill did not pass.

Pexton goes on to give credence to the notion that because of Israel's origins, it is not at "fault" for having control of nuclear weapons.[28] However, the beginnings of Israel are irrelevant to the matter at hand. The state of Israel continuously preaches peace among Arab nations and has attacked these states under the guise of bringing peace to the Middle East. Yet through these attacks, Israel itself fails to commit to a peaceful Middle East. Israel has long utilized the Begin Doctrine, the term widely used to describe its government's attacks on any enemy state's production of weapons of mass destruction. Most notably this has applied to the production of nuclear weapons. The Israeli government has come forth to declare that it stands for its citizens and that it will not allow anything that could overwhelmingly harm them to be manufactured.[29] However, many have wondered if the Israeli government is simply trying to disguise its attempts to ensure no other state in the region obtains nuclear weapons. If one were to do so,

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[26] Pexton, Patrick B. "Patrick Pexton: What about Israel's Nuclear Weapons?" The Washington Post. WP Company, August 31, 2012. https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/patrick-pexton-what-about-israels-nuclear-weapons/2012/08/31/390e486a-f389-11e1-a612-3cfc842a6d89_story.html.

[27] Israel Anti-Boycott Act. Bill (2017).

[28] See Footnote 1.

[29] "Fact Sheet: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal." Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, June 23, 2020. https://armscontrolcenter.org/fact-sheet-israels-nuclear-arsenal/.

Israel would be under more pressure to be open about their possession of nuclear weapons. It is no surprise that there is pressure among American professionals to not critique Israel as the state's actions clearly mirror similar calls for peace made by the United States that are often a mask to give reason for attacking another nation.

The main point Pexton attempts to bring home is the manner in which the media is at fault for not giving the reality of Israel and its nuclear weapons more in depth coverage. I concur with this notion. Ultimately, any nation having control of nuclear weapons has the ability to affect anyone. It is therefore the job of the media to inform its viewers. Unfortunately, it is difficult to appreciate Pexton's calls when he displays the same actions that he criticizes. Without giving possible solutions to the fears that bar American professionals from criticizing Israel, it is futile that the author argues that we need more publications to discuss the presence of these weapons. Discussing Israel's nuclear weapons in more depth and with more analysis than the author does here would be contradictory to what he says is crucial information to understanding the general American position. While Pexton himself is the media, the most he does is state that Israel has nuclear weapons but gives no clear critique on the hypocrisy of this and, instead, spends most of his piece critiquing the media for not having proper coverage on the issue while he himself is engaging in that very type of lackluster coverage.

All in all, Pexton is the perfect example of the very thing he is criticizing. Solely mentioning the existence of the nuclear weapons that Israel possesses but not giving any concrete analysis is the type of coverage that Pexton began his piece critiquing. Yet overall, his thesis is correct. The only chance of keeping nation states holding states accountable is through national pressure. But national pressure can not occur without the average citizen being aware of the facts.

While there are benefits to Israel not being upfront about their possession of nuclear weapons, including the lowered pressure on neighboring states to obtain their own nuclear weapons, they do not outway the negative social and physical repercussions. On the international field, neither achieving nor sustaining nuclear balance is possible if the attitude displayed by both Israel and the United States continues and becomes standard practice.

The Ratification Question: Why the United States Should Ratify the Convention of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities

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Abstract

The Convention of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities was one of the earliest products of multilateralism within the United Nations in the twenty-first century, led by the United States. However, since its creation in 2006, the United States has avoided ratifying the Convention. Under the Obama Administration, steps were taken to push for ratification by becoming a signatory to the treaty and a U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee recommending ratification. This paper will argue for the ratification of the Convention of the Rights for Persons with Disabilities. By ratifying the convention, the United States can garner further legitimacy within international law and multilateral institutions. Furthermore, the signal of ratification can help regain the United States leadership in human rights initiatives. In addition, ratification can help curb structural violence within the United States. Aside from providing assistance for people with disabilities, the convention's other statues can curb corporal punishment within schools.

What would I do if I could feel?
What would I do
If I could reach inside of me
And to know how it feels
To say I like what I see?
Then I'd be more than glad to share
All that I have inside of here.
And the songs my heart might bring
You'd be more than glad to sing.
And if tears should fall from my eyes
Just think of all the wounds they could mend.

- The Tin Man from "The Wiz" ("What Would I Do If I Could Feel?")

The Tin Man represents himself as a metaphor towards those who are deemed disabled because of their difference within society. He offers an interesting point of view of his inability to be similar to others due to his lack of a brain. The song he sings offers a deeper understanding for those who are unable to understand others because of his insability to comprehend. It further demonstrates the underlying depression caused by a lack of being similar to others. The violence disproportionally targeted towards disabled bodies can be witnessed by corporal punishment discipline policy. These inadequate policies caused the United States to be out of line within international standards and further destroy the United States' credibility within international law formation. These inadequate policies, internationally and domestically, can be remedied by full ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (C.R.P.D.) is a key convention that the United States helped create within the United Nations but failed to ratify. Much of the Convention was modeled after the domestic laws in the United States. Specifically, much of its statutes was modeled after the American Disabilities Act which was adopted in 1990 by the United States Congress. However, certain issues arose regarding the C.R.P.D. and national sovereignty. Article 24 of the C.R.P.D. outlines statutes regarding educational initiatives towards disabled students and highlights the immorality of corporal punishment within schools (Suarez). In a more liberal reading, it provides a right to education. This became a key point of contention, since certain nations felt that such legal agreement would infringe upon the authority of the nation. In 2012, the United States Senate attempted to ratify the Convention, but it sparked backlash by Congress over the question of legal sovereignty and therefore failed. Other nations that have ratified the Convention currently include the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, and the Islamic Republic of Iran (U.N.). This goes to show that other, more authoritarian, countries currently respect the C.R.P.D. and that ratification by the United States is not unreasonable.

Ratification would promote the credibility of the United States in international law. The United States has been and still is seen as a beacon for many nations in turmoil, and its position signifies great importance for the treaty overall. During early formation of the Convention, many nations looked towards the United States for guidance and creation of the Convention. The absence of ratification by the United States is the key determiner for the future of the Convention. Many foreign policy analysts point out that "the determination not to sign and ratify

the Convention raises important questions of whether other nations will choose to sign and ratify the treaty" (Melish 41). The absence of a forward leadership presence forces other nations to adopt a "wait-and-see" approach that is net-worse because it prevents immediate compliance measures for disability rights. The non-compliance approach of the status-quo towards the Convention created gaps within American treaty legitimacy. This created the perception of American exceptionalism in the international order. Ratification can provide an effect method to close those gaps and reverse exceptionalist perceptions by signifying full legal compliance in the multilateral order. A full ratification by the Senate would indicate that "the United States would confirm its commitment to international norms" and thereby close current treaty gaps (Farmer and Stinson, 1036). Included within this, compliance measures would promote the United States stance globally. The participation of the Convention has a massive symbolic value to United States human rights promotion. Ratification would signal participation that would "[enable] the United States to take part in a global conversation on important issues" (Lord, 41). The implications of this are significant . First, American leadership in forming norms in international law is critical to solving and mitigating threats in areas that require legal norm development. American leadership in "the international system provides unique specialized and technical expertise" due to its military and technological primacy and its overall legitimacy (Crocker). By promoting a strong presence and expertise in the system, the United States can promote a strong international stance to solve existential threats through effective multilateral forums with American leadership. Furthermore, the symbolism of ratification would be a massive promotion of human rights by the United States. Human rights are in of itself good, but promotion globally can provide hope to millions. An absence of a strong United States approach to human rights would be a "tragedy for the billions of people still living under authoritarian regimes around the world" (Piccone). With human rights declining in the status-quo from deteriorating governments and the COVID pandemic, now is a critical time to promote international rights (Repucci and Slipowitz). A strong United States approach to ratification can promote its legitimacy in multilateral forums and human rights promotion.

Ratification can also produce a massive domestic effect by conforming in international law. Ratification would ensure that the provisions of the C.R.P.D. would be implemented as law of the land due to Article VI of the Constitution. One of the most immediate benefits is preventing corporal punishment against disabled students. The C.R.P.D. combats disproportional corporal punishment among disabled students by preventing the use of seclusions and restraints. Though, disabled students are themselves harmed disproportionally by corporal punishments within schools, the racial and gender differences within the disabled population is further disproportionate (Suarez, 875). Though being "17.1% of the nationwide student population" African Americans have a paddling rate of 35.6% (Farmer and Stinson, 1039). This also disproportionately affects females. Recent research shows that "there is a strong gender dimension to the stigma and discrimination that children with disabilities experience" (Lord, 15). Only a clear and fully supported ratification can prevent localities from circumventing key human rights such as this. The Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities contains effective language and legal defense to promote effective solutions to this problem. Many have noted that the Convention's progressive nature has been effective to combat domestic problems. The framework offered specifically to "amplify human rights violations that are particular to children with disabilities" (Lord 11). This is done with effective multilateral initiatives through

the Convention itself like international oversight. By ratifying, the United States can effectively bring its domestic policies in line to prevent further disproportionate harm.

The United States should ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Ratification would promote the United States' legal standing in international law. That can allow effective international forums to combat existential threats. Furthermore, ratification would be a massive symbol and critical push of United States human rights promotion. Independently from the international benefits, the domestic benefits are worthwhile as well. Ratification can combat corporal punishment upon disabled students and potentially begin to end it. The rise of disability activism can provide further leverage and support for ratification. This is explicitly evident during the rise of disability activism during the attempt of repealing the Affordable Care Act (Abrams). Reform and activism is a process and it will take time, energy and effort. Though ratification is a long and difficult process, the potential good it can do should encourage its ratification.

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The Political Psychology of Regime Change in Iran

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Abstract

In the study of the 20th century's most infamous case of regime change, the 1953 Iranian coup d'etat, the role of political psychology played an increasingly vital role in how these revolutions panned out. In these instances, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had analyzed specific individuals, respectively being Iran's Mohammed Mossadegh, that were not adhering to policies in conjunction with American interests. As a result, the CIA led an immense role in the orchestration of the revolution and handpicked Iran's successor, Reza Shah Pahlavi. This essay works to perform a nuanced psychological analysis of these two individuals discussing the contested nature of why the CIA did not cooperate with Mossadegh, and why they picked Pahlavi to fill his place. Furthermore, it makes the invariable argument that while the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is not a terrorist organization as a whole, it's involvement in the revolution does constitute as a specific act of terrorism.

The topic of regime change is one of the more riveting subjects in the study of politics and international relations, especially when that change in government resulted from the interference of an outside or foreign agency. But a more latent aspect to note in the discussion of regime change is how specific individuals contribute to the development of the rise and fall of these governments, which requires the nuance of Political Psychology - a complex academic discipline, falling both under the branches of social psychology and political science. The interdisciplinary nature of the field is dedicated to understanding politics, politicians, and overall political behavior from a psychological perspective, and an important aspect of this process is the acquisition and study of distinct psychological profiles.

In the study of the 20th century's most infamous case of regime change, the 1953 Iranian coup d'etat, the role of political psychology played an increasingly vital role in how these revolutions panned out. In these instances, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had analyzed specific individuals, respectively being Iran's Mohammed Mossadegh, that were not adhering to policies in conjunction with American interests. As a result, the CIA led an immense role in the orchestration of the revolution and handpicked Iran's successor, Reza Shah Pahlavi. This essay works to perform a nuanced psychological analysis of these two individuals discussing the contested nature of why the CIA did not cooperate with Mossadegh, and why they picked Pahlavi to fill his place. Furthermore, it makes the invariable argument that while the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency is not a terrorist organization as a whole, it's involvement in the revolution does constitute as a specific act of terrorism.

Before delving into these pyschological profiles, however, this essay requires a definition of terrorism. In the scope of political science and international relations the word *Terrorism*, is one of the (if not *the*) most loosely defined terms of the discipline. There are various ways and avenues that one can take in defining the theory, but there exist three that are most relevant in this discussion of political psychology and regime change. The first being Professor Bruce Hoffman's definition, tenured professor of international relations at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. In his book "Inside Terrorism" he defines the concept as "the deliberate creation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in pursuit of political change" (Hoffman,1998). Essentially meaning that it is artificial violence created for the purpose of political altercation. The second definition is one that exists from standard international relations theory in which it's defined as politically motivated attacks against non-combatants by an individual or group. The key difference from Hoffman's definition being the inclusion of non-combatants in the scope of its meaning. The last definition is how professor Nicholas Grossman, assistant professor of political science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign defines it being "targeted, violent disruption of normalcy by a relatively weak actor for political purposes" (Grossman, 2020). The important aspect being that the action is committed by a *relatively* weak actor. All three of these definitions provide an overly similar view of the concept but differ in the addition of one key attribute, i.e. fear, non-combatants, and relative power. Nonetheless, each provides a clear course in which one could attribute the CIA's actions in both Iran and Guatemala to fitting at least one, if not all, of these forms of terrorism.

Now with the understanding of the contested nature that exists in the definition of terrorism one can move on to the psychological profiles of these leaders. In the case of Iran, Mohammad Mossadegh, born June 16, 1882 and raised in a prominent Persian family in the capital of Tehran. In 1909, Mossadegh traveled to Paris where he studied law at the Institut d'etudes politiques de Paris, or more commonly known as Sciences Po, one of the finest

universities of political science and law in all of Europe. After completing his studies in France, Mossadegh then traveled to Switzerland to study a doctorate en Droit (Doctorate of Laws) at the University of Neuchâtel, where after completing his studies in the June of 1913 became the first Iranian in history to receive a PhD in Law from a European university. Following his studies he returned to Iran where he began a long and arduous career in Iranian Politics.

In reference to his specific leadership style and overall psychological profile, Mossadegh can be described as an overall fighter of Iranian interests, holding the nation close at heart and known to sacrifice his livelihood and wellbeing in its defense - "If I sit silently, I have sinned" (Mossadegh, 1950). A journal article from the University of Chicago Press entitled "...The Case of Mohammed Mossadegh" works to further support and expand on Moassadegh's role as a prominent leader of the Iranian state. The article describes how there were two main hazards during Mossadegh's time as Prime Minister, the first being the lack of clear definitions of political power between himself and the Shah, i.e. whether or not the Shah acted as a national symbol separate from politics or that he wielded actual power. And the second being the lack of a strong national party movement, with various factions, interest groups, and shifting personas that dominated the parliamentary atmosphere creating an overall sense of great internal instability. Nonetheless, the study reaches the conclusion that despite these pitfalls "That he was able to survive [in this political climate] is a tribute to his political safacity and organizing ability. Indeed his rule was something of a tour de force in Iranian politics." (Efimenco, 1955).

In contrast Reza Shah Pahlavi, could be seen in an almost completely different light. Pahlavi, born October 26, 1919 was raised in royalty, being the son of Reza Khan, the first Shah in the Pahlavi dynasty. Khan was a dominating figure who showed little compassion for Pahlavi, and raised him in an demanding and austere environment. In Abbas Milani's (director of Irananian Studies at Stanford University) novel *The Shah,* he describes it as "growing up under his shadow, Mohammad Reza was a deeply scarred and insecure boy who lacked self-confidence" (Milani, 2011). The only real form of compassion and love that the prince grew up with came in the form of his mother and sisters, and even then that was only for the first 6 years of his life before his father took him away to be given a more masculine education. Noted Political Psychologist, Marvin Zonis, at the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, stated in his psychobiography *Majestic Failure: The Fall of the Shah*, that the overall result of his upbringing between a loving and compassionate mother, and an overbearing martinet father created "a young man of low self-esteem who masked his lack of self-confidence, his indecisiveness, his passivity, his dependency and his shyness with masculine bravado, impulsiveness, and arrogance" (Zonis, 1991). This further led to an internal struggle of great contradictions within the crown prince as he would later be described as "both gentle and cruel, withdrawn and active, dependent and assertive, weak and powerful" (Zonis, 1991).

The transition of power that then occurred between these two individuals, came in the context of Operation Ajax. Mohammed Mossadegh was a member of the National Front party which favored more socialist policies, the greatest of which was the plan to nationalize Iran's oil industry. At the time British and American oil companies held an increasingly large share of the Iranian oil market, Anglo-Persian oil being one of the largest - whose shares were more than 50% owned by Britain, and Mossadegh wanted to take back control of these resources. This fell far from conjunction with American and British interests and in turn, Ajax was soon executed in the August of 1953, essentially the CIA organized mass street riots and protests along with political subterfuge that forced Mossadegh from power. The result being the disposition of

Mossadegh and his government, and the strengthening and continued establishment of Shah Pahlavi's rule. Mossadegh possessed specific characteristics, tenacity, nationalism, political and intellectual efficacy, that made the CIA know that he would never be one to align with American interests. So instead of seeking to reason with Mossadegh they sought to simply overthrow him with an individual with characteristics that aligned with American goals and one they could easily control, Pahlevi being the obvious choice. Pahlevi had grown up in a complicated household, and lacked any real sense of compassion and sympathy that led him to being easily persuaded to join the American cause.

Keeping these psych traits in mind, one has to look at what had actually occurred during the CIA's involvement in the revolution. Essentially what Operation Ajax had done was create an overwhelming sense of fear and hysteria, with the immense threat of actual violence in order to mediate a shift of political power, which constitutes as a near perfect example of Professor Hoffman's definition of terrorism. The first half of his definition "The deliberate creation or exploitation of fear through violence or threat of violence", coincides with how the CIA organized mass protests that forced Mossadegh's resignation. Ervand Abrahamian - a leading scholar and historian of modern day Iran - explains in his book titled *The Coup: 1953, the CIA, and the roots of modern U.S. - Iranian Relations*, how the CIA hired two of the largest and most feared gang leaders of the South Tehran ghetto, "Icy Ramadan" and Shaban Jafari (also known as "Brainless Shaban") to mobilize mass protests against Mossadegh. And the second half of his definition "in the pursuit of Political Change", furthermore can only work to be attributed how these protests were vital in securing Reza Shah Pahlavi's path to the throne. Overall, it becomes increasingly clear that from Hoffman's definition of terrorism that the CIA's involvement in the Iranian coup simply consitute's as an act of terrorism.

However, when analyzing standard international relations theory and its definition of terrorism, the arguement can be made that the CIA orchestration of the coup d'etat is far from an instance of terrorism. The rationale being that standard IR theory defines the term as a politically motivated attack against *non-combatants*. Mossadegh and his supporters were inevitably always involved in this process, so it could be argued that perhaps they were always combatants. The fault in this logic however, is that combatants are defined as military personnel who hold the capability to defend themselves and non-combatants referring to civilians who do not possess that ability. Over the course of the 5 day coup, a primary source New York Times article from 1953 documents how more than 300 civilians were killed over the course of the fighting (New York Times, 1953). These were Royalists who had supported Reza Shah Pahlavi and took to the streets and killed supporters of Mossadegh but also civilians they encountered as well. Although it technically was not the CIA who had committed these murders, they had provided immense support to the people who had. For does there exist a prominent difference between the man who provides the gun and tells them who to kill, and the person who actually pulls the trigger? It cannot be left to a technicality for the CIA to retain political autonomy for these actions, and the truth of the matter is that even in the scope of standard international relations theory that the CIA's involvement in 1953 Iran does consititute as terrorism.

The last definition to explore is Professor Nicholas Grossman's, in that terrorism is the targeted and violent disruption of normalcy by a *relatively* weak actor. Even with the added nuance of the emphasis falling on the word relative, it is clear that CIA's involvement in Iran can be attributed to terrorism. By no means was the CIA stronger than Mossadegh's rule in Iran. One has to understand that the agency was not sending military troops to subjugate Mossadegh's rule

but rather crafting an air of political hysteria and fear, and this agency was working against the entirety of the Iranian government. In the scope of the word *relative* it's obvious that the CIA was relatively weak when compared to the government of Iran. It can be likened to comparing apples to oranges, it is one agency of a government versus a government in its entirety, inevitably it would be considered as the weaker actor. In light of this revelation, it can then be easily seen how Grossman's definition too fits with this situation, and the fact remains that CIA involvement in the 1953 coup d'etat constitutes as an act of terrorism.

This is not an argument that the Central Intelligence Agency as a whole can be designated as a terrorist organization, but rather in the scope of the definitions that this course provides that its involvement in the Iranian revolution can be called as an instance of terrorism. When analyzing the complexity of the psychological profiles of both Mohammed Mossedgh and Reza Shah Pahlavi, along with the dynamic interplay they share with the three most prominent definitions of terrorism. It is clear that the Central Intelligence Agencies role in the Iranian revolution of 1953, can be attributed and defined as an act of terrorism.

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The Illini Journal of International Security

Articles Section

On Private Military Companies and Hybrid Warfare

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Abstract

This paper analyses how the growing role of Private Military Companies PMCs has flown largely under the radar of the international community, even as dangerous legal loopholes and ambiguities come to light. From a strategic point of view, PMCs in general offer both benefits and new forms of risk for individual actors and international organizations. This paper focuses on two main aspects related to Private Military Companies: how they are the newest and most versatile tool in the "hybrid war" and shadow-war arsenal and how they are the byproduct of decades of misguided and ill-fated proxy warfare. We also discuss one of the most controversial PMCs: the Wagner Group, the technically inexistent but actually Russian state-backed military organization. Hybrid warfare, as employed in modern grand-strategy, is an ever-evolving concept with borders as shadowy and grey as the actors used to deploy this type of strategy.Through the prism of the private military world, we will see how the new shape of our conflicts has solidified the waging of war as a business, a lesser-known but equally significant precedent. Furthermore, as we see warfare taken out of the public spotlight and away from congressional oversight, the need for clear and strict legal frameworks to the world of warfare becomes even more apparent.

As the world evolves, so does the world of warfare. In the past century, the planet saw two world wars and a myriad of conflicts that fall under the umbrella of the "Cold War". One of the lasting legacies of this age of proxy warfare is what is called "hybrid warfare". Through hybrid warfare, countries seek to achieve strategic goals by employing military, economic, political, and informational assets, with more regard for their interest than regulations and laws governing war.

In recent years, clear examples of hybrid warfare have come to light. While this concept applies to any nation, recent trends show Russia employing a wide spectrum of hybrid techniques to achieve its strategic and economic goals. This has been particularly effective in areas with high levels of instability, allowing Russia to employ less conventional practices with less fear of reprisals. Throughout this paper, we will describe the uses of **hybrid warfare** and **non-linear warfare**. Seeing as how recent Russian and Western academic definitions of hybrid warfare differ, we will base our work on the definitions employed by NATO and put forward by Frank G. Hoffman, research fellow at the INSS Center for Strategic Research, who defines hybrid warfare as warfare incorporating "a full range of different modes of warfare including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder."[30] Throughout this paper, however, we will refer to Russian definitions of hybrid warfare, as we believe these serve their tactical and political objectives best.

One of the main tools in the hybrid warfare toolkit are Private Military Companies (PMCs). These firms provide a wide array of security and security-related services, from logistics and transportation to intelligence gathering and special forces operations. There are different categories of companies involved in private defense and security. These include General Service contractors that offer logistical assistance, Private Security companies that offer strategic, operational, and organizational support, and Private Military Companies, that offer all of the former, with the added capability of engaging in direct combat, going as far as directing airstrikes and special forces operations.
This last category, through its impact on the world of hybrid warfare, will. Private military companies have made themselves the perfect cover for states to claim plausible deniability while engaging in questionable behavior. Furthermore, the lack of accountability these firms display in the current international system makes it so that they can operate with a dangerous degree of autonomy.

As we mentioned earlier in our paper, the Cold War brought along with it an age of proxy and indirect warfare, the impact of which we're still evaluating today. For years, countries with territorial ambitions employed proxy campaigns and information tactics to achieve strategic, and political goals. In more recent years, however, countries such as Russia and Iran have adopted the use of "non-linear warfare" as part of their overarching strategic objectives. In simpler terms, this means that they employ means outside the strict realm of the military to better

[30] F. Hoffman, Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Virginia, 2007, pp. 7-8.

achieve their geostrategic goals. These two regimes in particular, have evolved their toolkits to achieve their goals in a world where the international community is more wary and observant of nations with ambitious geopolitical strategies. These strategies then have needed to develop an added layer of legal protections, insulating official policymakers and military members from some of their operations, to at least maintain plausible deniability of the aspects of hybrid warfare that might fall in grey or illegal areas. The proxy conflict and political strategies laid out during the Cold War, by both great powers and smaller, regional hegemons, helped establish the tactical groundwork for the hybrid war strategies we see today. On the other hand, the military upheaval brought on by the collapse of the Soviet Union, offered potential defense contractors the opportunity to begin employing former soldiers from a noticeably enlarged workforce, a development aided by the increased circulation of formerly used military equipment. Finally, we can also conjencture how the political developments of the late 1980's and 1990's encouraged decision-makers to explore possible responses that would allow states to achieve military and strategic goals whilst reducing exposure and investment of their own armed forces, thus reinforcing the need for private military contractors to expand their offer of service to governments and Defense ministries.

There are three key aspects of the role that private military companies play in hybrid warfare: first exploring how PMCs are a way to wage war in the dark; afterward analyzing the consequences of the Vietnam Syndrome in the way that policymakers have adopted PMCs and finally focusing on the Russian scenario. This last part is particularly pertinent as Russia has been a major employer of PMCs in some of their recent battle scenarios, and their particular brand of shotgun diplomacy is still unique to them.

Private Military Companies, as corporations operating (in most cases) at the behest of State or Defense ministries, offer a particular skill set with obvious drawbacks, but also clear benefits. These are particularly pertinent to policymakers and politicians. The more clear of these is of course the fact that private employees, formally contractors, can be deployed with far less caution than traditional soldiers, or even special forces operatives. Politically speaking, deployments of armed forces members are always riskier than charging private soldiers. Governments are not directly responsible for casualties regarding private contractors, and the public is less likely to be influenced by these: in most cases, "contractor" casualties attract less media and Congressional oversight, particularly in areas where US military involvement is kept out of the public spotlight. This aspect is pertinent in countries where transparency between the armed forces and the political leadership is strictly enforced, such as the United States. The use of troops is strictly controlled by Congress, who see themselves as the voice of the voting public. Contractors, however, can be quickly and discreetly deployed at the behest of the Defense or State departments, without fear of reprisals. Flaws have arisen in this way of operating, however, when private operatives have superseded their authority or committed illegal acts while under contract for the US government. After the peak of US Forces involved in the second Iraq War , for example, the ratio of military personnel to contracted personnel was about 1:1.[31] On one hand, this meant that far fewer US uniformed lives were being used and put at risk. On the other, this allowed the DOD to have a fighting force less accountable to Congress, yet more

[31] Jeremy Scahill, « Bush's Shadow Army », *The Nation*, 15 March 2007, 2

accountable or at least more subordinate to White House. But as the events of the 2004 Fallujah Ambush and the 2007 Nissour Square Massacre so violently illustrated, an elevated presence of private military contractors entails a heightened risk for these companies and their personnel, as well as a dangerous lack of oversight from the DOD that could lead to both human and political crises.[32] [33] As the future of hybrid warfare seems inextricably tied to a decrease in transparency for foreign operations, it becomes evident that the role of PMCs will have to be revisited and better regulated.

Hybrid warfare is also a resource for countries wishing to achieve geostrategic goals at a cost lower than traditional troop deployments. By hiring corporations whose main goals are to make a profit and cut costs, it becomes evident that PMCs offer the possibility to drastically reduce costs for the countries involved. This makes them particularly appealing to both authoritarian and democratic regimes. The former will probably attempt to maximize their return on investment, particularly if their aims are more long-term and aimed at destabilization, or if They are financially motivated. For the latter, this is a useful tool to decrease the likelihood of political interference, as accountability towards taxpayers comes into play.

We must also consider the long-term impact of the "Vietnam syndrome,"[34] the notion that has permeated the foreign policy establishments of many countries that wars cannot be fought without clear objectives, overwhelming military force, and the support of the public and elected officials. While born in the US, this has influenced how other countries direct their military goals. As hybrid strategies can be deployed at both small and large-scales, solutions allowing for the use of force without calling for full-scale war become increasingly valuable. This is especially evident when we consider that the last time a major power declared war was in1945 when the US declared war on Japan and Germany.

Private military companies fit perfectly into this narrative. As policymakers and heads of state worry more about their image domestically and abroad, the use of PMCs and special forces operating clandestinely rises, as cost-cutting solutions to geostrategic objectives. This is the same logic that has led to a rise in the use of combat drones, allowing for cleaner warfare without putting the lives of members of the armed forces at risk.

Furthermore, the end of Vietnam saw major powers move away from unilateralism and drifts toward more multilateral deployments. PMCs, by offering forces outside the military and at a lower cost, offer countries the possibility of building their own "*coalition of the billing*" whenever they see fit, without creating much publicity and most importantly, without having to validate their objectives and methods in front of the international community.[35] Thanks to this, countries with the power to hire PMCs no longer need to rely on their allies, as was once the norm in warfare. If we view this through a hybrid warfare perspective, PMCs offer a perfect gateway from which to deploy as many forces as needed without the need for Congressional or Allied oversight, and most importantly, in a variety of roles. PMCs such as the Wagner Group, which we will study more closely in the next section, offer their clients the capacity to handle

[32] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3585765.stm

[33] https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/23/us/blackwater-verdict.html

[34] https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2013/01/22/its-called-the-vietnam-syndrome-and-its-back/

[35] https://www.wired.com/2004/07/coalition-of-the-billing/

intelligence, disinformation, and broadcasting services, helping both lead combat and political operations.

We cannot forgo the Russian case, in this case, exemplified by the Wagner Group. This corporation, whose organizational structure and ties to the Russian Intelligence and Defense forces are intentionally murky, identifies as a PMC, primarily serving the Russian government and its allies.

Formally created in 2014, the Wagner Group presents itself as a traditional PMC, offering the usual benefits to governments and non-state actors interested in hiring them. Upon closer analysis, however, experts have described the group as a mostly self-funded unofficial paramilitary arm of both the Russian GRU and of Putin's closest allies. The Wagner Group's deployment in Ukraine and Syria, particularly, have illustrated how this PMC serves the Kremlin's hybrid warfare strategy perfectly.

Through them, the Russian government gains a layer of plausible deniability especially useful in politically risky scenarios, such as the annexation of Crimea or the fight against Syrian rebels. The relation between this organization and the Kremlin is both close and foggy, however, granting Russian authorities what many have called "implausible deniability," implying that the use of the Wagner Group offers Putin deniability so thin and difficult to believe that it almost defeats its purpose.[36] Formally, the Wagner Group is funded by its founder, Evgeny Prigozhin, and its operations, much like any formal, independent company. A closer look illustrates how the company has benefited from lucrative deals in exchange for their services, such as those they performed in Syria, that saw them officially profiting from oil fields they liberated.[37]

As Putin's foreign objectives expanded in the past 5 years, so have deployments of the Wagner Group which has now been identified as having contracts in Venezuela, CAR, Libya, Syria, Madagascar, and Sudan.[38] Under the assumption that the Wagner Group is simply a cover for Russian foreign operations, we can understand how the benefits brought by their creation serve Russian geostrategic goals in the fields of war, intelligence, political influencing and financial gains.

This last point can also be explained by the tenuous nature of the group. Its contracts and concessions in foreign countries also point to the organization serving the private goals of Russian oligarchs and their corporate interests, further fusing the Wagner Group to Putin's personal objectives, many of which can be completed thanks to hybrid warfare strategies.

From a legal standpoint, the Wagner Group serves to exemplify the risks the international community faces from the legal vacuum in which PMCs can operate today. Although individual countries have enacted legislation applicable to or aimed towards regulating PMCs, the lack of enforceable international conventions regulating the use of such forces poses a series of legal and ethical dilemmas.[39] The lack of universally accepted definition for what PMCs and Privately-Employed Defense Contractors are pose a significant challenge if legal or jurisdictional

[36]https://carnegieendowment.org/2020/06/02/implausible-deniability-russia-s-private-military-companies-pub-81954
[37] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/24/world/middleeast/american-commandos-russian-mercenaries syria.html
[38] https://www.fpri.org/article/2019/10/diplomacy-and-dividends-who-really-controls-the-wagner-group/
[39]http://www.privatesecurityregulation.net/files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20PMSC%20Article,%20US,%20Kevin%20Lanigan,%20Final.pdf

issues where to arise. This poses a threat to the legality of conflict today, as the use of non-regulated forces poses significant risks for all involved parties, as well as the legitimacy of existing statutes surrounding warfare. It would therefore be necessary to enact enforceable conventions, separate or annexed to existing laws surrounding war, in order to fully regulate and transparentize PMCs and their employers.

This would also serve to both address humanitarian concerns involving the deployment of private forces and help enforce financial transparency vis-a-vis these firms. This latter suggestion goes beyond the tributary and would help enforce the formal chain of leadership and financing for firms operating in the sector. Finally, enacting such regulations as conventions would give them the legal backing to be enforced by international organizations and tribunals, thus further protecting civilians and other combattants in theaters of operation involving PMCs.

In conclusion, we can say that as the world moves toward embracing and adopting hybrid warfare, albeit to varying degrees, private military companies see themselves in a privileged position of being able to fulfill, or at least supplement, many foreign policy objectives of their employers. Strengthening legal frameworks surrounding these firms would also facilitate their employment and use by states who might otherwise be discouraged by the lack of adequate legal standards and definitions regarding their use and deployment.

Hybrid warfare seeks to pursue objectives through a variety of means and on different fronts, and the versatility of private militaries is perfectly suited to this.

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Divide and Conquer: Separatism in Transcaucasia and Russian Intervention

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Abstract

"The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must." This quote from the famous ancient historian Thucydides may come off as rather harsh, but it describes well the attitude that many historical Great Powers have had towards weaker states. In the modern day, one can find a similar (albeit more nuanced) attitude with the Russian Federation's own affairs with its neighbors. None of these neighbors can hold a candle to the geopolitical might that Russia is able to project, including those based in the South Caucasus. The South Caucasus (Transcaucasia) was part of the Russian Empire since the early 19th century. Control continued with the establishment of the Soviet Union, but ended with its collapse in 1991. In the wake of Russia's retreat from the region came the birth of three new Transcaucasian republics: Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. However, independence was never straightforward for these new countries and political instability has remained in them ever since. Independence was never straightforward for these countries, and political instability has haunted them ever since - instability which Russia has noticed. This paper discusses and analyzes Russian intervention in the South Caucasus. While Russian policy towards each Transcaucasian country differs somewhat, Russia commonly exploits the separatist movements and violence in these states - namely those of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan - within the hope of leveraging influence.

Introduction

"The strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must." This quote from the famous ancient historian Thucydides may come off as rather harsh, but it describes well the attitude that many historical Great Powers have had towards weaker states. In the modern day, one can find a similar (albeit more nuanced) attitude with the Russian Federation's own affairs with its neighbors. None of these neighbors can hold a candle to the geopolitical might that Russia is able to project, including those based in the South Caucasus.

The South Caucasus (Transcaucasia) was part of the Russian Empire since the early 19th century. Control continued with the establishment of the Soviet Union, but ended with its collapse in 1991. In the wake of Russia's retreat from the region came the birth of three new Transcaucasian republics: Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. However, independence was never straightforward for these new countries and political instability has remained in them ever since. Independence was never straightforward for these countries, and political instability has haunted them ever since - instability which Russia has noticed. This paper discusses and analyzes Russian intervention in the South Caucasus. While Russian policy towards each Transcaucasian country differs somewhat, Russia commonly exploits the separatist movements and violence in these states - namely those of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia, and Nagorno-Karabakh in Azerbaijan - within the hope of leveraging influence.

The Bully Next Door

Before an analysis can be given of the conflicts in the South Caucasian countries and Russia's desire to take advantage of them, it must be asked first: why is Russia so interested in a domineering foreign policy in that region, and how do they stand to benefit from doing so?

Russia undoubtedly wants to be a Great Power, as stated by influential Russian leaders themselves: the head of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, Sergey Karaganov, once said that "We want the status of being a great power… we want to be the heart of greater Eurasia, a region of peace and cooperation." This necessitates Russia acting like a hegemon in its own neighborhood, the South Caucasus included (Jonavičius et al., 2019, p. 8).

Desire to recreate imperial prestige from the times of the Tsars and the Bolsheviks is not the only driving force behind Russian imperialism in Transcaucasia. Russia is also concerned with NATO presence in the South Caucasus. The Putin administration accuses NATO of "destabilizing the Caucasus region with joint exercises in Georgia" (Nasriov et al., 2017, p. 51). Through leverage over the South Caucasian republics, Russia can "deny NATO's involvement as an emerging stakeholder through new membership roadmaps and enhanced cooperation opportunities" in the region (Kasapoglu, 2017, p. 3). This policy doubles as check-mating rival Turkey as well, since it is also a member of NATO.

Finally, there is the issue of energy. There is plenty of oil and natural gas to be found both within the Caucasus and in the pipelines extending from the Caspian Sea: Azerbaijan possesses "7 billion barrels of oil (bbl) and 35 trillion cubic feet (cf) of gas," while Georgia's reserves lie at "40 billion bbl and 300,000 million cf" (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 3). Moreover, there are four pipelines (three oil, one gas) extending from the Caspian Sea and over the Caucasus. However, with the exception of the Baku-Novorossiysk Oil Pipeline, the pipelines are "owned and operated by Western companies and do not cross Russian territory"

(Peña-Ramos, 2017, pp. 3-4). This reality is detrimental to Russian geopolitical interests, for local Russian dominance on energy exports is being challenged.

Therefore, it is Great Power mentality, security concerns, and energy interests that motivate Russia to take an interventionist stance in the violence of the South Caucasus. By controlling and manipulating the instability of the region through a peculiar mix of provocation and mediation, Russia can effectively keep it divided and so project both military and economic power abroad. How Russia exactly goes about this from one Transcausian country to the next will be detailed and analyzed below.

David vs. Goliath: Russia, Georgia, and Secessionist South Ossetia and Abkhazia

One Russian strategy of keeping the South Caucasus divided is to support the secessionist movements in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, thereby weakening Georgia. This was exemplified by the 2008 Russo-Georgian War and its aftermath. Abkhazia and South Ossetia enjoyed a degree of autonomy during Soviet times. South Ossetians could lay claim to autonomy as early as shortly "before the "Sovietization of Georgia in 1921" (Saparov, 2014, p. 75). The political and military institutions established by South Ossetian partisans hostile to Georgian rule enabled them to "exercise some political influence and… a certain degree in minor decision-making" (Saparov, 2014, p. 75). Their pains would be rewarded by the victorious invading Russian Bolsheviks with the establishment of the South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast in 1922 (Saparov, 2014, p. 82). Similar efforts asserted by Abkahzians at the same time, meanwhile, would net them even greater autonomy. Sometime after the Bolshevik invasion of Georgia, Stalin heaped upon the Abkahzians the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Saparov, 2014, p. 49).

Therefore, a history of autonomy, combined with linguistic differences (Ossetians and Abkhazians each speak a language different to Georgian), would help to release long pent-up tensions between the three groups when the USSR collapsed. It also did not help that South Ossetians in particular have closer affinity with Russia than with Georgia: their northern brethren reside in Russia, and as many as "nearly 90 percent" of South Ossetians possessed Russian citizenship in 1992, the year both Russia and Georgia signed the Dagomys Agreements following the first outburst of violence between South Ossetians and Georgians (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 6).

Sporadic fighting between Georgians and secessionist elements haunted the 1990s and beyond. The last time Georgia made a serious effort at ending the autonomy of its breakaway provinces was in 2008, when Georgian troops invaded and bombed South Ossetia and Abkhazia through Operation Clear Field and Operation Rock, respectively (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 6). These campaigns turned out to be a serious blunder for Georgia, as Russia immediately intervened on behalf of the secessionists. With little NATO support and a miniscule military, the brief clash with Russia went as well for Georgia as anyone could reasonably expect. The end of the 2008 war witnessed Russian troops stationed in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, an occupation that lasts to this day.

So has Russia taken advantage of Georgian weakness? For one, Russia obviously has now greater freedom in militarily inserting itself in Georgia. The now-permanent stationing of Russian troops in both South Ossetia and Abkhazia means that military facilities can be constructed in these regions. Perhaps the best example of this is the Abkhazian port of

Ochamchire, which has enabled Russia to "strengthen the already massive presence of its naval fleet in the Black Sea" (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 7). Furthermore, naval basing in Abkhazia as well as Crimea situates Russia well against Turkey, bolstering the former's position in the "race in naval modernization going on between the two nations" (Kasapoglu, 2017, p. 4).

But what perhaps benefited Russia even more out of its support of South Ossetia and Abkhazia is its now-greater leverage over the energy flowing through Georgia. Georgia and other South Caucasian states have tried to lessen their dependence on Russian energy through positioning themselves as energy transit states (i.e. energy flowing from the Caspian Sea would go through these countries and not Russia). Needless to say, this trend would go against Russian interests, but Russian victory in the 2008 war may have reversed it. With a diminished Georgian army and Russian forces now within striking distance of Tbilisi from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia has helped in discouraging the "creation of new pipelines through the South Caucasus and Georgia avoiding Russian territory," such as the now-stillborne Nabucco project (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 7). Russia itself, meanwhile, became a more attractive alternative corridor for the transit of energy: thanks to Russian presence in South Ossetia, the Dzuarikau-Tskhinvali pipeline - the "highest mountain pipeline in the world" - was built in that breakaway region in 2009 (Pototskaya, 2014, p. 303).

In short, Russia's backing of Georgian secessionists has kept Georgia weak, increased Russian military capacity in its sphere of influence, and shifted the balance of power in regards to energy transportation in Moscow's favor. We will see similar consequences with Russia's intervention in the Nagorno-Karabakh crisis.

Into the Frying Pan: Russia's Intervention in the Nagorno-Karabakh Crisis

Russian relations with Azerbaijan and Armenia are shaped by the conflict waged between the two over Nagorno-Karabakh. Russian posturing in the crisis - acting as both mediator and instigator - enables it to spread its military and economic influence abroad not unlike what it accomplished with Georgia.

Nominally part of Azerbaijan, the existence of Nagorno-Karabakh is an oddity. Whereas Azerbaijan is "predominantly Muslim and ethnically Azeri," as much as "75 percent of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh is Christian and ethnically Armenian" (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 6). This is because the Soviet Union, "in an effort to divide and rule the South Caucasus," intentionally placed the Armenian-majority Nagorno-Karabakh district under the Azerbaijani Soviet Republic in 1921 (di France, 2018). Similar to South Ossetians and Abkhazians within Georgia, Armenians felt alienated inside a state whose majority ethnic group spoke a different language (and in this case, practiced a different religion). Also similar to Georgia, pent-up tension between Azeris and Armenians residing in Azerbaijan would be released violently with the collapse of the USSR.

Nagorno-Karabakh's attempt to secede from Azerbaijan and unite with Armenia towards the end of the 1980s resulted in conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, ending with Armenian occupation of "about 20% of Azerbaijani territory - namely Nagorno-Karabakh and seven surrounding Azerbaijani districts" (di Franco, 2018). Although Nagorno-Karabakh now desires outright independence as the Republic of Artsakh, it continues to receive strong military support from Armenia - and so relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan remain tense (despite the recent ceasefire in 2020). As a matter of fact, the border between Azerbaijan and Armenia

is the "most militarized in the world" (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 8).

So how has Russia positioned itself in the conflict, so as to increase its leverage over the competing sides? To maximize its geopolitical weight over the South Caucasus, Russia wants Armenia and Azerbaijan to continue their hostile relationship. This necessitates firmly aligning with either country, and Russia has chosen Armenia. Armenia is Russia's "only military and political ally in the region" through Armenia's continued membership in both the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (unlike Georgia) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (unlike Georgia and Azerbaijan) (Pototskaya, 2014, p. 301). Because of this, Russia is able to maintain a military presence in Armenia - namely through its "bases in Erebuni (mostly air elements) and Gyumri" (Kasapoglu, 2017, p. 6). It is this power projection, furthermore, that allows Russia to better keep NATO (i.e. Turkey) in check and keep an eye on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute.

However, Russia does not necessarily want to totally antagonize Azerbaijan either, for it is the most strategically placed of the South Caucasus republics when it comes to the transportation of energy in that region (Azerbaijan borders the Caspian Sea, where it extracts natural gas) (Pototskaya, 2014, p. 303). To maintain local geo-energy dominance, Russia has a share of the gas Azerbaijan exports. For this reason, Russia provides some military aid to Azerbaijan. For instance, it was reported by unofficial sources that in September 2010 there was a "significant delivery of Russian weaponry to Azerbaijan" (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 8).

Lastly, Russia's playing of both sides is evident in its handling of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Simply put, Russia acts as both instigator and mediator in the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh: it seeks to maintain the status quo.

On the one hand, it is imperative for Russia - as advocated by major Russian news outlets themselves such as *The Moscow Times* - to "firmly hold back Yerevan, Baku, and the Karabakh leadership from a new war" (Trenin, 2018). After all, should Azerbaijan commit to an all-out lengthy invasion, the energy flowing from its capital to Russia's Novorossiysk would be hampered or cut out altogether. It is for this reason that Russia helped to mediate a ceasefire between the two in 1994 and another in 2020, as well as maintain a presence of 2,000 Russian peacekeepers in the region (di Franco, 2018; BBC, 2020).

On the other hand, Russia wants to impede progress towards everlasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan by instigating violence (or at least mutual distrust) *just* enough that there will not be a unified South Caucasian bloc that could possibly counter Russian interests. It is also through intentionally keeping the conflict prolonged that Russia manages to "sow doubt over the construction of the TAP [Trans Adriatic Pipeline] and other pipelines that cross the South Caucasus or those being planned that intend to avoid Russian territory" - thereby maintaining Russia's regional monopoly on energy exports (Peña-Ramos, 2017, p. 10). Hence, Russia sells arms to both sides (in fact, Azerbaijan receives "85% of its arm imports from Russia") (di Franco, 2018).

Conclusion

Moscow's policy towards the South Caucasus differs from state to state there. However, the one commonality that can be identified in these interactions is Russia taking advantage of secessionist movements in the region. This is done so as to keep the Transcaucasian states disunited, bolster Russia's geo-energy interests, and project military

power abroad.

A NATO report perhaps best summarizes Russia's behavior in the South Caucasus as "Cooperation with Armenia, Confrontation with Georgia, and Confusion with Azerbaijan" (Kasapoglu, 2017, p. 3). Russia is clearly not afraid to support Abkahzian and South Ossetian aspirations to the point of war with Georgia, thereby diminishing Georgia's strategic position as a terminal energy transit state as well as Georgia's ability to defend itself militarily. The matter of Nagorno-Karabakh is more complex. Russia is firm allies with Armenia; while Azerbaijan is not entirely pleased with Russian military bases placed in its rival (as well as other mixed signals sent by Russia), the government of Baku can hardly complain about Russian military aid through arms imports. Russian support emboldens both countries enough to continue disputing over Nagorno-Karabakh but not to the point of a protracted war (the most recent clash between the two countries only lasted about a month before Russia and other states mediated a ceasefire). This all plays to Russia's benefit as detailed earlier.

Time will tell whether Russia's divide-and-rule strategy in the South Caucasus will either reap long-term benefits for Moscow, or just ultimately end up getting it involved in a quagmire. Even now, NATO is not entirely dissuaded from seeking new partnerships in the region, while Russia's geo-energy monopoly is still not entirely assured as plans for new pipelines continue to be explored. It will especially be interesting to see whether Putin's future successor can play the game as well as Putin himself does in keeping the South Caucasus within Russia's orbit.

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The Race for Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

As witnessed in the 1927 film *Metropolis* and in numerous novels before, the concept of the Artificial Intelligence threat is not new. However, the threat of Artificial Intelligence has not changed dramatically throughout the decades. Instead, it is becoming a greater reality. In 2016, developers from Google created an advancement that changed the world. Upon showcasing their Artificial Intelligence name 'DeepMind' in a public expo, governments and corporations around the world instantly became interested in the effects that this creation can bring. However, this zero-sum race to develop the first "strong AI" will have immense ramifications throughout the world. This paper will explore the geopolitical impact of Artificial Intelligence at both, the domestic and international, levels. Furthermore, the paper explores the various nations leading in Artificial development and the potential they have in their quest for Artificial Intelligence dominance. More specifically, as the United States and China are the current leaders in Artificial Intelligence research and development, the majority of this paper will analyze the effect Artificial Intelligence will have in the future between and within these two nations.

Introduction

"Artificial intelligence is the future... for all humankind. It comes with colossal opportunities, but also threats that are difficult to predict. Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world." - Russian President Vladimir Putin

In 2016, Google engineers pioneered the beginnings of modern artificial intelligence development. Under the company called "DeepMind", the engineers constructed "AlphaGo" to showcase the power Artificial intelligence can have. Through a process of machine learning, AlphaGo was fed many Go games and was able to compete at a competitive level. This was showcased in 2016 in the Google DeepMind Challenge Match where AlphaGo won against 18 time world champion Lee Sodel. Unlike former computers, AlphaGo's use of neural networks meant that it "learned" how the game was played and was able to out compute a human (Xu). This testament began a shift in the global mindset towards Artificial intelligence.

The Google DeepMind Challenge Match became a landmark in Artificial Intelligence development. Soon afterwards, many governments and corporations became interested in how such computational power can be put to use. Thus began the race for Artificial Intelligence dominance.

At the time of this paper, there are two clear leaders in Artificial Intelligence development, the first being the United States and the second China. These two counties have dedicated a significant amount of resources to develop Artificial Intelligence. This has fostered a new great-power competition that pits two very diverse ideologies against one another. With China posed to become an Artificial Intelligence superpower by 2030, the timeline is short between these two world powers (Goujon). This will be explored in the later sections.

Potential for Artificial Intelligence within Industries

The race for completing the first real AI is a critical point in humanity's societal and technological evolution, as it has the potential to redefine the structure of modern society by streamlining nearly every factor associated with modern society and governance. Among the most recent developments of civilization stands mass surveillance, which currently revolves around networks of cameras and programs that collect keywords from calls, tweets, messages, and other forms of communications data. However, this data is normally analyzed by people to identify real and potential threats. AI promises to cut out the middle man, and bridges the gap between surveillance and action. Already, corporations are pursuing the means towards minimizing costs through automation, but one company, Anduril Industries, promises AI for federal government use. Anduril is currently working on numerous projects, but perhaps the most ambitious one is their virtual border wall.

The virtual border wall is a project that has been in development since June, 2020, in cooperation between Anduril and US Customs and Border Protection. It is a project that has received bipartisan support, which only lends to its feasibility and efficiency. The project intends to create a large network of solar powered sensor towers that are managed by their proprietary Lattice Platform, a software that approaches true AI by utilizing a fusion of sensors, machine learning and a massive mesh network between all operating instances in order to create a single autonomous operating system capable not only of collecting surrounding thermal signatures, but also using its machine learning functions to differentiate between wildlife and people. With this

network established, the United States will be able to drastically reduce the operating cost of border protection, which will allow funds to be allocated elsewhere.

Furthermore, Anduril has been contracted by the US Air Force and the UK Royal Navy to create automated surveillance mechanisms capable of maintaining constant watch over battlefield conditions and hostile territories 24/7, which frees up a great deal of already limited manpower that would have been wasted on patrolling vast quantities of land. Already, "the artificial intelligence and ISR systems from Anduril are game changing technologies for the Royal Marines Future Commando Force. Anduril is now part of the UK NavyX accelerator program to get battle winning technology straight into the hands of our warfighters," said Colonel Dan Cheeseman, Royal Navy Chief Technology Officer (Allison). AI promises to deliver war changing tactical information to deployed units in a matter of minutes, which allows whichever force that controls a suitable AI to counter any attempted hostile maneuvers. True AI systems could scout an entire country and map out ambushes, IEDs, and hostile bases at rates faster than any human-only force could ever attain, which will reduce casualties and will make guerilla warfare almost obsolete

In addition to the socio-political effects of Artificial Intelligence, AI has the potential to change the health and science sectors as well. In the biotech industry, Artificial Intelligence could be harnessed to detect various diseases. Research done under Cardiff University found that the potential for AI in detection can provide better risk assessments to patients and prolong patient lives. Aside from the diagnosis and prognosis benefits, AI can help reduce hospital costs and reduce medicare costs (Cardiff University). In addition, Artificial Intelligence can be uniquely used for disease mapping. This can help track a pandemic and provide essential data at hyper-speeds. Artificial Intelligence can also transform the process of how to fight pandemics too. Instead of a passive approach, AI can predict future models for disease spread and analyze the effectiveness of various counter-measures (Mahmoud AAF and Pray LA).

With the ease of data mapping explained earlier, AI has the potential to revolutionize current climate sciences. Machine learning can help understand the current state of the environment and predict weather patterns. This will provide effect tools necessary to stall the current climate trajectory. Furthermore, the possibility of new products and services that AI brings to the table can help minimize humanity's climate footprint and potentially reverse climate trajectories (Marr).

United States

The United States has been seen as a forerunner in developing innovative technologies for a long time. In the context of Artificial Intelligence, it is no different. Recent data shows that the United States still has the largest amount of AI startups in the world and is considered to have a far more nurturing economy for growth in AI development (Barhat) (Chun). Furthermore, a recent Stanford report recognized that the United States has more conference papers in Artificial Intelligence. In addition, a majority of AI Ph.D. graduates in the United States are from abroad (Zhang et al.). This creates an interesting dynamic of outside influence in AI development within the United States.

In regards to social and political views about Artificial Intelligence, the United States has similar (if not the same) views about AI and AI development as other western nations. In terms of military capabilities, the United States primarily views AI as an enabler and as a means of data analysis. Many reports on AI being used in the US military have been on tracking targets and

generally reconnaissance activities (Siddiqui). Furthermore, the current ecosystem of the United States economy fosters open dialogue and communication. This ecosystem not only provides clarity in AI development, but it also promotes discussion in AI ethics (Kania). This is valuable because it can promote healthy AI development.

During the Trump Administration, there were significant pushes for AI development. Specifically, under a massive initiative by the administration, AI funding and development became more streamlined under the creation of the National Artificial Intelligence Initiative Office under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021. The administration pushed to create a coalition between the private, public and academic sectors in order to develop AI faster. Furthermore, under the administration, there was a large push for allocating more research and development spending towards AI (Cordell). However, as mentioned earlier, most of the research done on AI has been by foreign graduates. Given the administration's harsh rhetoric and actions on immigration policy, the administration potentially reduced its potential in achieving effective AI development by dissuading or barring potential experts from entering the nation and contributing to the United States' intellectual capital.

With the new administration illustrating new goals in regards to AI, a few steps would be beneficial for keeping the US at the forefront of AI development. The utmost priority should be on further development of AI ethics domestically and abroad. This could counter potentially unethical uses of Artificial Intelligence, such as mass surveillance that infringes on civil liberties or espionage against other nations, and promote safe development of AI. Given the United States's standing in international law and various multilateral institutions, the United States should promote its engagement in various institutions to enforce ethical uses of artificial intelligence. Furthermore, developing pathlines to foster more domestic graduates can help the United States to be sustainable in this endeavour. The other option would be to ease immigration policy for these individuals. A streamlined and more attainable path to citizenship would provide a large incentive for attracting more of these high-skilled workers from abroad. However, the large dependency of foreign graduates puts the US in a dependent position in future AI development. In addition, the writing above indicates that the main aspect of the United States in being ahead in this race is because of its relatively democratic ecosystem. Promoting that ecosystem can help promote further AI start-ups.

Also, it is paramount that the United States employs a massive effort to strengthen its cybersecurity capabilities. Over the last decade, cyber attacks have steadily been rising internationally from nearly every direction. Between Russian hackers constantly probing and striking at US systems, terrorist groups attacking telecom companies, and Chinese corporate espionage (CSIS), US research is far from safe. If the United States is to maintain its lead in AI, it needs to create active measures for monitoring any breaches in cybersecurity as the consequences of detecting them too late could be severe. Some have put forward the idea of utilizing AI research to create automated defenses against cyberattacks; using AI to protect current AI research as well as the rest of the nation, which will strengthen current cybersecurity protocols if implemented correctly, but achieving a functional and secure implementation, especially while the US still has yet to develop a true AI, will be a great challenge. Among the most glaring flaws of making a totally automated cybersecurity system is that the program will become a very clear target for hackers, and even one successful attack could cripple the nation's cybersecurity capabilities, leaving a wealth of data and research unprotected. At the moment, the US has yet to create any meaningful solutions to this critical issue, with the National Security

Commision on Artificial Intelligence saying that AI processes, functions, and parameters need to be properly documented in a transparent and standardized manner so that all AIs may be properly audited, however they have yet to indicate how this documentation should actually be used in order to improve cybersecurity. While the NSCAI has not elaborated on how detailed documentation aids in maintaining security, proper documentation is still key to maintaining the integrity of AI and preventing hacking. The best use of this documentation would be to pursue a policy of accountability where AI developers make the details of their programs readily available so as to facilitate third party stress testing and vulnerability probing (Wolff). Only if the US maintains a free and innovative sphere where AI security may constantly be challenged and advanced will it be able to preserve its lead in the current AI race.

More physical threats also exist to the United States' AI lead. History has shown that research that can be stolen in order to bolster the capabilities of a foreign actor. The most notable and pervasive threat of this comes from both the Chinese government and their tech giants. For example, in 2019, the US Justice Department charged the company Huawei with deliberately incentivising theft of foreign technology by offering employees a substantial bonus if they were able to procure foreign technologies; in this case the theft was of telecommunications technology from T-Mobile. Later, in 2020, it was found that Charles Lieber, head of Harvard University's chemistry department, lied about receiving money from the Chinese government while receiving a federal grant. As a pioneer in the field of nanotechnology, Lieber is the most prominent individual to date that the CCP has managed to buy out onto their side of the tech rivalry (Holt). While there are not any known instances of AI espionage by the Chinese government, their "whole of society" espionage strategy, as well as their dedication to rapid AI development and dominance, are strong indicators that the Chinese government is attempting to to infiltrate and subvert US research programs. The "whole of society" approach focuses on accepting anyone as a field agent towards the goal of having an overwhelmingly high volume of implanted people throughout all strata of a target country pursuing their ends (Eftimiades) In order to counter this program, the US government needs to either attempt its own infiltration of Chinese intelligence operations in order to root out agents and compromised individuals, or closely monitor anyone across both the public and private sectors that is involved in critical AI research. Also, a strong working relationship between the public and private sector is necessary to ensure that corporate entities do not misuse AI data. However, the US should take caution, as witch hunts and paranoia against researchers may prevent espionage but will ultimately hamper both the speed and quality of AI research, in a similar way to how McCarthyism led to a period of paranoia and ideological conformity that shook people's ability to cooperate.

China

The Chinese Communist Party rules with a focus on driving the nation forward in one direction, without deviation, that will ultimately result in the nation's dominance of the international geopolitical stage. The CCP has historically viewed AI as a tool towards consolidating their power and as a weapon, where other nations focus on the benefits to scientific development. Among the many tools of the CCP's arsenal is the system of civil-military relations(CMR), which is based on the joint focus and cooperation of civilian and defense industries in order to advance one goal. This system is dangerous, as it promotes China's development of an aggressive AI (Allen). The CMR system also makes Chinese AI development

unpredictable, because "[the] same facility might support testing of a luxury self-driving car one week, and a self-driving tank the next" (Allen).

In theory, all of Chinese society operating towards one goal, in this case the development of a true AI, is a scientific and industrial machine that is poised to overtake the US in AI development within the next decade, should they meet the goals outlined in their 2017 AI Development Plan (AIDP). That goal is to surpass the United States by 2025, and to become the uncontested primary center of AI innovation in the world by 2030.

In the pursuit of this goal, China has taken several steps towards advancing their interests. First, the CCP adopted a "wish list" of AI technologies and functions that prompted 15 of 31 local provincial governments in China to establish their AI plans following the AIDP's announcement. This has created a massive flow of both local and national government funding towards AI. They have also created a "national team" of tech giants (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent) and innovative startups (iFlytek) in 2017, with facial recognition startup Sensetime being included in 2018 and 10 companies in 2019, including tech titans (Huawei, JD.com, Xiaomi and other) in order to coordinate AI development across China's largest and most innovative hybrid firms (Dai). While these companies still compete with each other in numerous fields, the CCP's ownership of portions of these companies will ensure that they are still able to make joint headway in the future.

Second, the Chinese government has opted to learn from past mistakes, such as their 2014 semiconductor plan, and has made the standardization of AI research a priority within the nation. On page six of the 2018 AI Standardization White Paper, a Chinese document outlining standardized guidelines for domestic AI development, it states that "AI standardization is still in its infancy, and this white paper only serves as an initial link connecting AI technologies, AI industries, and standardization. It will be revised constantly in the future based on the developing requirements of technologies, industries, and standardization" (CESI), which illustrates the forward thinking and innovative approach that China is taking towards AI development, as they were already laying the groundwork for their coordinated development in 2018, while remaining cognizant of the constantly shifting demands and dilemmas that arise over the course of any project. This flexible approach stands in sharp contrast to the US which has yet to take any definitive steps towards creating a focused AI policy.

Third, China has recognized the human capital necessary to maintain pace with the US and has taken proactive steps to recruit and train AI specialists both domestically and abroad. The AIDP focuses on both "gathering" manpower by establishing international research centers abroad in order to recruit foreign specialists that could spur innovation, while also establishing a "training" approach in the long term, which begins at the creation of the "Intelligent Science and Technology major" that has been adopted by over 50 universities with the goal of cultivating environments that will eventually allow China to have a massive, highly skilled pool of domestic AI experts, which they currently severely lack (Ding).

These programs are already bearing fruit From 2017 to 2020, China surpassed the US in quantity of academic journals being published in regards to AI technologies (Zhang). While some will be quick to point out that the quality of these journals is sub par, given that these papers are rarely cited while US papers are some of the most cited in the world, the Chinese government is already trying to rectify this issue through their "gathering and training" approach. China is building a very large foundational infrastructure for future AI research that is ready to accommodate any experts they may recruit or train in the future.

The Chinese government has pursued AI development vigorously, though in their efforts towards being the first to develop AI, they have neglected dialogues on the ethical questions associated with AI development. The West has for the most part committed to avoiding the development of AI weaponry and promoting testing AI in a safe manner, while also thinking about the potential of AI sentience. No such dialogue has been popularized in China. Its disregard for the ethical components of AI development has the potential for many unintended side effects. Among these side effects is the threat of rogue AI, or an AI which has deviated from its directives and is instead a potential threat to all computerized systems, which would have the capabilities of compromising entire systems internationally due to the interconnected nature of the internet (The Economist).

In the past, China's large technological projects have run into many pitfalls. As shown by their 2014 semiconductor fund, the CCP is more than capable of setting ambitious goals, though delivering on them has proven more difficult. The 2014 plan illustrated that the politicized nature of Chinese research has prevented real progress, as fundings were typically allocated towards politically connected research institutions rather than those that have shown merit in R&D. Also, they failed to allocate the promised funds towards research institutes, giving only a fraction of the $150 billion promised. Finally, the local governments were also associated with this project, and the local projects often resulted in duplicates and shoddy works (Ding).

In order to succeed this time, the CCP will need to maintain accountability while also cracking down on local corruption. Furthermore, they will need to deliver on the promised funds while also allocating the money to institutions that show the most potential, rewarding skill and innovation over party connections. Also, a rogue AI could cripple a nation if they are incapable of containing it, so the CCP needs to ensure that ethical and safety questions are asked and answered throughout the entire development process. Above all, the Chinese government needs to be cautious about their "wishlist", as groups rushing to curry favor will rush out these projects without proper testing. If the CCP could properly foster the cooperation that they are trying to build through the national team, it may avoid the issues of duplication and politically motivated rushed projects, which would set them on a steady path towards properly harnessing the powers of AI.

Areas of Escalation

As the race for creating artificial intelligence becomes the new cold war, this competition creates the situations for various potentials of conflict escalation to occur. Four primary issues with the current race for AI supremacy are: Hyper-war, Nuclear deterrence, Unipolarity, and Rogue AI.

As explained previously, China's current vision of Artificial intelligence is a view towards an integration of civilian and militaristic technology. This push changes how AI will be viewed. This push towards civil-military fusion changes warfare from informatized warfare to what PLA thinkers call "intelligentized" warfare. Not only would this type of artificial intelligence promote authoritarianism by offering AI as a means of militaristic control, but it also changes how future AI will be developed. By viewing AI as a militaristic tool, other nations will promote its use as the same. That would change AI from a tool of peaceful change to an offensive weapon (Kania). This causes issues because the change in how other nations view AI can lead to full scale arms-race similar to the ColdWar. Only by disentangling military applications from AI and clearly separating those two can AI be developed safely. Furthermore,

opening dialogues and providing deep engagement can provide engagements on the risks towards security applications that AI poses. However, this is not the case in the status-quo. As AI becomes more dual-use and entangled with militaristic applications, it risks sparking a new arms-race dynamic (Kania). The issue of a strong militaristic approach towards Artificial Intelligence is that it risks removing the human factor in warfare and pushes for rapid response without evaluating consequences. This hyper-speed can accelerate war into a hyper-war. Not only will this risk miscalculations that can lead to annihilation, but it also risks a world where there is no human safeguard as a fail safe. Only by promoting safe democratic development of artificial intelligence can it be possible to slowly integrate its power to provide stability in the future (Siddiqui).

Aside from the possibilities of hyper-war, Artificial intelligence has the potential to change current nuclear deterrence policies and has the possibility to create shifts with the current unipolar system. In the aspect of nuclear deterrence, AI provides the chance for other nations to circumvent traditional modes of nuclear deterrence due to the diverse applications it can provide from automation to cybersecurity. AI cyberweapons can cripple key infrastructure through its fast computation and rapid response times. Due to the effectiveness that AI provides, it may be possible that AI can guarantee nuclear and non-nuclear retaliation, and strengthen a nation's deterrent capabilities (Straub). This change in deterrence policy might shift how great-powers view each other and provide the rise of other powers.

In addition to the change in deterrence policies, Artificial intelligence has the potential to change the current unipolar order. Not only through the economic means as explained earlier, but also through the militaristic means as well. AI is considered by many to be a conflict enabler, since it allows conflict to happen with increased effectiveness. By shifting through data at hyper-speeds, AI can provide speed and accuracy to planning wars. This can provide sustainability for military overreach for a Unipole. By providing effective decision-making, this can help reduce costs and allow shifting resources to hotspots. Furthermore, it allows change in command and control centers to exercise real time control and transform electronic warfare. However, this means of control and military power can disrupt the global order. If another nation develops AI first, it can disrupt and potentially upend the current United States military supremacy (Horowitz) (Valantin).

Another issue that might arise during the race for AI supremacy is the potential for rogue AI development to occur. The current lack of strict ethics in the current state of artificial intelligence development poses a risk for other nations to unintentionally create a rogue system that can develop ungoverned. This poses a risk to the global system. One scenario can potentially become a Terminator-like plot (Siddiqui).

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence will soon shift the international balance of power in favor of whichever nation is able to properly harness it first. It has the potential to revolutionize daily life if handled properly, however the advances that will likely develop in surveillance technology are vulnerable to being misused. In addition, the potential in data analysis by AI can reshape current biotech industries by developing solutions and promoting hospital efficiencies. The current status-quo showcases a race of AI supremacy between the United States and China. Both nations have the same drive to develop AI, but they have different views of it. While the United States views AI primarily as a means of data processing, the current view of the Chinese AI industry is

the militaristic fusion of AI. This race can pose significant effects in the future. Focused development of civil-military fused AI systems can spark a new arms-race for autonomous weapons, which can cause “hyper-war”. It can also shift the current unipolar system by upending traditional modes of deterrence and disrupting current United States military superiority. Conversely, it can also strengthen the current geopolitical order and allow the United States a path to a sustainable hegemony. All in all, artificial intelligence will change the geopolitical landscape in the future. Without a strong base for ethics, the race for AI runs the possibility of posing an existential risk. Strong efforts need to be maintained among all parties interested in AI development in order to maintain the stable and safe growth of AI technology so that it may be used for humanity’s advancement in the future, instead of its regression.

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Analysis of the Effects of Large-Scale Disasters on the Behavior of Non-State Violent Actors in Countries Already Under Duress

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Abstract

Over the course of human civilization, humanity has been exposed to major disruptions of normalcy due to the onset of naturally occurring large-scale disasters. In the midst of disaster, some societies have also dealt with intrastate conflicts that strain the already depleted resources necessary for the survival and support of established institutions and governance. At the forefront of my research is the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which established itself in the fourth quarter of 2019 and has since then taken hundreds of thousands of lives and deteriorated several economies around the world. For this paper, I will be analyzing the effects that disasters have with respect to the behavior of non-state violent actors (NSVAs) and subsequent influence on conflict continuation, escalation, and de-escalation, as well as the NSVAs ability to legitimize themselves in the view of the state and international community. I will be drawing on existing literature, including the Ripe Moment Theory presented by Joakim Kreutz, to help explain behavior and conflict before, during, and after a disaster; will be utilizing the ACLED Conflict Database to track conflict intensity both before and during the pandemic; and will be providing case studies from multiple regions around the world to provide different contexts for distinct NSVAs. At the end of this paper, I come to the conclusion that the behavior of the NSVA and conflict continuation, escalation, and/or de-escalation, in the midst of a disaster, is both moderately dependent of the condition of the regime type, as well as the overall ambitions of the actors in question, whether that be political motivations or motivations of other interests. Additionally, I argue that states and NSVAs must come to a mutual agreement in the establishment of relief services, and that states should attempt to negotiate with the NSVA in the facilitation of the appropriate resources and guidance.

Introduction

During the concluding months of the year 2019, a new deadly virus, COVID-19, originating from Wuhan, China, had begun to spread rapidly across the world, without borders . According to Johns Hopkins University, at the moment of writing this paper, nearly 63 million people have been infected, and about 1.5 million have died from the virus ("COVID-19 Map", 2020). The consequences of the virus have been severe; from global economic recessions to widespread panic and strict enforcement of pandemic related restrictions, governments all over the world have been struggling to contain the proliferation of the virus and 'flatten the curve'. While governments are busy fighting the virus and allocating extensive resources to its citizens, non-state violent actors have taken advantage of weakened governments and have started their own campaigns for the management of resources to populations in order to gain greater legitimacy and support, as well as cooperating with the government, and in some cases, continuing or escalating conflict.

Analysis of the behavior of non-state violent actors does not provide a concrete pattern in which all actors fall into. Instead, the behavior relies on the past and current environments in which they operate help predict the behavior of actors in future events. The culmination of this paper cannot be applied to all situations; however, I hope to give a starting point to understand the conditions and series of events that causes NSVAs and governments to either change or continue their behaviors in the midst of a disaster.

Defining Disaster and Definitional Accommodations

Over the course of the research done for this paper, I have come across various definitions that both fit and do not fit both the scope of the independent variable, the COVID-19 pandemic, that I am using to focus this research on. Therefore, I have discarded the concrete definitions of natural disaster, epidemic, pandemic, and global health crisis for the broader and greater-encompassing definition of disaster. This definitional choice was made in order to allow for greater implementation of the results as well as the qualitative and quantitative data represented in this paper to other events outside of the norm of the local or global community and to allow myself to introduce significant features of Kreutz' research into the behavior of non-state violent actors in the midst of a natural disaster (2014) into this paper, where I focus on a global health crisis; a phenomenon which does not fall under the narrow category of natural disaster.[40]

To encompass a broader body of events that may occur around the world I have adopted two definitions of 'disaster' that closely relate to each other and mangle them; one from the World Health Organization (WHO), and the other from the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC). As defined by the IFRC, "[a] disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources" ("What is a disaster?", 2020). In addition, the WHO defines disaster as "an occurrence disrupting the normal conditions of existence and causing a level of suffering that exceeds the capacity of adjustment of the affected community" ("Disasters & Emergencies", 2002, p. 3).

Through the interlacing of both definitions, we can conclude that a disaster involves three

[40] Kreutz (2014) uses the term "armed separatist challengers" in place of my use of non-state violent actors (NSVA).

key characteristics: the disruption of the condition of a community; the inability of a community to fully cope with the situation using its own resources; and the suffering of a community due to the destruction of human life, capital, and environment. This creation of an all-encompassing definition of ambiguous events allows it to be utilized in cases pertaining to earthquakes, hurricanes, pandemics, famine, drought, and others within the broad category. Therefore, the use of this paper can be applied to different events that may take place or have already taken place in order to better understand the behaviors of certain actors.

On the subject of the characterization of regime type and its polity, it is essential to define the main terms associated with the classification of regime types that will be used in this paper. For this, I will be using the "Center for Systemic Peace's" (creators of the Polity IV Project) definitions of *democracy, anocracy, and autocracy.* The Center defines *democracy* along three elements: "the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express effective preferences about alternative policies and leaders," "the existence of institutionalized constraints on the exercise of power by the executive," and "the guarantee of civil liberties to all citizens in their daily lives and in acts of political participation" (Marshall et al., 2018, p. 14). Furthermore, the Center defines *anocracy* as systems of government that are in "'transitions' from one mode of authority to another" and "'incomplete transitions' and the appearance of 'incoherent' polities" (Marshall et al., 2018, p. 9). This can be seen as a government stuck in the transition period in which the country utilizes policies seen in both democratic as well as autocratic countries. *Autocracy*, as defined by the Center, is "[sharply restricting] or [suppressing] competitive political participation," "their chief executives are chosen in a regularized process of selection within the political elite", and when "in office they exercise power with few institutional constraints" (Marshall et al., 2018, p. 15).

Existing Literature to Be Utilized

In order to better understand how the different actors behave in the event of a disaster, we must pull theoretical approaches from existing literature which provides both qualitative and quantitative data supporting specific theories. The primary theoretical arguments that I will tie into this paper come from Joakim Kreutz' paper "From Tremors to Talks: Do Natural Disasters Produce Ripe Moments for Resolving Separatist Conflicts?" and Kalyvas' "A Theory of Selective Violence." Additionally, I will be using the papers, "COVID-19 and Armed Conflict," by Tobias Ide, and "Violent Non-State Actors and COVID-19: Challenge or Opportunity." Each of these papers provides information pertinent to explaining behavior as well as understanding conflict continuity and legitimization of NSVAs on the political level.

The first, and most important, piece of research that I will be reviewing is Joakim Kruetz', "From Tremors to Talks." Over the course of his paper, Kreutz focuses primarily on the behavior of actors in Indonesia in the time period from 1990 – 2004 and looks at how the 2004 tsunami has affected ceasefires, negotiations, and peace agreements. To do this, he introduces his argument that natural disasters create a "ripe moment for conflict resolution" since the government needs to allocate its resources towards disaster response at the given moment (2012, p. 482). Over the course of his research, Kreutz has come up with the Ripe Moment Theory; the theory that external shocks to a state create incentives for the State to initiate conflict resolution actions for those it is fighting against (2012, p. 483). The 'Ripe Moment Theory' has some restrictions and assumptions, however. It assumes that the actors engaged in the armed conflict are rational, in that they calculate the cost-benefit of their actions in the wake of a disaster

(Kreutz, 2012, p. 484). Additionally, it assumes that the government is trying to stay in power and that they are trying to maintain the public's support as well as keep a positive public opinion (Kreutz, 2012, p. 485). Finally, the theory argues that when a state government is experiencing an increase in demand for resources from the public, it is more willing to negotiate with non-state violent actors (Kreutz, 2012, p. 483).

Utilizing the 'Ripe Moment Theory,' and generating both qualitative and quantitative data into an empirical analysis, Kreutz looks at 405 different disaster events in 21 different countries, between the years 1990-2004, and has 50 different rebel groups (2012, p. 484). Looking at conflict data from 12 months prior, then 12 months after the disaster event, Kreutz finds support for his 'Ripe Moment Theory.' In his results, Kreutz finds that the onset of a disaster is a catalyst for an increase in talks and ceasefires, and additionally finds that the onset of a disaster does not relevantly act as a catalyst for ceasefires (2012, p. 493). In addition to these results, Kreutz also finds that a disaster that occurs outside of a conflict zone is more likely to be a catalyst for talks, ceasefires, and peace agreements (2012, p. 493).

In addition to this study, Kreutz also introduces a study on regime type with respect to the 'Ripe Moment Theory,' and their likelihood to participate in either talks, ceasefire, or peace agreements. He finds that talks are probable in both democracies and non-democracies; ceasefires are more probable in democracies and have a significantly low probability in non-democracies; and finally, he finds that peace agreements have a very low probability in both democracies and non-democracies (2012, p. 494).

In conclusion, Kreutz paper highlights important data that I will be using to explain the behaviors of non-state violent actors during disaster events and their interactions with the standing government. As we can understand, the COVID-19 pandemic has generated shocks to countries around the world, causing both governments and non-state actors alike to seek out terms to provide support to the populations; whether it be for popular support and legitimization, or because of political or social pressure.

The second academic paper that is important to my research is "COVID-19 and Armed Conflict" by Tobias Ide (2020). Ide's paper takes a look at how NSVAs have reacted to the COVID-19 pandemic and how they take advantage of grievance and opportunity structures, which influence armed conflict with respect to increasing or decreasing levels of violence and conflict onset (Ide, 2020, p. 1). Over the course of his paper, Ide finds that three countries; Afghanistan, Colombia, and Thailand, have experienced a decrease in violence by NSVAs in order to increase their popular support through the provision of aid (2020, p. 8). Ide also finds, however, that five countries have witnessed an increase in armed activity by NSVAs in India, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, and the Philippines (2020, pp. 9-10).

Ide adds "that high levels of disease prevalence and the associated loss in life expectancy reduces the relative risks of individuals for joining dangerous activities like rebellion" (2020, p. 4). This ties directly into the 'collective action problem' that Ide introduces, where, based on individual cost-benefit analyses, it is less costly to join, in this case, a rebel group, than to not join.

Through the use of the collective action problem, Ide argues that "high levels of disease prevalence and the associated loss in life expectancy reduces the relative risks of individuals for joining dangerous activities like rebellion" (2020, p. 4). Attaching itself to the collective action problem, Ide adds that "GDP decline and poor health are also among the established predictors of civil war" (2020, p. 2). Through this, he is conveying the idea that poor government control

over economic and social services increases grievances against the State, providing a ripe moment for the collective action problem to play out among individuals, and increase the likelihood of conflict onset or escalation (2020, p. 2). While he finds that some countries have seen a decrease in violence, Ide adds that although there may be a decline in violence, there is still the possibility of violence escalation in the future as groups regroup and recruit for larger scale conflict (2020, p. 11).

This paper is useful in understanding the reasons in which individuals turn to non-state groups in order to provide personal protection and obtain sufficient resources for themselves when the government is unable to provide or isn't providing. Through the use of the collective action problem and the idea of grievances and opportunity, Ide sets a foundation for understanding cost-benefit analysis during a pandemic, which can be broadly used in conjunction with the broad definition of disasters. In addition, Ide presents and looks at specific case studies in the eight countries listed above, in which some will be expanded on later in this paper.

The third significant research set that I will be using to explain the behavior of actors in the midst of a disaster is Kalyvas', "A Theory of Selective Violence," in his book "The Logic of Violence in Civil War." Within this chapter, Kalyvas explains many different approaches as to the behavior of the incumbent government, insurgent forces, and civilians. However, later in the chapter, Kalyvas adds a theory and model of the use of violence (a behavior) by the incumbent and/or the insurgents, given certain environmental conditions. He starts on the idea that the "theory of selective violence [is] a joint process" and that "actors operating in a regime of fragmented sovereignty must rely on selective violence to deter defection" (Kalyvas, 2011, p. 173).

While much of this chapter looks at defection and denunciation during civil war, Kalyvas introduces a theory with equal importance that looks at the use of violence based on territorial control. He assumes that "[p]olitical actors maximize territorial control" and "when one actor abandons a territory, the rival actor moves in" (Kalyvas, 2011, p. 196). Additionally, Kalyvas notes that although his theory focuses on the aspect of civil wars, he notes that "the theory can be further refined and expanded… [allowing] the derivation of robust hypotheses about the variation of violence across wars, as well as across several types of violence – from organized crime to terrorism and genocide" (2011, p. 208). Through the addition of this, Kalyvas grants the use of this theory to be expanded on in other scenarios; which I plan on doing with relation to disasters and group behavior.

Turning our attention to his theory of the use of violence with respect to control, Kalyvas notes that there are five levels of control and violence type behavior, and simplifies it on a two-dimensional graph (2011, p. 204). Kalyvas' theory revolving around control and violence says; when control by either an government/insurgent/criminal/or other violent group is high, then the violence will be low (zones 1 and 5); whereas, on the other hand, if the control is low, then he expects violence to be high (zones 2 and 4). In zone 3, where both actors have equal control, the level of violence is expected to be low due to both actors attempting to win over the populace, therefore not risking violence (2011, p. 204).

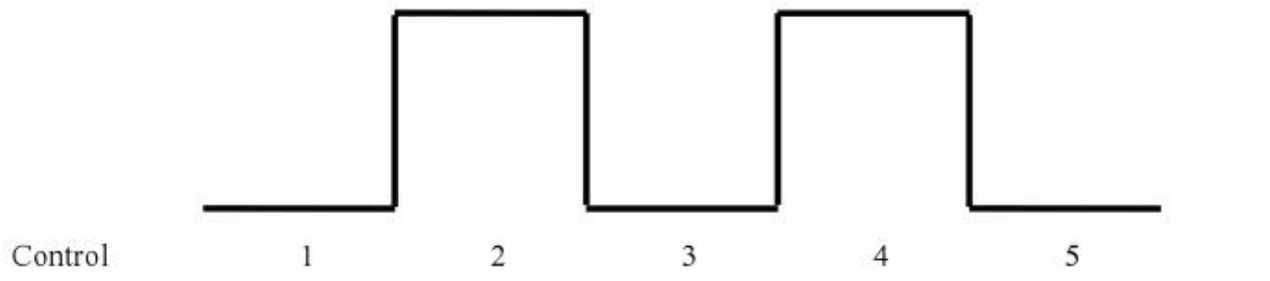


FIGURE 7.6. Selective Violence and Control

Source: Kalyvas, 2011, p. 204

With relation to this paper and the behaviors of non-state violent actors, Kalyvas' theories can be applied to better understand the circumstances in which groups may agree to either conflict escalation or de-escalation through the control variable and how it is used to predict whether or not the actor will use violence. When looking at this through the scope of a disaster, I expect to see zones of control between the government and NSVAs, in which resources help determine who the populace turns to for governance related purposes, thereby legitimizing an actor.

Research and Hypotheses

As shown in previous sections, the term, 'disaster' has a broad meaning and can act as a catalyst for the emergence of new events within the dimensions of conflict and legitimization of non-state violent actors. When a disaster has a significant effect on a country, it diverts resources, aid, money, and manpower to relief missions in order to mitigate the damage done to the State.

Through the union of the ripe moment theory, collective action problem, and the theory of selective violence, I come up with two main research questions:

1. How does the COVID-19 pandemic affect the legitimization of non-state violent actors within countries whose governments have limited resources and outreach?
2. How does COVID-19 affect conflict continuation, escalation, and/or de-escalation?

While I focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, I plan this paper to be applicable to disaster's in general and am using the current state of the world as a primary example for proof of concept.

For my hypotheses, I will be setting dependent and independent variables, as well as recognizing a control variable. The independent variable (IV) is the COVID-19 pandemic and was chosen due to the fact that it is an international disaster that has had a great effect on the current status of a country and its systems. I assume that over the period of time that this paper is being written that the pandemic will be ongoing and not drastically change.

For my dependent variables (DV), I have come up with four different variables that can change based on the current state of a disaster (ongoing or ended). The first dependent variable that I want to introduce is the *response of groups*. Under this DV, the response of groups is characterized in a couple different ways. The first way in which the response of groups is characterized is in how they react. Reactions can consist of doing nothing, increasing activity in the political landscape of the country, enforcing guidelines, along with many more. The response of the group will help in the determination of the group's goals and their capabilities as

a non-state actor. Another way in which response will be measured is whether or not they continue normal operations or divert their resources to providing relief and aid to the local population.

The third, fourth, and fifth dependent variables each relate to one another and can occur concurrently with each other depending on the current state of the disaster. The first of the three is *conflict continuation*. In conflict continuation, NSVAs can decide whether or not to continue their conflict with the State in the same capacity that they were prior to the onset of the disaster. The second of the three is *conflict escalation* and is when the NSVA increases their fight with the State and allocates more resources to their fight in order to push the State into greater levels of distress. The third of the three is *conflict de-escalation* and can occur when the NSVA eases their use of force against the State or ceases their force altogether . Conflict de-escalation does not necessarily imply direct cooperation and an end to the conflict, but can include ceasefire agreements, disengagement of forces, or withdrawal from the conflict for a period of time.

In addition to the IV and DVs presented, I have drawn up one conditional variable, *regime type*. The political stance of the regime, in many ways, can predict the type of behavior a country's government and military would have to a disaster, as well as their likelihood of reacting in certain ways to the NSVA. Types of regimes range on the polity scale from -10 to 10, with -10 being fully autocratic and 10 being fully democratic. Within and among the labels of autocratic and democratic lay different subsets of regime type that can include, but are not limited to; full democracy, democracy, open anocracy, closed anocracy, and autocracy (Marshall et al., 2018).

With the variables now defined, I will turn to my first hypothesis, which states:

> *H1: The onset of a disaster provides fertile ground for non-state violent actors to legitimize themselves among the international community and their local population.*

I predict that when a disaster occurs, NSVAs, who have greater political ambitions, are more likely to try and win the hearts and minds of the population through different means. Through winning the hearts and minds of the people, these groups will be able to effectively gain the support within the country's political landscape and can secure their legitimacy in the international landscape through recognition by different countries for their relief efforts.

The second hypothesis that I will turn to is:

> *H2: The onset of a disaster de-escalates conflict and violent behavior of non-state violent actors.*

For this hypothesis, I predict that in the midst of a disaster, NSVAs will, instead of escalating or continuing conflict with the state, they will de-escalate in order to allocate additional resources to local populations, as well as to keep local populations under control through the provision of their own rules and systems of governance.

When a disaster hits a country, we have seen instances in which groups actively ask the government for help in order to provide necessary aid to their populations ("Bringing Within Reach", 2020, p. 1). In turn, this cooperation between actors actively de-escalates conflict through the mutual building of a relationship between the NSVA and government around a similar cause ("Bringing Within Reach", 2020, p. 2).

Even though disaster may positively impact conflict de-escalation, there are places in which NSVAs already have the foothold they need on the population, and thus do not need to dis-engage from conflict. This leads to my third hypothesis:

> *H3: The onset of a disaster does not deescalate conflict, but instead has an adverse effect and escalates the violent behavior of NSVAs.*

When looking at the aspect of conflict escalation in the midst of a disaster, I take into account the goals of the NSVA as well as the resources and the foothold they have in their space of influence.

The final hypothesis that I will be presenting deals with the conditioning variable and the incumbent. In this I argue that:

> *H4: In States below the democracy governance type polity score threshold, there should be an increase in conflict amid a disaster, and in States under democratic governance type, there should be a decrease in conflict amid disaster.*

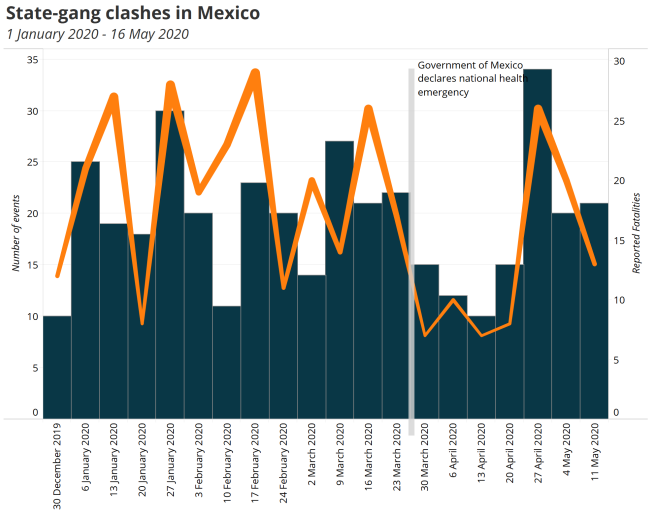
I come across this assumption as democratic states should be more willing to listen to their populations as governments face re-election. Autocratic governments, I predict, are more likely to increase their use of violence because they are less likely to have to answer to their populations, and are more likely to attempt to control dissent within their State.

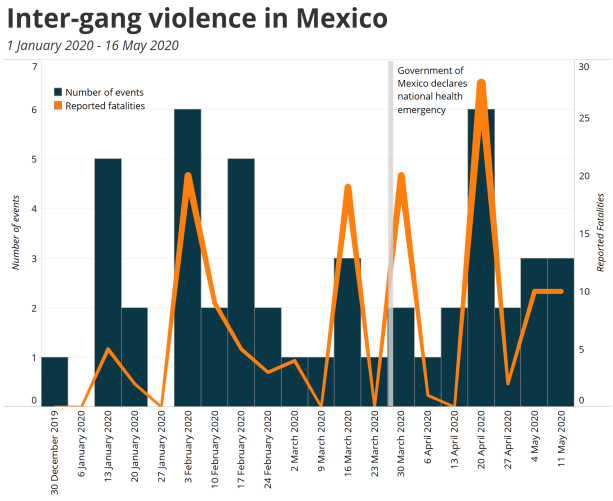
With these four hypotheses spelled out, I will turn to both qualitative and quantitative research to either prove or disprove them and provide current case studies through news articles and research papers in order to provide concrete support for my arguments. While my list is not exhaustive, I have picked out areas of the world with the most coverage and have plentiful data generated over the years, which help draw out a clear pattern.

Case Studies

Mexico

The situation, as it relates to the COVID-19 pandemic, in Mexico is complex and involves many NSVAs which are characterized as cartels and fight both amongst each other as well as against the incumbent government. Among the cartels in Mexico, six separate cartels, the two most prominent being the Gulf and Sinaloa Cartels, have started disaster relief and enforcement efforts in territories under their control. Looking at Mexico broadly, the ACLED database shows that for conflict events and fatalities between the months of January 2020 and May 2020, there have been spikes in both, reaching a new homicide record for the State in March 2020 (Gutierrez et al., 2020). Additionally, ACLED finds that in Mexico, the states of Baja California, Sonora, Nuevo Leon, Jalisco, Colima, and Mexico have seen an exponential increase in violence against civilians after March 2020.





Even though Mexico has been a hot spot with cartel violence for many years, the pandemic has created ways of the cartels to gain an upper hand on the government and to win social control over the populations (Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 12). According to Bunker and Sullivan, the Mexican cartels have been engaged in activities that are seen as equivalent to the provision of humanitarian aid, and have been using this aid to gain the public support and to use it as propaganda, to further their claims that they are the "protector of the community" (2020, p. 1). Additionally, Bunker and Sullivan recognize two other unique activities that cartels have started to engage in; "special taxing of businesses to provide that aid, and quarantine enforcement" (2020, p. 12).

While some groups do not have the resources on hand to provide aid to their respective populations, Jones and Hale find that many have turned to "Social Banditry" and "Robin Hood" strategy (2020, p. 1; Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 12). The "Robin Hood" strategy is the taking of resources from the government and the rich and giving it to the poor or suffering communities in order to undermine government attempts to help the communities (Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 12). "Social Banditry" is when "cartels [publicize] their distribution of food via pantries to portray themselves as "Robin Hoods" (Jones & Hale, 2020, p. 1). By using these strategies to win over the population, the cartels are able to cement their legitimacy in which they operate and can then utilize the local populations to their advantage, whether it be as lookouts or as "a layer of protection when authorities target them" (De Cordoba, 2020, p. 1; Jones & Hale, 2020, p. 2).

Over the past couple months, since the COVID-19 pandemic started, as well as during instances of other disasters to hit Mexico, drug cartels have been sending out aid packages to their local populace in order to help them make it through the pandemic. These aid packages often come in boxes that advertise the cartel and contain items such as: oil, sugar, rice, cereal, coffee, cookies, tuna, soups, milk, as well as household products such as "toilet paper… and soap" (Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 1; Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 5). So far, it is estimated that cartels have handed out aid packages in 11 of Mexico's States, and the provision of these is seen as a phenomenon of the Mexican cartels (Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 12; De Cordoba, 2020, p. 2).

In addition to providing aid to their local populace, Mexican drug cartels have also been enforcing quarantine and curfews as well as imposing punishment on dissenters. This has been seen in use by the Sinaloa Cartel, who operate in and around the Mexican State of Jalisco ("Sinaloa Cartel", 2019). Bunker and Sullivan note that both the Sinaloa Cartel and the Los Grandos Cartel have been enforcing a quarantine and curfew, while the Sinaloa Cartel has been issuing punishment through the use of hitmen who are armed with a wooden paddle (2020, p. 6; 2020, p. 10). By enforcing these restrictions on movement, the Cartels have been greatly increasing their legitimacy to the State of Mexico to the point that the President is considering the possibility of amnesty to some members for their support (Bunker & Sullivan, 2020, p. 1).

Regime and Polity

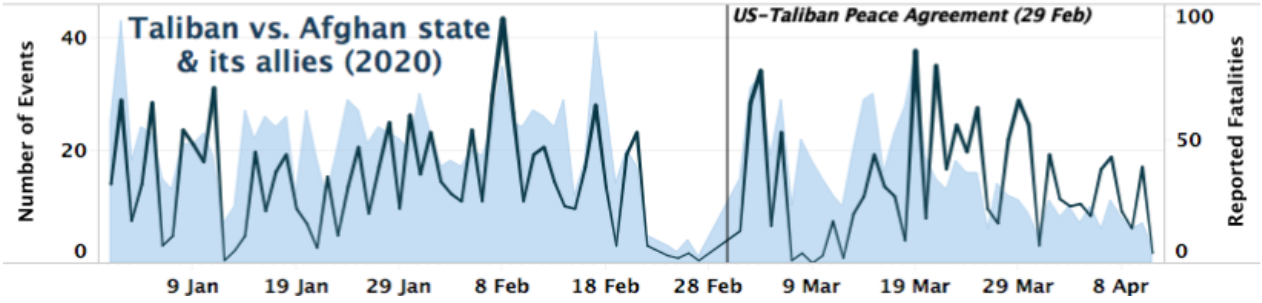
According to the CIA World Factbook, the government of Mexico is a federal presidential republic, with a national congress and judicial branch. The legal system is reportedly influenced by US constitutional law and involves judicial review ("The World Factbook: Mexico", 2018). As of 2015, Mexico's federal presidential republic earned a Polity IV score of 8, giving it the status of "Democracy" (Marshall et al., 2018).

Afghanistan

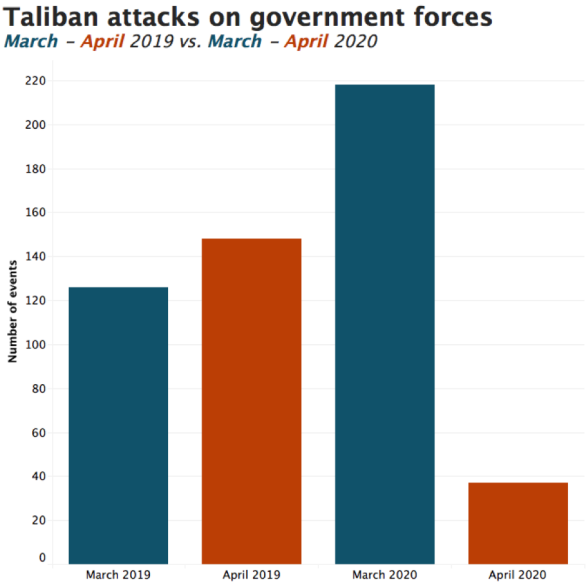
Similar to the drug trade in Mexico, the Taliban are a non-state violent actor that profits off of poppy in Afghanistan in order to produce heroin. The Taliban, however, are also designated as a terrorist organization and are working towards legitimacy on the international stage. In February 2020, the Taliban and the United States signed a peace deal as the United States prepared to demobilize troops to the country. Despite the deal, The Economist finds that since the deal and since the pandemic started, Taliban attacks have risen 70% ("The Taliban", 2020).

Although the Taliban are seen as a terrorist network by many countries, they have been involved with the government of Afghanistan for decades. After the September 11, 2001 attacks, the United States overthrew them from power. Since then, however, they have been making a more legitimate comeback into power. In response to COVID-19, they have opened up their territories to the Afghanistan Health Ministry, as well as the WHO, who says it is directly working with the group on COVID-19 related challenges. The Taliban are also taking a direct approach to the utilization of their resources and have been seen deploying "hygiene workers dressed in white personal protective clothing and carrying spraying tanks" as well as converting schools into quarantine centers (Marx et al., 2020, p. 2).

Given the impact of COVID-19 on Afghanistan and the response by the Taliban to push themselves into a 'for the people' role, they have acknowledged the fact that because they have so little cases, they will continue fighting (Marx et al., 2020, p. 1). When analyzing conflict data from Afghanistan as it relates to the Taliban, after the US-Taliban Peace Agreement, there has been a decrease in overall conflict events that take place. Prior to the Peace Agreement, events and fatalities were still occurring at a high rate despite the ongoing pandemic. These numbers are available below and show that while the Peace Agreement hasn't shown a long-term positive effect, the onset of COVID-19 has a correlative effect on the decrease of violence.



Source: Kishi, 2020



Source: Mehvar, 2020

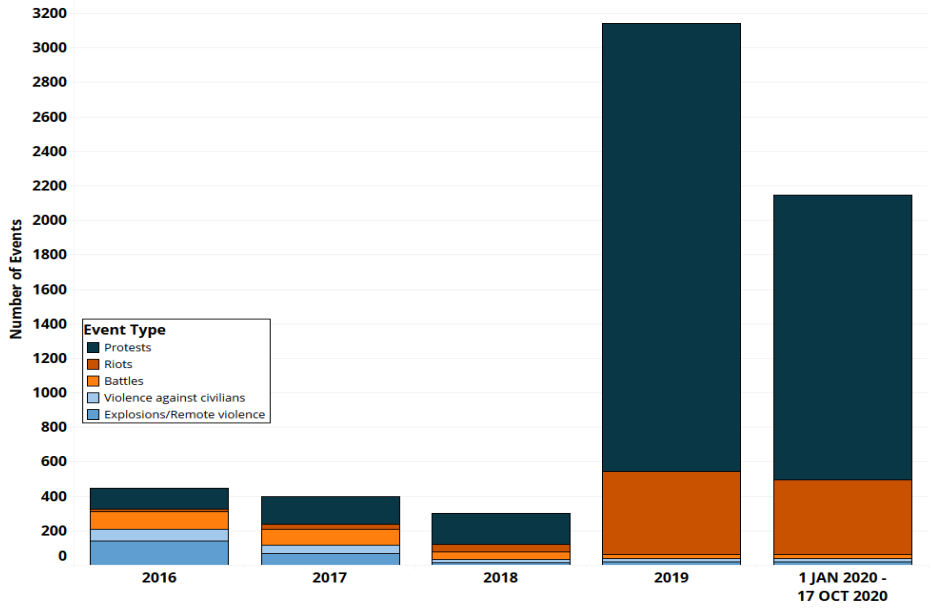
Regime and Polity

The CIA World Factbook characterizes the government of Afghanistan as a presidential Islamic republic with a national assembly and judicial branch of various court systems, the highest being the Supreme Court ("The World Factbook: Afghanistan", 2018). As of the year 2015, Afghanistan received a Polity IV score of 1, up from -7 between 1996 to 2004. A score of 1 gives Afghanistan the status of a "Open Anocracy," however the Polity IV Project characterizes the country as a "Failed State" (Marshall et al., 2018)

Lebanon

In Lebanon, the country is uniquely divided into two regions, North and South, both under the same government, however the South is mainly under the control of the Iranian-backed, anti-Israel Shiite Hezbollah movement. Due to the State support and resources that Hezbollah has, "[t]he paramilitary group is marshalling its deep resources in the fight against coronavirus using a corps of volunteers, doctors and facilities to carve out a prominent role in the crisis-driven response" of the incumbent (Knecht, 2020, p. 1). By allocating its own resources, while funding and providing support to the health ministry, Hezbollah is "fill[ing] gaps in state services to gain influence" and is trying to further legitimize itself into State politics and on the international community by taking pressure off of the State (Todman, 2020, p. 7; Trew, 2020, p. 6). Similar to the Taliban in Afghanistan, Hezbollah is trying to show that only they can control the pandemic in Lebanon and that they have the necessary resources to do so (Todman, 2020, p. 6).

Figure 1: Political Disorder in Lebanon, 1 January 2016 - 17 October 2020



Source: Carboni, 2020

Hezbollah has also been taking a direct approach to fighting off the virus and providing relief aid to those under its control. Reuters reported that "[Hezbollah] rolled out one of two new testing centers, a fleet of ambulances – many equipped with ventilators – and an entire hospital repurposed for coronavirus patients" (Knecht, 2020, p. 3). In addition to this they have been sending their own doctors to government run hospitals as well as setup a "call center, three quarantine centers with 170 beds and a capacity to scale up to 1,000, and 64 social committees to

monitor the needs of families hit by the economic fallout" (Knecht, 2020, p. 7). Due to the sharp increase of resources to the population under their control as well as to the populations under government control, Hezbollah is further solidifying itself as being able to provide for the people and govern the people, thus setting itself up as a legitimate political actor.

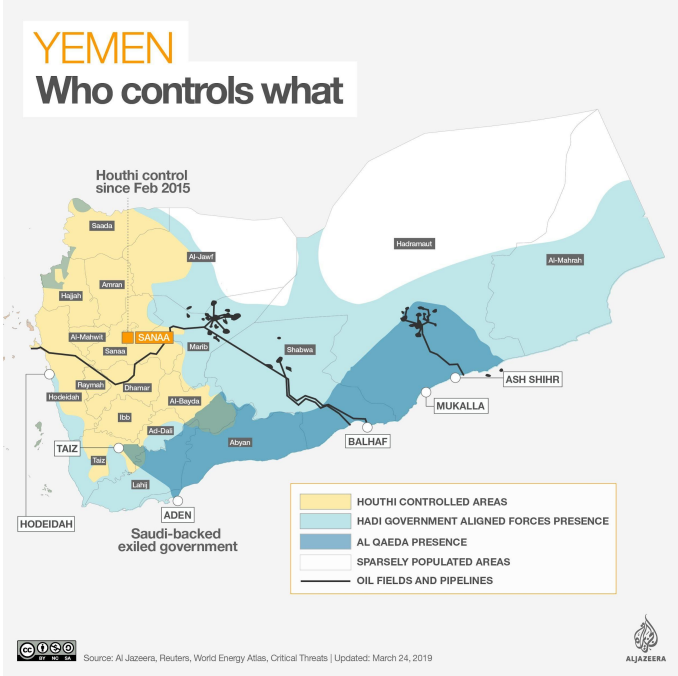
Since November 2019, Lebanon has experienced an increase in both peaceful and violent (riot) protests as well as a decrease in battles, violence against civilians, and explosions/remote violence with respect to previous years (Carboni, 2020). The most prominent events that have been taking place in Lebanon are primarily around the four cities of Beirut, Tripoli, Saida, and Zahle.

Regime and Polity

Regarding the government of Lebanon, the CIA characterizes their system as a parliamentary republic with a National Assembly and a judicial system consisting of courts at various levels, the highest being the Supreme Court ("The World Factbook: Lebanon", 2018). The Polity IV Project, as of 2015, gives Lebanon a polity score of 6, which characterizes it as a "Democracy" (Marshall et al., 2018).

Yemen

The final country of interest that has been severely torn by civil war in the past decade and has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is Yemen. For many years, Yemen has been struggling with famine and civil war, which has severely impacted the ability of the government to allocate necessary resources to key populations and is currently home to the world's worst humanitarian crisis in which "millions remain at risk of starvation" (Aksoy, 2020, p. 1). This situation has allowed strong non-state violent actors to intervene in Yemeni territorial sovereignty with the backing of the rogue regime in Iran.



Source: Chughtai & Edroos, 2019

According to the ACLED data on Yemen, the southern regions of the country have witnessed a sharp increase in conflict events and fatalities, one month after the country reported its first COVID-19 case. In September 2020, there was an additional period of exponentially higher conflict events between the Houthi's and anti-Houthi forces, as well as other NSVAs operating in-country (Carboni, 2020). In addition to the increase in conflict, Yemen has experienced a decrease in drone and airstrikes since the beginning of the pandemic (Carboni, 2020)

In the far northwestern area of Yemen, the Iranian-backed Houthi rebel movement holds tight control of major cities and populations, and currently exercises its own central control over its areas of influence. While the government is occupied with the ongoing conflict and famine, the Houthi's have taken it upon themselves to establish their own countermeasures to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to increase their own narratives (Alasrar, 2020, p. 2). According to Alasrar, the Houthi's leadership is deflecting the blame for the spread of the pandemic onto their adversaries, primarily stating that the "spread of the epidemic is a result of 'Saudi-led aggression'" (2020, p. 3).

In response to the pandemic, the Houthi leadership within Yemen, in conjunction with Iranian support, has begun to provide relief services and disaster resources within their sphere of influence. Accordingly, the Houthi movement has announced that they will be combatting the virus in many ways, including, "establishing a hotline to report cases and symptoms, training medical teams in districts under their control, opening medical quarantine units, and introducing testing for suspected cases" (Alasrar, 2020, p. 4). While this seems like a legitimate plan, the Houthi movement's trust is relatively low among the population due to previous failures in mitigating relief efforts, however, if successful, this will help legitimize the movement under the influence of their controlled populations.

Regime and Polity

In Yemen, the CIA writes that the government is "in transition," and consists of a parliament and a judicial system with various courts, the highest being the Supreme Court ("The World Factbook: Yemen", 2018). As of 2015, the Polity IV Project gives Yemen a polity score of 3, which marks it as a "Open Anocracy" (Marshall et al., 2018).

Analysis and Findings

Up until this point in the paper, I have provided concrete information on the nature of a disaster, have defined regime types, presented hypotheses based off of published theoretical papers, and have provided qualitative and quantitative data in case studies to show the affect that non-state violent actors have during situations involving disasters. In this next section, I will take each hypothesis and, using the information presented, show evidence as to whether or not the hypothesis holds or does not hold. The outcomes will not be a catch all, but instead be a starting point for understanding specific behaviors in certain areas of the world and regime types.

Through the use of the ACLED database as well as the Polity IV Project database, I was able to compare and contrast the different case studies involved and correlate that data with my hypotheses. In my first hypothesis, in which I hypothesize that disasters allow non-state violent actors to legitimize themselves among the international community as well as the local populations; from the data presented, I conclude that in three out of the four cases presented, this hypothesis holds. Via the legitimization witnessed being attributed to the groups, the Ripe Moment Theory helps explain hypothesis 1.

In Mexico, the Cartels have gained footholds within their respective communities in which they can then use to benefit themselves against the government. Additionally, the Mexican government has recognized the behaviors of the Cartels and has considered offering amnesty in exchange for the humanitarian aid they are providing to the populace. In this case, the government is legitimizing them by recognizing their status as groups who hold territorial control, thus providing a pathway to the political sphere of Mexico.

In Lebanon and Afghanistan, both the Taliban and Hezbollah have similar approaches in the way they have responded and are both already involved in the political landscapes of their respective countries. However, as noted before, they have most recently taken advantage of the pandemic to further their own political ambitions with both the international community and the local populations under their territorial control. Each has shown interest over the years of furthering their political power in their country's government and have taken steps to increase their legitimacy during the pandemic. We have witnessed both providing healthcare assistance to their populations as well as providing the enforcement of safety measures to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

The Taliban, a former government of Afghanistan before the United States overthrew them after 9/11, has been working its way back up to power through international channels. The pandemic has allowed them to further solidify their position through their allowance of the World Health Organization into their territories as well as creating quarantine centers and administering personal protective equipment (Marx et al., 2020, p. 2).

Hezbollah's approach in Lebanon, as mentioned previously, has taken a stance parallel with the Lebanese government and health ministry, setting up new healthcare infrastructure and employing thousands of physicians (Diwan & Abi-Rached, 2020, p. 4). While the group currently has 13 out of 128 seats in the Lebanese Parliament, their actions during the pandemic could help increase their influence, especially in the South. ("Interior Ministry", 2018)

In the case of the Houthis in Yemen, although they are attempting to provide aid to their local populations, many years of conflict has exponentially decreased their ability to gain public trust and support. Prior to the pandemic, Yemen was in the middle of the world's worst humanitarian crisis, and has only gotten worse (Aksoy, 2020, p. 1). According to Fatima Alasrar, while the Houthis have been setting up care services in areas under their control, their trust is exponentially low due to their failures in the past (2020, p. 4). Because of this, it can be inferred that their position in politics is not considered legitimate and is degrading.

Therefore, given these four case studies and the information that comes with them, while not apparent in every situation, the onset of a disaster can and does have an effect of the legitimization of non-state violent actors as long as they manage their resources, cooperate with the State, and provide sufficient relief efforts to the population.

The second set of hypotheses that I will be going over is the idea that disaster de-escalates conflict between non-state violent actors and the government or other groups, and that disaster increases conflict between non-state violent actors and the government or other groups. When going through the data on these hypotheses', I find that the results given the case studies are inconclusive based on a number of factors. For this, the ACLED database will be my primary source of data, which shows conflict events in correlation with time, particularly in the time-period after the pandemic began.

In Yemen, the country experienced a sharp increase in conflict events and fatalities beginning in May 2020, one month after the pandemic was first declared within their borders

(Carboni, 2020). Since then there has been a relatively steady amount of conflict events within the country, however this number still exceeds pre-COVID numbers (Carboni, 2020). Most of the ongoing fighting in Yemen is most likely due to the low trust factor that the population has with the Houthis, and over the control of aid resources, which are currently scarce as the Houthi's blame Saudi Arabia's blockade, given the famine and pandemic are ongoing, (Alasrar, 2020, pp. 3-4).

Much like Yemen, Mexico has seen an increase in violence among non-state violent actors, most notably with the cartels. In Mexico, with the many cartels operating within the borders, the groups often claim territorial control over areas. While a disaster is ongoing, and resources and supplies become limited, there is not only an increase in fighting with the government, but among cartels with homicides increasing by about 2.2% "during the first quarter of 2020 (Jones & Hale, 2020, p. 1). Duncan Wood, the Director of the Mexico Institute, supports that claim saying that "in Mexico violence has gone up through the pandemic" ("Violent Non-State", 2020, p. 2).

In the previous hypothesis, I stated that there is a possibility to have less conflict between the government and the cartels while they provide for their populations and legitimize themselves within the State. However, among the cartels, there is an expected increase in violence due to the territorial claims and resources that come with them. As the groups look to provide greater resources to their 'constituents,' they are more likely to expand into rival group territories, thus sparking violence. In addition, Jones & Hale add that violence has not decreased in Mexico during the pandemic because the disease is seen as having a 2% chance of death associated with it, whereas the cartels are seen as a greater threat than combating the disease (2020, p. 5).

In Lebanon, while there has been a rise in riots, violence against civilians and remote violence and explosions have dramatically decreased in comparison to the past three years. While riots are a type of violence, they can include a multitude of different groups or individuals; whereas, instances of explosions and other remote violence activity, which is more likely the work of a non-state violent actor group, have declined. Therefore, Lebanon's case has mixed results and adds to the inconclusiveness of this hypothesis.

The final piece of hypotheses 2 and 3 is the case of Afghanistan, who despite the peace deal signed in February, has witnessed a fluctuation of political violence among non-state violent actors within the country. As shown in the table on page 18, there is a relative decrease in violence in the country with relation to the onset of the pandemic. ACLED states that most violence attributed to the Taliban happens outside of Taliban controlled territory, and is against the government, however, is lower compared to data of Taliban violence in the previous year (Kishi, 2020; Mehvar, 2020). In conjunction with the data, I can conclude that COVID-19 has caused violence by non-state violent actors, specifically the Taliban, in Afghanistan to decrease.

Concluding hypotheses 2 and 3, the data shows the COVID-19 pandemic has had mixed effects on the violent behaviors of NSVAs and that although the virus has an exponential effect on populations, each group is different with how they react. With Mexico, some parts of Kreutz' Ripe Moment Theory hold, with the government offering amnesty and concessions for further cartel cooperation. In other areas, such as Afghanistan, even a peace deal hasn't been able to stop the fighting, despite the ongoing pandemic; and in Yemen, where the pandemic has been added to the backdrop of an already deteriorating country in the midst of a famine, fighting over territory continues between the government and non-state violent actors within the country with

no real end in sight.

The final hypothesis in which I have presented and will now be analyzing with the data and theories presented is that states below the democratic polity score threshold should experience an increase in conflict amidst a disaster, while democratic states should see a decrease in conflict amidst a disaster. As shown earlier, Mexico has a polity score of 8; Afghanistan a 1; Lebanon a 6, and Yemen a 3. None of these dip below the -6 score which is a conditional of an autocracy, however two are autocracies (transitioning), while the other two are not-full democracies. Despite this, the data can still show a pattern of behavior in correlation with disaster onset.

Mexico, considered a democracy by the Polity IV Project, has recently seen an increase in violence despite their score. With Mexico, despite them being a democracy, the most likely factor in which conflict has risen instead of fallen is due to the ongoing drug war within the country as well as the fight for resources during the pandemic. Another country that is considered a democracy (although riding the line) by the Polity IV Project is Lebanon. As we saw earlier, the Lebanese case is mixed, as there has been a decrease in certain forms of violence, while other forms have increased. Therefore, with these two countries the first part of the hypothesis, that democracies yield less conflict in the midst of disaster, does not hold.

Starting with Yemen, who has a polity score of 3, which according to the Polity IV Project is an anocracy, has experienced an increase in conflict. An anocracy is considered a government in transition, and conflict should be expected to increase during that time, therefore, this assumption is corroborated by the second part of the hypothesis. However, Afghanistan has seen a relative decrease in violence, despite its polity score being the lowest out of the four cases, at 1. This also indicates that Afghanistan is an anocracy and its government is in transition. With both Yemen and Afghanistan in mind, the second part of the hypothesis, that non-democratic states see a rise in conflict amidst disaster, does not hold.

Conclusion

At the outset of this paper, I looked to show a correlation between the onset of disasters and its relationship with the behavior of governments and non-state violent actors amidst conflict. With the case studies, analyses, and hypotheses presented, I have shown that while disaster may not be causation, there is definitely correlation with behaviors. My hypotheses showed within the case studies presented; that onset of disasters correlate with NSVAs progressing their legitimacy within their country of influence; disaster onset has had mixed outcomes with respect to conflict escalation or de-escalation; and democratic as well as non-democratic countries do not have a definitive correlation with conflict escalation or de-escalation amidst disaster.

The conclusions that I have come to given the hypotheses presented are not exclusive to the case studies presented nor should they be used unilaterally to explain behaviors in other conflicts. The information presented in an analysis and collection of observations and studies of behavior during a specified time period under exceptional circumstances, the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Ripe Moment Theory, presented by Kreutz, is one of the most prevalent theories for providing an explanation to the behaviors of NSVA behavior during a disaster. Given the information presented, it is also possible that disaster may have an opposite effect on conflict than previously thought. Disaster, may in fact, mitigate the onset of conflict and in many cases end or suspend violence between actors.

Some ideas that I was unable to include in this paper, but suggest for future study and research include the post-disaster behaviors, such as the status of the conflict and levels of violence, as well as changes in the political atmospheres of the countries. Additionally, future studies should look at countries outside of the limited regions that I have selected and look for correlation and differences between regions as well as a more in-depth analysis of regime type and conflict.

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